

ABSTRACTS OF SIKH STUDIES

(Vol VIII, Issue 3)

July-September 2006 / 538 NS

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RNI Regd No : 69639 / 98

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Published by

Institute of Sikh Studies
Gurdwara Singh Sabha, Kanthala, Indl Area Phase II
Chandigarh -160 002 (India).

Printed at

Sidharth Media Printers, 24/9, Industrial Area Phase II, Chandigarh

EDITORIAL

“GURU ARJUN : IMAGE OF THE LORD”

– A HOMAGE –

This being the fourth centenary of Sri Guru Arjun Dev ji's martyrdom, the following article is our humble tribute to the memory and the rich legacy of the great Guru.

– Editor

“Guru Arjun, fifth in succession, was the first Guru born as a Sikh. He proved himself an original thinker, illustrious poet, a practical philosopher, a great organizer, an eminent statesman, a shining sage, saint and seer, composer of music, scholar, founder of tanks and towns, an embodiment of love, humility and service, and the first martyr to faith. He was a dutiful son, a conciliatory brother, a loving husband, an inspiring father, beloved master and devoted servant of God. He possessed a tender heart but a resolute will. He was forgiving but fearless, firm in his faith as a rock, but never a fanatic. He completely changed the external aspect of Sikh religion.”¹ This is how Hari Ram Gupta, the famous historian, refers to the Guru.

“Under his fostering care, the Sikh faith acquired a strong scriptural and organizational base, and became potentially the force for a cultural and social revolution in the Punjab. Its religious and social ideals received telling affirmation in practice. It added to its orbit more concrete and permanent symbols, and its administration became more cohesive. By encouraging agriculture and trade and by introduction of a tithe collection for the common use of the community, a stable economic base was secured. Guru Arjun gave Sikhism its scripture, the Granth Sahib, and its main place of worship,

the Harimandir, the Golden Temple of modern day. He taught, by example, humility and sacrifice and was the first martyr of the Sikh faith. The work of the first four Gurus was preparatory. It assumed a more definitive form in the hands of Guru Arjun. Later Gurus substantiated the principles manifested in his life. Guru Arjun thus marked a central point in the evolution of the Sikh tradition.”² These are the words in which Talib pays his homage to the Guru.

The Guru’s contemporary bards, the Bhattas, have paid glowing tributes to his divine personality. One of them, Mathura, who was a witness to the glory of the Guru, says in a panegyric:

*Guru Arjun is manifestly image of the Lord,
Between the two no difference is.*³

No words can adequately describe the Guru’s personality or his greatness. In Indian literature terms *brahmgyani* and *satguru* are used to describe great souls. In his famous composition, *Sukhmani*, the Guru himself defines these terms as follows :

Brahmgyani:

*The Holy Lord in their mind and on their tongue;
Other than the sole Divine Being behold they nothing in the universe,
Saith Nanak: Such are the characteristics of the God-enlightened.*

Elsewhere in the same hymn, he says, “*Brahmgyani is God himself*”⁵

Satguru:

*He is the true preceptor, who holy Supreme Being has realized.
In his company does the disciple find liberation,
Saith Nanak, by Chanting Divine laudation.*⁶

Who else satisfies the requirements of these definitions better than Guru Arjun Dev? He was surely the true Guru or Satguru, and *brahmgyani* in the truest sense.

BLESSINGS OF THE GURU

Guru Arjun Dev was only 18 when he was anointed as Guru, and died in 1604 at the young age of 43. In this short span of life and the brief tenure of Guruship, his achievements are simply amazing. His contribution to the development of religious thought and evolution of the Sikh movement is colossal, and cannot be adequately assessed or appreciated. In the biographical accounts of the Guru, his contribution as compiler of the *Adi Granth* or *Pothi Sahib* and his martyrdom dominate. Before listing some of his countless other

blessings, it would be appropriate, therefore, to highlight some facts relating to each of these two events :

1. **Compilation of the Adi Granth** : The work started in 1599 AD at a nice shady place in the new township of Amritsar on the bank of the newly-dug Ramsar *sarovar*, with Bhai Gurdas, who is acknowledged as an unparalleled scholar and exponent of Sikh philosophy, as scribe. Guru Arjun Dev himself made an outstanding contribution towards its contents. Out of approximately 6000 hymns, over 2200 are his. His major compositions are *Sukhmani*, *Bara Maha (Majh)*, *Bawan Akhri*, *Chaubole*, *Funbe*, *Gatha*, *Var Gujri*, *Var Jaitsri*, *Var Maru*, *Var Basant and Var Ramkali*. "The most popular and widely recited among these is the *Sukhmani*, or the *Psalm of Peace* as Teja Singh calls it. Its aim is to remove confusion from the mind, disease and distress. Its recitation is expected to soothe an afflicted heart and increase joy and tranquility."⁷

Without going into the details of the tremendous effort, that went into the project, a few features which are unique to the *Granth* may be pointed out :-

- It is not merely a scripture for the Sikhs, it represents the word of God revealed through Guru Nanak and his successors. The *Pothi Sahib*, as it was originally called, was shown utmost reverence not only by the Sikhs, but also by the Guru himself. It was formally installed in the Harmandir Sahib in 1604.
- Apart from the *bani* of the Gurus, the *Granth* carries hymns of the contemporary and earlier men of God, representing different castes, regions and religious denominations, thus giving the *Granth* the character of a universal scripture.
- The hymns are arranged according to 31 major modes of the Indian classical music in which they are supposed to be sung. They carry the message of universal love, and preach highest standards of moral and ethical conduct and equality, rising above caste, colour, gender and regional considerations. The sole object of worship is God who is the Creator of the universe. He is the Father, and we are all His children. The hymns are devotional, and when sung in appropriate forms of music, carry the devotees to spiritual heights and ecstasy

leading to union with God who is immanent in His creation. Love for Him is, therefore, to be expressed through service of mankind.

- The *Granth* is a unique source of knowledge. Guru Arjun, in his *Mundhavani* at the end of the volume sums it up thus :

*In this dish are placed three things - Truth, Harmony and Wisdom. These are seasoned with the name of God, which is the basis of all. Whoever eats and enjoys it, shall be saved.*⁸

- The *Granth* has the unique distinction of having been completed and authenticated by the founder of his religion himself. The original volume prepared by Guru Arjun Dev is extant at Kartarpur in Jalandhar district of Punjab in the custody of Sodhi descendants of Dhirmal.
- The compilation of the *Adi Granth* formed an important landmark in the history of Sikhs. It became the sacred book of the new faith and reinforced the identity of its followers.
- The *Granth* is the first and the most important work of Punjabi language recorded in the Gurmukhi script evolved by the Gurus themselves. It is a repository of many languages. The Gurus' hymns are a mixture of Hindi and Punjabi. The compositions of Rama Nand and Kabir are in pure Hindi, Farid's verses are in pure Punjabi. The language of Trilochan and Nam Dev is Marathi. *Adi Granth* contains words of Lahndi, Persian and Sindhi also.

2. **Martyrdom of Guru Arjun Dev:** Martyrdom or supreme sacrifice of one's life for a noble cause is inherent in Sikh philosophy. This concept appears to have never been mentioned in the earlier Indian tradition. Guru Nanak was the first to make this call on the religious front. He said :

*If you seek to play the game of love,
Then enter upon my path with your head on your palm.
But, once you set your foot on the way,
Then find not a way out, and lay down thy head.*⁹

He reiterated:

*Only is the death of heroic men, whose dying is divinely
Such alone may be called heroes as at the Divine Portal approved
obtain true honour.*¹⁰

Kabir defines a martyr or a hero in the *Guru Granth Sahib* thus :

*True hero is one who fights in defence of the humble and the faith,
is cut limb after limb, and flees not the field.*¹¹

Guru Arjun Dev adds the qualification of love of God for heroism or martyrdom. He says :

*In this age such alone are designated as true heroes,
As in the love of the Lord are dyed.
One instructed by a holy Preceptor perfectly endowed,
Conquers the self and thereby subdues all else.*¹²

Guru Arjun Dev had intensified his preaching activity and, as a result, the Sikh faith was becoming popular. Not only Hindus but even Muslims were attracted, and were becoming his followers. Besides Punjab, where he stayed, the message of Sikhism had spread in other countries as well. According to Mohsin Fani, the author of *Dabistan-e-Muḥabib*, there was hardly any town in inhabited countries without a visible presence of Sikhs. This attracted the wrath of Muslim fundamentalists, notably Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi, the head of the Naqshbandi Sect of Muslims, and the bigoted emperor Jahangir, who wanted the Guru to stop his preaching and convert to Islam. The Guru could never, and did not, oblige. The result was that he ordered the Guru's execution with torture. The Guru thus became the first martyr of faith, and demonstrated to his followers the merit of supreme sacrifice for a righteous cause over any worldly gains.

Some motivated attempts have been made in certain quarters to play down the martyrdom, suggesting that the Guru's death was a punishment for his support to the Jahangir's rebel son, Khusrau. Others have blamed (a junior official in the imperial court), Prithi Chand (the Guru's brother) and some local officials who were certainly unfriendly to the Guru. But they were too insignificant to influence the Emperor in a decision like this. The following record from *Tuzk-e-Jahangiri* belies all these assumptions and leaves no doubt about the supreme sacrifice that makes the Guru “*Shahidan da Sartaj*” :

“A Hindu named Arjun lived at Goindwal on the bank of river Beas in the garb of a Pir and Shaikh. As a result many of the simple-minded Hindus as well as ignorant and foolish Muslims had been persuaded to adopt his ways and manners, and he had raised aloft the standard of sainthood and holiness. He was called Guru. From all sides cowboys and idiots became his fast followers. This business had been flourishing for three or four generations.

For a long time it had been in my mind to put a stop to this vain affair (*dukan-e-batil*) or **to bring him into the fold of Islam.**"

Again, he records :

"I ordered that he should be summoned. His houses, camps and sons were given over to Murtza Khan. His property and cash were confiscated. I issued instructions that he should be put to death by torture. Murtza Khan deputed Chandu Shah to confiscate the Guru's property, and he fleeced the Guru's family of everything of value."

The Martyrdom had a profound effect on the psyche of his followers. In fact, it marked the beginning of a new era in the history of Sikhs. The Guru had realized that it was necessary to defend the faith with arms. He had been preparing his followers for this eventuality. When he was arrested, he knew he would not return alive. He had, therefore, appointed Guru Hargobind as his successor. He had also trained him in use of arms and martial arts. His last message to his son sent from the prison is worth quoting :

"I have succeeded in effecting the object of my life. Go to my son the holy Har Gobind, and give him for me ample consolation. Bid him not to mourn or indulge in unmanly lamentations but sing God's praises. Let him also restrain from grief the other members of my family. Let him sit fully armed on his throne, and maintain an army to the best of his ability. Let him affix the patch of Guruship to his forehead according to ancient custom, and ever treat his Sikhs with the utmost courtesy. Let him hold Bhai Budha in honour, and in all respects, except the wearing of arms hereby enjoined, adopt the practice of the preceding Gurus."¹³

Trumpp says that Guru Arjun's death was a great turning point in the development of Sikh community, as from that time the struggle commenced that changed the entire character of reformatory religious movement.¹⁴

Besides the compilation of *Adi Granth* and the martyrdom, there are several other aspects of Guru's life and contribution which need to be highlighted. Some of these are:

1. *Construction of Harmandir Sabib* at Amritsar in the middle of the Amrit Sarovar with a unique architecture, low plinth and low inverted lotus dome symbolising humility of mind and purity of

thought, and doors on four sides indicating universality. Popularly known as the Golden Temple, it became the epicentre of Sikh activities throughout history since inception and continues to be the centre-stage for all Sikh affairs, as well as a most coveted tourist destination the world over.

2. *Urbanisation*: The Guru developed Ramdasapur (Sri Amritsar) founded by his father Guru, and founded new towns at Tarn Taran, Kartarpur (in Jalandhar district) and Sri Hargobindpur (on the right bank of the river Beas).
3. *Tanks* : The Guru constructed tanks at Amritsar (Santokhsar and Ramsar), Taran Tarn and Kartarpur to meet the needs of the populations, collecting rain water.
4. *Percolation Wells* : The Guru encouraged sinking of percolation wells in villages for irrigation purposes against droughts and famines.
5. *Diversification of Economy*: He encouraged his Sikhs to take to trade and skilled jobs required in urbanization programme. Trading in horses received special attention.
6. *Whole-life Religion*: The Guru practised the whole-life religion of Guru Nanak, based on the cardinal principles of *Naam japo*, *kirat karo* and *vand chhako*, which decries asceticism and enjoins social responsibility, full individual and corporate life, service and sacrifice.
7. *Missionary Work*: He reorganized and consolidated the missionary network through *manjis* and *pirbis*. Majha area received special attention. His message spread to other remote areas as far as Central and West Asia through Sikh traders.
8. *‘State Within State’*: The Guru organized his followers for collective programmes, voluntary *daswandh*, etc., which are normally state functions. The Sikhs called the Guru as *Sacha Padshah* (the true Emperor).

Nobody can count the Guru’s blessings. He recorded the revealed ‘Word of God’, the *bani*, which became the ‘Guru Eternal of the Sikhs’, and a beacon light of wisdom for the entire humanity. He practised and taught the philosophy of a whole-life religion. He demonstrated how to live a life with dignity and honour, attuned to the Will of the Lord, and to lay down one’s life for a noble cause. He thus served humanity both in life and in death. He embodied, in ample measure, all the virtues that are considered divine. He was indeed “image of the Lord Manifest.”

~ ~ ~

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ISC : 'THE NEW SOCIAL INSTRUMENT'

Not long after the unfortunate partition of India in 1947, the erudite Sikh scholar and statesman, S Kapur Singh, said that 'the Sikhs must either forge new social instruments to capture the next stage of history of the Indian Sub-continent, or be written off as a living and significant people'. In support of this view, he states:

“Three times during the past one hundred years, the Sikhs have neglected to assume responsibilities for all India leadership, the international leadership and Southeast Asian leadership, respectively. On each of these occasions, the Sikhs had the requisite opportunities, but every time their leaders failed them. “In the quarter century between 1769-1799, the imperial throne of Delhi was lying ineffectively occupied and there was no all-India power, including the John Company or the Marathas, who could or would have even the desire, to oppose the Sikhs assuming all-India leadership. The Sikh leaders altogether failed even to comprehend the true political situation around them and wasted their energies in periodical raids into the Gangetic plain collecting yearly 'blanket-tax' (*kamblee*): They had five lakhs of well-armed horse-men ready to fight and die in the cause of the Panth, during this period.

“Again, after the battle of Pherushahar, on the evening of 21st December, 1845, the British Power in India had decided to surrender unconditionally before the Sikhs, by passing on the undisputed leadership of the whole of India to them after withdrawing from the East. As a consequence, there would neither have been British Empire, nor Western Europe as the centre of Industrial Revolution: the World History would have

been Sikh-oriented. Treachery of General Lal Singh, the Commander-in-Chief of the Sikh Armies alone prevented this development.

“Lastly, in the year 1947, a virtually sovereign status for the Sikh people as such, in suitable coordination with the emerging Hindu and Muslim Indias, was a solid possibility to be picked by deft hands, like a ripe fruit. Such a denuement would have made the Sikhs people to be reckoned with from Somalia to Indonesia and from the Hindukush mountains to the Mekong river delta. Only gross perfidy and pitiable political myopia of the Sikh leaders has reduced the Sikhs to what they are.

“Each and every time, incompetent charlatans and dishonest men have assumed the leadership of the Sikhs at decisive moments of their history and the Sikhs have been unable to recognize or dislodge them.

“Certain clear conclusions emerged out of this past of Sikh history. The Sikhs are naïve and gullible, easy to impose upon. The institution through which their social impulse is exercised, are encumbered with vested interests, and they are too hardened for securing power or answering changing conditions.

“The Sikhs must either forge new social instruments to capture the next stage of history in the Indian sub-continent or be written off as a living and significant people.”*

The subsequent events of the last century only confirm the above conclusion. During this period also Sikhs have suffered an endless series of setbacks, one after the other. In 1956, when states were reorganized on linguistic basis, claim of Punjabi speaking state was rejected, for, Sikhs could be a majority in the new state. This necessitated a prolonged struggle in which thousands went to jail, and hundreds of lives were lost. The result was a truncated Punjabi sub-state without a capital or High Court, with no control over its river waters, and large chunks of Punjabi speaking areas awarded to the newly created states of Haryana and Himachal Pradesh. Later events like the Emergency clamped on the nation during 1970's, the infamous

* Sirdar Kapur Singh, “*Failure of Sikh Leadership*”, *Madhya Pradesh Kendri Sri Guru Singh Sabha Newsletter*, May 2006, pp7-8.

Blue Star in 1984, and the repression of Sikhs, killing thousands of Sikh youth in fake encounters, are too fresh in our minds. The exploitation of Punjab river waters continues, while the state itself is fast heading towards desert conditions.

There is no doubt the present leadership set-up of the Sikhs has proved inadequate in the task of handling the prevailing complex situation. The need for a new set-up, or 'new social instrument' advocated by S Kapur Singh is obvious. This has been universally realized by Sikh masses as well as intelligentsia, and luckily, the 'new instrument' has appeared in the form of International Sikh Confederation with its headquarters at Chandigarh. This new body has been hailed by Sikhs everywhere, and has attracted a rapidly increasing membership.

The ISC has made a very spectacular start. It has set up an impressive office in the prime area of Chandigarh at #1, Madhya Marg in Sector 28 under the charge of Lt. Gen (ret'd) Kartar Singh, equipped with modern office facilities. It has already held an international seminar on "Task before the ISC" which attracted some excellent papers on the subject, some of which are being reproduced in the current issue of the AOSS.

A General Meeting of Primary members was called on the 9th April, 2006, at Chandigarh in which the revised Constitution was discussed and adopted with suitable amendments. An Interim Executive Committee was also constituted with nine members selected by consensus. This committee has been very active, and is holding regular meetings every month. Some more members have since been co-opted. Action to constitute five Advisory Councils (AC) has been initiated, and eminent Sikhs have been persuaded to work on these Councils. H.H Justice Mota Singh, the well-known eminent jurist of UK, has agreed to be the Chairman of the AC for Legal and International Affairs. Dr Sardara Singh Johl, an outstanding economist and educationist, will head the Councils for Economic Affairs and Education, while Giani Harinder Singh, the well known scholar and statesman from U.P., currently President of the Kendri Singh Sabha, will look after the Council for Religious Affairs. Dr Charan Kamal Singh, current Secretary General of the Sri Guru Gobind Singh Study Circle, Ludhiana, will be the Chairman of the AC for Media and Public

Relations. Members of those councils are being nominated from among specialists in respective disciplines, in consultation with the Chairmen concerned. These Councils will soon meet and come out with short-term and long-term plans aimed at better future of the Sikhs and glory of the Panth, nationally and internationally.

Efforts are also afoot to constitute the Governing Council. The exercise cannot, however, be completed until a broad base of Primary membership is created. A vigorous drive for enrolment of Primary members has, therefore, been launched. We take this opportunity to appeal to all well wishers of the Panth to join members and to promote the Confederation. This is the very minimum and the first step expected from any Sikh who shares genuine concern for future of the Panth. The members can form Local Committees as provided in the Constitution, start deliberations on problems facing the Panth and provide valuable feedback to the Regional Committees and Central Executive Committee in matters of policy. They can also promote the cause of the ISC in the local community and make organised efforts to carry out its programmes. The numerous problems facing the Sikh Community demand a united effort, and nothing can be achieved, unless the local committees participate actively.

The Seminar organised on the theme "Task before the ISC" was indeed a welcome step, and has yielded some valuable conclusions. Selected papers are being reproduced in original. While the speakers covered practically every aspect of the problems facing the Sikhs in India as well as abroad, consensus, emerged, however, that following programmes should be taken in hand on a priority basis:

- a) *A Standard English Translation of Guru Granth Sahib*: This is necessary to provide a reliable and acceptable basis for translation into other Indian and world languages. We are paying our homage to Guru Arjun Dev who compiled the Guru Granth Sahib, on the 400th anniversary of his martyrdom. This year is, therefore, particularly appropriate for undertaking this project.
- b) *Quality Education*: The state of education in rural areas of the Punjab is highly deplorable. A concerted effort is required to provide quality education in villages by strengthening the existing schools with better infrastructure, better teaching staff and modern teaching techniques. Similarly, at the higher education

level, financial assistance to deserving students needs to be assured. The ISC is expected to come out with a comprehensive education plan.

- c) *Attention to Youth*: During the last few decades, very little attention has been paid to religious instruction or technical training to youth. As a result, young boys and girls are getting alienated from the core Sikhs values and visible symbols of the Sikh faith. They have also become victims of drug addiction and other vices. A well thought out full fledged campaign is required to deal with these extremely serious problems. It is expected that ISC will organise it with the cooperation of the network of deras and other existing Panthic organisations.
- d) *Economic Upliftment* : There is widespread frustration among the youth due to lack of employment opportunities and technical training. A comprehensive programme involving a network of technical training institutes, career guidance and counselling centres, academies for preparing the youth for competitive exams for defence and other services, cooperation of employment agencies, assistance in emigration, etc., is urgently required.
- e) *Problems of NRI Sikhs*: Outside India, the Sikhs encounter discrimination and numerous problems resulting from their external identity and hostile propaganda by certain agencies. The recent French ban on turban is the latest example. The ISC will have to initiate diplomatic activity and fight legal battles to solve these problems.

The task before the ISC is indeed formidable, but should not daunt the followers of the Guru. They have a history of challenges and triumphs. There is no reason why we should not come out of the present crisis with flying colours. Let us face the challenges. Our very survival is at stake. We want to live with dignity and honour in the service of mankind through the ideology preached by our great Gurus. Our homeland is India, but we are citizens of the world and want to participate actively in national and international affairs. This is the message the ISC wants to convey in a practical way.

We conclude this note with the appeal, "Join the ISC for bright future of the Sikh Community, glory of the Panth and service of the mankind."

TASK BEFORE THE ISC – INAUGURAL ADDRESS

KHARAK SINGH

It is a great privilege and honour to address this august gathering of distinguished scholars and eminent Sikhs, assembled to discuss issues, which have a vital bearing on the future of the Sikhs as a community. The formation of the International Sikh Confederation (ISC) is an historic event, and will always figure as a major landmark in the annals of Sikh history. Those who conceived the idea, and have worked hard for its realisation, deserve our praise and congratulations and blessings of the Guru, whose doctrine of *Guru Granth – Guru Panth* gets a concrete form in the ISC.

Ever since the beginning, the Sikhs have been facing opposition and active hostilities. The martyrdom of Guru Arjun, Guru Tegh Bahadur, Guru Gobind Singh and his sons, besides the sacrifices of thousands of Sikhs in the centuries that followed, in the cause of justice and truthfulness were indeed traumatic. The Sikhs have undergone all kinds of tribulations. But with their perseverance and their faith in the Guru, they were crowned with success and glory in the form of a Sikh empire in the North of India in the 19th century, the first Indian Sovereign state after centuries of slavery.

The glory was, however, short-lived, and in less than half a century, the Sarkar-i-Khalsa fell to the British (East India Company). There may be several other reasons for the debacle, but the fundamental cause was that Maharaja Ranjit Singh had ignored the doctrine of *Guru Panth* and sought to establish his dynastic rule. This is a lesson, we can ignore only at our own peril.

The twentieth century had again been traumatic for the Sikh Panth. Although the 5-year struggle for liberation of gurdwaras ended in victory in 1925, leading to the formation of SGPC, there were two

major setbacks. In 1947, the country was partitioned, and the price of freedom had to be paid largely by the Sikh community. Besides the loss of Nankana Sahib and other sacred shrines, about five million Sikhs were forced to leave their homes and hearths and their fertile lands, and migrate as penniless refugees to the Indian side. Tens of thousands lost their lives in the tragic upheaval. In India, along with the efforts to rehabilitate themselves, the Sikhs had to launch a struggle for getting a Punjabi-speaking state. This became necessary since in the reorganisation of states on linguistic basis in 1956, this right was denied to Punjabi language. Although the right was conceded after a long struggle of ten years, a truncated Punjabi sub-state was carved out in 1966, with no capital, no independent High Court, no control over its river waters, and keeping large areas with Punjabi-speaking population outside Punjab. The struggle against this discrimination still continues. In the meantime, in 1984, Government of India mounted a full-fledged military invasion on Sri Darbar Sahib, Amritsar, with tanks and artillery, demolishing the Akal Takht Sahib, damaging the Sanctum Sanctorum, killing thousands of innocent pilgrims, including women and children trapped in the *parkarma* and the numerous buildings in the complex. A virtual army rule was clamped on the state, and thousands of innocent young Sikhs were killed by police forces in fake encounters. The official propaganda and media painted the Sikhs as anti-national, secessionists and terrorists, nationally as well as internationally, causing an incalculable damage to the popular image of the Sikhs as a patriotic, hard working, philanthropic, peace-loving and a liberal community. This left an indelible impact on the Sikh psyche, and is still a serious problem to be dealt with.

While the above background continues to cast its ominous shadows, there are several other problems which demand attention of the Sikh Panth as a whole.

There is no unanimity on the long-term political goals of the Sikhs. While some sections demand a sovereign independent state, others prefer autonomy within the Indian Union. The SAD has favoured the Anandpur Sahib Resolution of 1973, which was subsequently modified in 1978. The Hindu majority, however, considers it secessionist, and is in no mood to concede the demand.

There are challenges to Sikh identity, and concerted efforts

are afoot to treat the Sikhs as a sect of the Hindus. The Rashtriya Sikh Sangat wing of the BJP is busily engaged in confusing the Sikhs on this issue.

Then there is the problem of apostasy, particularly among the Sikh youth. Under the influence of the West and the TV culture, alarmingly large numbers of Sikhs have dropped the most visible and essential requirement and symbolic identity of Sikhism – the unshorn hair.

The Sikhs outside Punjab as well as the Sikh diaspora outside India have their own peculiar problems. Besides, there are millions of tribal Sikhs like Vanjaras, Sikligars, Lobanas, Tharus, etc., known as Nanak Panthis, who are living in utter neglect and abject poverty in several states of India, notably Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, etc. They have received no attention from the Panth, and are vulnerable to the influence of the missionaries of other faiths.

To this list of problems must be added the recent controversies over Dasam Granth, All India Sikh Gurdwaras Act, Sikh Personal Law, seating arrangements in *langar*, the authority of the Takht *jathedars*, research on Sikh history, Sikh philosophy and *Gurbani*, and the issue of world heritage status for the Golden Temple, Amritsar.

Little organised effort has been made by the Sikh leadership to carry the message of the Gurus in its pristine form. Clever individuals, taking advantage of this situation, have established their *deras* where they preach their own cult in the garb of Sikh religion among the credulous and gullible Sikh masses not only in India but also abroad. This leads to rapid erosion of Sikh values, and weakens the Panth. Each *dera* is a potential Schism and a challenge to the mainstream Sikhism.

The Sikhs want to live a peaceful life with dignity and honour in India, their homeland, and as ambassadors of goodwill abroad. Their enemies have tried to paint them as terrorists, secessionists and anti-national. This mischievous propaganda has to be countered. Sikh identity continues to be challenged. Very little organized effort has been made so far to explain to the world at large the noble mission of love and universal brotherhood and service to mankind without distinction of caste, colour, gender or creed, as preached by the Sikh Gurus. The youth has been subjected to criminal neglect, so that they

are drifting away from religion and falling a prey to drugs and other vices on a vast scale. Education, particularly at school level, is in shambles. Controversies, schisms, *deravad*, etc., continue to rip the Panth apart, and self-seeking politicians continue to mislead and exploit the common Sikh masses.

However, the problems, numerous and complex as they are, need not frighten us. These are normal phenomena with the ever changing values and cross-cultural currents. All faiths have faced and are facing such problems. The Sikhs are no exception. What should indeed frighten us, is a lack of awareness, and preparedness to face them. It is, however, gratifying to note that the Panth has taken up the challenge through the ISC.

It is only this newly created organisation, International Sikh Confederation (ISC), that can pull the community out of the present mess and psycho-spiritual quagmire. We, therefore, call upon all well-wishers of the Panth, particularly the intelligentsia and all Panthic organizations and institutions, to join the Confederation and contribute their mite towards achievement of a better future for the community as well as for humanity as a whole. They have nothing to lose except their isolation and frustration, and everything to gain in terms of prestige and brighter future. United, we pull in the same direction and become an irresistible force assured of glorious future. Divided, we work at cross-purposes, pulling in different directions, leading to no progress and a sure downslide.

There will be opposition from quarters that have never been friendly to the Sikhs or those whose vested interests are likely to be threatened. But that should not deter us. For, in the words of Martin Luther King Jr, 'In the end we shall not remember the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends'. Let us not, therefore, keep silent, but express our support to the ISC, actively and without delay.

It is hoped that the deliberations in the Seminar scheduled for 8th April, 2006, will lead to resolutions of far-reaching consequences. Some of the things which need to be taken up on a priority basis may be mentioned below :

- A) **A STANDARD ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF GURU GRANTH SAHIB:**
This is necessary, because the available translations by individual scholars give variant interpretations and do not do full justice to

the spirit of *Gurbani*. We have witnessed in recent times, unprecedented interest in the teachings of the Gurus. The Scripture, therefore, has to be translated in all major Indian and world languages. Since very few non-Sikhs know the Punjabi language in Gurmukhi script, the standard English translation, undertaken by a team of scholars, will form the basis for future translations into other languages. It is hoped that the ISC will set-up a panel of competent scholars to produce a standard English version of *Gurbani*.

- B) **EDUCATION FUND:** Poor state of education, particularly at the school level, is a cause for serious concern, and is exercising the minds of all well-wishers of the Panth. To rectify the situation and to ensure quality education to Sikh children and youth, top educationists among the Sikhs have to put their heads together. An education fund should be raised, so that in future no aspiring Sikh child is deprived of an opportunity to educate himself up to the highest level.
- C) **TV CHANNEL:** Considering the role of electronic media and the obsession of the youth with TV programmes, it is an urgent necessity to set-up a 24-hour channel to project the true image of Sikhism through attractive programmes with heroes/heroines in proper Sikh form, and to share with the rest of the world the lofty ideals of Sikh religion.
- D) **AKAL TAKHT & THE SGPC:** The authority of these institutions is being undermined by forces within as well as outside. The Akal Takht has to be accepted as a Supreme authority and its status and role clearly defined and jurisdiction of the SGPC extended to all historic shrines in India.
- E) **SIKH PERSONAL LAW:** With the enactment of Sikh Personal Law, the contentious article 25 in the Constitution will automatically become redundant.
- F) **ACADEMIC CONTROVERSIES:** We are aware of several controversies that divide the Panth. It is necessary to constitute panel(s) of scholars to find solutions at academic level sooner than later, in the interest of the unity and integrity of the Panth.
- G) **RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS:** An institute for advanced studies exclusively devoted to *Gurbani* and Sikh history is needed to be

set-up immediately. Multi-faculty universities invariably tend to dilute this purpose and invariably come under government control. Besides preparing research material, the institute will also produce textbooks for religious instruction in schools and colleges, and popular literature for the masses.

- H) **DERAS:** A number of *deras* have sprung up and claim devotion of large numbers of Sikhs. These *deras* often tend to divide the Panth. But, with proper direction, they can be persuaded to propagate the ideals of mainstream Sikhism. For this purpose, it may be necessary to convene a meeting of all heads of *deras* and channelise their missionary zeal and resources for the betterment of their devotees' lives.
- I) **SPORTS:** This is one of the natural talents among the followers of the Gurus. A comprehensive programme is required to promote sports among the Sikh youth. A beginning may be made with honouring a few outstanding Sikh sportsmen. They can do a lot in pursuing and popularising the Sikh identity.

The above list is only illustrative, and by no means exhaustive. The constitution of ISC provides for Advisory Councils for different subjects, to be manned by the best professionals in respective disciplines. We have no doubt that these councils will rise to the expectations of the people.

The ISC must succeed. For, there is no other way for the Guru's Panth to achieve its destined glory. It must become the brain bank, a think tank and a conscience keeper of the Panth and, in the course of time, is destined to become the voice of the Sikh Community, which would be recognised by all, nationally as well as internationally. The Panth must take over the responsibilities entrusted by the Tenth Guru under the doctrine of *Guru Granth – Guru Panth*.

Wahguru ji ki Khalsa; Wahguru ji ki fateh.

PROBLEMS FACED BY THE SIKHS IN DIASPORA

H H JUSTICE MOTA SINGH*

Ours is a bewildered, tormented, fractured generation, and it would not be an overstatement to say that mankind is, today, in the midst of one of the greatest crises in history. It seems to me that the whole world is suffering from scepticism in faith, anarchy in morals; we do not know which way to turn and what to do. There is certain duplicity in human nature, which makes us do things even when we recognise them to be wrong. We conceal from ourselves and from others the nature of what we do by euphemism.

Sikhs are not immune from this phenomenon.

Our generation has the responsibility for deciding whether we are to prosper or decline, whether our conduct will lead to a beginning or to an end. We must strip away all pretence and be honest with ourselves. That is the only way to regain faith in decency.

This seminar is the first serious attempt by the Sikhs (a) to identify the problems and challenges they face, (b) to suggest (i) the goals for the community and (ii) the measures required to achieve them. I regret that I am unable to be with you but I was asked if I would submit a paper. I said "Yes", in an unguarded moment. When I looked at the list of the very distinguished participants, I quailed at my own temerity in daring to join them. I submit this paper, in all humility and with a certain amount of diffidence.

The paper touches upon a number of topics, in particular the problems faced by the Sikhs in Diaspora.

Sikhism is the youngest, and now the fifth largest, world religion. It is a revealed religion; it is not an offshoot of another religion or the syncretic blend of two different and often conflicting religions. It is an

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independent religion and this independence is underlined and enshrined in the Guru Granth Sahib on page 1136. Many writers of great erudition have written books about our religion, but I would like to consider what two non-Sikhs, among many, have said about it. McAuliffe said "It would be difficult to point to a religion of greater originality or to a more comprehensive ethical system. The Sikhs owe it to the world to share the rich heritage with the rest of mankind." The other is the philosopher, Bertrand Russell, whose prolific writings on religion, politics and morals always stimulated interest, often to his own detriment. He often expressed what he regarded as the absurdities of religion. But he said that "if some lucky men survive the onslaught of the third world war of atomic and hydrogen bombs, then the Sikh religion will be the only means of guiding them." Russell was asked if the implication of what he was saying was that the Sikh religion was not capable of guiding mankind until and unless there was a third world war, he replied, "No. It has the capability, but the Sikhs have not brought out, in the broad daylight, the splendid doctrines of their religion which has come into existence for the benefit of the entire mankind. This is their greatest sin and the Sikhs cannot be freed of it."

We know how Guru Gobind Singh shook, out of their lassitude, people reconciled for long to their fallen state, their will to action completely atrophied. With unparalleled zeal to raise the down-trodden and fight against repression, he created the Khalsa, uplifting the weak and instilling in them supreme courage and devotion to righteous causes. Out of the oppressed and demoralised arose a distinctive people, with a resolve of steel accompanied by a saintly temperament, and fired with a sense of mission and determination to usher in a new society. Guru Gobind Singh introduced the Amrit ceremony. This, with its special vows, is basic to becoming the Khalsa. We know about the five symbols. These, along with the turban, constitute the Khalsa uniform which distinguishes a Sikh from all other people in the world. This uniform is essential to preserve the life of the community and to foster the spirit of brotherhood among the Sikhs. It makes the Sikh look like the Guru himself and, therefore, prompts him to behave, to act, like the Guru. The symbols instil discipline and unity. They are meant to keep the Sikhs united in the pursuit of the aims and ideals of their Gurus. They mean that the Khalsa cannot take refuge in anonymity. He and his religion are known to everyone. Just as the

Englishman is believed to take the common law with him wherever he goes, so the Sikh takes his religion, his Gurus' teachings with him wherever he goes. He stands out among people and any misconduct or unseemly behaviour on his part would be noticed immediately as a breach of the Khalsa discipline. That is why a Sikh is always expected to be on guard, alert and true to his calling.

There can be no dispute that a disciplined life, an organised life, a life lived in accordance with stated rules is infinitely better, more productive, more secure, more satisfying than an undisciplined life, a disorganised life and a life bereft of rules and direction. A disciplined life evokes implicit faith, trust and loyalty and respect. And you do not need me to tell anyone of the fate of a person who acquires the reputation of being disloyal, untrustworthy and untruthful.

According to Gokal Chand Narang, while Guru Granth Sahib saved the Hindus of Punjab from spiritual starvation, the Khalsa prevented them from crossing over religious boundaries from which their return was impossible. A Gujarati businessman, living in London, in a comment at a meeting, acknowledged unequivocally that "if it had not been for Guru Gobind Singh, we would all be Muslims now."

Sikhism is a world religion, but it is not a proselytising religion; we do not seek to convert others. Regrettably, that cannot be said of some other religions some of which are more aggressive in their efforts at conversion; some employ subtler methods; they consider it their divine duty. Those who sponsor religious propaganda in their zeal for the spiritual welfare of their fellowmen indulge in a vulgar competition about the know-how of salvation. Agencies for proselytisation which scramble for souls are not in keeping with the true spirit of religion. There are still people, who, with a crusading zeal, affirm that they have the monopoly of a final, unique, exclusive and incomparable revelation. These people are directly responsible for the eclipse of religion, for the blight of unbelief in large parts of the world. We, Sikhs, believe in religion as communion with God and do not dismiss differences among religions as unimportant or irrelevant. We do not propose an undifferentiated universalism or indifferentism. We believe in partnership among religions. We believe that all human beings are of the same essence and, therefore, of equal worth and entitled to the same fundamental rights; that the human individual is the highest, most concrete embodiment of the spirit on earth and anything that

hurts his individuality or damages his dignity is morally wrong.

I believe that one's religion is an important indicator of personal and social well being. I am a practising Sikh; that means that I have been initiated into the order of the Khalsa in accordance with the rites and ceremonies that have been laid down and bound by the strict code of discipline. The Khalsa is, as I have already said, a powerful brotherhood which in unity, loyalty and courage was to struggle against overwhelming odds and survive. The Code enjoins upon its adherents the highest standards of moral and spiritual rectitude and probity in daily life. As we all know, the climax of the ceremony is a form of initiation which requires all initiates to drink from a common bowl, thereby striking at the nature of ritual purity. This is testimony to the fact that our Gurus were, beyond doubt, vigorous and practical denouncers of caste.

Now, it is axiomatic that when people migrate from one country to another, they take with them their religious and cultural beliefs and values. These beliefs and values react with the beliefs and values of others, whether indigenous or other immigrants. In any liberal society such as Britain, for example, two main assumptions underpin the relations between the wider society and its immigrants and form the basis of an unspoken moral covenant. The society rightly expects its immigrants who have chosen to come and settle in its midst, to make every effort to become part of it and, in that sense, to identify with it, and undertakes, in return, to treat them equally with the rest of its citizens. These are fair terms of co-operation, for they are embodied in and consistent with the central values of liberal society, reconcile the legitimate claims of the wider society and the immigrants in a reasonably satisfactory manner and create the conditions of a cohesive and fair society. It implies, at the minimal, that the immigrants should not live in isolated and self-contained communities, cut themselves off from the common life of the wider society: because, we recognise that no ethnic or religious minority could thrive if it tried to isolate itself from the mainstream of life of the country where they have made their homes. But that requirement of identification or integration does not mean total absorption into the wider society's culture and the concomitant surrender of the immigrants' cultural identity, the immigrant does not have to become like the rest in order to develop a common sense of belonging with them.

There are now over 500,000 Sikhs living in the United Kingdom.

The majority of them were either born here or came here as young children. The Sikh community has been prominent in modern British life for several decades now. We have such strong commitments to our cultural and religious identity, starting with the five Ks, that British society has had to reflect hard about how it co-operates with and integrates distinctive minority groups like the Sikh community. Because we are so distinctive and were eager to force debate on such issues, we have in many ways been one of the pioneers for forging the new multi-cultural, multi-spiritual, multi-ethnic society. But it is a matter of record that when they first came here, in search of a new and possibly better life for themselves and their families, Sikhs encountered great difficulties in their search for employment and housing; they were not made particularly welcome; they felt obliged to discard their beards and turbans in the belief, no doubt, that that would make them more acceptable, less distinctive and therefore less susceptible to abuse, even physical attack. It is a matter of regret, however, that when conditions changed, when the environment improved, when attitudes became more tolerant, when it was no longer necessary for Sikhs to remove their beards and turbans in order to obtain work, etc., they continued, nevertheless, to cut their hair and shave their beards. They refused or were unwilling to re-adopt the outward symbols of their faith which distinguished them from other immigrants. So, what was once an understandably enforced submission to social/economic pressures has become a way of life. Not only that, they decided that there was no need for their offspring to keep their hair unshorn. They have gone a step further and this clearly demonstrates a decisive break. In the matrimonial columns of the vernacular press one invariably comes across advertisements which insist that "the boy should be clean shaven and belong to this or that caste." That, regrettably, is the fact; that is the reality; it strikes at the very root of the Sikh faith. And the numbers of such people are growing.

There is clear anecdotal evidence of the disintegration of faith and growing disillusionment about the traditional values that have come to us. One of the dangers from within is, as is apparent from what I have stated, the increasing indifference of our youth to organised religion and its practice. How do we cope with that? It has often been said that the children of a nation are its capital and in the proper investment of that capital consists its life and prosperity. We have a special responsibility toward our youth and that responsibility is to

ensure that they are protected from and do not fall a prey to the pernicious practices I have mentioned. How do we stop them from straying from the Gurus' path? Do not forget we are in competition with a whole lot of other agencies – apart from the zealots of other religions – that influence our youth – television, radio, media and outside the home, the school, place of work and so on. How do we prevent our youth, if at all, from being adversely influenced by what they see around them with the inevitable conflicts that arise in their minds? How do we inculcate in them the feeling, the conviction that they are the inheritors of a great religion and great traditions, that they can, and should be able to, combine their everyday life with a life lived in accordance with the tenets of their faith? May I emphasise that for us, the Sikhs, the rules of conduct laid down are sacrosanct; it is not for us to seek to change or re-write them according to intellectual or political fashion or such considerations, or to dispense with them because we feel that their observance is proving to be irksome or inconvenient. These are some of the questions that we must face. I wish I had the answers which would satisfy everyone. Part of the difficulty lies in the fact that the community is riven by differences – some doctrinal, but mainly inter-communal; the latter are so deep-seated as to give rise to mutual distrust.

The Sikh religion is, as we know, a religion of continuity. It depends for its very existence on the willingness of successive generations to hand over their faith and way of life to their children, and on the loyalty of children to the heritage on their part. By culture and upbringing we are, some of us, part of the liberal democracies of the West, but by birth each of us is heir to the history of our ancestors and a destiny that joins our fate to theirs. There is a difference between where we are and who we are. We are not wrong to see identity as a matter of birth. The fact that any of us is born a Sikh is no mere fact. It happened because generations of ancestors decided to be Sikhs and hand on that identity to their children.

The particular challenge facing us, the Sikhs in the West, in the Diaspora generally (and may be in parts of India too, I do not know), is to determine whether or not Sikh identity can be sustained in an open, secular society. We face a crisis, a crisis of continuity. It can be defined by a simple question and a far from simple answer. The question which I pose with a sense of grave urgency is “Will we have Sikh

grandchildren?" The answer is YES, but not without a determined, concerted effort to rebuild the vehicles, transmitters of Sikh continuity, if we follow implicitly and without question the tenets laid down by our Gurus. They have been neglected for too long. Unless we do so, the future of the Diaspora is at risk.

The greatest single danger is not that we do not know how to create continuity, but that we will fail to do so because we did not recognise that times have changed and so too has the challenge. By continuing to fight yesterday's battles, we risk losing the battle of today. There must be a massive shift in our communal priorities and strategy. For this to happen we must understand what is at stake, and what have been the transformations of Sikh life in our time. Handing on a tradition, a way of life and an ideology, is what successive generations have done. But how to do so in an age in which Sikh identity has become weak, fragmented and confused, is altogether more difficult. If we are Sikhs it is because our ancestors were Sikhs, and because they braved much and sacrificed more to ensure that their children would be Sikhs. They did more than survive under seemingly impossible circumstances. They maintained their distinctiveness against every inducement – sometimes benign, sometimes brutal – to assimilate or convert. To every crisis they responded with renewal. Whenever the opportunity arose, they enriched the life of the larger society in which they lived. And we are their heirs.

The world has gone through a good deal of change, indeed upheaval, over the years, particularly in the last 50 years or so. Changes have occurred, not all of them good, but some of which will make it almost impossible for the old order to return. The Sikhs, in particular, have had to face events of cataclysmic proportions. The community is still reeling from the effects of these events with its psyche scathed and its reputation tarnished. But I am convinced that these matters are not beyond repair, provided we act now and act decisively. The danger to the community has been as much from without as from within, but it is the danger from within that is more sinister, more ominous that should concern us. I remind myself of the great principles of our faith, principles for which our Gurus stood and some of them sacrificed all they had. At no period in our recent history were those principles greater in need of being followed, without question, than now. Many pernicious practices against which our Gurus revolted

have crept into Sikh society. Worldly considerations are corrupting the great ideals. The barriers which the Gurus laboured to cast down have been recreated. We only pay lip-service to these ideals.

I pray in aid again what Macauliffe said in 1910, “we shall see hereafter, it would be difficult to point to a religion of greater originality or to a more comprehensive ethical system. The values taught by Guru Nanak are as relevant to day as in the 15th century. The world today needs this faith of hope and optimism that preaches the welfare of all. The Sikhs owe it to the world to share their rich heritage with the rest of mankind.”

We fulfil Macauliffe’s words by inculcating in the youth a sense of pride – pride in their community, in its origins and its history, its religion and its language. And we do that by trying to understand them and the pressures on them of living in a multi-cultural and multi-religious society, by trying to understand their predicament, by putting ourselves in their shoes. But simply telling them that they ought to conform is not enough; it would not work; they are a pretty shrewd lot; they will only be convinced by argument, especially by example. Our gurdwaras, by definition, should be ideal places for doing all this, but they are not. Some gurdwaras come into being, not because a real need is felt, but because of dissension among the members, the craving for position. Surely not a good example to set to our youth. The scramble for position at election time is well known. Our youth point to the quarrels, even open fights sometimes resulting in bloodshed, between factions – all in the name and in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib. Why? Simply because one faction wants to take control. There are only a few gurdwaras that have not been subject of expensive litigation or have not had a visit, particularly at election time, from the police, invited by supporters of one or other faction. The members desecrate the holy place themselves and yet they feel no compunction in condemning the police for entering the gurdwara with their shoes on and their heads uncovered. That is just one of the reasons why our youth stay away from the gurdwaras. I reiterate, unless we model our lives on the principles and precepts we profess, we cannot expect others, especially the precocious youth, to follow these implicitly. We do not tire of reminding others of these principles but are among the first to violate them and we do so with impunity. We cling to our petty egos and merely observe the trappings of religion, the gestures of faith and the conventions of piety; our behaviour and actions do not match our

words. We conceal from ourselves and others the true nature of what we do by euphemism. We must strip away all pretence and be honest with ourselves. That is the only way to regain faith in decency, that is the way to regain the confidence of the youth, to prevent their alienation becoming complete. They are not beyond redemption, but they will be unless we act now; our gurdwaras will be as empty as some of the churches.

I often wonder whether the Sikh leaders in and outside India are alert to the dangers, the perils to the community. If they are, there is little, if anything, to suggest that they are taking steps to prevent the total and inevitable alienation of the Sikh youth; if they are not, they are guilty of a blatant dereliction of duty. Past experience shows that Sikhs only wake up to the dangers to the community when there is a catastrophe. I ask, must we wait for catastrophes to happen, to bring us to our senses, to goad us into action?

Our youth are the raw material of the community. To train the youth of any free society, they must be taught not only one role – the obligations and rights of individuals – but their meaning and value for life. If we want Sikhism to remain a world religion, we should act now. The voice of the Gurus can still be heard asking us to shape our community and families as home for the divine presence. God seems to have been excluded by much of our present-day culture. But He exists where we let Him in. That is the call that beckons us. If we fail to answer the call we will be answerable to our Gurus.

And let me say this – we cannot and should not always blame others for all our ills; we must be prepared to accept our share of the blame; we must put our house in order. The onus is on us. The need of the hour is for enlightened men and women with a clear vision, of discipline, steeped in the Maryada, men and women with a spiritual depth, not uncaring bigots, above all men and women of moral courage who will stand like a rock, who will speak to our deep instincts that there is more to life than self-indulgence, personal power or position that modern culture seems not only to expect and condone but encourage; men and women who understand the global community's problems, anxieties, needs and predilections, who are alive to the challenges to the community and have the ability and courage to articulate its fears and its aspirations and to set their faces like flint against any fissiparous tendencies, to identify and define the goal for

the community and give imaginative, decisive leadership and not dither or quarrel among themselves. Loyalty to tradition does not mean imprisonment within it.

One accepts that some of the problems facing Sikh youth living in countries in the West are unique to these countries. I see no objection on any moral or religious grounds, indeed, I see a positive advantage, in gurdwaras employing *granthis* and lecturers who understand and speak English, who can produce translations of *Gurbani* in modern English and who can converse with our youth in a language they understand. The object is to reach out to the youth of the community. That is one of the major challenges that faces the community and one which it must meet. The consequences of a failure to rise to the challenge will be nothing short of calamitous. We shall ignore these consequences at our peril. The Sikh religion is a world religion. If we want it to remain so we should act now.

The setting up of the International Sikh Confederation is an ideal opportunity for us not only to show our loyalty to our heritage, but also to re-dedicate ourselves to the great ideals and to fulfil our destiny. But do not forget that we will only prove worthy of the Gurus' grace if we ensure that our deeds match our words, if we become "Khalsa" in thought, word and deed. That is the call that beckons us. It is, at the same time, an opportunity for us to guide our youth in the path of the Gurus, to remind them and the world of the basic philosophy of *Sikhi* – charity, worship and hardwork are the ethical conduct of life. Poetry, art, music and philosophy are important; religion, however, is the highest faculty of attaining spiritual wisdom and knowledge of the eternal truth. If we fail now, we will be answerable to our Gurus and to posterity. We will not be forgiven. Another duty we owe our ancestors who died because of their faith is to build a world in which people no longer die because of their faith. We honour the past not by repeating it, but by learning from it, by refusing to add pain to pain, grief to grief. That is why we must answer hatred with love, violence with peace, resentment with generosity of spirit and conflict with reconciliation. In short, either we live together in peace as God's children, children of one Father, or we perish together. The choice is either extinction or human brotherhood. It cannot be left to the vagaries of chance.

IMPROVING THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF SIKHS

SARDARA SINGH JOHL*

Economic well-being of individuals, families, communities or countries is closely and positively related to their educational status or their knowledge base. In order to improve the economic status of any community, may they be Sikhs or any other community, there must be a focused emphasis and thrust on imparting applicable education to its members. No doubt, investment is an essential and a vital factor, rather a pre-requisite that promotes growth and development, it is the properly educated individuals and families who can take advantage of these investments and gainful employment opportunities generated by such investments. If the jobs created by the investments are simple physical labour jobs only, these may not help improve the living standards and quality of life of the beneficiaries. We have the case of Punjab before us. To day, according to one of the PAU surveys, uneducated migratory labour from states like Eastern UP, Bihar, Orisa, Rajasthan etc, counts for seventeen percent of the Punjab population. These migratory labour families are in abject poverty and their presence has negative effects on the demography of Punjab. Apart from poverty, squalor, hygienic breakdowns, health problem, etc. these illiterate, poor and indescrpt populations indulge in crimes of all descriptions. One of the police analyses of Ludhiana in 2004 brought out that more than 65 percent of the crimes in the district were committed by the migratory population. An other 18 percent were committed jointly by the migratory labour and Punjabis together or in connivance with each other. Hardly 17 percent of the crimes were committed by the Punjabis alone. Thus, the availability

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of migratory labour, not only reduces the employment opportunities for the Punjabi workers, their presence affects adversely the living conditions in the state. Unfortunately, the Punjab government has not paid any attention to this serious problem. No doubt these people, being Indians from outside the state have the right to work in the state, because after all it is their country too, yet for anyone seeking work in the state from outside could be subjected to obligatory registration with the local police based on the police or revenue authority verification from their home districts. If Himachal Pradesh could do it, why not Punjab? The registration of migratory labour and their families can go a long way in stemming the onslaught of the crimes being committed by these indelible populations.

Another aspect of the problem that deserves consideration, is that in some of the neighbouring states, Punjabis can not buy land or own houses. Why Punjab is left so open for anyone from anywhere to buy properties in the state, is a matter that should receive a serious review by the authorities. We should believe in the philosophy of “one country-one people”, but this principle should apply everywhere in the country. After all this affects the employment opportunities for the Punjabis and adversely affects their well-being.

The main point of emphasis is that investments that invite simple physical work are not appropriate investments for the state of Punjab. Any additional investment of this type will invite accelerated inflow of migratory labour with deleterious effects on the life and living standards of Punjabi populations. Investments in Punjab, therefore, must be for clean industries that generate middle level and technical jobs for literate and graduate workers and also management related and professional/technical jobs that require professionally qualified executives/managers and technicians. Even if the state takes the extreme step of reserving certain percentage of jobs for the local workers, as Himachal Pradesh has done, simple low-paid labour jobs that require physical input alone, will not be of much help.

Assuming that right type of investment flows into Punjab that generates right types of jobs that would attract the Punjabi population, the quest remains how can the Sikh youth be empowered to take advantage of these job opportunities. Reservations or earmarking of certain jobs for the purpose would be unconstitutional and will not

stand the scrutiny of law. The only way to empower the Sikh youth for availing of these opportunities would be to educate them appropriately and enhance their knowledge base. Thus, the challenge before the Sikh community is to strengthen the educational base of its members, which is the seminal input that would not only improve the economic status of the community, but will also help improve the situation in the areas of drug addiction, alcoholism and several other social evils.

The present situation is quite alarming. Majority of the Sikh population in Punjab lives in villages. Educational facilities in villages are worth nothing. There are very few higher secondary schools in the rural areas that have science subjects. Those that have science or commerce subjects, have very poor teaching infrastructure. Teachers do not stay in these schools and absenteeism is rampant. As a consequence, students do not opt for science or commerce subjects. They are not, therefore, able to compete for professional higher education. Surprisingly, even the Punjab Agricultural University does not have many students from rural areas or farming families. This agricultural university has almost all the students from urban non-farming families. Further, it is the girls from the urban families that excel and capture top academic positions and win medals. Concern is not that students from these non-farming urban families get this education; the concern is that agricultural/rural youth is being left behind and majority of these youth in the villages are from the Sikh families. If this is the situation in the subjects of agricultural stream, one can well imagine the situation in respect of engineering, medical and other professional subjects. The answer to the problem lies in the strengthening of school education in the villages and then improving the educational infrastructure as well introducing science/professional subjects in schools and colleges located in the rural areas. One has to keep in mind that students studying in the rural schools and colleges belong to the poorer families and have no alternative but to studying in these ill-equipped educational institutions in the rural areas. If Sikh organizations from inside and outside the country, especially the SGPC, can focus on rural education in the state, it will help the poor populations, majority of which are the Sikhs. To the extent that the

Non-Sikh youth benefits from these investments in rural areas, it leaves positive impression about the Sikh community and creates harmony in the beneficiary populations of castes and creeds.

There is another quite effective approach that can be adopted to increase access of the Sikh youth to purposeful education. The Gurudwaras, Sikh Organizations and the SGPC - should come together to create an endowment fund of at least worth 5,000 crore rupees to begin with spread over five years. This fund should grow to at least Rs 10,000 crore. From the interest/earnings of this fund, deserving Sikh students should be supported through varied types of concessions, assistance and scholarships for science education at the school level and professional/technical education at higher levels. This amount can fully finance at least four lakh students every year. Target should be that no Sikh boy or girl would go without purposeful education due to the lack of financial support. In fact, the target for the Sikh community should be that no Sikh should be illiterate and every one in the community will have a knowledge base that can provide him or her access to productive employment. Efforts should be focused on creating entrepreneurial competence amongst the Sikh youth who become vehicles to create jobs for others rather than demanding jobs from the market. Education, rather purposeful education, should become inseparable part of the identity of a Sikh. This will ensure for the community not only a rightful economic status, but will also empower it adequately to find a central place in the administrative structure of the country. From here will start a multiplier and accelerator effect that will take the community to unimaginable heights of economic prosperity and respectable place in the Indian economy, society and polity. This is a challenge before the Sikh community and the Sikh Panth has both the ability and enterprise to take up this challenge. The Guru is great; once the community commits itself to taking up this challenge, the Guru's hand will guide and support the community.

Another very disturbing aspect that needs serious consideration, is the menace of drug addiction and alcoholism that is eating into the very vitals of the community, especially in the rural areas. Due to the frustrations caused by unemployment, inadequate agricultural earnings, lack of education and social pressures, the young boys in the rural

areas are getting addicted to intoxicants. This drains the strength of the community and debilitates the youth leading to wastage of precious productive lives. The rural youth needs to be taken out this *Chakkar Vhien*. The answer again lies in the right type of education imparted to the rural youth that could help them to get productively employed.

However, an important aspect needs to be seriously viewed by the leaders of the community. On the one hand, various civil societies, NGOs, organizations and groups are engaged in de-addiction of the addicts of alcohol and other intoxicants and drugs, on the other hand, our leaders organize free distribution of alcohol, poppy husk and other drugs at the time of elections for weeks and months to woo the voters. Efforts at de-addiction pale into insignificance in the face of these nefarious acts of the political class which have ruined a large number of families in the villages and made the youth virtual lifeless entities. The political class does not realize what irreparable harm they are doing to the society for their selfish ends. More shocking is the fact that alcohol and intoxicants are as freely distributed in SGPC elections as is being done during other elections. Cannot the Sikh community put a ban on the distribution of alcohol and other intoxicants at least in the SGPC election? After all, the contestants in SGPC elections are all Sikhs and they are supposed to be Amritdhari Sikhs! If they are Amritdhari Sikhs, in letter and spirit, how can they even think of taking alcohol and other intoxicants, and how can they distribute these religiously prohibited poisons among the voters? Such persons are not Sikhs and are more of *Behroopias*. They should be severely castigated without any mercy and removed from the Sikh community through the inviolable edict of the Akal Takht. If the Sikh community is not prepared to take this much needed action, it should be prepared to keep watching helplessly the Sikh community passing into oblivion.

Guru Maharaj did not put a taboo on tobacco alone. All intoxicants are out of bound for a Sikh. Is it not an irony of fate that in social parties and gatherings where drinks are served, if a Sikh does not drink, immediate response is: how come being a Sardar you do not drink! In fact, the response should be otherwise. A glass with an alcoholic drink in the hands of a Sikh should look as odd and socially unacceptable as a cigarette.

We must not forget that education and health are the two basic

determinants of economic well-being of an individual. Where as the lack of education erodes the knowledge base of an individual and lets him or her not have access to gainful employment, lack of health sucks away his or her energy to perform in any sphere including performance at a job. If the Sikh community is indeed worried and concerned about the economic well-being of its members, it has to take determined steps to rectify the degeneration that has taken place in the field of education and health. This rectification, I am confident, is within the capacity and capability of the community. We must keep in mind that every day lost in this direction is pushing the community deeper and deeper into the cesspool of economic deterioration, social degradation and cultural degeneration. The community leaders of all shades, religious, social and political, must sit up and dedicate themselves to enable the community to face these challenges.

In the end, permit me to put a straight question to the honorable leaders of the community. We have celebrated several sacred centenaries, have built up huge monuments and memorials, imposing structures, gold-plated our Gurudwaras and created all kinds of religious hypes and fervors during these celebrations. Have not we concentrated and focused ourselves on the form only, ignoring the vital content that is essential and pivotal to the religious growth and prestige of the community? Can we solidly commit and declare honestly in one of the sacred centenary celebrations that Sikh Panth will ensure that illiteracy and taking of alcohol shall be as strong religious and social taboos for a Sikh, as are smoking and begging today? Let us deliberate, decide, devote and deliver.

□

*Nanak, the persons, who remember the Name
Look beauteous and obtain honour in True Court.*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 602

ਨਾਨਕ ਨਾਮੁ ਸਮਾਲਹਿ ਸੇ ਜਨ ਸੋਹਨਿ ਦਰਿ ਸਾਚੈ ਪਤਿ ਪਾਈ ॥

TASK BEFORE THE ISC – SOME CRITICAL ISSUES

SARAN SINGH*

The ceremonial celebration of centennials often misses the core message of the Scriptural text. Sri Guru Granth Sahib time and again demands loyalty to God's will. Individually as well as collectively, human behaviour must promote active resolution of problems. A Sikh, always being a learner, needs to focus on the fusion of mind and body. Religious experience, rooted in the power of divinity, could, thus, be measured in terms of outcomes that bring peace and goodwill. This calls for a broader understanding among all faiths in a heterogeneous society such as India's.

One of the paradoxes of the information revolution is, how little people know about the psychology and history of the minority religions. Events of the recent decades suggest that the much-touted Indian tolerance is a myth. The stereotype Sikh depicted by Bollywood movies, of a loud mouth, brawling drunken truck driver, scarcely recognisable as a Sikh, may be a thing of the past. But the print media, in a symbiotic relationship with the 'filmy' world, still promotes an ill conceived bias towards the Sikhs, born of ignorance, if not jealousy. Earlier, in the 1980's, the press skillfully cultivated the Sikh image as that of the fundamentalist, instead of the fiercely patriotic Indian he is. It studiously blacked out the historic role of the essentially non-violent Akali movement and its success of the 1920's, which Mahatma Gandhi had characterized as the "first victory in India's freedom struggle."

A significant, even if minor, example of the majoritarian mindset is the portrayal of Sardar Bhagat Singh sporting (not the turban he

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wore most of his youthful life) but the bowler hat that he used only as a disguise. His portrait in the Parliament's committee rooms, or his bust in Calcutta's Shahid Park, bear mute testimony to the general insensitivity to minority susceptibilities.

Government's tourist literature does not even list the Golden Temple as a popular destination. The recent acquittal of two Sikhs by a Canadian Court in the Kanishka bombing case, has been seized upon by the press to resuscitate the image of the Sikhs as Extremists.

Likewise, Vir Sanghavi misused the columns of *The Hindustan Times* to target the Sikhs, little realizing that the newspaper was first established by a Sikh, Sr. Mangal Singh, over six decades ago.

To write about Punjab's deprivations is unfashionable in post-1984 India, though negative images find ready space in syndicated columns wherein certain "pretenders" claim, every now and then, that the natural beard for men was a sign of orthodoxy. Jobs are denied to the Sikhs, Punjab has no capital or high court exclusively of its own. Non-riparian states are claiming water resources of the much divided Punjab. India's school syllabi are singularly bereft of the basic information on Sikhism or, for that matter, other religious minorities. The argument is dismissed by pointing to the India's secular character. No wonder Bodh Gaya's Buddhist shrines are managed and controlled largely by Brahmin priests!

One can speculate, in retrospect, that had the principal advisers of the late prime minister Indira Gandhi known a little more of the history and mystique of the Sri Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple), the tragedy of the army assault, and the trauma of the Indira Gandhi's assassination, in 1984, might have been averted.

There is no denying the fact that all the civil and military leaders of the time had been caught up in a process beyond their comprehension. They had no idea of the political manipulation of the Sikh affairs that had preceded the brutal suppression in Punjab, much less of the Sikh moral value system.

But when we pause and ponder, we find that events such as Operation Bluestar have receded into the remote corridors of history, a dark spec in history's horizon. While 1984 is burnished into the psyche of the older generation, the Sikh youth in their 20's have neither any recollection nor emotion. The same applies to the 1947 partition of

India which is remembered only in books and films.

India now has a Sikh prime minister, even an army chief of staff they can identify with, though this happened after an incredible fifty seven years. With all these bonus points, one can forget history only at one's own peril, for history has a bizarre way of repeating itself!

Problems, however, continue to fester. To illustrate: Article 15-A of the Constitution speaks of Fundamental *duties* of Citizens — a belated but essential counterpoise for Fundamental *rights*. It enjoins upon the people to “value and preserve the right heritage of our composite culture”. The dictionary defines the term “composite” as “made of constituents that remain recognisable”. In all fairness the people are entitled to know about every strand of our common heritage. That should include the Muslim, Christian and Sikh cultures. But some state administrations, television and other media seem to be working overtime to project and promote only one culture – that of the majority. Tourist literature, history text-books and the media ceaselessly propagate the customs, festivals and mythologies that perpetuate the image of India as a Hindu state. Homogenisation and assimilation are the subtle underlying objectives. An appreciation of India's diversity, or insistence on the distinguishing characteristics of minority cultures, beliefs and traditions is simply not acceptable. It is even frowned upon as “communal” in the pejorative sense.

The world may be shrinking into a global village, but the people's aspirations for recognition are growing apace. Religious, cultural and ethnic identities are, more than ever before, becoming the defining elements in our society. Those who set the intellectual agenda for the mass media, as well as the corps of educationists, who run the system of primary and secondary education, have a duty to the Constitution, and, to their conscience, to hold the scales even, for promoting a better and more comprehensively understanding of the minority religions and cultures.

Now that Punjab and most of the Sikhs have re-emerged from the trauma and the ordeal of the forces unleashed by Operation Bluestar, the leaders of the majority community must also adopt a positive and flexible policy framework and, for a change, try to understand the minority aspirations. For example, is there any logic in

denying the Sikhs the right to campaign for greater autonomy and federalism? Or, for the right to an exclusive capital city of Chandigarh? Or to demand deletion of explanatory clause in the Constitution which lumps together the Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs with Hindus for civil law and taxation procedures?

India's 22 million Sikhs wish to live in peace, with honour, committed to a strong federal India. Our commitment to the Sikh ideology and religious identity only reinforces our faith in democracy; this commitment must, therefore, be safeguarded, rather than sabotaged through misrepresentations and distortions. The correct policies and attitudes will not only validate the Indian secularism but also promote patriotism, enterprise, and optimism.

□

*Fruitful is the moment and fruitful the time,
When love for the True Lord is embraced.
Suffering and sorrow do not touch him,
Who has the support of God's Name
Whom the Guru takes out, seizing by the arm
He crosses the (sea of Life)
Embellished and immaculate is the place
Where the Saint's congregation is held.
He alone, who has found the Perfect Guru,
Obtains the place of protection.
Nanak has founded his house on that (ground)
Where there is no death, birth and old age.*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 44

ਸਫਲ ਮੂਰਤੁ ਸਫਲਾ ਘੜੀ ਜਿਤੁ ਸਚੇ ਨਾਲਿ ਪਿਆਰੁ ॥
ਦੂਖੁ ਸੰਤਾਪੁ ਨ ਲਗਈ ਜਿਸੁ ਹਰਿ ਕਾ ਨਾਮੁ ਅਧਾਰੁ ॥
ਬਾਹੁ ਪਕੜਿ ਗੁਰਿ ਕਾਢਿਆ ਸੋਈ ਉਤਰਿਆ ਪਾਰਿ ॥ ੩ ॥
ਥਾਨੁ ਸੁਹਾਵਾ ਪਵਿਤੁ ਹੈ ਜਿਥੈ ਸੰਤ ਸਭਾ ॥
ਢੋਈ ਤਿਸ ਹੀ ਨੇ ਮਿਲੈ ਜਿਨਿ ਪੂਰਾ ਗੁਰੂ ਲਭਾ ॥
ਨਾਨਕ ਬਧਾ ਘਰੁ ਤਹਾ ਜਿਥੈ ਮਿਰਤੁ ਨ ਜਨਮੁ ਜਰਾ ॥

SIGNIFICANCE OF HISTORY IN SIKHISM

KIRPAL SINGH*

History and religion constitute two separate subjects, which are well defined in their respective fields. The former deals with the past and the latter is connected with faith and its allied rituals, etc. Normally, they are distinct, viz., History of Christianity and Christian Theology are different. Similar is the case with History of Islam and Islamic theology. But the case of Sikhism is quite different. We have ten Gurus in Sikhism. Their life span is from 1469 to 1708 CE. All the Sikh Gurus had the same spirit:

ਜੋਤਿ ਓਹਾ ਜੁਗਤਿ ਸਾਇ ਸਹਿ ਕਾਇਆ ਫੇਰਿ ਪਲਟੀਐ ॥

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 966

But every Guru had to face different challenges. Responses of the first five Gurus are preserved in their holy Granth in the form of verses. The later Gurus responded to their times with their actions, viz., martyrdom of Guru Arjun, *Miri-Piri* of Guru Hargobind, martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur, Guru Gobind Singh's Sahibzadas, etc. These cannot be divorced from Sikhism and these can hardly be explained without the help of history. In this way, Guru's history and history of Sikh martyrs have become part of Sikh theology. In the Sikh prayer, all the martyrs are remembered twice – both in the morning and in the evening prayer.

Guruship had been bestowed on Guru Granth Sahib by the tenth master — Guru Gobind Singh (1675-1708). The text of Guru Granth Sahib can hardly be understood without the help of history of time.

Every Guru had to face different type of challenges, according to changed circumstances. For instance, Guru Nanak had to face Babur's invasion and he has written hymns, which constitute *Babar*

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Vani in the *Adi Granth Sabib*. He had mentioned it at a number of places, the corruption in the administration, malpractices of *Qazis* and other officials. We can hardly understand all those hymns without the knowledge of history. Many examples can be quoted from *Asa Di Var*.

Various similes and metaphors in *Adi Granth* explain the spiritual life. Those similes and metaphors have been given from the daily life of people. We hardly understand the spiritual significance of those lines without understanding the contemporary life referred to therein. For instance, Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism writes:

*Make thy mind ploughman, thy action cultivation vocation
Modesty the water and thy body the field, in the field sow name of God.
Make content the leveling plank
And maintain humility as fence of the field.*¹

To explain the spiritual intricacies, similes and metaphors have been used from the actual life led by people. As is clear from the stanzas given above.

CORRUPT REVENUE ADMINISTRATION

The corruption was rampant in the revenue administration of the Sultans. This has been mentioned almost everywhere, but to what extent that corruption was, that has been stated by Guru Nanak in *Asa di Var*. Guru Nanak says:

*Sin is the king, greed the minister,
Falsehood the officials (shiqdars) to carry out command.
And lust the deputy to take counsel with all three-hold conclave to chalk out plans
The blind subjects out of ignorance pay homage like dead man.*²

Guru Nanak (1469-1539 CE) had very closely watched the revenue administration of his times as he worked in the Modikhana (storehouse) of Daulat Khan Lodhi at Sultanpur (Distt Kapurthala) during the reign of Sikandar Lodhi (1488-1517 CE). In those days, revenue was collected in kind, as there was acute shortage of currency and grain was very cheap. In the Modikhana, landlords, *chaudharis*, *qanungos* (a revenue official) and people in general, used to deposit the grain, which was distributed to employees, soldiers and different types of people. The officials were given land grants instead of salaries,

and petty employees grain instead of wages. In this way, Guru Nanak came in contact with the various types of people and different rungs of society and has described the corruption rampant there.

Guru Ram Das, the fourth Sikh Guru had three sons — Prithichand, Mahadev and Arjun. The youngest son who became Guru Arjun was considered the fittest to succeed. On this issue, the eldest son Prithichand fell out with his father who admonished him not to run after wealth and remember the name of God. He writes in a hymn in the *Adi Guru Granth*:

*My son why with your father make contention?
He who brought you to birth and maturity,
Sin it is with him to contend (I-Pause)
Wealth that you are so proud will not last
In an instant poisonous Maya – pleasures desert and then come regrets
Contemplate you the Lord who is your Master
Nanak, servant of God thus instructs you
Should you listen to it, will your agony be ended.³*

Prithichand paid no heed to his father's advice and continued enmity with his younger brother Guru Arjun. It is presumed that Prithichand persuaded Sulhi Khan, a Mughal official to lead an attack on Guru Arjun, but his plan was foiled as his horse along with its rider fell in the burning brick kiln and both were killed. This was a very serious crisis for Guru Arjun, who referred to this incident at a few places in his hymns in the *Adi Guru Granth*.

At first I was counselled to send a letter, secondly, I was advised to send two men to mediate.⁴

At another place, Guru Arjun writes:

*God preserved me from Sulhi, (Sulhi Khan's attack),
Sulhi by no means succeeded, Sulhi died unclean,
God drew forth His axe and smote off his head and in a moment he became ashes,
He was consumed over by meditating evil, he who created him thrust him into the fire,
Son, friend, wife, nothing remains with him now, his brethren and relations have all abandoned him,
Says Nanak, I am sacrificed to that God who fulfilled the words of His*

*servant.*⁵

In similar strain is the hymn of Guru Arjun on p. 1138 “*His slave, the Lord hugs to his bosom. The slanderer, he throws in the fire.*”

GURU ARJUN AND AKBAR, MUGHAL EMPEROR

Guru Arjun writes:

*The memoranda against me has proved false,
And the slanderers have come to a grievous loss,
He whose support is Govind, the supporter of earth him the Yama touches not,
He who utters falsehood in true court, he, the blind one, strikes his head
and writhes his hands (in remorse),
Them all ailments afflict, they who sin.
For, Lord Himself is the Judge of them,
We are bound by our own actions and our riches forsake us when life
departs,
Nanak sought the refuge of the Lord's True court,
And so his honour was saved by Lord, the Lord.*⁶

In the hymn quoted above, Guru Arjun, the fifth Guru (1581-1606) refers to the complaint made against him to the emperor Akbar. Some *pandits* and *qazis* had enmity towards the Guru on account of his compilation of the *Adi Guru Granth*. They complained to the emperor that the Guru had compiled a book in which Mohammedan, prophets and the Hindu incarnations and gods were spoken of with contempt. It was the year 1598, when the emperor was in Punjab. Upon this, the emperor ordered that the Guru and the *Adi Guru Granth* should be produced before him. The Guru sent Baba Budha and Bhai Gurdas with the copy of *Adi Guru Granth*, which was being compiled in 1598 (compilation completed in 1604 CE).

The fifth hymn which caught the Emperor's eye was Guru Arjun's own composition in Persian language:

*From earth and light God made the world,
They, sky, earth, trees, and water are God's creation,
O man, whatever the eye can behold is perishable,
The world is eater of carrion, neglectful of God and greedy of mammon,
Like an ogre on a beast, it eateth forbidden food,
Restrain thy hearts, or the Omnipotent will take and punish thee of what*

*avail, shall patrons, brothers, courts and possessions and mansions,
The pure God knoweth thy condition,
Slave Nanak utters thy prayer to the holy man to guide thee.*⁷

The Emperor found nothing objectionable. The slanderer of the Guru represented that it was specially selected for the Emperor's hearing. Now the Emperor himself turned the pages and pointing to a particular spot asked Bhai Gurdas to read. The hymn which begins with the following lines was read:

*Thou fastenest a stone to thy neck,
And sees not God who dwelleth in the heart.*⁸

Akbar expressed deep appreciation for the book. In the *Khulastut Twarikh*, Sujan Rai Bhandari of Batala states that while returning from Lahore, Akbar stayed on the bank of the river, Beas and saw Guru Arjun, the successor of Baba Nanak and heard his verses. The Emperor also remitted a portion of the year's revenue of the *Zamindars* whose hardships were brought to his notice by the Guru.

Abul Fazal in the *Akbarnamah* states that on the thirteenth of the month of Azur (Jamal-ul-Sani) of the forty third year of Akbar's reign (24th November, 1598) Akbar with gorgeous military retinue crossed the Beas and saw Guru Arjun. People reversed the successor Guru as spiritual leader and solicited his benedictions.⁹

In the end, it is stressed that all the items of Sikh heritage should be preserved, popularised and exhibited in Punjab, India and abroad. These items are:

1. Sikh Art Paintings, Frescoed painting on Walls.
2. Sikh architecture
3. Sikh music – *kirtan* according to *ragas* in the *Adi Guru Granth*.
4. Sikh coins
5. Sikh artifacts

Recently, there has been exhibition of Sikh art in New York. Such exhibitions should be organised and encouraged in every country.

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TASK BEFORE THE ISC – A LEGAL PERSPECTIVE

GURMIT SINGH*

As the problems facing the Sikhs, a people, are numerous, so the tasks before the International Sikh Confederation are also many. It is not possible to lay down the list of these tasks in this brief paper but an attempt is hereby made to deal with some of the important issues.

The basic problem which stands as a hindrance to solution of the Sikh problems is that Sikhs have no State of their own, but under the law only a State has the *locus standi* to raise an issue at the International Forums. For example, at the International Court of Justice, only states are competent to approach the court under the statute of that court. Similarly, at the United Nations Organisation (UNO), no individual or group of people can claim membership. Article 34 of the Statute of the International Court of Justice reads:-

ARTICLE 34

1. Only states may be parties in cases before the court.
2. The Court subject to and in conformity with its rules, may request the Public international organisations for information relevant to cases before it, and shall receive such information presented by such organisations on their own initiative.

Thus, with the Sikhs facing problems regarding their religious identity in various countries all over the world, the only alternatives open to them are:

1. To struggle for the creation of a State of their own recognised by the International Community of Nations.
2. The second alternative, though less effective, is to get consultative status with the United Nations Organisation as a Non-Governmental Organisation, i.e., N.G.O.

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How can the Sikhs take advantage of the International Court of Justice? Under the law of international communities, the International Court of Justice is competent to interpret treaties although it has no power to enforce them. But it is capable of creating international public opinion. The Treaty of Bhyrowal, dated 22nd December, 1846, in Article 11, clearly provided that the kingdom of Maharaja Duleep Singh, the last Sikh Ruler, will be restored to him on his attaining the age of 16 years or on 4th September, 1854. It was also held by the Privy Council in 1940 in the famous Shaheed Ganj Masjid case that the British Government in India is under a legal as well as moral obligation to maintain the Status Quo as it existed on 5th April, 1849, when the Sikh Kingdom was annexed by the British. Whether the Sikhs are entitled to restoration of their Kingdom in terms of Treaty of Bhyrowal is a question that can be referred to the International Court of Justice. In the light of that decision, it can be decided by that court, whether the Transfer of Power in India by the British, with special reference to Punjab, was legal or not.

It also needs to be determined by the International Court of Justice, whether the provisions of the Indian Independence Act, still hold good after its repeal by the Indian Parliament when it still continues to be a part of British Statutes, as the Act was passed by the British Parliament.

It also needs to be determined by the International Court of Justice, whether the question of status of Sikhs in Independent India is still open to arbitration by the British Government as per provisions of the Indian Independence Act, particularly when the Sikh representatives refused to sign the Constitution of India as framed by the Constituent Assembly in view of provision that if one of the major communities does not agree with the Constitution framed, then the matter will be referred to the Privy Council for decision. While deciding this issue, the International Court should also decide as to what is the effect of Repeal of Privy Council Act by the Indian Parliament. As all these matters affect more than one country, therefore, the International Court of Justice alone is competent to determine these matters. The next question that arises in this context is who has the jurisdiction to invoke the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice. The affected parties as per Article 34 of the Statute of International Court of Justice are:

1. The Government of India
2. The Government of Pakistan

3. The British Government

As a proper party, the Government of Indian Punjab and Pakistan Punjab can also be impleaded as the matter involved may affect their territorial jurisdiction although these two Punjab Governments will be represented through the Government of India and the Government of Pakistan, respectively, as they are integral part of those countries and any decision of the International Court will have the same effect on them as other decisions of that Court. So either of the three states, i.e., India, Pakistan and British has the *locus standi* to approach the Court. But the question arises why should anyone of these governments move the court. As all know, the nations are governed by their self-interest and what is gainful for a nation is moral and what is not gainful is immoral. Indian Government will certainly not like to move in this matter as reopening of the question may be harmful particularly with regard to Kashmir. The Kashmir question is integrated with Punjab, because at the time of annexation of Punjab, Kashmir was part of the Sikh Kingdom ruled by Duleep Singh. Therefore, we are left with two States who can approach an international forum. The Pakistan government can do it because it will help their stand on Kashmir. The Great Britain can take advantage because this will enable them to play a major role in this part of the world, which is of great strategic importance. Under the provisions of the Indian Independence Act, the British are to act as arbitrators in resolving any dispute between the parties. However, in the case of interpretation of Lahore Treaty, they will be arrayed as opposite party.

The International Sikh Confederation should start organizing functions on 5th April because it was on that day that Punjab was annexed and merged with British India. On 4th September also functions should be organized to demand the restoration of the Sikh Homeland as laid down in Treaty of Bhyrowal. This will arouse political consciousness amongst the Sikhs and make them conscious of the fact that they ruled Punjab once upon a time.

Another problem over which the Sikhs are feeling agitated these days is the ban by French Government on wearing of turban by the Sikh children in schools of that country. The Sikhs consider it to be an act of religious intolerance. The French look at this problem from their own perspective. They do not consider themselves to be a pluralistic society and hold the view that every individual belonging

to cultural, religious or ethnic minority cannot be encouraged to form distinct community within the French nation. The French are a proud people as is evident from the fact that even an English knowing French person will talk only in French pretending that he does not know English language. When we assert that Sikh soldiers during world war had liberated France from Germans, it hurts their national pride because the Sikh soldiers of that time were part of British army and every French National is anti British although they are ostensibly allies.

The Sikhs should avail the services of non-Governmental Organizations such as Amnesty International, the International Federation of Human Rights. In France itself, there are Human Rights Organizations who are always ready to help the victims of human rights violations, such as the Federation France Liberte's, ATD Quart Monde, the Ligue International Centre Le racisme et L'antisemitisme (LICRA), Movement Contre Le racisme et pour L'amitie entre les Peuples (MRAP) and many others. These organizations vigilantly monitor the government activities. United Nations Human Rights Commission takes serious note of the reports of the Commission National Consultative chaired by a member of the Conseil d'Etat which brings together the non-governmental rights organizations.

Approach to any of these organizations on the turban issue will inspire respect among the French people, who respect democratic and human rights.

The problem needs humanitarian and emotional approach. France is signatory to the International convention on the Rights of the child and no one can be emotionally cold to the children. If even an insignificant proportion of French Children are deprived of their right to education as a consequence of the French laws, the ultimate consequences for the French nation will be disastrous because these children are the future builders of the French Nation. This is, perhaps, what Ms Asma Jahangir, United Nations, Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or belief, means when she warns:

“My concern is more serious with regard to indirect consequences of the law in the longer term.”

One's dress is innocent expression of one's religious belief and does not interfere with similar rights of others. The denial of this right to teenagers is violation of religious rights guaranteed under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which was adopted in Paris.

Article 18 of this declaration guarantees the rights to publically manifest one's religion, and dress is essentially a manifestation of this right. This Article reads as under:

ARTICLE 18

“Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief, in teaching, practice, worship or observance.”

The use of the words “manifest his religion” includes dress as held by the Supreme Court of India, and use of the words in public or private makes the French law violative of the Universal Declaration of Human rights. It is a blot on the French Nation known all over the world for contributing to the realm of thought, the idea of Equality, after the glorious French Revolution.

Meeting at the Palais de Chaillot in Paris, the third session of the General Assembly of the United Nations had adopted the Universal Declaration of the Human Rights on 10th December 1948 and since then this date has been celebrated every year as Human Rights Day. It will be a sad day in the history of Nations, if on this auspicious day, the Sikhs demonstrate, under the banner of International Sikh Confederation or any other Organization, before the offices of the UNO or French Embassies or cultural centres. The French nation remembers:-

Unity is not uniformity. It is a pattern woven with delicate care out of several strains and its harmony can be disturbed by the least human folly, be it the arrogance of a stupid majority or an insolent minority. The genius of the French people lies in tolerance in all spheres of life, for which French people enjoy a good reputation all over the world. The Sikhs have always had good relations with the French people and they still cherish the visit of Victor Vincelas Jacquemont, the French Botanist who visited Punjab during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the Sikh ruler near about 1830. The Sikhs cannot forget that their last Sikh ruler Maharaja Duleep Singh on 15th July, 1886, had proclaimed his sovereignty and declared himself the Maharaja of the Sikhs and a “lawful sovereign of the Sikh Nation,” in Paris. Let those good relations be revived and presented as a part of the heritage of the two nations.

FUTURE OF SIKH FAITH AND SIKHS – CHALLENGES BEFORE A WORLD ORGANISATION –

HARBANS LAL*

ABSTRACT

At the time of its entry into the twenty-first century, the Guru Panth is going through a major transition towards its renaissance. Areas impacting Sikh faith are listed with a view to initiate further discussions. The areas which will impact us include, new technology, proliferating diversity, prosperity, globalization, basic concepts in Sri Guru Granth Sahib, significance of symbols and mystiques, and attention of new generations to indulgence in the community's future. In the end, a suggestion has been made to set up a Center for major studies of the Sikhs and the Sikh faith in the global environment in which they must make their impact on civil society.

PROBLEMS

We are gathered here at the time of major transitions through which the world civil society is passing. Although no community or ideology will be an exception to the onslaughts of this new transition, the burden of transition will be more critical for a younger entity like Sikhs. We are still struggling for a proper opportunity to solidify our place in today's civilization. As a result, there is a real potential for our experiencing a catastrophe or a renaissance in the next ten to twenty years. Why, because the world is moving into a new territory and the transitional times are always chaotic. The transition is that we are at the doors of a new world with our deep seated traditions, which are

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facing challenges unlike any previous ones in our history. Let us review those to move forward.

LET THEM NOT FRIGHTEN US

In a next couple of decades, our old self will meet our new self. Where the mountains meet, the territory is always rocky and any expedition through such a terrain may cause injuries. Likewise, when old form of spiritual practice meets the new, the psychic and emotional boundaries will be found to be uneven and rugged. Navigating those ridges and valleys will be difficult, of course, but mastering the valleys and the peaks will be a must for reaching every next peak. If it is done wisely, there will be an exhilaration of a level so high that those living in less exciting times would have never experienced.

The next decades will be such a time. In such times, when years of dust are settled, nations are renewed. We must pledge to prepare for this renewal. With my implicit faith in my Guru, I cannot envision that Guru Gobind Singh would permit the catastrophe to strike at his own creation. On the contrary, we are bound to witness the renaissance of the Panth in the 21st century. In the spirit of a major change that is imminent, we can already sense signs of a movement towards this renaissance in many quarters, along with faltering of the old diehard beliefs and practices.

From the upheavals that we experienced in the past few years, it appears that next few years would be taking us back to the realization of the real purpose for which the Panth was organized. And, deeper the realization, the faster will it lead to our renaissance in the new world, all in accordance with the Guru's plan for the *charhdi kala* of the Panth. It is not a coincident that we are entering the twenty-first century with the memorial celebrations of the most significant Tercentennial: Celebration of the Tercentenary of the Installation of the Sri Guru Granth Sahib as the Eternal Guru of the Sikhs in 1708. The Celebration serves as a strong reminder that we are members of a religious community that is created to be relevant for the whole world and will have a message to impact the civil societies every where.

I BELIEVE

Let me first give you my belief about our future before making some suggestions:

Sikhs will remain a minority in every country but with a potential to be a creative minority.

Gurmat or *Sikhee* is predestined to be touching unimaginable heights at the end of this century.

Gurmat is/will be recognized as a world religion that is meant for every one (unlike Islam or Christianity).

Sikhee will be a multi-cultural and multinational belief.

Gurmat literature will be in English and other international languages.

Sikh centres of activities will gravitate away from Punjab and towards the West.

There will be many challenges towards reaching my vision. Blessed will be those who become the tools of Guru's policy in achieving those predictions.

CHALLENGES AND CAPABILITIES

The first challenge is to realize that the new age is the age of technology and economic prosperity. Therefore, it will be an age of freedom and choice of values, choice of religion and choice in styles of daily living. However, our religious leadership is neither trained nor accustomed to foresee such a freedom. Therefore, the expression of this freedom will lead to a strong resistance. To fight the drag created by their resistance the new age will require heaps of resistances or resilience. If we continue to follow the Sri Guru Granth Sahib (SGGS) that we were fortunate to inherit, we need not go into depression; the Guru's Way would infuse in the Panth the plenty of spiritual energy that no political or psychosocial maneuvering could limit.

The following stanzas from the SGGS support the above views:

ਨਾਨਕ ਗਿਆਨੀ ਜਗੁ ਜੀਤਾ ਜਗਿ ਜੀਤਾ ਸਭੁ ਕੋਇ ॥

Says Nanak, the spiritually wise ones will conquer the world and every one included in it.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 548

ਜਗੁ ਜਿਤਉ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਮਾਣਿ ਮਨਿ ਏਕੁ ਧਿਆਯਉ ॥

You may conquer the world by following the Guru's teachings as you meditate single-mindedly on the One.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 1397

Contrary to the current practices, the Sikh spirit and the Sikh

practices will neither be up for a vote from any section, nor may they be subservient to verdicts from any clergy. The time of our clergy would be gone from our national and personal life as is clear from the writings in the SGGS:

ਮਾਂਦਲੁ ਬੇਦਿ ਸਿ ਬਾਜਣੈ ਘਣੈ ਧੜੀਐ ਜੋਇ ॥
ਨਾਨਕ ਨਾਮੁ ਸਮਾਲਿ ਤੂ ਬੀਜਉ ਅਵਰੁ ਨ ਕੋਇ ॥

Most of the people are paying heed only to the bugle of 'karam kaand' sounded by recitations from many religious scriptures. Says Nanak, you should accept the path of Naam and do not sow the seeds of profiling people and the creation.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 1091

ਕਾਬੀਰ ਜਿਹ ਮਾਰਗਿ ਪੰਡਿਤ ਗਏ ਪਾਛੈ ਪਰੀ ਬਹੀਰ ॥
ਇਕ ਅਵਘਟ ਘਾਟੀ ਰਾਮ ਕੀ ਤਿਹ ਚੜਿ ਰਹਿਓ ਕਬੀਰ ॥

Crowds of people are following the path that is laid down by the clergy. However, the path to the Divine that was taught to Kabir is very distinct.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 1373.

Our history teaches us that no action but only our principles can contain chaos. Our lives will not be brought to order through anything but through the teachings of the Guru left for us in the SGGS.

ਜਗੁ ਜੀਤੇ ਹੋ ਹੋ ਗੁਰ ਕਿਰਪਾਇ ॥

You shall be victorious in this world by Guru's Grace.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 1304

We must let the public know that, with this celebration of the Tercentennial, we will bring an entirely new worldview onto the horizon. For ourselves, we will no longer look at the outer world as the source of our power or our salvation. The belief that it ever was our salvation was a delusion fostered by the seductive politicians and self-appointed cardinals of our institutions. The Sikh traditions reveal that true power is enshrined within, is ever-renewable through the Guru's *Sabad*, and is activated through our dedication to serve the humanity rather than preparing a list of self centered goals.

The second challenge for us is our learning to adapt. This does not mean that we would be asked to sacrifice our basic beliefs. It only means to translate our beliefs in a new language. Just as when you move from Punjab to USA, you use an adapter to convert your use of electrical energy, so we must now adapt to convert our use of the Guru Granth's teachings. We are moving into a new territory where

we will be unable to plug into New World unless we learn how to convert our thinking into modes of the new century. We need adapters that are facilitators of the *Sikhee* consciousness and more importantly we need the willingness to adapt.

During the phase of our adaptation, our actions will annoy and offend our clergy and our politicians. It may also annoy our elders in some cases. They would prefer that we enter the new century with no fundamental change in the practice of our faith and traditions. They fail to realize that our history had never been static. We encountered twentieth century that was quite different from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and we exhibited determination to adapt. Did we not succeed in discarding the baggage of Brahminic rituals in our every day life? For example, did we not succeed in electrification of the Golden Temple in spite of edicts from our clergy to oppose it? The heads of all Takhts had petitioned that the electrification would impinge on the sanctity of our central shrine. Did we not succeed in marrying our youngsters in *Anand Karaj* ceremony in spite of many roadblocks from our own clergy and our social leaders of nineteenth century? Did we not succeed in halting the ethnic cleansing of the *shudi* movement of the *Arya Samaj*, in spite of many religious and political forces refusing to budge from their position of discriminating against the people of lower caste?

PREPAREDNESS

My presentation on the coming of an age in our community is not a prophecy for the new century but rather a description of what is happening in the community at a number of levels. In spite of our assets, we may be ill-prepared to jump on to the opportunities that lie ahead in the twenty first century. There are many religiously and politically influential individuals in our community leadership who do not seem to read deeply into the Guru's message of Gur Gaddi in 1708; the message of kinship of humankind, globalization of faith and practices, discarding of hollow rituals and traditions, and making spirituality as the soul of our worldly activities. Those same individuals spent the last several years of our history striving to divert our eyes from seeing the changing world around us. They wrote history on hearsay. They issued verdicts that were self-serving in motivation and

were reactionary in scope. They interpreted scripture so narrowly that their interpretations were obsolete in face of any reality. They offered political goals that were neither pragmatic nor bore any relation to reality. They offered vision that should only fall on the deaf ears.

There are some youth and intellectuals though small in number but attracted to new attitudes based on the awareness of Sikhism's universal principles and their logical applications in our life. They clearly show potentials of making a mark in the new century. They have already shown that they would not pay heed to obsolete slogans and scary tactics. They also believe that nation will march on into the new century with renewed vigor under the protective hand of the Guru Granth to guide the nation. Under their insistence, all structures and systems that remain primarily wedded to porous substance of the past have already begun to crumble and will continue to leak and collapse around us. These institutions and structures are dinosaurs of the past. They will be replaced by structures just as real but those that focus on the Guru's vision of the future and the Will of *Akal Purakh*. As was done three hundred years ago, today old rituals and hypocrisy in the religion will be forced to surrender to an era of the universal spiritual consciousness practised in every aspect of life. We will realize that only what was built on sacred principles of the Guru's vision is built on a solid rock and will stay. All else, built on sand, will be blown away.

WHAT WE TOLD THE NGOs AT THE UNITED NATIONS

With the realization of the perils of godless politics, we formulated principles of goals for the civil society. I present them here for your consideration and support. They are based on our Guru's teachings. Our Guru urged us to consider spiritual basis for our economics and our politics. This new basis of political life insures motivation for justice, selflessness, teamwork, collaborative problem-solving, and promotion of people's participation in the governance processes. These objectives will be effectively accomplished only when there is a moral force of something eternal that drives the motivation of the political leaders and their electorates. Therefore, eleven Sikh organizations signed and presented them for consideration of the NGOs.

The fifty-seventh annual Conference of non-governmental

organizations (NGOs) and the United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI) held a three day conference at the UN Headquarters in New York. More than 1,800 representatives from 540 organizations based in 93 countries had come together for three days to assess the progress and consider the way forward to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

At this year's meeting, the Sikh representatives and their friends urged that a significant change in attitude would be necessary to unite the world communities to promote peace and achieve the development goals.

On September 9, 2004, the Sikh delegates, with their friends, gathered for a brief meditation in the meditation room. A silent prayer for the goodwill of the whole humanity followed it. Moving out of this room, an informal meeting was held where brief history of the compilation of the *Aadi Granth* was reviewed to stress its interfaith character, its universal message and its reverence for human rights, justice, peace and freedom of religious practice. It was felt: 1) that the initiatives taken by the compiler of the *Aadi Granth* were clearly to establish world peace through understanding, gratitude, and reverence for nature; 2) that the ancient wisdom of the *Aadi Granth* would be of value to the modern world when they are considering its future.

On the final day of the conference, September 10, the Sikh group collected again to review the comments and support received from the world faith leaders who could not attend the New York Headquarters. Messages of support for the effort of the Sikh delegation were received from Marcus Braybrooke (President, World Congress of Faiths), Kiranjot Kaur (Shromani Gurdwara Parbhandhak Committee, Amritsar), Yogi Harbhajan Singh (Sri Singh Sahib, Sikh Dharma International), Dr. Inderjit Kaur (Bhai Sahiba, Sikh Dharma International, 3HO), Dr. Jasbir Singh Ahluwalia (Guru Gobind Singh Foundation, Chandigarh), Dr. Rajwant Singh (Sikh Council on Religion and Education (SCORE) and Guru Gobind Singh Foundation, Washington DC.), Alfredo Sfeir-Younis (World Bank), Rajinderjit Kaur (Sikh Women Association and Temple of Understanding), Col. Perminder Singh Randhawa (Sikhya Seekers International, Chandigarh) and Pritpal Singh Bindra (Sikh Social and Educational Association, Canada).

TEN POINTS DECLARATION OF THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

1. To Recognize the Presence of Divine Light in every living being.
2. To recognize that the earth is created according to God's cosmic blueprint and it is therefore intrinsically good. Nature is our mother, our home, our security, our peace, our past and our future. It is our obligation to treat natural things and habitats as our sacred temples and shrines, to be revered and preserved in all their intricate and fragile beauty.
3. God is the Creator and its creative manifestation extends to all humans. Therefore, all humans are intrinsically creative in partnership with God.
4. It is a human destiny to emulate the divine attributes; such as Identity with Truth, Fearlessness, Without Animosity, Eternal Personality, beyond the genetic and mimetic imprisonments, and Free Spirit that lives in Gratitude.
5. To experience Divinity in work and service, in art and science, in philosophy and religion, and in environment and creation.
6. To follow the principles of righteous living by believing in: Human Equality, Human Dignity, Justice, and Human Behaviors that cleanse the Body and the Mind.
7. To build the institutions of altruism and sharing in social infrastructures. Examples are: *Langar* or free community kitchen attached to every congregation, OR Institutions like Pingalwara for every unfortunate citizen.
8. To be Advocate for those who are most vulnerable in our society.
9. To exert Spiritual and moral responsibility to Guide politics and political institutions, and to provide guidelines for leadership of religious institutions.
10. To build a world order without the culture of "mera tera" (meaning "mine and yours") psychology. It is a transgression of the divine principle of unity in God's creation to profile and divide people between "us" and "them".

PLAN FOR RESEARCH: CENTRE FOR SIKH GLOBAL IMPACT STUDIES

Before we decide on what our lines of action to reach our goals may be, we must research our current assets and liabilities, and then

propose to chalk out a path for future action. This center will assist us to identify the new programs and projects to be undertaken by this international organization meeting here. I therefore propose establishment of a high level research center. It is as follows. A center may be established on:

Opportunity Structures in Global Sikh Relations: Study of Contemporary Multi-level Public Participation of Sikhs in Global Environment and its impact on their Transnational Growth.

A Center be established to study the global Sikh populations. There, World's renowned experts may be invited to investigate and debate the following areas:

- Demographic Characteristics of Sikh Communities across continents; their professions, beliefs, practices and hopes.
- Main characteristics and organizational structures of contemporary ethno-national participation of contemporary Sikhs.
- Extent to which Sikhs' relationships and political agency exist with their homeland and host-society governments.
- The communal strategies and tactics (and circumstances) that are used by Sikhs and which are most effective at influencing global relationships with civil societies, particularly the religious, social and political environments of their domicile countries?
- Opportunity structures that exist for Sikhs in the post-modern and trans-state social, economic and political systems, and which are the most essential to foster and/or exploit progression of spatial, historical, temporal factors?
- The ways in which Sikh activities and maintenance of ethno-national identity may influence social and political environments, security issues, and economic development both domestically and in foreign policy matters?

A high level seminar be organized to formulate guidelines for such a Center. The Center may be located near an outstanding academic research enterprise to be able to use its resources. The administrative and research structure may take advantage of experiences at the Indian Institute of Punjab Studies in Simla. It may impart training and research experience to visiting scholars and publish position papers. The budget

may be derived from donations and grants.

CONCLUSION

With the beginning of a new century, we must clarify who we want to be in this century and then evolve into something much more than our present position. According to the Guru's definition of a Sikh, there is a divinity within us waiting for its moment to be born that will bring us out of the shadows of our entrenched illusions. Renaissance will begin with the activation of forces of internal rebirth, spreading like lightning through each of us and out into the world. Under this principle, we should now learn as much about waging spirituality and unity, as we have known for three centuries about waging wars and divisiveness, as much about power of love to heal, as we have known about the power of anger to destroy.

ਸਚਿਆਰਾ ਦੇਇ ਵਡਿਆਈ ਹਰਿ ਧਰਮ ਨਿਆਉ ਕੀਓਇ ॥
 ਸਭ ਹਰਿ ਕੀ ਕਰਹੁ ਉਸਤਤਿ ਜਿਨਿ ਗਰੀਬ ਅਨਾਥ ਰਾਖਿ ਲੀਓਇ ॥
 ਜੈਕਾਰੁ ਕੀਓ ਧਰਮੀਆ ਕਾ ਪਾਪੀ ਕਉ ਡੰਡੁ ਦੀਓਇ ॥

The Creator bestows glorious recognition upon those who are truthful and promote righteous justice. Every one should praise the ONE who arranges to protect the poor and the lost. He honors the righteous and punishes the culprit.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 89

I will close with a verse from Bhai Gurdas on the true nature of our Panth and its future:

ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਸਚਾ ਪੰਥੁ ਹੈ ਸਚੁ ਦੋਹੀ ਸਚੁ ਰਾਜੁ ਕਰੰਦਾ ॥

The nation of the Guru-oriented people is the nation of the truth. Their slogan is Truth and their kingdom is based on the laws of Divine Truth.

– Bhai Gurdas, Vaar 26, Pauri 1, [5]

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A BLUEPRINT FOR EDUCATIONAL RESURGENCE IN MODERN-DAY PUNJAB

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Education, quality education, is the most effective tool to empower the present younger generation of Punjab. As a result of the collapse of the Govt-run Education System, especially the school education segment, several private players have jumped into the field. But these unaided, uncontrolled educational institutes started by some of the unscrupulous players have started these ventures not for serving the society in the educational field, but for earning huge profits. These institutions, from the schools to the university level, have mushroomed all over the State as a result of the businessman-politician nexus which encourages these institutes to charge exorbitant fees and appoint sub-standard faculty and exploit this faculty and make do with a sub-standard infrastructure. The schools run by certain religious and social organisations are mainly run by the Government grant-in-aid to the extent of 95% which hinders these organisations to pursue any independent quality-oriented educational programmes, both in terms of admissions and faculty appointments. Thus, there are three main players in education in Punjab:

- 1) The public sector, govt schools colleges, and state-funded universities;
- 2) Institutes run by religious, social organisations and subsidised by the government; and
- 3) The purely private, unaided institutions.

SCHOOL SEGMENT

Out of these three segments of education, it is the school

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segment, more especially the rural school segment, which cries for urgent attention of the socially conscious, intellectually enlightened citizens and socio-religious and non-Governmental organisations, like the newly constituted International Sikh Confederation. Rejuvenation of this, once vibrant affordable school system, should, in my opinion, be one of the primary tasks to be taken up by the Confederation. Before suggesting any remedial measures and the ways in which an organisation like ISC can intervene to revitalise this most vital organ of society, it would seem necessary to enlighten the readers with some of the most shocking and horrifying distortions which have crept into the school delivery system in the state of Punjab in order to bring forth the gravity of situation and alarming state of affairs in this most fundamental sector of our society.

THE ROT

A brief perusal of the latest survey report recently submitted by Punjab Human Rights Organisation¹, and the thoroughly researched paper on Secondary Education in Punjab, prepared by Dr Sucha Singh Gill², an eminent economist and his two colleagues, will reveal that in Punjab the entire delivery system of education at the school level, especially in the public sector, has almost totally collapsed because of the state government's long-term policy to withdraw in phases its public financing of school education and the gross mismanagement of the existing school infrastructure. These two exhaustive studies reveal the yawning gap between the existing Punjab state statistics in the vital sectors of teacher-student ratio, percentage of public/state funding of state education, quality of teachers and state/governmental responsibility of guaranteeing the fundamental right of basic education to state's citizens and the standards set up by the Prof Yashpal Committee submitted to the Ministry of Human Resource Management, Govt of India after being duly approved by the highest body CABE (Central Advisory Board of Education) The Yashpal Committee³ report envisages the teacher-student ratio of 1.30; public funding of education to the tune of 6% of GDP, appointment of trained qualified teachers selected on merit by a state body with impeccable credentials, adequate infrastructure in the form of classrooms of specified dimensions, separate toilets for boys and girls,

uniform academic syllabus based on NCERT curriculum and periodwise division and a credible system of examination by the State Education Boards. To quote the most operative part from this report included in it from National Secondary Education Commission (1952), it states the essential goal and aim of education. It states:

“The Constitution of India guarantees equality of status and opportunity to all citizens. Continued exclusion of vast numbers of children from education and the disparities caused through private and public school systems challenge the efforts towards equality. Education should function as an instrument of social transformation and egalitarian social order.”⁴ (P. 3)

Against the backdrop of these briefly summed up recommendations of Prof Yashpal Committee, let us have a look at the statistics regarding the school education system in the state of Punjab:

DR GILL'S SURVEY

Data presented by Dr Gill's report on the number of schools in the primary segment, student enrollment and teachers upto year 2001 shows great expansion in quantitative terms but its failure to show 100% enrollment in this segment of government schools as compared to the most literate and educationally advanced states of Kerala and Tamilnadu despite the enactment of compulsory Primary Education Act of 1960 in Punjab. Another distortion that has crept into this segment as reported by PHRO report is that 70% of the students being enrolled into this segment belong to the scheduled caste and scheduled tribes families, who are neither motivated towards education by their family circumstances, nor by the scanty staff in these schools. The teacher enrollment in this segment has been continuously declining during the last one decade as a result of which 30,000 posts are lying vacant, out of which majority of the posts belong to this segment. Belatedly, now on the eve of elections to the State Assembly, the Government is making daily declarations to recruit 12,000 teachers in this year. But seeing the past record of these govts., it seems to be more of an election gimmick rather than an earnest policy of the government. However, the most horrifying scenario in this segment is the high dropout rate among school children. It was 38% to 39% in

2001-2002 as per Dr Gill's report both among boys and girls. This "high drop out rate and repetition rates (in the same class) puts a question mark on state's strategic goal to enable all children upto the age of 14 years to complete elementary education in government schools which has resulted in the mushroom growth in the number of unrecognised privately financed primary schools in every nook and corner of villages and towns of Punjab. Despite their inadequate basic educational infrastructure and sub-standard, poorly paid and least motivated faculty, these so-called English medium schools are attracting more and more students partly due to the paying capacity of middle class families and partly due to their misguided, baseless perception that these schools are better than the government schools. The govt's indifferent attitude towards the mushroom growth of these schools has resulted in the ruining of the government school system, the exploitation of both parents due to very high fees and of teachers due to shamelessly low salaries without improving the quality of education on the whole. The only beneficiaries are managements of these teaching shops. According to Punjab Government's own admission published in the *The Tribune*, March 30, 2006, 10,000 private schools with one *lakh* students enrolled in these schools and 500 of these schools being recognised schools are running from private residential buildings. The State government has decided to ban these private schools from residential areas from the next academic session. The herd mentality of the gullible people and indifference and absence of any regulatory governmental mechanism are primarily responsible for this wrecking of the government school system and emergence of a remedy worse-than-disease in the form of these privately managed schools.

PHRO SURVEY

The other factors responsible for the decline in both quality and quantity of the governmental school system recorded by Dr Gill's report are shortage of infrastructural facilities (in terms of building, classrooms, playgrounds, toilets, furniture, blackboards), heavily prescribed syllabus, outdated teaching practices, decreased motivation among teachers, shortage of teachers, poor governance and supervisory mechanism, absenteeism among teachers, and lower income of parents

sending their children to Punjab state-schools. The latest figures related to the factors as released by PHRO report have brought out these infirmities in the education system in concrete terms with figures which are extremely disturbing and must stir the conscience of the powers that be as well as those who are socially conscious and intellectually sensitive towards the future of Punjab youth and the future generations of our community. To give a few factual statistics from the PHRO report: The standard of education and classroom teaching in 90% of these schools is extremely poor where 70% students come from the disadvantaged sections of society. Almost none of either school teacher's own wards or any school administrative functionary's ward is enrolled in these schools.

ENROLLMENT

A total of 36.52 *lakh* students are enrolled in these govt. schools and 1.13 *laks* teachers are on their payrolls, with 30,000 posts of teachers still lying vacant. The dropout rate in these schools varies from 30 to 40 percent by the time these students cross the middle class. The other disturbing factor about govt schools is that there are 300 schools where the total strength of students is less than 50. These schools are mainly located in the districts of Amritsar, Bathinda, Mansa and Muktsar.

Although 30,000 posts of teachers are lying vacant out of which govt professes to fill 12,000 posts in this year, but the teachers already in service and on the payrolls of schools are also least motivated to teach in their schools. On any given working day, 25% of the teachers are absent from the school duties and 50% out of those present do not prefer to teach on one pretext or the other. Out of the standard 180 teaching days in an academic session, teachers are put on non-academic duties such as preparing voters' lists, election duties, census data preparations, pulse polio programmes, taking students to political rallies and other odd jobs for 73 days on an average. In some remote and border areas, some ingenious teachers with a political clout have engaged contractual teachers on a salary of Rupees 1000 to 2000 and sublet their teaching jobs on leasehold basis. As per the latest figures published in *The Indian Express*, dated June 20, 2006, taken from the Education Department, Punjab, there are 84, 57, 54, 38, 36, 31, 23,

19 schools in the district of Ludhiana, Patiala, Muktsar, Ropar, Bhatinda, Moga, Faridkot and Fatehgarh Sahib, respectively, where there no Principals to head these schools.

A sizeable number of serving teachers have been recruited on the basis of false degrees from the UGC blacklisted universities. Despite the detection of their fake degrees by the state vigilance department and their indictment by the Honourable Punjab and Haryana High Court, the Punjab School Education Board is still shielding these tainted teachers and they are continuing in service. The dubious way in which these teachers have been appointed during the last few years is an open secret. Thus, from the point of appointment to the transfer of teachers, the whole process is vitiated. This has resulted in scarcity of teachers in rural schools and surplus teachers in urban schools than the sanctioned posts with the active connivance of political and administrative vested interests. Now with the passing of administrative control of primary and middle schools to the faction-ridden, semi-literate *panchayats*, the whole govt school system is likely to crumble and collapse totally.

SCHOOL RESULTS

The data on school results submitted by PHRO report in 2006 mentioned that the results of 79 senior secondary schools for 10th and 10+2 classes was 0%, of 219 similar schools was less than 10%, of 40 schools 10% for the last 10 years. These results have emerged despite the mass scale copying in these examinations in majority of centres in Punjab schools. A school system whose examination system and whose state school board has lost credibility in the eyes of the public and whose students are denied admission in colleges in some of the elite colleges of union territory and other states on one pretext or the other is doing an incalculable harm to the state of Punjab and its younger generation. Alarmed by this extremely high dropout rates, the state government has now decided to make entries of these dropout figures in the teachers annual confidential report (ACRS) and ordered the teachers to go from door to door to make admission to their schools.

EXPENDITURE

The public expenditure on each student in govt schools is

projected as Rs 600/- per month, but major budgetary allocation during the years 2001 to 2005 has been shown under the headings of sports, culture, libraries and laboratories, whereas very scanty facilities in these spheres are available.

PRIVATE AIDED SCHOOLS

In the govt-aided private schools, 1000 posts of teachers and 102 posts of principals are lying vacant. The Pension scheme started in these schools has been withdrawn with effect from 31-5-05. PHRO report has found that in some cases, relatives of management trustees are drawing salaries against some of these sanctioned posts.

PRIVATE UNAIDED SCHOOLS

Due to the almost collapse of school education in the govt sector, the totally self-financed private schools and their managements are having a field day. Exorbitant fees in the name of admission fees, school uniforms, building funds, very high tuition fees are being charged without appointing the corresponding qualified faculty and paying them adequate salaries in the absence of any governmental regulatory system in place. Running a school in a ram-shackle residential house has become the most lucrative business these days. To sum up the present school education scenario in the state of Punjab, "a majority of Govt schools exist for squandering away the money from the state exchequer, and private schools exist for robbing the people"⁵ to quote the exact words from the PHRO report.

HIGHER EDUCATION

In the higher education sector, the situation is slightly less dismal with the exception of professional medical, engineering, law, and education colleges in the private, self-financing category where the fee structure is back-breaking despite the Supreme Court strictures and Justice Majithia Commission recommendations. Paper leakages, tampering with the results, plethora of court cases are evidence that some of our premier institutions lack professional competency to manage their academic affairs. It is in the backdrop of such a discredited education system in the state of Punjab, that the International Sikh Confederation should discuss and debate on this

most important tool of human empowerment and suggest ways and means to rejuvenate and revitalise this vital social sector. The following remedial measures are proposed towards the achievement of this goal:

ISC's ROLE – AN IMMEDIATE TASK

i) The International Sikh Confederation, being a non-political organisation with its image of being a Sikh body consisting of members with impeccable credentials, integrity and commitment to provide enlightened guidance to the Sikh society, must launch a campaign, rather a crusade against all those vested interests, both political and bureaucratic within the government as well as the purely profit-blinded private players dealing with the most fundamental segment of social and economic empowerment, i.e., education. It must raise its voice against governmental neglect of its primary duty of providing a uniform, affordable education to the rural and urban poor population. Casting itself in the role of a watchdog body capable of pin-pointing the cracks and aberrations which have crept into the social fabric of Punjab and acquiring the image of an intellectually enlightened think tank of the Sikh society, having the tallest moral stature due to the selflessness and moral commitment of its members to uplift the Sikh society, the Confederation must create such a powerful and charged environment and milieu of ideas for empowering the Sikh society for the provision of uniform, affordable school education, so that no political party or government of the state could dare to ignore the voice and viewpoint of this Confederation of the Sikhs. It must make the government realise its criminal neglect, rather wreckage of the school education system of the state, by raising its voice through the available public for a such as press, electronic media, its own institutional journal, symbolic representations, memoranda and even peaceful dignified demonstrations. It must arouse the conscience of the people as well by providing intellectually enlightened guidance so that the people of Punjab must be seen to be holding the powers that be accountable for this mess in the education sector. The Confederation must assume the role of a conscience-keeper of Sikh Society together with its being a think tank whose opinion could be ignored by the vested interests at their own peril. It must create a body of opinion both among the masses as well as its elected representatives that a minimum of 6% of

state's GDP is allocated to education, and all other distortions like recruitment of teachers, their proper training, and postings are set right. The Matriculation and Secondary level examinations must be conducted by a competent professional body. Punjab School Education Board must be divested of the duty of conduct of examinations till this sick and stinking monolith is revamped. Since the next elections are due in a short time, the Confederation must see that revamping of the existing educational school system in the public sector through reasonable budgetary allocations and administrative overhauling is given a top priority in election manifesto of every political party aspiring to seek people's mandate. It is better to repair the existing government school infrastructure than to disband and privatise it. It is not good to throw the baby with the bath water when this educational baby's vital organs are still capable of being revitalised. To create a parallel, substitute system of education through the contributions by the Sikhs is too monumental a task at this stage. So, the Confederation, which itself is in its nascent stage, must use its brain power and moral credentials to create a current of public opinion for the restoration of Education System at least to its pre-1980 position as rightly pointed out by the PHRO survey report. This should be the immediate task before the Confederation.

LONG-TERM PERSPECTIVE

ii) For the long-term revamping of Education system, efforts must be made by the Confederation to create a Sikh Educational Fund (SEF) to the tune of one billion dollars on the lines of a Jewish Education Fund (JEF) as suggested by the distinguished Professor at Berkeley (USA) Dr Sukhmandar Singh at the two day international Sikh Conclave held in November 2005 at the Institute of Sikh Studies. This is not an impossible task given the prosperity of the Sikhs all over the world, provided the image and credibility of ISC members is trusted by the Sikh society. For that purpose, the proposed five member presidium of the ISC must consist of persons who command the universal respect of the Sikh society. With this fund, the ISC can aspire to educate every Sikh child and empower the Sikh society, as well as propagate the Sikh ethos in the younger generation. The Confederation should also try to rope in the services of cash rich Sikh Sant Babas and diaspora

NRI Sikhs under the auspices of a registered body of ISC. A detailed survey of Punjab villages, even by a professional agency, be made and a chain of primary, middle and secondary schools in a proportional ratio in the identified cluster of villages be started. The services of eminent educational experts and socially motivated retired, experienced as well as well-known educationists like Dr Inderpal Singh, Dr T.R. Sharma and D.S. Bedi can be utilised for preparing a blueprint for this long-term educational plan.

In College education segment in the rural areas, a selective approach should be adopted. Meritorious, deserving students should be given financial incentives to make their career.

At the university level, ISC should put on its website, the financial incentives as well as the checks and balances, terms and conditions riders for eligibility of availing those financial incentives for the meritorious and deserving students with a proviso that such students as avail of these incentives will contribute to the ISC funds after getting into a successful career.

CONCLUSION

Since the ISC has been conceived and started by a group of individual visionaries with the motive of preserving, promoting and propagating the Sikh philosophy and Sikh heritage and legacy, their dream can be fulfilled only by working selflessly day and night by sacrificing personal comforts of leisure and family obligations. The very fact that this dream has been conceived is an indication that *Waheguru Akal Purakh's* Will is working behind this noble and lofty dream. The organisers need to cast themselves in the mould of divine instruments of this Guru's design and respond to this great challenge. The immediate challenge and task is not as radical as to build a new pyramid overnight in place of an existing crumbling pyramid as to prick the conscience of those who are consciously and deliberately demolishing the once pre-1980 considerably sound educational pyramid through a reprimand, a censure and a gentle rap on the knuckles from those who decidedly possess a higher moral stature. We have often heard it said "Neros were fiddling when Rome was burning." The ISC needs to send a stern reminder to the modern day Neros of the state of Punjab to stop fiddling and fidgeting while our motherland is sinking

fast into the quagmire of educational, intellectual and moral bankruptcy under the pressure of market forces of commercialisation of education. To conclude in the words of Lawrence Summers, President, Harvard University (USA), “We have a saying that Science is too important to leave to the scientists and war is too important to leave to the generals. Education is too important to leave to the educators (alone).”

Hence the need for ISC’s intervention.

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ANNUAL SEMINAR

The Annual Seminar of the Institute of Sikh Studies will be held on the 11th-12th November, 2006 (*Katak* 28-29, 538 NS) at Chandigarh. The theme of the Seminar is :

CONCEPT OF SRI AKAL TAKHT SAHIB

All are cordially invited to attend. Scholars are requested to present papers on the subject, which should reach the Institute by the 1st October, 2006.

**YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROMOTION BY
CAREER COUNSELLING
– VISIONARY ROLE OF SIKH INSTITUTIONS –**

MOHINDER SINGH*

The Sikh youth, particularly the rural youth, is very much demoralized and confused for non-availability of proper counselling, guidance and assistance for finding suitable career options. The ancestral profession of agriculture is not to his liking in view of un-economic holdings, mounting family debts, break-up of joint family system, poor rural infrastructure for marketing produce and exploitation at every stage. Opportunities for getting government jobs is fast declining besides corruption and caste/class discriminations at all levels. The idle young generation, mostly from school drop-outs, is being easily attracted to drugs or lured by the criminal gangs. The 70% of India's population, living in rural areas, is yet denied of basic rights of health, education, hygienically safe environments and economic rehabilitation through gainful & assured employment opportunities.

The political/administrative wings of government hardly disseminate any knowledge awareness or provide any reliable counselling to common sections of society to understand the long channel of seeking assistance under various development schemes. The 'vote-bank' politics restricts development in limited pockets of influences but produces no mass awareness among the backward.

Disadvantaged common category of society, especially belonging to rural areas, is poorly lacking in employment among educated/under matric category, and uneducated are increasing every year due to fresh

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addition from migration of land oustees, migrant labour influx from other states, relieved ex-servicemen cadre, surplus agricultural labour and absence of any new industrial investments, etc. Widespread corruption, declining defence services recruitment and class/caste discriminations have further reduced the employment opportunities among commoners. The present governance system is not different than that summed up by Guru Nanak in a sacred hymn:

“Rulers have turned beasts of prey, their officers hound; none do they allow any peace or rest. The subordinates wound the people with their claws; like dogs they lick on the blood of marrow of the poor...”

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 1288

However, our Divine Heritage provides sufficient guidelines to attain *Chardikala* and seek salvation within a family life by sharing values of services and economic benefits. The Eternal doctrines of *Naam Japna*, *Kirt Karni* and *Wand Chhakna*, preached by the ten Nanaks, are now globally recognized concepts of human welfare. The Guru has drawn out an eternal road-map for achieving human welfare (*Sarbat Da Bhalla*) through self-efforts as underlined in *Gurbani* :

Ghal khai kichh bathon deh Nanak rah pachhane seb ...)

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 1245

“Those who eat the bread of their labour and give away something in charity, saith Nanak, truly recognize the way.....”.

In spite of government’s systems’ failure on all fronts, the Guru leads us to the stage of fulfillment & contentment by following *gurbani* guidelines: “*Aapan bathhi aapna ape hi kaaj swariye...*”

SELF-HELP GROUPS

It is a wake-up call for the whole Sikh society and its institutions to work out a damage control exercise at each level by forming ‘Self-Help Groups’ for tackling the local ground problems for the betterment of the community. Such help lines can only provide timely counselling/guidance and help among the targeted youth and weaker components to bring happiness in their family life under a well planned benefit oriented action programme. The channeled help, aimed for betterment of the strayed youth, shall most likely attract them back to the Sikh mainstream motivating them for preserving their Sikh

identity. The community is presently wasting large proportion of offerings & infrastructure facilities in holding frequent *Kirtan Darbars*, arranging *Chetna* marches/religious processions & serving free *langars* en route. Through such frequent functions, some of the organizers generally find easy escape route by diverting *sangats'* resources for either serving selfish motives or achieving some political gain by helping an affiliated political party. These activities, other than daily observance of *gurmaryada* during morning & evening hours, can be curtailed & savings (say 10% *daswand* money) can be diverted in creating an "Endowment Fund" for initiating socio-economic welfare projects. We had been humiliated and have suffered enough during past two decades by the omissions and commissions of national & Sikh leaderships. Now is a time for introspection & acting wisely by guiding/counselling & diverting the youth energy for their & that of Panth's better future. A new happy, healthy and holy approach by Sikh institutions and intellectuals is the need of the present millennium.

The Entrepreneurship promotion by assistance, counselling/guidance & training shall enable new talent to flourish among youth for adopting a better career path by starting some self-employment ventures around their local surroundings. The Sikh institutions are in a better economic position to set up Counselling Cells in their premises for assessing & harnessing the socio-economic needs of local area, targeting youth of both the sexes). These Cells can operate successfully by implementing some planned Action Programmes through the agencies of Self-Help Groups. The role of such groups of voluntary people organizations, forming cooperative bodies for human welfare, have attained a special recognition under the 10th Five Years Plan (2002-2007) for disbursement of Government of India's liberal grants fixed against various development schemes for the benefit of disadvantaged/weaker sectors, including minorities.

The registered Sikh institutions promoting social welfare objectives for community betterment, besides practising normal religious norms incorporated in their respective Memorandum of Association, are eligible for such development grants under minority category, subject to certain terms & conditions.

However, to start with, the institutions can initiate self-financed, need-based welfare projects within their available infrastructure under

new role of reaching the youth and weaker sections of the community through creation of Self-Help Groups, under their administrative control, but in collaboration with locally available career Experts/ Professional Advisors. Such Groups have been given a legal status & right to seek redressal of grievances and seek justice on behalf of any citizen. The recently enacted Right to Information Act, 2005, empowers an individual or any voluntary organization to seek time-bound information on behalf of any aggrieved citizen. However, any political nomination or propagation of political agenda of any party, should preferably be debarred from the administration of such Self-help Groups in the general interest of the community. Operation of such counselling/services providing career assistance & resolving long pending disputes on behalf of any aggrieved youth or his family shall likely to develop more respect for Sikh heritage.

A few government-sponsored Self-help Groups are in operation under the administrative support of the Development & Panchayat Department. But they are yet to come out of influence of narrow political "vote-bank" policy limitations. The role of Sikh institutions & right thinkers have become very crucial and important for helping the youth & poor village society by spreading effective awareness towards religious heritage as well as serving their socio-economic betterment through planned counselling clinics. A diagnostic channel appraisal is required before initiating such scientific treatment through faculties of professionals. For achieving multi-objective results, a chain of self-promoted help-lines or Self-Help Groups have to be started at every village and urban corner within the institutional premises. The Sikh institutional sponsored and financed Cells are bound to play a very encouraging role in due course of time. The central objectives shall be to provide a true Sikh heritage awareness among strayed youth, but through a planned scientific channel treatment by way of spot counselling, guidance and financial assistance for effective solution of their acute socio-economic problems being currently faced by the ignored youth and economically weaker rural sections of the community & other destitute sections. Such united vision of damage-control efforts are sure to achieve the noble concept of *Sarbat Da Bhalla*.

There are number of huge built-up structures of historic

gurdwaras under the control of SGPC & DSGMC along with attached hundreds of acres of agricultural land and open space. Some portion of their highly developed, centrally located infrastructure can safely be utilized for operating some industrial & sports promotion activities, facilitation projects in collaboration with willing NRIs & private sector for promoting entrepreneurship & providing training-cum-employment to local youth. Similarly, such activities on small scale can also be provided on the premises of local gurdwaras, on selective basis, during free hours after routine *maryada* schedule. The schools and dispensaries being run by a few gurdwaras are a welcome step. But other activities like bi-weekly Career Counselling/ Guidance/ Help Cells, training for martial games, arts & crafts centers, etc, can be started in addition with proper planning. It is observed that the influential members of the management & their employees are misutilizing attached agriculture land, open spaces or even *sarai* rooms. A proper survey and investigation may reveal more facts. An independent Sikh institution like ISC may consider some action plan.

GUIDELINES ON SELF-HELP GROUPS FORMATION AND WORK SYSTEM

- i) Besides performing the pre-defined constitutional objectives, a desirous management shall make an amendment for incorporating few additional social welfare objectives for organizing a part-time Counselling Cell in association with a team of five outside nominated voluntary Professional Advisors (retired or in-service), for seeking their guidance on important subjects for expert analysis, assessment & finding out solution to socio-economic family problems, particularly being faced by the youth and other weaker sections of our society.
- ii) The President & the Secretary of the management may approach and identify list of locally available, willing Advisors likely to be associated with Counselling. The Advisor may be drawn out of professions of Agriculture, Industry, Business, Service, Health/ Hygiene, Education, Engineering & Technology, Law, Banking & Finance, Environment Control, Defence, Sports, Drugs de-addiction, etc. At least one woman Advisor may also be co-opted. The local part-time advisors may not draw any honorarium but any expert invited from outside may be offered some

consultation fee, depending on circumstances. However, the management is expected to provide normal courtesy of office, telephone/computer facility, transport and refreshment, etc., to the Advisors.

- iii) The Counselling Cell's working hours may be fixed on week-ends or holidays/off hours. Camps of identified group may be arranged during summer/winter vacations. A monthly work notice be displayed prominently by the Management with system of registration.
- iv) An 'Endowment Fund' be created with at least 10% of annual income of institution as regular contribution for financing the recommendations of Advisors, and donations received in future may be added to the Fund. The Fund accounts shall be auditable under Society's Registration Act, and may be operated jointly by the President of Management & one representative of Advisors.
- v) The consultation to the Cell shall be opened to all categories of community families/ individuals, but monetary assistance may be limited to the economically weaker sections and youth. The returnable, interest-free loan on matching basis for limited period for obtaining bank finances or outright financial aid can also be granted for urgent needs of medical treatment, education, tutorials, business promotion, etc.
- vi) The experts of Cell may also advise on procedural system of availing assistance under various government developmental and banking schemes & pursue their cases with departments concerned. On special occasions, the departmental consultants may also be invited, on negotiated fee-payment basis, for providing group consultancy.
- vii) The legal Advisor may provide guidance with regards to family disputes, on matters of human rights violation & assisting for settling the departmental grievances. Likewise, other subject expert may use his influence & knowledge for any grievance redressal.
- viii) An individual sponsoring institution or group of area-based institutions may jointly later adopt any village in urban periphery and perform similar services by pooling resources in association with village *gurdwara/panchayat*. The villagers may be provided

guidance & training for forming their own “Village Self-Help Groups” for settlement of their local grievances and approaching the government departments for seeking assistance available under various Rural Development Schemes. Holding the village camps for dual purpose of providing awareness to Sikh identity and heritage, along with counselling/guidance for their economic & educational betterment is likely to change the shape of a village in due course of time.

- ix) Special rural camps of short duration for achieving multi-objectives may be arranged by advance consultation with identified rural agencies subject to their convenience.
- x) A trained missionary volunteers cadre (of both sexes) has to be built up by the Sikh institutions for carrying out the successful operation of “Self-Help Group” campaign. The volunteers found performing excellent work need to be honoured publically.

ACCOMPLISHMENT OF TASKS SET BY THE ISC

A Global Sikh Organization, under the constitutional umbrella of the International Sikh Confederation, has now come into reality in November, 2005, after many years of deliberations by the reputed national & international Sikh intellectuals. The various aims and objectives for accomplishment have been incorporated in its constitution. The most important, according to my thinking, are establishing and helping the institutions of higher professional learning & research to promote the education and economic development of Sikh community. It must further emphasize on coordination of various activities of Sikh organizations for humanitarian causes in pursuance of the basic Sikh tenet of *Sarbat Da Bhalla*. For financing and achievement of such noble objectives, stress has been laid on establishment of Endowment Funds and Trusts by the Sikh community. My proposal for encouraging setting up of small Counselling Cells within the premises of Sikh gurdwaras and financing through exclusive Endowment Fund exactly fit into the ISC’s tasks framework.

The road-map for various tasks, accomplishment have yet to be chalked out by the ISC. My suggestion is to assign top-priority to the objectives of finding ways and means of providing educational-cum-economic development and rehabilitation of Sikh youth & weaker

sections. This huge task can not be achieved by any big or small group of small institutions individually. The community's built-up resources of existing gurdwaras, infrastructure are enough to make a start for conceiving a feasible long term project of all-round promotion of young generation. The time is running out. If the Sikh institutions failed to adopt a broad visionary role of immediate setting up of the Counselling Cells and Self-Help Groups promotion, as suggested in this article, the youth can not be sewed and is likely to go astray further. The propagation and coordination of such youth building tasks is now the prime responsibility of International Sikh Confederation.

□

*O' my mind practise not guile even by mistake.
In the end, it is thy own soul that shall have to render an
account.
Every moment the body is wearing off and the old age is
having the upper hand.
Then no one shall pour water into the cup of thy hands
Says Kabir, no one belongs to thee.
Why thou utterest not the Lord's Name in thy mind betimes?
O saints, my wind-like mind has now acquired rest.
I reckon that I have learnt the science of union with God, to
some extent.*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 656

ਮਨ ਮੇਰੇ ਭੂਲੇ ਕਪਟ ਨ ਕੀਜੈ ॥ ਅੰਤਿ ਨਿਬੇਰਾ ਤੇਰੇ ਜੀਅ ਪਹਿ ਲੀਜੈ ॥
ਛਿਨੁ ਛਿਨੁ ਤਨੁ ਛੀਜੈ ਜਰਾ ਜਨਾਵੈ ॥ ਤਬ ਤੇਰੀ ਓਕ ਕੋਈ ਪਾਨੀਓ ਨ ਪਾਵੈ ॥
ਕਹਤੁ ਕਬੀਰੁ ਕੋਈ ਨਹੀ ਤੇਰਾ ॥ ਹਿਰਦੈ ਰਾਮੁ ਕੀ ਨ ਜਪਹਿ ਸਵੇਰਾ ॥
ਸੰਤਹੁ ਮਨ ਪਵਨੈ ਸੁਖੁ ਬਨਿਆ ॥ ਕਿਛੁ ਜੋਗੁ ਪਰਾਪਤਿ ਗਨਿਆ ॥

TRANSLATION OF SRI GURU GRANTH SAHIB INTO ENGLISH

SARJIT SINGH*

Before taking up discussion of problems of translating Sri Guru Granth Sahib [SGGS] into English, it would be advisable to give a background of this topic from two historical sources available to us, representing view points of East and West.

“Undoubtedly there are only a handful of people in the entire world capable of reading of the volume [SGGS] in totality. There has never been any extensive system of scriptural study made by Sikhs. **The average Sikh devotee knows very little about the Granth Sahib and it is for this reason non-essential in Sikh training.** Although most Sikhs do not know the contents of their sacred book, they do treat it with reverence, almost to the point of idolatry” [1].

The second quotation is as follows: “Sikhism is the most modern, yet the most misunderstood, of all the world religions.....**The confusion of interpretation has occurred because the Sikhs themselves, for historical and other reasons, have never seriously attempted a scientific and cogent exposition of the doctrines of their faith,** based on the word of the Guru-Granth and related to the historical lives of the Gurus who uttered it”[2].

In the light of above, another quotation from [2] is worth noting, “The language of the Guru-Granth is becoming archaic for the present-day reader, if it has not become so already. It is written in a script which is confined to Panjab. Till recently, the words of the Guru-Granth even in print could not be separated one from the other so that its correct reading was restricted to the select few. And but for a few

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individuals, it has never occurred to the community to define its basic tenets, and to answer the seeming contradictions in these tenets, in short to attempt an integrated account of the Sikh view of life”.

I- A few translations of SGGS in English, French, German and Spanish have been made available during the past fifty years. However, none of the translators has moved out of the boundaries defined by earlier translators who followed Bible as the model. In these translations firm flavor of Sikh faith and philosophy is almost absent. Most of these translators had English as their second language. Modern experts of English language as well as linguists concur that idiom of one language cannot be easily translated into another language without distortion of and/or deviation from the original message [3].

II- However, a reasonable solution of this problem has been offered. The **core words** of terminology of SGGS such as **Akaalpurkh, Akaalmoort, IkOh, Panch, Guru, Satguru**, etc., which are a product of culture and language of Panjab, should be used in the English translation without any alteration [4]. These cannot be translated by a single word but can be explained in the foot notes or glossary in detail. This would retain the flavor and scent of Sikh religion intact, which has been imparted to it by Sikh Gurus who coined new words or symbols as well as used existing core words from other religions within the domain of their own semantics in SGGS. This gives the background for misinterpretation of Sikh religion by those who accept these words in Sikhism in the context of religions from which these have been borrowed and used, but do not realise the new meanings in which these have been used in SGGS. Let us illustrate it with a few examples. The first word or symbol on the first page of SGGS is ੴ which any child in a Sikh household, without any interference from any one, would say **IkOh**. This word is repeated about hundred times in this very context, first by Guru Nanak and afterwards certified to be true by Guru Arjun. A dozen translations of Japu and SGGS are with the author of this article. Only two [5,6] translators of Japu have accepted this symbol for **IkOh** while others are writing dozens of pages to justify that it is 1EAMkwr. Why these gentlemen are trying to prove that Guru Nanak and Guru Arjun were wrong? Why they are not trusting the word of Guru Nanak and Guru Arjun? Perhaps these gentlemen are under the spell of **haume** to say

that they are the only persons who know Sikhism better than any body else, even the Sikh Gurus. In fact most of us are suffering from myopia of understanding and deliberation which is discussed by Dr Gopal Singh[2].

Next point is related to spellings of Core words of SGGS in English. Here we are sticking to old spellings such as **Akal** due to some mistake of a teacher of English, made a few centuries ago. Any one who is conversant with European languages, can easily find out that English language borrowed a lot of words from all the world languages, including European languages. However, to attach nationalism to their language, English people did not allow people to follow rules of pronunciation of the original language from which these word were borrowed. This is now happening in USA too, even with English words. The moot point is that we need not be tied to apron strings of England any more. We can choose spellings whatever helps us in retaining the original phonetics and flavor of Panjabi in foreign lands such as Australia, France, Holland, Germany, Italy, Spain, etc. Thus, an humble request is made that spellings such as **Akaal**, **Gurbaani**, etc., need acceptance without any kind of anglophobia. This is in the context of keeping Core words of SGGS intact during translation of SGGS into any other language of the world. Even in USA such words are prevalent which have origin in Arabia or Europe, having spelling such as **Khalid Mashaal** [7], **Doug Poorman** and **Susan Staats** [8] in order to keep clarity of original pronunciation intact.

Though SGGS with *padsheid* was published in thirties of 20th century, still there are pending problems which are being tackled individually by translators rather than by any august body of Sikhs at national or international level. For instance, Jaswinder Singh Chadha [9] while translating Japu into English has split ਪਰਹਰਿ in Pauri 5 into the form ਪਰ ਅਤੇ ਹਰਿ in order to arrive at the meanings that *Akaalpurkh annuls suffering*. Another example is in Pauri 3 where the stanza given below on making readjustment gives better sense and meaning [10] than before, as accepted by earlier scholars:

Old ਗਾਵੈ ਕੋ ਗੁਣ ਵਡਿਆਈਆ ਚਾਰ ॥ New ਗਾਵੈ ਕੋ ਗੁਣ ਵਡਿਆਈ ਆਚਾਰ ॥ 1

V- Most of the Sikh scholars, in the diaspora, are of the opinion that gurbaani in Panjabi should be taught to children along with its

meanings in English so as to give a feel of the language of Sikh scripture. However, the pronunciation of gurbaani written in old language is carried out in modern phonetics. There is difference in the written language of gurbaani and its pronunciation while reading it. For instance, in Japu the following two stanzas in Pauri 18 & 32 offer good examples:

Pauri 18 old Panjabi	ਅਸੰਖ ਗਲ ਵਢ ਹਤਿਆ ਕਮਾਹਿ ॥	2
Modern Panjabi	ਅਸੰਖ ਗਲ ਵਢ ਹਤਿਆ ਕਮਾਹਿ ॥	
Pauri 32 old Panjabi	ਸੁਣਿ ਗਲਾ ਅਕਾਸ ਕੀ ਕੀਟਾ ਆਈ ਰੀਸ ॥	3
Modern Panjabi	ਸੁਣਿ ਗਲਾਂ ਅਕਾਸ਼ ਕੀ ਕੀਟਾਂ ਆਈ ਰੀਸ ॥	

Now the question arises, how to implement this way of teaching and writing it in books. Some people object to this approach strictly on the grounds that sanctity of gurbaani should not be compromised at any cost. However, the teachers are of the view that we cannot teach *gurbaani* in the old fashion which does not convey the true essence of spoken language of today. Here a compromise for English speaking children is proposed by using *gurbaani lipi* for modern Panjabi for pronunciation of gurbaani even though it is written in old Panjabi.

VI- Undoubtedly, every Sikh has the right to study gurbaani and translate it on the strength of its convictions and commitment to share it with other Sikhs. However, any attempt, without an understanding of basic tenets of Sikh philosophy, is not only a futile exercise but, sometimes, detrimental, too. Dr Ujagar Singh Bawa [11] has translated *Sukhmani*. Here the meanings of Sloka (1) are given below for favor of perusal by readers:

Gaurhi Sukhmani Mahala 5

Sloka (1)

ਆਦਿ ਗੁਰਦੇ ਨਮਹ ॥ ਜੁਗਾਦਿ ਗੁਰਦੇ ਨਮਹ ॥

ਸਤਿਗੁਰਦੇ ਨਮਹ ॥ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰਦੇਵਦੇ ਨਮਹ ॥੧॥

4

Sloka (1)

Salutations to the eternal Guru, **Sri Guru Nanak Dev Jee**; salutations to the Guru who was at the beginning (of an age), **Sri Guru Angad Dev Jee** and **Sri Guru Amar Das Ji**; and salutations to the true Guru; and salutations to Sri Gurdev, **Sri Guru Ram Dass Ji** [1].

Here the pertinent point is: *Did Sikh Gurus advise personality worship by Sikhs that, too, in Sukhmani of Guru Arjun*. Any ordinary Sikh knows

that all the Sikh Gurus advised worship of **Akaalpurkh / Akaalmoort** only. In many slokas of gurbaani the specific word **IkOh** is used. However, judgment of this issue is left to Sikh Scholars present over here. This is an important area of gurbaani which needs careful study and general policy by an apolitical august Sikh organisation which includes members from the diaspora as well.

VII- Another flaw found in this translation [11] is tampering with the slokas of gurbaani in *Sukhmani* which relate to Sabd Two in Ashtpadi One.

Sukhmani Dr Bawa

ਸੁਖਮਨੀ ਸੁਖ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਨਾਮੁ ॥
ਭਗਤ ਜਨਾ ਕੈ ਮਨਿ ਬਿਸ਼ਾਮ ॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥
ਪ੍ਰਭ ਕੈ ਸਿਮਰਨਿ ਕਾਲੁ ਪਰਹਰੈ ॥
ਪ੍ਰਭ ਕੈ ਸਿਮਰਨਿ ਦੁਸਮਨੁ ਟਰੈ ॥
ਪ੍ਰਭ ਸਿਮਰਤ ਕਛੁ ਬਿਘਨੁ ਨ ਲਾਗੈ ॥
ਪ੍ਰਭ ਕੈ ਸਿਮਰਨਿ ਅਨਦਿਨੁ ਜਾਗੈ ॥
ਪ੍ਰਭ ਕੈ ਸਿਮਰਨਿ ਭਉ ਨ ਬਿਆਪੈ ॥
ਪ੍ਰਭ ਕੈ ਸਿਮਰਨਿ ਦੁਖੁ ਨ ਸੰਤਾਪੈ ॥
ਪ੍ਰਭ ਕਾ ਸਿਮਰਨੁ ਸਾਧ ਕੈ ਸੰਗਿ ॥
ਸਰਬ ਨਿਧਾਨ ਨਾਨਕ ਹਰਿ ਰੰਗਿ ॥੨॥

Sukhmani SGPC

ਸੁਖਮਨੀ ਸੁਖ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਨਾਮੁ ॥
ਭਗਤ ਜਨਾ ਕੈ ਮਨਿ ਬਿਸ਼ਾਮ ॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥
ਪ੍ਰਭ ਕੈ ਸਿਮਰਨਿ ਗਰਭਿ ਨ ਬਸੈ ॥
ਪ੍ਰਭ ਕੈ ਸਿਮਰਨਿ ਦੁਖੁ ਜਮੁ ਨਸੈ ॥
ਪ੍ਰਭ ਕੈ ਸਿਮਰਨਿ ਕਾਲੁ ਪਰਹਰੈ ॥
ਪ੍ਰਭ ਕੈ ਸਿਮਰਨਿ ਦੁਸਮਨੁ ਟਰੈ ॥
ਪ੍ਰਭ ਸਿਮਰਤ ਕਛੁ ਬਿਘਨੁ ਨ ਲਾਗੈ ॥
ਪ੍ਰਭ ਕੈ ਸਿਮਰਨਿ ਅਨਦਿਨੁ ਜਾਗੈ ॥
ਪ੍ਰਭ ਕੈ ਸਿਮਰਨਿ ਭਉ ਨ ਬਿਆਪੈ ॥
ਪ੍ਰਭ ਕੈ ਸਿਮਰਨਿ ਦੁਖੁ ਨ ਸੰਤਾਪੈ ॥
ਪ੍ਰਭ ਕਾ ਸਿਮਰਨੁ ਸਾਧ ਕੈ ਸੰਗਿ ॥
ਸਰਬ ਨਿਧਾਨ ਨਾਨਕ ਹਰਿ ਰੰਗਿ ॥੨॥ 5

This comparison between the slokas of *Sukhmani* from two sources clearly shows that Dr Bawa has eliminated or omitted one sloka [in bold print] from sabd second in order to make *five couplets* in slokas of sabd One and Two. Besides, an error is found in spelling of Amrit [in bold print]. The ball is in the court of Sikh Sangat to peruse and understand as to what can be the solution for this kind of omission in the translation of gurbaani by Sikh Scholars around the world.

VIII- Most of the Sikhs as well as Sikh scholars are aware of the fact that word **Akaal** as a noun has been used in conjunction with **Kaal** in SGGS only two times in the slokas of Guru Arjun and Kabir jee in **Raag Maru** which are given below:

ਸਿਮਰੈ ਕਾਲੁ ਅਕਾਲੁ ਸੁਚਿ ਸੋਚਾ ॥੭॥੧॥੮	6
ਮਾਰੂ ਮ: ਪ ਸ:ਗ:ਗ:ਸ: ਪੰਨਾ ੧੦੭੯	
ਕਾਲੁ ਅਕਾਲੁ ਖਸਮ ਕਾ ਕੀਨਾ ਇਹੁ ਪਰਪੰਚੁ ਬਧਾਵਨੁ ॥੨॥੬॥	7
ਮਾਰੂ ਕਬੀਰ ਸ:ਗ:ਗ:ਸ: ਪੰਨਾ ੧੧੦੪	

In both these slokas the meanings of **Akaal** and **Kaal** are *birth or life* and *death*, respectively. However, lack of serious study has led

many an educated Sikh to believe that there is little difference between **Akaalpurkh** and **Akaal** in the gurbaani of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. This has serious consequences which are not acceptable in Sikh philosophy. Any Sikh who is prepared to study and understand gurbaani shall certainly be concerned about this ignorance amongst Sikh scholars, in particular, and Sikhs, in general.

This article is presented in order to enumerate the dimensions of problems faced during reading of translations by Sikhs. There are myriads of such translations even in Panjabi, not to speak of English alone.

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SCHOOL EDUCATION IN PUNJAB

SADHU SINGH*

I congratulate you all for participating in this historic gathering for formulating plans for the uplift of the community. According to me, it is possible only through Education.

ਵਿਦਿਆ ਵੀਚਾਰੀ ਤਾਂ ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰੀ ॥

If one dwells on the essence of Knowledge, one becomes a Benefactor of all. This is the best and the highest purpose of Education given to us by Sri Guru Nanak Dev *ji*. One wonders why, the Sikhs having such a grand philosophy of Education, do not bother about Education at all. Since they tend to think with Lord Browning, the incorrigible optimist that:

“God is in His heaven
All is well with the world”

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Sikhs have come into existence with the blessings and sacrifices made by the Sikh Gurus. For *Charhdi Kala*, the Sikhs must have sterling qualities of head and heart. So, there is a great need for imparting Quality Education to the students. Modern scientific education given to the Sikh children alone can ensure a bright future for the Sikhs.

There is a need for change and adaptation to the challenging socio-political situation of a rapidly modernising society. Education should have its aim at both the development of society and the realisation of man's potentialities. So, the future of the Sikh community depends, to a great extent, upon the levels of education of the Sikh children. Men of vision and imagination realised this fact at the time of Vishav Sikh Sammelan in 1995. It was resolved that Quality

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Education should be imparted in all Sikh institutions.

The power of education as a tool for social transformation, social mobility and cultural strength has been recognised all over the world. The future of any country depends on the quality of its future citizens, namely, the youth. Thus, education is the most important factor. As Alexander Pope says,

“Tis education that forms the common mind
Just as the twig is bent, the tree's inclined.”

I may remind this august gathering that 80% of the Sikhs live in the Punjab and about 70% out of this number of them live in the villages. Upper and middle class families, which are very few, have rejected the mainstream Government Schools and they send their children to privately run schools, which are affiliated to CBSE or ICSE. The main impact of falling standard of education has been felt in the rural areas. Majority of the rural students are unable to come up to the “BREAK THROUGH LEVEL” from where they could start their academic career and compete for admissions in Engineering, Medicine, Army and Institutions of higher learning. Thus, the rural students are willfully ignored and deprived to achieve their “Possible Level of excellence” in the main national stream. We all know that a rural school graduate is unable to qualify even for a lower level entry test for police and army recruitment. Emphasis on spoken and written English in the competitive examinations is making things all the more difficult for rural students.

In his addresses at Modern Public School, Patiala, on Jan 8, 2006, Dr Harbans Singh Sidhu, Chairman of the Punjab School Education Board, remarked that despite being a prosperous state, Punjab had slipped from 6th to 16th position in Education over the past 15 years. From Nehru to Dr Manmohan Singh, all Prime Ministers have promised at least 6 percent GDP allotment for education but it was never implemented. The State of Punjab is not spending even the national average of 3.5 percent of its GDP on education. Besides the 30,000 posts of teachers lying vacant, there is a shortage of 5,000 rural teachers due to the preference for urban posting.

PUNJAB POORER THAN THE POOR

The education scenario in the Punjab is pitiable. Thousands of

schools lack teachers, classrooms, furniture or even drinking water. As per the annual report of the Union Ministry of HRD for 2004-05 only 71.21 percent of the age group of 6 to 11 years were enrolled for primary education in Punjab whereas poorer states like UP and Bihar enrolled 91.25 percent and 72.52 percent, respectively. The Punjab Government's own figures point to a very dismal picture. Out of the total 12972 primary schools 4448 are short of classrooms, 8577 lack proper mats for students; 9760 schools require dual desks; 4444 primary schools are without power; 1727 are without drinking water; 3371 do not have toilets and 3891 schools have no boundary wall.

Dr T R Sharma, an eminent educationist and a member of the sub-committee for reforms in education system in Punjab, points out that "as per World Bank surveys, the state of supervision in classrooms by teachers is the worst in Punjab. Up to 36 percent of the teachers in govt schools remain absent, while half of those who attend schools do not teach. All over the world the trend is towards a better teacher pupil ratio, whereas in Punjab the education ministry has ordered to increase the number of students per teacher from 35 to 54 in primary schools, 40 to 55 in secondary schools and to 60 in Senior Secondary schools. A bureaucratic system, habitually estranged from life, finds it hard to entertain the idea that schools are made for children, instead of children being made for schools. To top this all, the callous bureaucracy has been toying with the idea of privatising education. This idea, when ever put into practice, would deny the poor sections of society even the elementary education which is their fundamental constitutional right.

Education is the key to the new world; indeed, the essence of a vibrant democracy lies in a long term, well conceived and coherent educational policy.

To strengthen its knowledge economy, Punjab needs to do a lot on education remarked, Chairman Montek Singh Ahluwalia, on 4th Feb, 2006, Planning Commission Deputy . He said Science as a subject should be popularised in rural areas for full exploitation of the knowledge economy.

According to Kanwar Sandhu, the well-known columnist, the state of Punjab can learn from Himachal Pardesh. All the H.P. Chief Ministers realised that basic education was the most critical tool for speedy social development. Compulsory Primary Education Act in 1997 was implemented in letter and spirit. The initiative has been

appreciated by very eminent people like Amartya Sen and Jean Dreze. The educationists feel that HP has done better in education than even Socialist countries like China.

We may have ultra-modern cities in the Punjab but the march of civilization has to pass through the countryside. I fully agree with Thomas Gray, a famous English poet, who made the observation in his poem *Elegy*, written in a Country Church Yard:

Fully many a gem of purest ray serene,
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear.
Fully many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

The countryside has rough diamonds in the form of the youth living in the villages. They have to be polished by providing modern educational facilities.

What should be done to improve the condition of education in the Punjab, especially for the Schools in rural areas?

I would suggest that following measures may be taken to come out of the woods:-

To follow the Akal Academy system of education

Each Gurdwara with a substantial income should start a School for imparting **quality education** or sponsor some students from their area to join such a School.

Appealing to the NRI's of the area for sponsoring educational Projects or giving Scholarships.

Starting Sikh Education Fund.

Appeal to NGOs to contribute liberally to **education**

AKAL ACADEMY SYSTEM

The fountainhead of this system was Sant Attar Singh *ji* (1866-1927) of Mastuana. He was a great Sikh missionary and a man of great vision. He made Mastuana Sahib the centre for imparting temporal education tempered with spiritual education. In order to spread this system far and wide, Sant *ji* inspired Sant Teja Singh (1877-1965) who got his high quality scientific education from English and American Universities. Sant Teja Singh *ji* founded the Kalgidhar Trust in 1965 in order to spread the message of universal brotherhood by combining spirituality with modern scientific education :

“We believe it is possible to impart quality education to the students of rural areas. We wish to see their mind informed, disciplined, strengthened – infact, trained in somewhat the same way as per the teachings of Sri Guru Nanak Dev ji Maharaj.”

Baba Iqbal Singh ji (former Director of Agriculture HP) is the Chairman of Kalgidhar Trust. Dr Khem Singh Gill (former VC of PAU) is the Director of Akal Academies. There are more than 20 Academies and, on the request of the people, many more are likely to come up in the near future. These are affiliated to CBSE except one school. More than 20 thousand students are studying in these Academies situated in the remote villages of the Punjab, UP and HP. Akal Academies have been equipped with modern Science labs, Maths labs, Language labs, EV labs, well stocked libraries, playing fields and Computer rooms.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The real objective of education is not merely to impart worldly knowledge or to award degrees and certificates to students but also to train them in moral and spiritual values. As such, the Akal Academies have been established to achieve the following aims and objectives:

- To develop in the students a trained intellect to enable them to adjust themselves in the fast changing world.
- To create among the students a strong sense of duty and discipline.
- To inculcate in students a love for nature and respect for all forms of life.
- To help students become good (ideal) human beings through the process of self-realisation and service to the mankind.
- To cultivate in the students a mind which is aware and awake.
- To instill in the students a global outlook and sense of belongingness to the whole humanity.
- To culture the students to achieve excellence in whatever field they participate.

Akal Academy system is becoming popular because in this system Character and Intelligence training are harmonized. Private tuition is not needed because of the Day-boarding School system. Committed staff under the supervision of an imaginative head are producing excellent results in academics as well as in co-curricular activities.

Many enlightened managements of Gurdwaras have started Schools

for imparting quality education. We have the laudable examples of Gurdwaras of Sectors 34 & 22, Chandigarh. Even in some villages, where the *panchayats* and retired people have felt the need for quality education, schools have been started. We should propagate this idea and, instead of marblising the gurdwaras, improve the villages quality education wise. It should become mandatory for each gurdwara to allocate some money for education.

Punjab has a natural resource in its NRIs who have already shown great interest to help their brethren. NRIs are of great help in the field of education and they are doing a lot in improving the quality of life in their native villages. They contribute very generously for the religious and humanitarian causes. The inspiring instances of Dhaliwal (Rakhra) brothers and Dhot brothers are there to follow. This big source could be tapped by the International Sikh Confederation.

After World War II, the wise heads of the Jews pondered over their abject poverty and great humiliation of centuries. They started a Jewish Education Fund. With the help of this JEF, the whole community became highly educated after a few years. The result is that the great scientists, bankers, educationists and many prominent persons in other fields are all Jews. Now they control the economy and technology of the world. Taking a cue from the Jews, we may also start Sikh Education Fund and utilize it for the uplift of the community.

Many NGOs like Nishkam Sikh Welfare Council, Delhi, and Guru Gobind Singh Study Circle, Ludhiana, have been doing a commendable work in the field of education. The ISC may tap more such organisations and co-ordinate their activities. This would go a long way in improving the quality of education in the rural Punjab.

CONCLUSION

The above-mentioned measures to up-date and overhaul the education system in the Punjab are only illustrative and by no means exhaustive. I am very hopeful that the Advisory Council for Education would rise to the expectations of the people of Punjab. May the guru Panth achieve its destined glory through the efforts of the *sewadars*. I quote an Urdu couplet:

ਬਹਾਰ ਮੇਂ ਮੱਟੀ ਭੀ ਉਗਲ ਦੇਤੀ ਹੈ ਫੂਲ,
ਮਰਦ ਹੈ ਤੇ ਖਿਜ਼ਾ ਮੇਂ ਬਹਾਰ ਪੈਦਾ ਕਰ ॥

RURAL EDUCATION
– A CHAIN OF AKAL ACADEMIES –

HARJOT SHAH SINGH*

Dr Kharak Singh, the Convenor of the International Sikh Confederation, personally invited Baba Iqbal Singh *ji*, President, Kalgidhar Trust Baru Sahib, during his Mohali visit, to participate in this seminar. The Trust has founded about two-dozen Higher Secondary Schools in villages of Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Western UP. These have been recognised by the Central Board of Secondary Education, New Delhi. In view of the excellent success of these schools, the President was suggested to read a paper on Rural Education. As he was to go abroad, I was asked to read this paper on his behalf.

One of the objectives of founding the Trust in 1963 by Sant Teja Singh, MA, LLB, AM (Harvard) was to provide education to the village students. He told the Trustees that India resides in villages, unless the villagers are educated, the country cannot move forward. Further, he told them that for making youth to be good human beings, spiritual education must also be given along with academic education. This, in other words, is the endorsement of the second objective, *education and social affairs*, of this seminar.

At present, twenty Academies are providing education upto the 10th or higher classes in the rural areas, each covering 50-100 villages. A total of about 17,000 students (that number is increasing every year) are benefiting from the good academic and religious education provided by about 1500 teachers and other supporting staff. About 60-80% students obtain first division in the Board examinations, and many students get placement under ‘distinction’ in different subjects.

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The founder of the Trust, Sant Teja Singh, in 1956 purchased a village named Baru, Rajgarh, Himachal Pradesh, to start spiritual-based school education. After developing the facilities in the village, first Akal Academy was inaugurated in July 1986. Now many Akal Academies are passing out +2 graduates, and some of the students have obtained admissions in prestigious professional colleges in India. A few graduates were successful in getting admissions to foreign universities based on their high scores in the SAT examination of USA.

As intended by the founder and the Trustees, the Academies are also bringing social change in the village life. These achievements of two Academies in village Cheema and village Mandher have already been mentioned in the *Abstracts of Sikh Studies*, July-September 2005, Vol VII, Issue 3, under the title *Successful Fight Against Drug Addiction – Cheema Shows the Way*.

A couple of more incidents, which are very interesting, will explain the role being played by the students. An elementary student refused to sleep with his father, “Dad! No, you smell awful. Choose between me and your bottle.” A girl student persuaded her father to quit drinking thus: “Daddy, if I commit a mistake, blame goes to you being my father. If a Sikh drinks / cuts his hair people blame his Guru. Why should you bring blame to our Guru who sacrificed all his four sons for our honorable future?”

Two years ago, when some students of Akal Academy, Cheema, returned from an Inter-school competition, Dr Gurbakhsh Singh USA, a trustee, happened to be there at the gate of the school. Coming out of their bus, they voluntarily announced, “Baba jee, we have won many awards in the competition.” While talking to them about the competition, a senior student told him that after the function, one of the judges shared with the VIP guest, “Not only that they perform good in studies and co-curricular activities, they are well behaved children. They urge and pressurise their parents and relatives to give up drinking.”

The rural education can bring a real change in the country. The hard earned money of the farmers enters the pockets of the alcohol dealers, police, lawyers and judges because they drink, fight and litigate. Therefore, Trust is willing to associate with the projects to be started

by the International Sikh Confederation in their drive for uplifting the state through spreading education in the rural areas.

Remarks of Shri Pavnesh Kumar, Controller of Examinations, CBSE, New Delhi, who visited Baru Sahib, may be reproduced here “Having been here for almost twelve hours, I get the impression, as if I have been on a pilgrimage”, he said. Addressing the students he continued, “What we need first in society are the noble citizens. If you do not know how to deal with human beings, your existence in this world is of no use.” For the teachers he emphasized, “The Ganges can only flow from Gangotri, I believe that morals and virtues can only flow from good teachers.” He also added, “Everyone of us has some sainthood in us. The only point is how to bring it out, and this is the task the Akal Academy is doing.”

Many residents of the rural areas want schools to be started in their villages on the pattern of the Akal Academy. They are willing to extend the necessary co-operation regarding the provision of land and other support. The Trust intends to open as many schools as are within their physical constraints.

All this has been achieved with the public cooperation and their contributions, without any financial support from the government. Welfare of the Panth and Punjab state is not difficult.

Education needs to be given the highest priority in any programme to uplift the rural masses. Baba Iqbal Singh assured that the Kalgidhar Trust Baru Sahib and its Akal Academies would give full cooperation in this task.

□

*As fire is contained in all timber and butter in all milk,
So, in high and low, His light is contained.
And the Lord of wealth is pervading,
The hearts of all the human beings.*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 617

ਸਗਲ ਬਨਸਪਤਿ ਮਹਿ ਬੈਸੰਤਰੁ ਸਗਲ ਦੂਧ ਮਹਿ ਘੀਆ ॥
ਉਚ ਨੀਚ ਮਹਿ ਜੋਤਿ ਸਮਾਣੀ ਘਟਿ ਘਟਿ ਮਾਧਉ ਜੀਆ ॥

FOSTERING UNITY AND ENCOURAGING DIVERSITY IN THE SIKH PANTH

PUNEET SINGH*

Thank you for the opportunity to address this august gathering. I wish to express my gratitude to Harbans Lal, Jagpal Singh Tiwana, Jodh Singh Arora, Ishwinder Singh Chadha, Kharak Singh Mann, Kartar Singh Gill, Ashok Singh Bagrian, Virinder Singh Grewal, Kamalla Rose Kaur, Karamjit Singh Bharij, and Laurie Bolger for their encouragement and comments in connection with this conference.

There is perhaps no better example of unity in diversity than the case of India itself. India is home to twenty-eight states, seven union territories, fifteen official languages, and all of the world's major religions. And yet, in the midst of all this diversity, Kashmiris, Assamese, Gujaratis, Keralites, and Punjabis all think of themselves as Indians, albeit with occasional grievances.

This paper puts forth the suggestion that Sikhism, and in particular the International Sikh Confederation (ISC), adopt a similar model for unity in diversity.

According to such a model, the ISC would treat every Sikh as an equal citizen eligible for the highest office without regard for caste, color, affluence, race, gender and, very importantly, without concern for orthodoxy. Eligibility for office would be based purely on merit and past performance in areas relevant to the organization. Such as administration, diplomacy, technology, and management rather than a test of perceived religiosity. Why do I use the term 'perceived religiosity?' I do so because it is not for us to judge the religiosity of another. That determination is to be entrusted to Akal Purakh (God). Therefore, Sikhs desperately need to keep religion out of institutions,

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especially non-religious ones such as the I.S.C.

Furthermore, the I.S.C. must provide equal representation to all Sikhs in order to be viewed as a democratic institution. As global trends have adequately demonstrated in recent decades, non-democratic institutions have neither the credibility nor the tools to be truly successful. The American Revolution against British colonialism was founded on the grass roots protest against 'taxation without representation.' Representation, I suggest, is the way to engage a larger audience, including, most critically, the youth and the unorthodox, neither of which are adequately represented here today.

There is perhaps a lesson we could learn from Hinduism's 'Boa Constrictor' nature, as Max Arthur Macauliffe characterized it. Macauliffe had implied that Hinduism is so flexible and all-encompassing that it is able to swallow up any dissenting sect and accommodate almost any kind of theological variation in order to remain whole. I am not suggesting that Sikhs should compromise their core beliefs for the sake of unity. However, I am proposing that the I.S.C. adopt a similarly absorptive methodology with regard to Namdharis of Kukas (the first to protest British colonialism) Nirankaris (who gave us the Sikh marriage ceremony, Anand Karaj), and all others who revere the Guru Granth.

Every field of human endeavour experiences evolution; be it science, law, management, or administration. Why then must religion be the only area that remains static? Guru Gobind Singh had the unique vision to grant Guru to the Sikh Panth. The vital question before us now is whether the Sikh Panth has the matching vision to exercise this authority to evolve the Sikh religion.

Unless we are willing to include Sikhs of all persuasions there really is nothing to confederate. We must, therefore, be wary of a quest for excessive uniformity. A bouquet of flowers is attractive not because all the flowers look the same but because a variety of flowers are arranged to form one single entity. Let us model the I.S.C. on a colorful bouquet of flowers.

Let us strive for pan-Sikhism, i.e. an inclusive Sikhism. Let us build bridges, not walls.

BUT NOT THE LEAST

BIRENDRA KAUR*

With the International Sikh Confederation in place, there is every hope that the wisdom of the Panth shall get channelised, that would enable the progressive march of the Panth, long overdue, towards fulfilling the aims of the revered Gurus.

I would skip most issues, which are too glaring for most of us to be unaware of. With the intention of not taking much of your precious time, I wish to highlight only three points:

PANTH BE ABLE TO SET PRIORITIES

The first is, that, along with the channelising of the wisdom of the Panth, the funds of the Panth too be channelised in a manner that reflects the concerns of the Panth. Now, when we offer money at gurdwaras, it is the management of these gurdwaras that decides about its use (for all you know, it may be spent on lighting crackers on *gurpurabs* – something that should rather be banned). So, an individual has no say, whatsoever, in the utilization of the funds donated, which may even hold one back from donating some times.

But, generally, every individual feels more concerned about a particular cause as compared to other causes. And as many a project could be undertaken simultaneously, with immediate effect, and many a Sikh would contribute liberally towards these, different funds could be created for different causes. Say, a fund called Khalsa Educates could be created for educating the underprivileged; Khalsa Sports for promoting games; Khalsa Adopts for the needy; Khalsa Calling for Sikh media, print,

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electric, electronic; Khalsa Farms for the hard pressed farmers; Khalsa Cares for those hit by famine/floods/war/riots, etc; and so on.

With separate funds in place, individuals would be able to donate for a cause they feel more concerned about, and the donations thus collected would also reflect the priorities of the Panth.

RAHIT MARYADA BE AN OPEN CHAPTER

The second point that I wish to make is that the *Rahit Maryada* should not be a closed chapter, barring the unshorn hair and the 5 Ks. So, any issue raised by anyone should be addressed to his / her satisfaction. I say so, because there is an issue that irks me and there is no Body / Organization I can approach for its redressal.

As a case, the issue that I wish to be addressed / reviewed by the religious heads / scholars is the Anand Karaj ceremony. While its nomenclature is Sikh-like, the ceremony itself does not appear to be so. In its present form, it reflects immensely the culture of the majority community, which is in stark contrast to the ideology of Sikhism. For example, the handing of the groom's *palla* to the bride by her father, while the hymn *palley taidey laagi* is being sung, implies nothing short of *kanyadaan*; and this is done in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib. Moreover, the preceding verse of *tau palley taidey laagi*, i.e., *habbey saak koorhavey dithey*, definitely could not imply that the bride is now getting wedded, because she finds all her relatives to be false. Further, in the *sikhyā* that follows, additional verses from *Gurbani* are selected and misinterpreted to deify the husband, who should be worshipped by the bride. Equality of the genders, one of the most unique features of Sikhism, rather exclusive to Sikhism, gets totally demolished in the process.

As a suggestion: Whereas the *palla*, a *siropa* preferably, could be handed to the groom and the bride simultaneously by the *granthi*, the hymn, *palley taidey laagi*, should be excluded from the Anand Karaj ceremony altogether. This hymn should instead be sung during the Amrit ceremony, where it so aptly applies.

Even the word *babul* denotes only the girl's father in common parlance, so the hymn *viah boa merey babula*, too, is misplaced, as its not only the girl that is getting wedded, but also the boy. Some other hymns could be selected, if must, for the occasion, keeping their import in mind.

The ceremony has been designed, without doubt, in good faith, but too literally by simply replacing the capital 'H' of Husband, the Almighty, with a small 'h', without considering its implication from the human perspective. Celebrations, rituals, etc., deeply affect the psyche of a person. The *janenu* is a harmless thing, but Guru Nanak refused to wear it for its import / significance. It is, therefore, imperative that the manner in which we perform our ceremonies and the way we celebrate our festivals, be re-examined in the light of *gurmat*, so as to enhance the spiritual growth of an individual, rather than arresting it.

A FAQs Section (Frequently Asked Questions) should also be created on the website of the ISC for this purpose.

ANANDPUR SAHIB RESOLUTION BE REVIEWED

In its present form, I feel, that the Anandpur Sahib Resolution reads as a crude documentation, lacking diplomacy, and unheeding the sentiments of others. For example, the community, from whom the demands spelled out in the Anandpur Sahib Resolution are sought, is commented upon as 'the brute majority' and its religion as 'the saltish sea waters of incoherent Hinduism' in the Resolution itself. The name of the Resolution too, no matter how appealing its contents might be for every Indian, tends to isolate Sikhs from the rest of Indians at the very outset. And 'pre-eminence of Khalsa' as political goal puts non-Sikhs on the defensive right away. If we condemn the present dominance by the Hindu majority, how can we defend a similar dominance by Sikhs? Thus, we make the government's job of presenting us as secessionists all too smooth. Calling the Resolution by some other name, such as 'Federal Structure for India, Anandpur Sahib' or 'Autonomy for States, Anandpur Sahib', would have made it more appealing to the whole population, who would have been drawn to it. And, it would

have taken the government to task for its effort to mislead the people of India or other nations about Sikhs being separatists.

Further, the demand for State autonomy need not be clubbed with the basic postulates, purposes, and political goals of the Shiromani Akali Dal. It should be prepared keeping all States in mind, so as to elicit their support for its implementation. For example, the word 'religion' should be used instead of Sikhism, 'minority' instead of Sikhs, 'natural resources' instead of river waters, 'State language' instead of Punjabi, etc., and the departments to be with States / Centre should be defined, explaining how such a move would improve the condition of the people and the nation at large as compared to the present set-up.

Mention of religious, economic, cultural, and social demands made in the Resolution passed in 1978 at Ludhiana in the light of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution, such as, broadcasting of *Gurbani*, six sugar mills, four textile mills, eradication of unemployment, improved per capita income, increased economic growth rate, abolition of excise duty on tractors, ban on sale of liquor and other intoxicants, status of Punjabi language, etc., is not necessary, since these go with state autonomy.

Setting our own house in order is of foremost importance at this juncture of time. Events of the last few decades need to be critically reviewed, be these political, religious or international, not with a view to criticising, but to analyse these once again in the light of their outcome. Placing and projecting them in their right perspective may prove of assistance to us and the future generations to see vividly the path the *Panth* is to follow.

□

ISC MEMBERSHIP OPEN

The membership form may be downloaded from the ISC website www.sikhconfed.net and mailed to its headquarters (# 1, Sector 28-A, Chandigarh, India).

ਇੰਟਰਨੈਸ਼ਨਲ ਸਿੱਖ ਕਨਫੈਡਰੇਸ਼ਨ ਲਈ ਇਕ ਹੋਰ ਜ਼ਰੂਰੀ ਕੰਮ

ਹਰਨਾਮ ਸਿੰਘ ਸ਼ਾਨ*

ਇੰਟਰਨੈਸ਼ਨਲ ਸਿੱਖ ਕਨਫੈਡਰੇਸ਼ਨ ਦੇ ਕਨਵੀਨਰ ਤੇ ਰੂਹੇਰਵਾਂ, ਮਾਨਯੋਗ ਡਾਕਟਰ ਖੜਕ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੀ ਨੇ ਐਬਸਟ੍ਰੈਕਟਸ ਆਫ ਸਿੱਖ ਸਟੱਡੀਜ਼ ਦੇ ਅਜੋਕੇ ਪਰਚੇ ਦੇ ਐਡੀਟੋਰੀਅਲ ਵਿੱਚ ਇਸ ਵਲੋਂ ਕੀਤੇ ਜਾਣ ਵਾਲੇ ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਕੰਮਾਂ ਦਾ ਜ਼ਿਕਰ ਕੀਤਾ ਹੈ, ਉਹ ਸਾਰੇ ਜ਼ਰੂਰੀ ਹਨ ਬੁਨਿਆਦ ਅਤੇ ਭਰਵੇਂ ਉਦਮ ਨਾਲ ਕਰਨ ਦੇ ਨਜ਼ਿੱਠਯੋਗ ਹਨ।

ਇੱਕ ਹੋਰ ਅਜਿਹਾ ਕੰਮ ਜੋ ਮੇਰੀ ਜਾਂਚੇ ਕੇਵਲ ਇਹੋ ਸੰਗਠਨ ਹੀ ਕਰ ਜਾ ਕਰਵਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ ਉਹ ਸਿੱਖ ਪੰਥ ਵਿੱਚ ਗੰਭੀਰ, ਬਹੁਭਾਸ਼ੀ ਤੇ ਬਹੁਪੱਖੀ ਵਿਦਵਤਾ, ਇਲਮੀਅਤ ਜਾਂ ਲਰਨਿੰਗ ਤੇ ਸਕਾਲਰਸ਼ਿਪ ਦੀ ਦਿਨੋ-ਦਿਨ ਪੈ ਰਹੀ ਭਾਰੀ ਘਾਟ ਨੂੰ ਪੂਰਾ ਕਰਨ ਤੇ ਕਰਦੇ ਜਾਣ ਲਈ ਕੋਈ ਯੋਗ ਬਨਾਉਣ ਨਾਲ ਸਬੰਧਿਤ ਹੈ।

ਜਿਵੇਂ ਕਿ ਆਪ ਜਾਣਦੇ ਹੋ, ਹਰ ਕੌਮ, ਧਰਮ ਸਭਿਅਤਾ ਤੇ ਸਭਿਆਚਾਰ ਦੀ ਰੀੜ੍ਹ ਦੀ ਹੱਡੀ ਉਸ ਦੇ ਅਜਿਹੇ ਆਲਮ ਤੇ ਵਿਦਵਾਨ ਹੀ ਹੋਇਆ ਕਰਦੇ ਹਨ। ਇਤਿਹਾਸ ਇਸ ਗੱਲ ਦਾ ਗਵਾਹ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਇਸਲਾਮ ਤੇ ਈਸਾਈਅਤ ਨੂੰ ਪੱਕੇ ਪੈਰੀ ਖਲ੍ਹਾਰਨ ਅਤੇ ਥਾਂਉ-ਥਾਂ ਪਰਚਾਰਨ ਤੇ ਪਰਸਾਰਨ ਦਾ ਕੰਮ ਉਜਿਹੇ ਵਿਦਵਾਨਾਂ ਤੇ ਆਲਮਾਂ ਦਾ ਹੀ ਕੀਤਾ ਹੋਇਆ ਹੈ। ਇਉਂ ਹੀ ਭਾਰਤ ਵਿੱਚ ਹੀ ਜੰਮੇ ਤੇ ਵੱਧੇ-ਫੁੱਲੇ ਬੁੱਧਮੱਤ ਨੂੰ ਭਾਰਤੋਂ ਖਦੇੜਨ ਤੇ ਹਿੰਦੂਮਤ ਨੂੰ ਮੁੜ ਬਹਾਲਣ ਦਾ ਕਾਰਜ ਵੀ ਇਸ ਦੇ ਅਜਿਹੇ ਮਹਾਨ ਵਿਦਵਾਨਾਂ ਤੇ ਵਿਚਾਰਵਾਨਾਂ ਨੇ ਹੀ ਨਜ਼ਿੱਠਿਆ ਸੀ।

ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਤੇ ਪੰਥ ਦੀ ਅਜਿਹੀ ਸੇਵਾ ਮੁੱਢਲੇ ਕਾਲ ਵਿੱਚ ਭਾਈ ਗੁਰਦਾਸ, ਭਾਈ ਮਨੀ ਸਿੰਘ ਤੇ ਭਾਈ ਸੰਤੋਖ ਸਿੰਘ ਵਰਗੇ ਮਹਾਨ ਵਿਦਵਾਨਾਂ ਵਲੋਂ ਹੀ ਕੀਤੀ ਹੋਈ ਹੈ।

ਇਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਵਰਤਮਾਨ ਸਮੇਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਵੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਸਤਿਗੁਰਾਂ ਨੇ ਇਸ ਨੂੰ ਭਾਈ ਕਾਹਨ ਸਿੰਘ ਵਰਗੇ ਅਜਿਹੇ ਮਹਾਨ ਵਿਦਵਾਨ ਨਾਲ ਨਿਵਾਜ਼ ਦਿੱਤਾ ਸੀ ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੇ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਪਾਵਨ ਪੰਥ ਲਈ ਇਕ ਅਜਿਹਾ ਮਹਾਨਕੋਸ਼ ਤਿਆਰ ਕਰ ਦਿੱਤਾ ਸੀ ਜੋ ਤੁਲਨਾਤਮਕ ਧਰਮ ਦੇ ਖੇਤਰ ਵਿੱਚ ਵੀ ਆਪਣੀ ਮਿਸਾਲ ਆਪ ਹੈ। ਨਵੇਂ ਯੁਗ ਦੇ ਨਵੇਂ ਚਾਨਣ ਨਾਲ ਚਾਨਣਿਆਈ ਹੋਈ ਉਸੇ, ਭਾਵ ਪਿਛਲੀ ਸਦੀ ਵਿੱਚ, ਪ੍ਰੋਫੈਸਰ ਤੇਜਾ ਸਿੰਘ ਵਰਗੇ ਵਿਦਵਾਨ ਵੀ ਵਿਚਾਰਦੇ ਰਹੇ ਹਨ, ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀ ਬਹੁਪੱਖੀ ਵਿਦਵਾਨਤਾ ਨੂੰ ਹੀ ਮੁੱਖ ਰੱਖਦਿਆਂ, ਭਾਈ ਕਾਹਨ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੀ ਨੇ ਆਪਣੇ ਉਕਤ ਸ਼ਾਹਕਾਰ ਦਾ ਮੁੱਖਬੰਧ ਲਿਖਣ ਦਾ ਸੱਦਾ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਦਿੱਤਾ ਸੀ, ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਮਿਰਤਕ ਸਰੀਰ ਨੂੰ ਜਦੋਂ ਅੱਗ ਛੁਹਾਈ ਗਈ ਸੀ ਤਾਂ ਮਾਨਯੋਗ ਬਾਵਾ ਹਰਿਕਿਸ਼ਨ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੀ ਦੇ ਭਰੇ ਹੋਏ ਗਲੇ ਵਿੱਚੋਂ ਇਹ ਵਾਕ ਨਿਕਲਿਆ ਸੀ, ਪਤਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਪੰਥ ਨੂੰ ਅਜਿਹਾ ਵਿਦਵਾਨ ਮੁੜ ਕਦੋਂ ਨਸੀਬ ਹੋਵੇਗਾ। ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਭੋਗ-ਪਰੋਗਰਾਮ ਵਿੱਚ ਆਪਣੀ ਸ਼ਰਧਾ ਤੇ ਧੰਨਵਾਦ ਪਰਗਟ ਕਰਦਿਆਂ, ਪੰਥ ਰਤਨ ਮਾਸਟਰ ਤਾਰਾ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੀ ਨੇ ਆਖਿਆ ਸੀ,

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ਪੰਥ ਵਿੱਚ ਸੱਚ ਮੰਨੋ ਮੈਨੂੰ ਤਾਂ ਕੋਈ ਅਜਿਹਾ ਵਿਦਵਾਨ ਨਜ਼ਰ ਨਹੀਂ ਆ ਰਿਹਾ ਜਿਸ ਤੋਂ ਮੈਂ ਅੱਗੋਂ ਲਈ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਜਹੀ ਅਤਿਲੁੜੀਦੀ ਅਤੇ ਨਿਗਰ ਤੇ ਨਿਸ਼ਕਾਮ ਸਲਾਹ ਤੇ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਲੈ ਸਕਾਂਗਾ। ਉਸ ਸਦੀ ਨੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਹੀ ਇਕ ਵਿਦਵਾਨ ਇਤਿਹਾਸਕਾਰ ਸਾਥੀ, ਡਾਕਟਰ ਗੰਡਾ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੀ ਨਾਲ ਵੀ ਨਿਵਾਜ਼ ਦਿੱਤਾ ਸੀ, ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਨਿਗਰ ਤੇ ਨਿਰੰਤਰ ਖੋਜਾਂ, ਲੱਭਤਾ ਤੇ ਲਿਖਤਾਂ ਨੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਇਤਿਹਾਸਕਾਰੀ ਨੂੰ ਨਵਾਂ ਵਿਗਿਆਨਕ ਮੋੜ ਦੇ ਕੇ ਕਈ ਇਤਿਹਾਸਕ ਗੁੰਝਲਾਂ ਵੀ ਖੋਲ੍ਹ ਦਿੱਤੀਆਂ ਸਨ। ਉਸ ਸਮੇਂ ਹੀ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਭਾਈ ਵੀਰ ਸਿੰਘ ਵਰਗੇ ਅਜਿਹੇ ਸਾਈ-ਰੰਗ-ਰੱਤੇ ਵਿਦਵਾਨਾਂ ਦੀ ਕਲਮ ਦੇ ਚਮਤਕਾਰ ਵੀ ਨਸੀਬ ਹੋ ਗਈ ਸਨ ਜਿਸ ਨੇ ਮਾਤ-ਬੋਲੀ, ਪੰਜਾਬੀ, ਦੀਆਂ ਲੁਕਵੀਆਂ ਸੰਭਾਵਨਾਵਾਂ ਉਘਾੜ ਕੇ, ਸੁਤੀ ਪਈ ਸਿੱਖ ਕੌਮ ਨੂੰ ਆਪਣੇ ਸ਼ਾਨਦਾਰ ਵਿਰਸੇ ਨਾਲ ਜੋੜ ਕੇ, ਸਿੰਘ ਸਭਾ ਲਹਿਰ ਦੇ ਨਾਂ ਹੇਠ ਉਭਰੀਨਵ-ਜਾਗਰਤੀ ਲਹਿਰ ਨੂੰ ਇਕ ਅਨੂਠਾ ਤੇ ਅਤਿ-ਲੁੜੀਦਾ ਹੁਲਾਰਾ ਦੇ ਦਿੱਤਾ ਸੀ। ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਹੀ ਇਕ ਵਿਗਿਆਨੀ ਸਾਥੀ ਪ੍ਰੋ ਪੂਰਨ ਸਿੰਘ ਦੇ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਸਿੱਖ ਪੰਥ ਨੂੰ ਇਕ ਅਜਿਹੀ ਵਿਦਵਾਨ ਪ੍ਰਤਿਭਾ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਹੋ ਗਈ ਸੀ ਜਿਸ ਦੀ ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ੀ ਵਿੱਚ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ, ਸਪਿਰਿਟ ਤੇ ਪਰੰਪਰਾ ਆਦਿ ਸੰਬੰਧੀ ਲੰਡਨ ਵਿੱਚ ਛਪਦੀ ਰਹੀ ਰਚਨਾ ਆਪਣੀ ਬੋਲੀ, ਸ਼ੈਲੀ ਸਿਦਕ ਤੇ ਸੁਹਿਰਦਤਾ ਸਦਕੇ ਅਜੇ ਤੱਕ ਬੇਜੋੜ ਹੈ। ਉਸੇ ਭਾਵ ਵੀਹਵੀਂ, ਸਦੀ ਵਿੱਚ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਹੀ ਵਿਗਿਆਨੀ ਸਾਥੀ ਡਾਕਟਰ ਬਲਬੀਰ ਸਿੰਘ ਵਰਗੇ ਗੰਭੀਰ ਤੇ ਸਮਰਪਿਤ ਵਿਦਵਾਨ, ਪ੍ਰੋਫੈਸਰ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਸਿੰਘ ਵਰਗੇ ਬਾਣੀ ਦੇ ਵਿਆਕਰਣੀਏ ਤੇ ਟੀਕਾਕਾਰ, ਗਿਆਨੀ ਸੰਤ ਸਿੰਘ ਮਸਕੀਨ ਵਰਗੇ ਕਥਾਕਾਰ ਤੇ ਵਿਆਖਿਆਕਾਰ, ਸਰਦਾਰ ਦਲਜੀਤ ਸਿੰਘ ਵਰਗੇ ਤੁਲਨਾਤਮਕ ਧਰਮਾਂ ਦੇ ਮਾਹਿਰ ਵਿਦਵਾਨ ਅਤੇ ਨੈਸ਼ਨਲ ਸਿੱਖ ਪ੍ਰੋਫੈਸਰ ਸਰਦਾਰ ਕਪੂਰ ਸਿੰਘ ਵਰਗੇ ਅਜਿਹੇ ਦਾਰਸ਼ਨਿਕ ਵਿਦਵਾਨ ਵੀ ਵਿਚਰਦੇ ਰਹੇ ਸਨ ਜੋ ਸਿੱਖ ਦਰਸ਼ਨ, ਪਰੰਪਰਾ ਤੇ ਹਿੱਤਾਂ ਅਧਿਕਾਰਾਂ ਬਾਰੇ ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ੀ ਵਿੱਚ ਚੋਖਾ ਕੁਝ ਬੋਲ ਲਿਖ ਕੇ ਸਾਡੀ ਤਰਜ਼ਮਾਨੀ ਕਰਦੇ ਰਹੇ ਹਨ।

ਉਸੇ ਸਦੀ ਦੇ ਆਰੰਭ ਵਿੱਚ ਟਕਸਾਲ ਨਾਮੀ ਕੁਝ ਅਜਿਹੇ ਡੇਰੇ ਜਾਂ ਸੰਸਥਾਵਾਂ ਵੀ ਮੌਜੂਦ ਰਹੀਆਂ ਹਨ ਜੋ ਸਿੱਖ ਸਤਿਗੁਰਾਂ ਦੇ ਜੋਤੀ-ਜੋਤਿ ਸਮਾਉਣ ਉਪਰੰਤ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਦੇ ਵਿਦਵਾਨ ਤੇ ਵਿਆਖਿਆਕਾਰ ਤਿਆਰ ਕਰਦੀਆਂ ਰਹੀਆਂ ਹਨ।

ਪਰ ਹੁਣ, ਮੰਦੇ ਭਾਗੀ, ਨਾ ਉਜਿਹੇ ਡੇਰੇ ਤੇ ਸੰਸਥਾਵਾਂ ਨਜ਼ਰ ਆ ਰਹੀਆਂ ਹਨ ਅਤੇ ਨਾਂ ਹੀ ਆਪੋ-ਆਪਣੇ ਖੇਤਰਾਂ ਦੇ ਅਜਿਹੇ ਗੰਭੀਰ, ਬਹੁਭਾਸ਼ੀਏ, ਬਹੁ ਪੱਖੀ ਤੇ ਸਮਰਪਿਤ ਵਿਦਵਾਨ ਦਿਸ ਰਹੇ ਹਨ। ਉਹ ਤਾਂ ਅਜਿਹੇ ਸਿਰਮੌਰ ਪੰਛੀਆਂ ਵਾਂਗ ਸਨ ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਉਡ ਜਾਣ ਉਪਰੰਤ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਆਲ੍ਹਣੇ ਅਜੇ ਤੱਕ ਉਵੇਂ ਹੀ ਖਾਲੀ ਪਏ ਹਨ। ਮੈਨੂੰ ਤਾਂ ਠੇਠ ਤੇ ਸਮਰਪਿਤ ਸਿੱਖ ਵਿਦਵਾਨਤਾ ਦੇ ਖੇਤਰ ਵਿੱਚ ਇਕ ਖਲਾ ਜਿਹਾ ਪੈਦਾ ਹੋ ਗਿਆ ਜਾਪਦਾ ਹੈ। ਸਿੱਖ ਪੰਥ ਵਿੱਚ ਟਕਸਾਲੀ ਤੇ ਸਮਰਪਿਤ ਇਲਮੀਅਮ ਦਾ ਮਾਨੋ ਕਾਲ ਪੈਦਾ ਜਾ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ।

ਸਾਡੇ ਦੇਸ਼ ਵਿੱਚ ਹੀ, ਮਿਸਾਲ ਵਜੋਂ, ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ, ਸਾਹਿਤ ਤੇ ਇਤਿਹਾਸ ਬਾਰੇ ਸਥਾਪਿਤ ਕਈ ਚੇਅਰਾਂ ਭਾਵ ਉਦਮਤ ਖੋਜ-ਅਧਿਐਨ ਪਰੋਫੈਸਰੀਆਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਅਸਾਮੀਆਂ ਠੀਕ ਅਰਥਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਸੁਯੋਗ ਤੇ ਸਮਰਪਿਤ ਵਿਦਵਾਨਾਂ ਦੀ ਘਾਟ ਕਾਰਨ ਕਈ ਵਰ੍ਹਿਆਂ ਤੋਂ ਖਾਲੀ ਪਈਆਂ ਹੋਈਆਂ ਹਨ ਅਤੇ ਅਜੇਹੇ ਹੀ ਜੇ ਕੋਈ ਭਰੀਆਂ ਵੀ ਗਈਆਂ ਹਨ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਵਿੱਚੋਂ ਵੀ ਕਈ ਉਪਰੋਕਤ ਵਿਦਵਾਨਾਂ ਵਰਗੀ ਸਮਰਪਿਤ ਸੁਯੋਗਤਾ, ਮੁਹਾਰਤ ਤੇ ਪੂਰਵ-ਤਜਰਬੇ ਆਦਿ ਵਿੱਚ, ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦਾ ਸਤਿਕਾਰ ਕਰਦਿਆਂ ਕਸਰਵੰਦੀਆਂ ਹੋਣ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਬੰਧਿਤ ਮਨੌਰਥਾਂ ਦੀ ਸਹੀ ਪੂਰਤੀ ਤੋਂ ਅਸਮਰਥ ਜਾਪਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ।

ਸਤਿਗੁਰਾਂ ਦੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਹੁਣ ਦੇਸ਼ ਦੇ ਕਈ ਪ੍ਰਾਂਤਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਪਰਦੇਸ਼ ਦੇ ਕਈ ਮੁਲਕਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਵਸ-ਰਸ ਰਹੇ ਹਨ। ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀ ਵਿਲੱਖਣ ਪਛਾਣ ਤੇ ਰਹਿਣੀ ਬਹਿਣੀ ਬਾਰੇ ਲੁੜੀਦੀ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ, ਤੁਲਨਾਤਮਕ ਧਰਮਾਂ ਦੇ ਮੰਚਾਂ ਤੇ ਗੋਸ਼ਟੀਆਂ ਆਦਿ ਵਿੱਚ ਸ਼ਾਮਲ ਹੋਣ ਲਈ ਤੇ ਅਨਮਤੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਬਾਰੇ ਸਹੀ ਤੇ ਅਤਿ

ਲੁੜੀਦੀ ਜਾਣ-ਪਛਾਣ ਕਰਾਉਣ ਲਈ ਵੀ ਵੱਡੀ ਲੋੜ ਪੈਦਾ ਹੋ ਗਈ ਹੈ। ਗੁਰਸਿੱਖ ਖੁਦ ਆਪਣੀ ਸੰਤਾਨ ਨੂੰ ਵੀ ਗੁਰਸਿੱਖੀ ਤੋਂ ਜਾਣੂ ਕਰਾਉਣ ਲਈ ਬੜੇ ਉਤਸੁਕ ਹਨ। ਇਸ ਲਈ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੇ ਲੱਖਾਂ ਰੁਪਏ ਪੱਲਿਓਂ ਖਰਚ ਕੇ ਕੁਝ ਪਰਦੇਸੀ ਯੂਨੀਵਰਸਿਟੀਆਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਉਪਰ-ਵਰਣਿਤ ਚੇਅਰਾਂ ਕਾਇਮ ਕਰਵਾਈਆਂ ਹੋਈਆਂ ਹਨ, ਪਰੰਤੂ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਲਈ ਵੀ ਠੀਕ ਅਰਥਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਲਾਇਕ, ਯੋਗ ਤੇ ਸਮਰਪਿਤ ਸਿੱਖ ਵਿਦਵਾਨ ਮਿਲ ਨਹੀਂ ਰਹੇ।

ਇਸੇ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ, ਉਜਿਹੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਵਿਦਵਾਨਾਂ ਦੀ ਘਾਟ ਵੀ ਬੜੀ ਤੀਬਰਤਾ ਨਾਲ ਮਹਿਸੂਸ ਹੋ ਰਹੀ ਹੈ ਜੋ ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ੀ ਵਰਗੀ ਅੰਤਰਰਾਸ਼ਟਰੀ ਅਤੇ ਹਿੰਦੀ-ਉਰਦੂ ਵਰਗੀਆਂ ਹਿੰਦ-ਪਾਕਿ ਦੀਆਂ ਰਾਸ਼ਟਰ ਬੋਲੀਆਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਸਿੱਖ ਪਰਮ, ਸਾਹਿਤ ਤੇ ਇਤਿਹਾਸ ਬਾਰੇ ਜ਼ੋਰਦਾਰ ਤੇ ਪਰਭਵਸ਼ਾਲੀ ਤਕਰੀਰਾਂ ਕਰ ਸਕਣ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰ ਮੱਤਾਂ ਦੇ ਵਿਦਵਾਨਾਂ-ਇਕੱਠਾਂ ਤੇ ਗੋਸ਼ਟਾਂ ਆਦਿ ਵਿੱਚ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਵਾਂਗ ਹੀ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨਾਲ ਅਜਿਹੀ ਸਿਧਾਂਤਕ ਬਹਿਸ ਵੀ ਕਰ ਸਕਣ ਜਿਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀ ਪਿਛਲੀ ਸਦੀ ਵਿੱਚ ਜਿਵੇਂ ਸਨਮਾਨਯੋਗ ਗਿਆਨੀ ਦਿੱਤ ਸਿੰਘ, ਪ੍ਰੋਫੈਸਰ ਗੁਰਮੁੱਖ ਸਿੰਘ ਤੇ ਭਾਈ ਦਯਾ ਸਿੰਘ ਵਰਗੇ ਟਕਸਾਲੀ ਤੇ ਸਮਰਪਿਤ ਸਿੱਖ ਵਿਦਵਾਨ ਕਰਦੇ ਤੇ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਦੀ ਜੈ ਬੁਲਾਂਦੇ ਰਹੇ ਹਨ।

ਸੋ, ਇਹ ਕਨਫੈਡਰੇਸ਼ਨ ਜੇ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਦੀ ਇਸ ਭਾਰੀ, ਅਕਾਦਮਿਕ ਤੇ ਵਿਦਵਾਨਾਤਮਕ ਲੋੜ ਨੂੰ ਵੀ ਪੂਰਾ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਕੋਈ ਕਦਮ ਉਠਾ ਸਕੇਗੀ ਅਤੇ ਲੁੜੀਦਾ ਬਾਨਣੂੰ ਬੰਨ ਸਕੇਗੀ ਤਾਂ ਦੇਸ ਪ੍ਰੇਦਸ ਵੱਧ ਰਹੀ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਦੀ ਖੁਸ਼ੀ, ਤਸੱਲੀ ਤੇ ਸੁਰਖਰੂਈ ਦੀ ਵੀ ਭਾਰੀ ਬਣ ਜਾਏਗੀ।

ਇਸ ਵਾਸਤੇ ਸਭ ਤੋਂ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਕਰਨ ਵਾਲਾ ਕੰਮ ਇਸ ਘਾਟ ਦੇ ਕਾਰਨ ਲੱਭਣ ਅਤੇ ਉਸ ਦੀ ਪੂਰਤੀ ਲਈ ਲੁੜੀਦੇ ਉਪਾਅ ਸੋਚਣ ਵਾਸਤੇ ਇਕ ਐਨਕੁਆਇਰੀ ਭਾਵ ਦਰਿਆਫ਼ਤੀ ਕਮੇਟੀ ਦੀ ਸਥਾਪਨਾ ਹੈ ਜੋ ਇਸ ਦੀ ਕੱਲ ਹੋ ਰਹੀ ਜਨਰਲ ਬਾਡੀ ਦੀ ਇਕੱਤਰਤਾ ਵਿੱਚ ਹੀ ਨਿਯਤ ਕੀਤੀ ਜਾ ਸਕਦੀ ਹੈ। ਅੱਗੋਂ ਜਿਵੇਂ ਗੁਰੂ ਨੂੰ ਭਾਵੇਂ ਅਤੇ ਇਸ ਦੇ ਸੁਯੋਗ ਤੇ ਸਮਰਪਿਤ ਪਰਬੰਧਕਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਮੁਮਕਨ ਤੇ ਮੁਨਾਸਿਬ ਪਰਤੀਤ ਹੋਵੇ।

□

*By obtaining the water of God's Name, through the Guru,
Quench the four fires (of cruelty, worldly-love, anger and
greed) and remain dead in life.*

Thus the heart-lotus blossom be filled with Nectar

And thou shalt be satiated.

*Nanak, make the True Guru thy friend, then going to
His Court thou shalt obtain the True One.*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 22

ਚਾਰੇ ਅਗਨਿ ਨਿਵਾਰਿ ਮਰੁ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਹਰਿ ਜਲੁ ਪਾਇ ॥

ਅੰਤਰਿ ਕਮਲੁ ਪ੍ਰਗਾਸਿਆ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਭਰਿਆ ਅਘਾਇ ॥

ਨਾਨਕ ਸਤਗੁਰੁ ਮੀਤੁ ਕਰਿ ਸਚੁ ਪਾਵਹਿ ਦਰਗਹ ਜਾਇ ॥

ਧਰਮ ਪ੍ਰਚਾਰ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਤੇ ਸਾਡੀਆਂ ਜ਼ੁਮੇਵਾਰੀਆਂ

ਗੁਰਬਖਸ਼ ਸਿੰਘ ਯੂ ਐਸ ਏ*

ਸਾਡੇ ਪੋਲਿਟੀਕਲ ਵੀਚਾਰ ਵੱਖਰੇ ਵੱਖਰੇ ਹੋਣੇ ਸੁਭਾਵਕ ਹਨ ਪਰ ਪੰਥ ਦੀ ਏਕਤਾ ਤੇ ਚੜ੍ਹਦੀ ਕਲਾ ਲਈ ਤਾਂ ਸਾਡੇ ਧਾਰਮਿਕ ਵਿਸ਼ਵਾਸ ਅਤੇ ਮਰਯਾਦਾ ਇਕ ਹੋਣੇ ਚਾਹੀਦੇ ਹਨ। ਇਸ ਦੇ ਉਲਟ ਸਾਡੇ ਪ੍ਰਚਾਰਕਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਵੀਚਾਰਵਾਨਾਂ ਨੇ ਆਪਣੇ ਆਪਣੇ ਸਿਧਾਂਤ / ਮਰਯਾਦਾ ਮੰਨਕੇ ਕਈ ਛੋਟੇ ਵੱਡੇ ਡੇਰੇ ਚਲਾ ਲਏ ਹਨ। ਇਹ ਆਪਣੇ ਆਪ ਨੂੰ ਸੱਚਾ ਅਤੇ ਦੂਸਰਿਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਕੱਚਾ ਪ੍ਰਚਾਰਦੇ ਹਨ। ਇਥੋਂ ਤੱਕ ਕਿ ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਉਚਾਰਣ ਅਤੇ ਨਿਤਨੇਮ ਦੀਆਂ ਬਾਣੀਆਂ ਪਾਠ/ਅਰਦਾਸ ਦੀ ਮਰਯਾਦਾ ਭੀ ਸਭ ਦੀ ਸਾਂਝੀ ਇਕ ਨਹੀਂ।

ਲੰਗਰ ਦੇ ਪੰਗਤ ਵਿੱਚ ਜਾਂ ਮੇਜ਼ਾਂ ਤੇ ਛਕਣ ਵਾਰੇ ਬੇਲੋੜੇ ਹੁਕਮਨਾਮੇ ਨੇ ਪ੍ਰਦੇਸ਼ਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਪੰਥ ਨੂੰ ਈਰਖਾ ਤੇ ਵੈਰ ਭਾਵ ਰੱਖਣ ਵਾਲੇ ਦੋ ਹਿਸਿਆਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਵੰਡ ਦਿੱਤਾ ਹੈ। ਪੱਛਮੀ ਕੈਨੇਡਾ ਦਾ ਹਰ ਇਕ ਗੁਰਦਵਾਰਾ ਦੇ ਛੋਟੇ ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰਿਆਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਵੰਡਿਆ ਗਿਆ। ਵੈਰ ਭਾਵ ਇਤਨਾ ਵਧ ਗਿਆ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਰਿਸ਼ਤੇ ਟੁਟ ਗਏ ਅਤੇ ਪ੍ਰਵਾਰ ਵੰਡੇ ਗਏ।

ਡੇਰੇਦਾਰਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਪ੍ਰਚਾਰਕਾਂ ਵਲੋਂ ਪੰਥਕ ਸਿਧਾਂਤ ਅਤੇ ਰਹੁਰੀਤ ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਚਾਰਨ ਦੀ ਥਾਂ, ਆਪਣੀ ਉਚਤਾ ਦਰਸਾਉਣ ਲਈ ਵੱਖਰੀ ਮਰਯਾਦਾ ਵਾਰੇ ਜ਼ੋਰਦਾਰ ਪ੍ਰਚਾਰ ਕੀਤਾ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਨਾਲ ਪੰਥ ਦੀਆਂ ਵੰਡੀਆਂ ਮਿਟਣ ਦੀ ਥਾਂ ਹਰ ਸਾਲ ਹੋਰ ਪੱਕੀਆਂ ਹੋ ਰਹੀਆਂ ਹਨ। ਜੇਕਰ ਅਜੇਹੇ ਪ੍ਰਚਾਰ ਨੂੰ ਠੀਕ ਲੀਹਾਂ ਤੇ ਨਾ ਪਾਇਆ ਗਿਆ ਤਾਂ ਹੋਰ ਧਰਮਾਂ ਵਾਂਗ ਸਾਡੇ ਭੀ ਕਈ ਫਿਰਕੇ ਬਣ ਜਾਣਗੇ। (ਸਾਡੀ ਤਾਂ ਗਿਣਤੀ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਹੀ ਬਹੁਤ ਘਟ ਹੈ।) ਸ਼ੀਆ ਤੇ ਸੁੰਨੀ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਨਾਂ ਦਾ ਵੈਰ ਵਿਰੋਧ ਜਗਤ ਪ੍ਰਸਿੱਧ ਹੈ। ਪ੍ਰੋਟੈਸਟੈਂਟ ਅਤੇ ਕੈਥੋਲਿਕ ਈਸਾਈਆਂ ਦੇ ਆਇਰਲੈਂਡ ਵਿੱਚ ਫਸਾਦ ਕਈ ਦੇਰ ਤੋਂ ਹੁੰਦੇ ਆ ਰਹੇ ਹਨ। ਉਚੀ ਤੇ ਨੀਵੀਂ ਜਾਤ ਵਾਲੇ ਹਿੰਦੂਆਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਲੜਾਈਆਂ ਤਾਂ ਅਖਬਾਰਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਛਪਦੀਆਂ ਹੀ ਰਹਿੰਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ।

ਵੱਖਰੇ ਵੱਖਰੇ ਡੇਰੇ ਆਪਣੀ ਆਪਣੀ ਮਰਯਾਦਾ ਦੇ ਧਾਰਨੀ ਹੋਣ ਕਰਕੇ ਗੁਰੂ ਖਾਲਸਾ ਪੰਥ ਤੇ ਉਸ ਦੇ ਸਿੰਘਾਂ ਦੀ ਇਕ ਮਰਯਾਦਾ ਦਾ ਸਿਧਾਂਤ ਹੀ ਅਲੋਪ ਹੋ ਗਿਆ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਏਕੇ ਨੂੰ ਮੁੜ ਪ੍ਰਚਲਤ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਇਹ ਇੰਟਰਨੈਸ਼ਨਲ ਸਿੱਖ ਕੰਨਫੈਡਰੇਸ਼ਨ ਬਨਾਉਣੀ ਸਾਡੀ ਮੁਖ ਜ਼ੁਮੇਵਾਰੀ ਹੈ।

ਗੁਰੂ ਕਾਲ ਪਿੱਛੋਂ ੧੮ਵੀਂ ਸਦੀ ਵਿੱਚ ਰਾਗੀਆਂ ਤੇ ਕੀਰਤਨ ਦਰਬਾਰਾਂ, ਕਥਾਕਾਰਾਂ ਜਾਂ ਸੰਤ ਪ੍ਰਚਾਰਕਾਂ ਵਾਰੇ ਲਿਖਤਾਂ ਨਹੀਂ ਮਿਲਦੀਆਂ। ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰਿਆਂ ਤੋਂ ਦੂਰ ਸਿੱਖ ਜੰਗਲਾਂ ਤੇ ਝੱਲਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਔਕੜਾਂ ਵਾਲਾ ਜੀਵਨ ਜੀ ਰਹੇ ਸਨ। ਪਰ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੇ ਉੱਚੇ ਸੁੱਚੇ ਤੇ ਕੁਰਬਾਨੀ ਵਾਲੇ ਜੀਵਨ ਤੋਂ ਪ੍ਰਭਾਵਿਤ ਹੋ ਕੇ ਰਾਜ ਸੱਤਾ ਦੇ ਮਾਲਕ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਨ ਭੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਸਜਦੇ ਸਨ। ਇਸ ਦੇ ਉਲਟ ਅੱਜ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਪਾਸ ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰਿਆਂ ਦਾ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧ ਹੈ, ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਪਾਸ ਚੰਗੀਆਂ ਪਦਵੀਆਂ ਹਨ ਅਤੇ ਉਹ ਵੱਡੇ ਵਪਾਰੀ ਹਨ। ਰਾਗੀਆਂ, ਪ੍ਰਚਾਰਕਾਂ, ਸੰਤਾਂ ਦੇ ਕੀਰਤਨ ਦਰਬਾਰਾਂ ਦੀ ਗਿਣਤੀ ਕਰਨੀ ਸੰਭਵ ਨਹੀਂ। ਪਰ ਇਹ ਸਭ ਪ੍ਰਚਾਰਕ ਮਾਇਆ ਇਕੱਠੀ ਕਰਨ ਅਤੇ ਆਪਣੀ ਵਡਿਆਈ

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ਪ੍ਰਚਾਰਨ ਤੋਂ ਵੱਧ ਕੋਈ ਹੋਰ ਪ੍ਰਭਾਵ ਨਹੀਂ ਪਾਉਂਦੇ। ਇਸ ਦਾ ਸਿੱਟਾ ਇਹ ਨਿਕਲਿਆ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੇ ਘਰ ਜਨਮ ਲੈਕੇ ਬੱਚੇ ਅਤੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਕਹਾਉਣ ਵਾਲੇ 'ਸਰਦਾਰ' ਸਿੱਖ ਸਰੂਪ ਭੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਰੱਖਣਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ? ਸਾਡੇ ਅੱਜ ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਚਾਰ ਵਿੱਚ ਕੀ ਕਮਜ਼ੋਰੀ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਵਾਰੇ ਸਭ ਨੂੰ ਚਿੰਤਕ ਹੋਣਾ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ।

ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦਾ ਜੀਵਨ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਵਾਲਿਆਂ ਲਈ ਪ੍ਰੇਰਨਾ ਸਰੋਤ ਸੀ। ਪਰ ਅੱਜ ਸਿੱਖ ਜਨਤਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਉਹਨਾਂ ਦੇ ਲੀਡਰ ਬੁਨ ਬੋਲਦੇ ਤੇ ਨਸ਼ੇ ਕਰਦੇ ਵੇਖਕੇ ਨੌਜਵਾਨਾਂ ਦੇ ਮਨਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਦਾ ਗੌਰਵ ਤੇ ਚਾਅ ਪੈਦਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੁੰਦਾ। ਗੁਰਦਵਾਰਿਆਂ ਤੇ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧਕ ਗੁਰੂ ਗੋਲਕ ਵਿੱਚ ਘਪਲੇ ਕਰਨ ਵਾਰੇ ਅਤੇ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦਾ ਜੀਵਨ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਦੇ ਵਿਪਰੀਤ ਹੋਣ ਵਾਰੇ ਖਬਰਾਂ ਪੜ੍ਹਕੇ ਹਿਰਦਾ ਦੁੱਖੀ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ। ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧਕ ਬਣਨ ਲਈ ਸਿੱਖ ਉਮੀਦਵਾਰਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਬੇਅੰਤ ਮਾਇਆ ਖਰਚਦੇ ਅਤੇ ਸ਼ਰਾਬ ਨਸ਼ੇ ਵੰਡਦੇ ਵੇਖਕੇ ਸ਼ਰਮ ਆਉਂਦੀ ਹੈ।

ਪ੍ਰਚਾਰਕਾਂ ਤੇ ਕੀਰਤਨ ਕਰਨ ਵਾਲਿਆਂ ਦੇ ਮਾਇਆਧਾਰੀ ਜੀਵਨ ਅਤੇ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦਾ ਸਿੱਖ ਮਰਯਾਦਾ ਦੇ ਉਲਟ ਵਿਵਹਾਰ ਵੇਖਕੇ ਬੱਚੇ ਪੁਛਦੇ ਹਨ, "ਜੇ ਪ੍ਰਚਾਰਕ ਹੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਮਤ ਧਾਰਨ ਨਹੀਂ ਕਰਦੇ ਤਾਂ ਅਸੀਂ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਤੋਂ ਕੀ ਲੈਣਾ ਹੈ।" ਸਗੋਂ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਸਾਡੀਆਂ ਕਮਜ਼ੋਰੀਆਂ ਦੀ ਚਿਤਾਵਨੀ ਦੇਣ ਲਈ ਕਹਿੰਦੇ ਹਨ ਕਿ, "ਅਸੀਂ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਕਿਰਦਾਰ ਨੂੰ ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਰਾਗੀਆਂ ਪ੍ਰਚਾਰਕਾਂ ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧਕਾਂ ਵਾਂਗ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਦੇ ਵਿਪਰੀਤ ਕੰਮ ਕਰਕੇ ਪੰਥ ਨੂੰ ਧੱਬਾ ਤਾਂ ਨਹੀਂ ਲਾਉਂਦੇ। ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਪ੍ਰਚਾਰਕਾਂ/ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧਕਾਂ ਨਾਲੋਂ ਸਾਡਾ ਜੀਵਨ ਸੁਥਰਾ ਤੇ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਸਿਧਾਂਤਾਂ ਦੇ ਨੇੜੇ ਹੈ।

ਸਾਡੇ ਲੀਡਰ ਕੇਵਲ ਗੱਲਾਂ ਦੁਵਾਰਾ ਹੀ ਪ੍ਰਚਾਰ ਕਰਦੇ ਹਨ, ਸਿੱਖ ਦੀ ਪ੍ਰੀਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਤੇ ਭੀ ਪਹਿਰਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਦੇ ਸਕੇ। ਰਾਜ ਭਾਗ ਦੇ ਭਾਈਵਾਲ ਹੁੰਦਿਆਂ ਹੋਇਆਂ, ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਕਾਨੂੰਨ ਅਨੁਸਾਰ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਲਿਖੇ ਜਾਣਾ, ਆਨੰਦ ਮੈਰਿਜ਼ ਐਕਟ ੧੯੦੯ ਨੂੰ ਭੁਲਾਉਣਾ ਤੇ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੇ ਵਿਆਹ ਸ਼ਾਦੀਆਂ ਤੇ ਜਾਇਦਾਦ ਵੰਡ ਲਈ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਕੋਡ ਬਿਲ ਅਨੁਸਾਰ ਰਜਿਸਟਰ ਕੀਤੇ ਜਾਣਾ ਨੂੰ ਬਦਲਣ ਦੀ ਕੋਸ਼ਿਸ਼ ਨਹੀਂ ਕੀਤੀ। ਸ਼ਾਇਦ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਲੀਡਰਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਇਸ ਗੱਲ ਦਾ ਪਤਾ ਹੀ ਨਾ ਲੱਗਿਆ ਹੋਵੇ। ਕਿਉਂਕਿ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੇ ਵਿਆਹ ਚਾਹੇ ਆਨੰਦ ਕਾਰਜ ਦੇ ਰਸਮ ਨਾਲ ਹੁੰਦੇ ਹਨ ਪਰ ਰਜਿਸਟਰ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਕੋਡ ਬਿਲ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਕੀਤੇ ਜਾਂਦੇ ਹਨ। ਲੀਡਰਾਂ ਨੇ ਤਾਂ ਆਪਣੀ ਜ਼ਿੰਮੇਵਾਰੀ ਤਿਆਗ ਕੇ ਚੁਪ ਧਾਰੀ ਹੈ।

ਵੀਚਾਰਵਾਨਾਂ ਲਈ ਇਹ ਗੱਲ ਸਮਝਣੀ ਔਖੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਕਿ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਤੋਂ ਨੌਜਵਾਨ ਦੂਰ ਕਿਉਂ ਜਾ ਰਹੇ ਹਨ। ਸਿੱਖ ਲੀਡਰਾਂ ਦੇ ਘਰਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਬ੍ਰਹਮਣੀ ਕਰਮਕਾਂਡ ਦੀਆਂ ਖਬਰਾਂ ਪੜ੍ਹਦੇ ਹਾਂ। ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਦੀ ਨਿੰਦਿਆ ਕਰਨ ਵਾਲੇ ਪਖੰਡੀ ਸੰਤਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਦੀਵਾਨ ਲਾਉਣ ਲਈ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੇ ਲੀਡਰ ਆਪ ਹੀ ਸੱਦਾ ਦਿੰਦੇ ਹਨ ਅਤੇ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦਾ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧ ਕਰਦੇ ਹਨ। ਨੌਜਵਾਨਾਂ ਦੇ ਰੋਲ ਮਾਡਲ ਸਿੱਖ ਫੌਜੀ ਤੇ ਪੁਲੀਸਮੈਨ ਹੁੰਦੇ ਸਨ। ਹੁਣ ਕੋਈ ਭਾਗਾਂ ਵਾਲਾ ਪੁਲੀਸਮੈਨ ਹੋਵੇਗਾ ਜਿਸਨੇ ਕੇਸ਼ਾਂ ਦੀ ਨਿਰਾਦਰੀ ਨ ਕੀਤੀ ਹੋਵੇ। ਲਗਭਗ ਸਾਰੇ ਹੀ ਪੁਲੀਸ ਵਾਲਿਆਂ ਦੇ ਕੱਟੇ ਕੇਸ ਤੇ ਛਾਂਗੀ ਦਾੜੀ ਦੇਖਕੇ ਜਾਪਦਾ ਹੈ, ਇਹ ਉਹਨਾਂ ਦੀ ਵਰਦੀ ਦਾ ਹੀ ਹਿੱਸਾ ਹੈ।

ਪੰਥਕ ਰਹਿਤ ਮਰਯਾਦਾ ਅਨੁਸਾਰ ਬਰਸੀ ਮਨਾਉਣਾ ਮਨਾਂ ਹੈ। ਪਰ ਸਵਾਰਥੀ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧਕ ਲੀਡਰਾਂ ਤੇ ਡੇਰੇਦਾਰਾਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਬਰਸੀਆਂ ਮਨਾਉਂਦੇ ਤੇ ਸ਼ਰਧਾਂਜਲੀਆਂ ਦਿੰਦੇ ਹਨ। ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਦੀ ਵਿਲੱਖਣਤਾ, ਵਡਿਆਈ ਤੇ ਉਚਤਾ ਪ੍ਰਚਾਰਨ ਦੀ ਥਾਂ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਸਭ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਧਰਮ ਦੇ ਕਰਮਕਾਂਡਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਧੱਕੀ ਜਾ ਰਹੇ ਹਨ। ਸ਼ਬਦ ਗੁਰੂ ਦੇ ਸਿਧਾਂਤ ਨੂੰ ਸਮਝਾਉਣ ਤੇ ਜੀਵਨ ਵਿੱਚ ਲਾਗੂ ਕਰਨ ਦੀ ਥਾਂ ਗੁਰੂਆਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਬੁਠੀਆਂ ਮੂਰਤਾਂ ਦੀ ਪੂਜਾ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧਕ ਤੇ ਪ੍ਰਚਾਰਕ ਗੁਰਦਵਾਰਿਆਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਕਰਦੇ ਹਨ। ਪ੍ਰਚਾਰਕਾਂ ਤੇ ਲੀਡਰਾਂ ਦਾ ਅਜੇਹਾ ਕਰਨਾ ਹੀ ਗੁਰਮਤ ਪ੍ਰਚਾਰ ਵਿੱਚ ਵੱਡੇ ਰੋੜੇ ਹਨ।

ਸਿੱਖ ਸਰੂਪ – ਮੀਡੀਆ, ਫੈਸ਼ਨ ਅਤੇ ਅਸੀਂ

ਕਰਮਜੀਤ ਸਿੰਘ*

ਸਿੱਖ ਭਾਈ ਚਾਰੇ ਦਾ ਸਭ ਤੋਂ ਵੱਡਾ ਸੰਕਟ ਕਿਰਤ ਤੋਂ ਬੇਮੁੱਖ ਹੋਣਾ ਹੈ, ਪਰ ਫਿਰ ਵੀ ਸਭ ਤੋਂ ਵੱਧ ਮਹੱਤਵ ਸਰੂਪ ਦੇ ਸੰਕਟ ਨੂੰ ਦਿੱਤਾ ਜਾ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ। ਕਿਰਤ ਛੱਡ ਕੇ ਭਾਵੇਂ ਸਿੱਖ ਕੰਗਾਲ, ਕਰਜ਼ਾਈ ਅਤੇ ਪਰਾਧੀਨ ਹੋ ਰਹੇ ਹਨ। ਤਿੰਨਾਂ ਰਹਿਤਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਪਹਿਲੀ ਰਹਿਤ ਦਾ ਤਿਆਗ ਕਰਕੇ, ਬਿਹਾਰੀ ਅਤੇ ਪੂਰਬੀ ਭਈਆਂ ਤੇ ਨਿਰਭਰ ਹੋ ਕੇ, ਆਰਥਿਕ ਸਮਾਜਿਕ ਪੱਖੋਂ ਨਿਆਸਰੇ ਹੋ ਕੇ, ਆਪਣੀ ਅਣਖ ਨੂੰ ਮਿੱਟੀ ਵਿੱਚ ਮਿਲਾਕੇ ਨਸ਼ੇ, ਗੁਟਕਾ, ਜ਼ਰਦਾ ਆਦਿ ਪੰਜਾਬ ਵਿੱਚ ਭਈਆਂ ਦੀ ਆਮਦ ਦਾ ਹੀ ਨਤੀਜਾ ਹੈ। ਪਰਵਾਸੀ ਕਿਰਤੀ ਪੰਜਾਬ ਵਿੱਚ ਹੀ ਕਿਉਂ ਆਏ, ਉਹ ਰਾਜਸਥਾਨ ਅਤੇ ਹਰਿਆਣੇ ਵਿੱਚ ਕਿਉਂ ਨਹੀਂ ਗਏ। ਇਹ ਤੁਲਨਾ ਪ੍ਰਾਤਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਪੰਜਾਬ ਵਰਗੀ ਜ਼ਮੀਨ ਵਾਲੇ ਇਲਾਕਿਆਂ ਨਾਲ ਸਬੰਧਿਤ ਹੈ। ਪੰਜਾਬ ਵਿੱਚ ਪਰਵਾਸੀ ਤਾਂ ਆਏ ਕਿਉਂਕਿ ਇਥੇ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਢੇਈ ਮਿਲੀ। ਕਿਰਤ ਤੋਂ ਬੇਮੁਖ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਨੇ ਪਹਿਲੀ ਰਹਿਤ ਛੱਡੀ। ਕਿਰਤੀ ਦੀ ਰਹਿਤ ਜਿਸ ਦਾ ਨਤੀਜਾ ਅਨੇਕਾਂ ਬੁਰਾਈਆਂ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਕੇਸ ਕਟਾਉਣ ਦੀ ਬਜਰ ਕੁਰਹਿਤ ਹੋ ਕੇ ਨਿਕਲਿਆ। ਅੱਜ ਉਹ ਕੁਰਹਿਤ ਜਿਵੇਂ ਪ੍ਰਵਾਨਿਤ ਹੋ ਗਈ ਹੋਵੇ। ਪੈਂਤੀ ਸਾਲ ਤੋਂ ਘੱਟ ਉਮਰ ਵਾਲੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਭਾਈਚਾਰੇ ਵਿੱਚ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਸਰੂਪ ਵਾਲਿਆਂ ਦੀ ਗਿਣਤੀ ਅਰਥਾਤ ਕੇਸ ਅਤੇ ਦਸਤਾਰਧਾਰੀ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੀ ਗਿਣਤੀ ਕੇਵਲ ੧੮ ਪ੍ਰਤੀਸ਼ਤ ਹੀ ਰਹਿ ਗਈ ਹੈ। ਜਿਸ ਕੁਰਹਿਤ ਨੂੰ ੮੨ ਪ੍ਰਤੀਸ਼ਤ ਨੇ ਆਪਣਾ ਲਿਆ ਕੀ ਉਹ ਪ੍ਰਵਾਨਿਤ ਵਰਗੀ ਹੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਕਹੀ ਜਾ ਸਕਦੀ ?

ਸਚਾਈ ਤਾਂ ਇਹੋ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਕੇਸਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਦਸਤਾਰ ਨਾਲ ਹੀ ਹੈ। ਜੇ ਕੇਸ ਨਹੀਂ ਤਾਂ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਨਹੀਂ। ਸੋ ੮੨ ਪ੍ਰਤੀਸ਼ਤ ਕੇਸਹੀਣ ਅਤੇ ਦਸਤਾਰ ਹੀਣਾਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਆਰਥਿਕ ਮੁਸ਼ਕਲਾਂ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਵਲੋਂ ਬਾਅਦ ਵਿੱਚ ਨਜ਼ਿੱਠੀਆਂ ਜਾ ਸਕਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ, ਪਰ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਜ਼ਰੂਰੀ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਉਹਨਾਂ ਦੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਭਾਈਚਾਰਕ ਪਹਿਚਾਣ ਦੀ ਪੁਨਰ ਸਥਾਪਤੀ ਕੀਤੀ ਜਾਵੇ। ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਹਮਦਰਦੀ ਅਤੇ ਸਾਂਝ ਦਾ ਪਾਤਰ ਇਕ ਸਿੱਖ ਦੇ ਰੂਪ ਵਿੱਚ ਬਣਾਇਆ ਜਾਵੇ। ਇਸ ਬਾਰੇ ਨਜ਼ਰ ਆਉਣ ਵਾਲੇ ਮਤਭੇਦ ਅਗਲੇ ਵਿਚਾਰ ਤੋਂ ਬਾਅਦ ਖ਼ਤਮ ਹੋ ਜਾਣਗੇ। ਵਿਚਾਰ ਅੱਗੇ ਤੋਰੀਏ। ਪੈਂਤੀ ਸਾਲ ਦੀ ਉਮਰ ਤੱਕ ਸਿੱਖ ਪਰਵਾਰਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਜਨਮੇ ਅਤੇ ਪਲੇ ਕੇਸਧਾਰੀ ਕੇਵਲ ੧੮ ਪ੍ਰਤੀਸ਼ਤ ਹਨ ਪਰ ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਪੰਦਰਾਂ ਸਾਲ ਤੋਂ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦੇ ਬਾਲਕ ਵਰਗ ਦਾ ਜਾਇਜ਼ਾ ਲਉ ਤਾਂ ਦੁਰਦਸਾ ਹੋਰ ਵੀ ਭਿਅੰਕਰ ਨਜ਼ਰ ਆਏਗੀ।

ਸਰੂਪ ਤਿਆਗਣ ਦੇ ਕਾਰਨ

ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੇ ਘਰ ਵਿੱਚ ਜੰਮੇ ਅਤੇ ਪਲੇ ਨੌਜਵਾਨ ਵੀ ਹੋਰ ਕੌਮਾਂ ਦੇ ਯੁਵਾ-ਵਰਗੇ ਹੀ ਹਨ। ਸੋਚ ਅਤੇ ਇੱਛਾ ਦੇ ਪੱਖੋਂ ਕੋਈ ਫਰਕ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੈ। ਸਿੱਖ ਯੁਵਕਾਂ ਤੋਂ ਪੱਗ ਬੰਨਣ ਅਤੇ ਕੇਸਧਾਰੀ ਹੋਣ ਦੀ ਉਮੀਦ ਕੀਤੀ ਜਾਂਦੀ ਰਹੀ ਹੈ। ਜਦ ਤੱਕ ਮੀਡੀਏ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਬਾਹਰੀ ਪ੍ਰਭਾਵ ਨਾ ਪਏ ਉਦੋਂ ਤੱਕ ਸਿੱਖ ਯੁਵਕ ਇਸ ਦੀ ਪਾਲਣਾ ਕਰਦੇ

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ਆਏ। ਇਸ ਵਿਚ ਮਾਂ ਪਿਉ ਦਾ ਕੋਈ ਯੋਗਦਾਨ ਨਹੀਂ ਸੀ। ਸਿੱਖੀ ਸਰੂਪ ਤਾਂ ਸੁੱਤੇ ਸਿਧ ਹੀ ਸੀ ਕਿਉਂਕਿ ਇਹ ਸਿੱਖ ਸਮਾਜਿਕ ਰੀਤ ਕਈ ਸਦੀਆਂ ਤੋਂ ਚਲਦੀ ਆ ਰਹੀ ਸੀ। ਜੇ ਪਹਿਰਾਵਾ ਪਿਉ ਦਾਦੇ ਦਾ ਸੀ, ਉਹੋ ਹੀ ਅਗਲੀ ਪੀੜ੍ਹੀ ਦਾ ਬਣਦਾ ਰਿਹਾ। ਇਸ ਦਾ ਕਾਰਨ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਵਿਚ ਪਕਿਆਈ ਜਾਂ ਦ੍ਰਿੜਤਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਸੀ, ਬਲਕਿ ਮੀਡੀਏ ਵਰਗੀਆਂ ਸ਼ਕਤੀਆਂ ਵਲੋਂ ਖਤਰਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਸੀ ਪੈਦਾ ਕੀਤਾ ਗਿਆ। ਉਸ ਵਕਤ ਸਿੱਖ ਸਮਾਜ ਦਾ ਹਰ ਇਕ ਪ੍ਰਭਾਵਸ਼ਾਲੀ ਵਿਅਕਤੀ ਭਾਵੇਂ ਵੱਡਾ ਜਰਨੈਲ ਹਰਬਖਸ਼ ਸਿੰਘ, ਜਨਰਲ ਅਰੋੜਾ, ਏਅਰ ਮਾਰਸ਼ਲ ਅਰਜਨ ਸਿੰਘ, ਉਡਣਾ ਸਿੱਖ ਮਿਲਖਾ ਸਿੰਘ, ਹਾਕੀ ਦੇ ਸਟਾਰ ਬਲਬੀਰ ਸਿੰਘ ਜਾਂ ਉਧਮ ਸਿੰਘ ਹੋਣ, ਪੂਰੇ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਸਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਸਨ। ਇਸ ਤੋਂ ਸਿੱਖ ਯੁਵਕਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਗੈਰ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਆਦਰ ਅਤੇ ਮਾਣ ਵਾਲੀ ਪਹਿਚਾਣ ਮਿਲਣਾ ਸੀ।

ਬਦਲੇ ਹਾਲਾਤ

ਪਿਛਲੀ ਸਦੀ ਦੇ ਅਖੀਰਲੇ ਹਿੱਸੇ ਵਿਚ ਜ਼ਿੰਦਗੀ ਬਹੁਤ ਤੇਜ਼ ਹੋ ਗਈ। ਮੀਡੀਏ ਨੇ ਖਾਸ ਕਰਕੇ ਟੀ ਵੀ ਨੇ ਦੁਨੀਆਂ ਦੀ ਹਰ ਇਕ ਘਟਨਾ ਨੂੰ ਨੁਕਰਾਂ, ਗੁੱਠਾਂ ਤਕ ਪਹੁੰਚਾ ਦਿੱਤਾ। ਨੀਗਰੋ ਕੇਸ਼ੀਅਸ ਕਲੇਅ ਉਰਫ ਮੁਹੰਮਦ ਅਲੀ, ਮਾਈਕਲ ਜੈਕਸਨ ਅਤੇ ਮੈਡੋਨਾ ਆਦਿ ਤਾਂ ਸਿੱਖ ਮੁੰਡਿਆਂ ਲਈ ਵੀ ਨਰਿੰਦਰ ਬੀਬਾ ਅਤੇ ਯਮਲਾ ਜੱਟ ਅਤੇ ਸੁਰਿੰਦਰ ਕੌਰ ਵਾਂਗ ਹੀ ਹੋ ਗਏ। ਅੱਜਕਲ ਦੇ ਗੁਰਦਾਸ ਮਾਨ, ਹਰਭਜਨ ਮਾਨ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰ ਕਈਆਂ ਨੇ ਤਾਂ ਆਪਣੇ ਸਿਰ ਘੋਨਮੋਨ ਹੀ ਕਰਵਾਏ ਹਨ। ਇਕ ਸਿੱਖ ਨੌਜਵਾਨ ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਤਾਂ ਖਬਰੇ ਸੁਣਦਾ ਹੈ ਜਾਂ ਨਹੀਂ ਪਰ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਗੀਤ ਬੜੇ ਹੀ ਚਾਅ ਨਾਲ ਸੁਣਦਾ ਹੈ। ਇਹ ਸਾਰੇ ਹੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਹੋ ਕੇ ਵੀ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਸਰੂਪ ਵਾਲੇ ਨਹੀਂ ਹਨ। ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਹੀ ਦਿਨਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਵੱਡੇ ਵੱਡੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਖਿਡਾਰੀ ਜਿਵੇਂ ਕਿ ਹਾਕੀ ਦਾ ਜੁਗਰਾਜ ਸਿੰਘ ਅਤੇ ਪ੍ਰਭਜੋਤ ਸਿੰਘ, ਕ੍ਰਿਕਟ ਦਾ ਯੁਵਰਾਜ ਸਿੰਘ ਆਦਿ ਵੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਸਰੂਪ ਤੋਂ ਹੀਣੇ ਹੀ ਹਨ। ਇਸ ਸਭ ਤੋਂ ਸਿੱਖ ਯੁਵਾਂ ਵਰਗ ਨੂੰ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਸਰੂਪ ਤਿਆਗਣ ਦਾ ਸੰਦੇਸ਼ ਮਿਲਿਆ।

ਵੱਡਿਆਂ ਦੀ ਅਣਗਹਿਲੀ

ਜੇ ਪਿਛਲੇ ਤੀਹਾਂ ਸਾਲਾਂ ਉਤੇ ਧਿਆਨ ਮਾਰਿਆ ਜਾਵੇ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਵੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਸੰਸਥਾ ਨੇ ਸ਼੍ਰੋਮਣੀ ਕਮੇਟੀ ਸਮੇਤ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਯੁਵਕਾਂ ਜਾਂ ਵਿਅਕਤੀਆਂ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਬੰਧ ਸਥਾਪਤ ਕਰਨ ਦਾ ਥੋੜ੍ਹਾ ਜਿਹਾ ਵੀ ਯਤਨ ਨਹੀਂ ਕੀਤਾ, ਜਿਹੜੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਪਿਛੋਕੜ ਵਾਲੇ ਸਨ ਪਰ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਸਰੂਪ ਤਿਆਗ ਚੁੱਕੇ ਸਨ ਅਤੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਯੁਵਕਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਬਹੁਤ ਪ੍ਰਭਾਵਿਤ ਕਰਕੇ ਆਪਣੇ ਵਰਗੇ ਬਣਾ ਰਹੇ ਸਨ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਖਿਡਾਰੀ, ਪੌਪ ਸਿੰਗਰ, ਫਿਲਮ ਸਟਾਰ ਖਾਸ ਕਰਕੇ ਜ਼ਿਕਰਯੋਗ ਹਨ। ਸਿੱਖ ਯੁਵਕਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਗੁਸੈਲ ਅਤੇ ਫਿਕਰਮੰਦ ਬਜ਼ੁਰਗਾਂ ਨੇ ਟੋਕਿਆ ਅਤੇ ਕੋਸਿਆ ਤਾਂ ਜ਼ਰੂਰ ਹੈ ਪਰ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੇ ਮੀਡੀਏ ਤੋਂ ਬਚਾਉਣ ਦਾ ਕੋਈ ਹੱਲ ਨਾ ਲੱਭਾ। ਸਿੱਖ ਯੁਵਕ ਵੀ ਫੈਸ਼ਨ ਦੇ ਇਸ ਜ਼ਮਾਨੇ ਵਿਚ ਗੈਰ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਨਾਲੋਂ ਪਿਛੇ ਨਹੀਂ ਸਨ ਰਹਿਣਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ। ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਤਾਂ ਸੀ ਕਿ ਸਿੱਖ ਮਾਪੇ ਅਤੇ ਸੰਸਥਾਵਾਂ ਜਮਾਨੇ ਦੀ ਨਬਜ਼ ਪਹਿਚਾਣ ਕੇ, ਉਪਰਾਲਾ ਕਰਦੇ ਅਤੇ ਕੇਸ, ਦਸਤਾਰ ਨੂੰ ਵੀ ਫੈਸ਼ਨ ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਤੀਕ ਵਜੋਂ ਸਥਾਪਿਤ ਕਰਵਾਉਂਦੇ। ਇਸ ਪਾਸੇ ਕੁਝ ਵੀ ਨਾ ਕੀਤਾ ਗਿਆ। ਅਖੀਰ ਜੋ ਹੋਣਾ ਸੀ ਹੋ ਕੇ ਹੀ ਰਿਹਾ। ਫੈਸ਼ਨ ਦੇ ਰਾਹ ਵਿਚਲੀ ਰੁਕਾਵਟ ਕੇਸ ਅਤੇ ਪੱਗ ਅਲੋਪ ਹੀ ਹੁੰਦੇ ਜਾ ਰਹੇ ਹਨ। ਇਥੇ ਇਹ ਜ਼ਿਕਰ ਕੁਝਾਵਾਂ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੋਵੇਗਾ ਕਿ ਸਿੱਖ ਯੁਵਕ ਕੇਸ ਕਟਵਾ ਕੇ ਵੀ ਸਮਾਜਿਕ ਰੀਤਾਂ ਰਿਵਾਜਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਸਿੱਖ ਰਹੁ-ਰੀਤ ਦਾ ਹੀ ਪਾਲਣਾ ਕਰ ਰਹੇ ਹਨ। ਅੱਖੇ ਵੇਲੇ ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰੇ ਹੀ ਪ੍ਰਸ਼ਾਦ ਕਰਵਾਇਆ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਅਖੰਡ ਪਾਠ ਦੀ ਸੁਖਣਾ ਵੀ ਸੁੱਖੀ ਜਾਂਦੀ ਹੈ। ਭਾਵ ਇਹ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਕੇਸ ਤਾਂ ਜ਼ਰੂਰ ਕੱਟੇ ਗਏ ਹਨ ਪਰ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਦੀਆਂ ਜੜ੍ਹਾਂ ਅਜੇ ਨਹੀਂ ਕੱਟੀਆਂ ਗਈਆਂ। ਫਿਰ ਵੀ ਫਿਕਰ ਕਰਨਾ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਜਿਹੜਾ ਕੁਹਾੜਾ ਟਾਹਣੇ ਵੱਢ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ ਉਹ ਜੜ੍ਹਾਂ ਵੀ ਵੱਡ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ। ਸੋ ਸਾਵਧਾਨ ਹੋਣ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ।

ਸਿੱਖ ਸਰੂਪ ਦੀ ਕਥਿਤ ਅਸੁਵਿਧਾ

ਅੱਜਕਲ ਭੱਜ ਨੱਠ ਅਤੇ ਰਫਤਾਰ ਵਾਲੀ ਜ਼ਿੰਦਗੀ ਵਿੱਚ ਹਰ ਇਕ ਕੋਲ ਸਮੇਂ ਦੀ ਘਾਟ ਹੈ। ਲੰਮੇ ਕੇਸ ਸੰਭਾਲਣ ਅਤੇ ਸਾਢੇ ਅੱਠ ਮੀਟਰ ਦੀ ਪੱਗ ਬੰਨ੍ਹਣ ਲਈ ਨਿਸ਼ਚੇ ਹੀ ਸਮੇਂ ਅਤੇ ਹੁਨਰ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਉੱਤੇ ਖਰਚ ਵੀ ਆਉਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਸਭ ਨੂੰ ਫੈਸ਼ਨ ਅਤੇ ਦਿੱਖ ਪੱਖੋਂ ਵੀ ਘੋਖਿਆ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਕੋਈ ਵੀ ਯੁਵਕ ਭੱਦਾ ਜਾਂ ਸ਼ੈਲੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਦਿਸਣਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦਾ। ਜਮਾਨੇ ਨਾਲ ਹਰ ਕਦਮ ਹੋਣ ਵਾਲੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਵੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਸੰਸਥਾ ਨੇ ਪੱਗ ਅਤੇ ਕੇਸਾਂ ਦੀ ਸਹੂਲਤ ਵਾਲੀ ਸਾਭ ਸੰਭਾਲ ਅਤੇ ਦਿੱਖ ਦਾ ਫਿਕਰ ਫੈਸ਼ਨ ਪੱਖੋਂ ਨਹੀਂ ਕੀਤਾ। ਇਥੇ ਯਾਦ ਕਰਨਾ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਲਾਰਡ ਡਲਹੌਜ਼ੀ ਵੇਲੇ ਉਸ ਵਕਤ ਦੀ ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ ਸਰਕਾਰ ਵਲੋਂ ਸਿੱਖ ਫੌਜੀਆਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਦਾੜ੍ਹੀ ਦਾ ਖਿਆਲ ਕਰਕੇ ਦਾੜ੍ਹੀ ਲਈ ਜਾਲੀ ਬਣਵਾਈ ਗਈ ਸੀ। ਹੈਰਾਨੀ ਦੀ ਗੱਲ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਦਾੜ੍ਹੀ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੀ ਪਰ ਇਸ ਦੀ ਸਾਭ ਸੰਭਾਲ ਦੀ ਜਾਲੀ ਜਾਂ ਨੈੱਟ ਦੀ ਕਾਢ ਕੱਢੀ ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ਾ ਨੇ। ਜੇ ਦਾੜ੍ਹੀ ਨੂੰ ਡੋਰੀ ਵਿੱਚ ਬੰਨ੍ਹਣ ਸਮੇਂ ਬਾਜ਼ ਵਰਤਿਆ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ, ਇਹ ਵੀ ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ਾਂ ਦੀ ਹੀ ਦੇਣ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਬਾਜ਼ ਦਾ ਨਾਂ ਬੈਕਅੱਪ ਸੀ ਜੋ ਬਾਅਦ ਵਿਚ ਬਾਜ਼ ਬਣ ਗਿਆ। ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ਾਂ ਦੇ ਇਸ ਕਰਤੱਵ ਨਾਲ ਸਿੱਖ ਫੌਜੀਆਂ ਦੀ ਖਿਲਰੀ ਹੋਈ ਦਾੜ੍ਹੀ ਬੜੇ ਸੁਚੱਜੇ ਅਤੇ ਰੋਹਬਦਾਬ ਵਾਲੇ ਤਰੀਕੇ ਨਾਲ ਸਾਂਭੀ ਗਈ। ਮੈਂ ਅੱਜ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਸਾਰੇ ਸਤਿਕਾਰਯੋਗ ਸਿੱਖ ਬਜ਼ੁਰਗਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਪੁਛਣਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦਾ ਹਾਂ ਕਿ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਪਤਿਤ ਹੋਣ ਵਾਲੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਮੁੰਡਿਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਕੇਸਦੇ ਤਾਂ ਬਹੁਤ ਹੋ ਪਰ ਕੀ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀ ਦਾੜ੍ਹੀ ਅਤੇ ਪੱਗ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਬੰਧਿਤ ਮਸਲੇ, ਕਦੀ ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ਾਂ ਵਾਂਗ ਹੱਲ ਕਰਨ ਦਾ ਯਤਨ ਕੀਤਾ?

ਹਿੰਦੋਸਤਾਨ ਵਿਚ ਸਾਰੇ ਹੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਪਾਤਰਾਂ ਵਾਲੀ ਅਤੇ ਵੱਡੇ ਸਟਾਰਾਂ ਵਾਲੀ ਪਹਿਲੀ ਵਾਰ ਇਕ ਫਿਲਮ ਬਣੀ ਜਿਸ ਦਾ ਨਾਮ **ਨਾਨਕ ਨਾਮ ਜਹਾਜ਼** ਸੀ। ਇਸ ਫਿਲਮ ਦੇ ਗ਼ੈਰ ਸਿੱਖ ਪਾਤਰਾਂ ਨੇ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਵਿਚ ਆਪਣਾ ਰੋਲ ਅਦਾ ਕਰਨਾ ਸੀ। ਇਸ ਵਾਸਤੇ ਇਹਨਾਂ ਦਾ ਰੋਹਬਦਾਬ ਵਾਲੇ ਸੋਹਣੀ ਦਿੱਖ ਅਤੇ ਪ੍ਰਭਾਵਸ਼ਾਲੀ ਸ਼ਕਲ ਸੂਰਤ ਵਾਲੇ ਦਿਸਣਾ ਜ਼ਰੂਰੀ ਸੀ। ਇਹ ਮਸਲਾ ਫਿਲਮ ਦੇ ਡਾਇਰੈਕਟਰ ਨੇ ਹੱਲ ਕਰਨਾ ਸੀ। ਇਸ ਵਿਚ ਸਭ ਤੋਂ ਵੱਧ ਧਿਆਨ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਐਕਟਰਾਂ ਦੇ ਮੂੰਹ ਉੱਤੇ ਲਾਈ ਜਾਣ ਵਾਲੀ ਨਕਲੀ ਦਾੜ੍ਹੀ ਅਤੇ ਸਿਰ ਤੇ ਬੰਨੀ ਜਾਣ ਵਾਲੀ ਪੱਗ ਵੱਲ ਹੀ ਦੇਣਾ ਪੈਣਾ ਸੀ। ਫਿਲਮ ਦੇ ਕਾਸਟਿੰਗ ਡਾਇਰੈਕਟਰ ਨੂੰ ਕਈ ਮੁਸ਼ਕਲਾਂ ਪੇਸ਼ ਆਈਆਂ ਕਿਉਂਕਿ ਪੱਗ ਦਾ ਖੱਬੇ ਅਤੇ ਸੱਜੇ ਪਾਸਿਉਂ ਭਾਰਾ ਦਿਖਾ ਕੇ ਹੀ ਪਟਿਆਲਾ ਸ਼ਾਹੀ ਪ੍ਰਭਾਵ ਪਾਇਆ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਸੀ। ਇਸ ਮਸਲੇ ਨੂੰ ਹੱਲ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਡਾਇਰੈਕਟਰ ਨੇ ਪੱਗ ਦੀ ਲੰਬਾਈ ਘਟਾ ਕੇ ਚੌੜਾਈ ਵਧਾ ਦਿੱਤੀ।

ਇਸ ਤੋਂ ਉਸ ਨੂੰ ਪੱਗ ਦੇ ਵਿਚ ਸੀਣ ਪਾਉਣੀ ਪਈ। ਬਾਅਦ ਵਿਚ ਇਹ ਤਰੀਕਾ ਸਿੱਖ ਯੁਵਕਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਏਨੀ ਸਹੂਲਤ ਵਾਲਾ ਲੱਗਾ ਕਿ ਅੱਜ ਸੀਣ ਤੋਂ ਬਗ਼ੈਰ ਕੋਈ ਵੀ ਪੱਗ ਨੌਜਵਾਨ ਬੰਨਦਾ ਹੀ ਨਹੀਂ। ਵਿਚਾਰ ਕਰੋ ਕਿ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੀ ਪੱਗ ਅਤੇ ਦਾੜ੍ਹੀ ਬਾਰੇ ਜੋ ਵੀ ਦਿੱਖ ਪੱਖੋਂ ਇੰਪ੍ਰੋਵੈਮੈਂਟ ਹੋਈ ਉਹ ਜਾਂ ਤਾਂ ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ਾਂ ਨੇ ਕੀਤੀ ਜਾਂ ਫਿਰ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਫਿਲਮ ਨਿਰਮਾਤਾ ਮਹੇਸ਼ਵਰੀ ਬ੍ਰਦਰਜ਼ ਨੇ ਕੀਤੀ। ਕੀ ਇਹ ਸੋਚ ਕਿਸੇ ਉਸ ਸਿੱਖ ਦੇ ਮਨ ਵਿਚ ਨਹੀਂ ਸੀ ਆ ਸਕਦੀ ਜਿਹੜਾ ਨੌਜਵਾਨਾਂ ਦੇ ਕੇਸ ਕਟਾਏ ਜਾਣ ਤੇ ਸਦਾ ਹੀ ਕਲਪਦਾ ਰਹਿੰਦਾ ਹੈ। ਧਿਆਨ ਰਹੇ ਇਸ ਪਾਸੇ ਅਜੇ ਵੀ ਕੁਝ ਨਾ ਕੁਝ ਜ਼ਰੂਰ ਹੀ ਕੀਤਾ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ।

ਇਥੇ ਇਕ ਹੋਰ ਗੱਲ ਦਾ ਜ਼ਿਕਰ ਵੀ ਜ਼ਰੂਰੀ ਹੈ। ਜਿਸ ਸਟਾਇਲ ਦੀਆਂ ਪੱਗਾਂ ਅੱਜ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਅਤੇ ਮੈਂ ਸਜਾਈ ਬੈਠੇ ਹਾਂ ਇਹ ਕਿਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਹੋਂਦ ਵਿਚ ਆਈਆਂ? ਇਹ ਵੀ ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ਾਂ ਦੀ ਹੀ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਹੈ। ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਵਿਚੋਂ ਜਿਹੜੇ ਫੌਜ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਬੰਧਿਤ ਹਨ, ਉਹ ਪਗੜੀ-ਪਰੇਡ ਤੋਂ ਜ਼ਰੂਰ ਹੀ ਵਾਕਫ਼ ਹੋਣਗੇ। ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ ਫੌਜੀ ਅਫ਼ਸਰਾਂ ਨੇ ਪੱਗ ਦੀ ਲੰਬਾਈ ਅਤੇ ਪੇਚ ਨਿਰਧਾਰਤ ਕੀਤੇ। ਜਿਸ ਦਾ ਉਦੇਸ਼ ਪ੍ਰਭਾਵਸ਼ਾਲੀ ਰੋਹਬਦਾਬ ਵਾਲੀ ਸਰਦਾਰੀ ਦਿੱਖ ਅਤੇ ਥੋੜ੍ਹੇ ਸਮੇਂ ਵਿਚ ਤਿਆਰੀ ਸੀ। ਕੀ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਸਰੂਪ ਦੇ ਹੋ ਰਹੇ ਖਾਤਮੇ ਦੇ ਇਸ ਪ੍ਰਮੁੱਖ ਕਾਰਨ ਉੱਤੇ ਕਿਸੇ ਨੇ ਧਿਆਨ ਦਿੱਤਾ?

ਇਕ ਗੱਲ ਸਾਰੇ ਸਮਝ ਲੈਣ। ਮੈਂ ਹਵਾਲਾ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਰਾਜਨੀਤਕ ਮਹਾਤਮਾ ਗਾਂਧੀ ਦਾ ਦੇ ਰਿਹਾ ਹਾਂ। ਮਹਾਤਮਾ ਗਾਂਧੀ ਦਾ ਪੁੱਤਰ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਨ ਬਣ ਗਿਆ ਸੀ ਅਤੇ ਕਿਸੇ ਬੰਦੇ ਨੇ ਇਸ ਨੂੰ ਘੋਰ ਅਨਰਥ ਕਹਿ ਕੇ ਮਹਾਤਮਾ ਗਾਂਧੀ ਨਾਲ ਅਫਸੋਸ ਕੀਤਾ। ਜਵਾਬ ਵਿਚ ਮਹਾਤਮਾ ਗਾਂਧੀ ਨੇ ਕਿਹਾ ਸੀ ਕਿ ਕੋਈ ਫਰਕ ਨਹੀਂ ਪੈਂਦਾ, ਮੇਰਾ ਪੁੱਤਰ ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਹੁਣ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਨ ਹੈ ਉਹ ਇਸ ਤੋਂ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਕੁ ਹੀ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਸੀ। ਇਸੇ ਹੀ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਜਿਹੜੇ ਸਾਡੇ ਕੇਸ ਕਟਾ ਚੁੱਕੇ ਹਨ, ਉਹ ਹੁਣ ਵੀ ਉਹਨੇ ਹੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਹਨ ਜਿੰਨੇ ਉਹ ਕੇਸ ਕਟਾਉਣ ਤੋਂ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਸਨ। ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਕੇਸ ਕਟਾਉਣਾ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਤੋਂ ਵਧੀ ਹੋਈ ਉਦਾਸੀਨਤਾ ਜਾਂ ਦੂਰੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੈ, ਬਲਕਿ ਨਿੱਜੀ ਅਸੁਵਿਧਾ ਹੈ। ਜਿਸ ਦਾ ਕਾਰਨ ਫੈਸ਼ਨ ਦੇ ਖੇਤਰ ਵਿਚ ਗੈਰ ਸਿੱਖ ਯੁਵਕਾਂ ਦੇ ਬਰਾਬਰ ਹੋਣ ਦੀ ਇੱਛਾ ਹੈ।

ਅੰਤ ਵਿਚ ਮੈਂ ਕੁਝ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਨੌਜਵਾਨਾਂ ਦੇ ਨਾਂ ਦੱਸਦਾ ਹਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਪੁੱਛਦਾ ਹਾਂ ਕਿ ਉਹ ਗੈਰ-ਸਿੱਖ ਹੋ ਕੇ ਵੀ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਸਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਕਿਉਂ ਹਨ? ਮੂਲ ਰਾਜ ਸ਼ਰਮਾ, ਹਰ ਰਾਜ, ਸੀ ਮਾਰਕੰਡਾ ਅਤੇ ਕੁਝ ਪ੍ਰਸਿੱਧ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਲੇਖਕ ਜਿਵੇਂ ਕਿ ਰਾਮ ਸਰੂਪ ਅਣਖੀ ਅਤੇ ਓਮ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ ਗਾਸੇ, ਜੈ ਕ੍ਰਿਸ਼ਨ ਕੋਸ਼ਲ, ਆਦਿ?

ਕੇਸ ਕਟਾ ਚੁੱਕੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਨੌਜਵਾਨਾਂ ਦੀ ਬਹੁਤੀ ਗਿਣਤੀ ਅੱਜ ਵੀ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਤੋਂ ਉਨ੍ਹੀ ਹੀ ਦੂਰ ਜਾਂ ਨੇੜੇ ਹੈ, ਜਿੰਨੀ ਕਿ ਉਹ ਕੇਸ ਰੱਖਣ ਸਮੇਂ ਸਨ। ਸੇ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਦੀ ਅਕਲ-ਸ਼ਕਲ ਨੂੰ ਸਮਾਜਿਕ ਰਹਿਣੀ ਬਹਿਣੀ ਨਾਲ ਜੋੜਨ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਇਸ ਲਈ ਜੇ ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ ਸਿੱਖ ਫੌਜੀਆਂ ਲਈ ਤਰੀਕੇ ਲੱਭ ਸਕਦੇ ਸਨ, **ਨਾਨਕ ਨਾਮ ਜਹਾਜ਼** ਦਾ ਨਿਰਮਾਤਾ ਸੀਣ ਵਾਲੀ ਪੱਗ ਪ੍ਰਚਲਤ ਕਰ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਵੀ ਕੁਝ ਨਾ ਕੁਝ ਜਰੂਰ ਕਰ ਸਕਦੇ ਹੋ। ਯਾਦ ਇਹ ਵੀ ਰੱਖਣਾ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਸਰੂਪ ਅਤੇ ਭੇਖ ਬਾਰੇ ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਵਿਚ ਕੀ ਆਖਿਆ ਗਿਆ ਹੈ ਪਰ ਸਰੂਪ ਦਾ ਮਹੱਤਵ ਕਦੇ ਵੀ ਨਕਾਰਿਆ ਨਹੀਂ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ। ਇਸ ਵਾਸਤੇ ਬੇਝਿਜਕ ਹੋ ਕੇ ਕਿਸੇ ਫੈਸ਼ਨ ਮਾਹਿਰ ਦੀ ਮਦਦ ਲੈ ਲੈਣੀ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ। ਅਸੀਂ ਪਤਲੂਨਾਂ, ਕਮੀਜਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਸਫ਼ਾਰੀ ਸੂਟ ਫੈਸ਼ਨ ਡਿਜ਼ਾਈਨਰਾਂ ਦੇ ਬਣਾਏ ਹੋਏ ਹੀ ਤਾਂ ਵਰਤ ਰਹੇ ਹਾਂ।

□

*Except through the True Guru's instruction,
There is no other way to perform Lord's devotional service.
O' my Soul! extinguish the fire through the Guru.
Abide by Guru's word within thy mind
And still thy ego and desire.*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 22

ਹੋਰੁ ਕਿਤੈ ਭਗਤਿ ਨ ਹੋਵਈ ਬਿਨੁ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਕੇ ਉਪਦੇਸ ॥
ਮਨ ਰੇ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਅਗਨਿ ਨਿਵਾਰਿ ॥
ਗੁਰ ਕਾ ਕਹਿਆ ਮਨਿ ਵਸੈ ਹਉਮੈ ਤ੍ਰਿਸਨਾ ਮਾਰਿ ॥

ਸੰਸਾਰ ਸਿੱਖ ਸੰਗਠਨ ਅੱਗੇ ਚੁਣੌਤੀਆਂ

ਸੁਖਦੇਵ ਸਿੰਘ*

ਅੱਜ ਸਿੱਖ ਕੌਮ ਸੰਸਾਰ ਮੁਖੀ ਹੋ ਕੇ, ਸੰਸਾਰ ਪੱਧਰ ਤੇ ਵਿਚਰ ਰਹੀ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਖੁਸ਼ੀ ਦਾ ਮੁਕਾਮ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਸੰਸਾਰ ਸਿੱਖ ਸੰਗਠਨ ਕੌਮ ਨੂੰ ਦਰਪੇਸ਼ ਚੁਣੌਤੀਆਂ ਪ੍ਰਤੀ ਚਿੰਤਨ ਹੋ ਕੇ, ਸਾਰੇ ਹੀ ਪੰਥ ਨੂੰ ਵੀ ਚੇਤਨਾ ਦੇਣ ਦਾ ਓਪਰਾਲਾ ਕਰ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ। ਸਿੱਖ ਕੌਮ ਦੇ ਵਿਸਥਾਰ ਅਤੇ ਵਿਕਾਸ ਲਈ ਸਿੱਖ ਸਮਾਜ ਨੂੰ ਕੁਝ ਅਣਗੌਲੇ ਅਤੇ ਭੁੱਲੇ ਵਿਸ਼ੇ ਖੇਤਰਾਂ ਉੱਤੇ ਧਿਆਨ ਜ਼ਰੂਰ ਹੀ ਦੇਣਾ ਪਵੇਗਾ। ਸਿੱਖ ਕੌਮ ਦੀ ਬਹੁਗਿਣਤੀ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਗ੍ਰੰਥਾਂ ਦਾ ਤਿਆਗ ਤਾਂ ਕਰ ਹੀ ਚੁੱਕੀ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਇਸ ਦੇ ਨਾਲ ਦੋ ਕਰੋੜ ਦੀ ਛੋਟੀ ਜਿਹੀ ਗਿਣਤੀ ਨੂੰ ਹਕੀਕਤ ਮੰਨ ਕੇ, ਕਮਜ਼ੋਰੀ ਨੂੰ ਹੋਰ ਵਧਾਇਆ ਜਾ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ। ਕਿਸੇ ਬਾਗ ਵਿਚ ਸਿਰਫ ਪੰਜ ਦਸ ਦਰਖਤ ਹੀ ਹੋ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਨ ਪਰ ਨਰਸਰੀਆਂ ਵੱਲ ਧਿਆਨ ਦਿਵਾ ਕੇ ਸੰਬੰਧਿਤ ਕਾਰਜ ਦੇ ਰੂਪ ਰੇਖਾ ਪ੍ਰਤੀ ਚੇਤਨਤਾ ਦੇਣੀ ਹੈ। ਵਣਜਾਰੇ, ਸਿਕਲੀਗਰ, ਜੌਹਰੀ ਸਤਿਨਾਮੀ ਪੰਜਾਬੋਂ ਬਾਹਰ ਵਸਦੇ ਰਵੀਦਾਸੀਏ, ਕਬੀਰ ਪੰਥੀ, ਨਾਮਦੇਵੀਏ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰ ਅਨੇਕਾਂ ਨਿਗੁਣ-ਭਗਤਾਂ ਦੇ ਅਨੁਆਈਆਂ ਦੀ ਕਰੋੜਾਂ ਦੀ ਗਿਣਤੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਕੌਮ ਦੇ ਬਾਗ ਨੂੰ ਵਧਾਉਣ ਲਈ ਨਰਸਰੀਆਂ ਹੀ ਤਾਂ ਹਨ। ਇਸ ਸੰਬੰਧੀ ਵਿਚਾਰ ਕੀਤਾ ਜਾ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ।

ਸਿੱਖ ਕੌਮ ਦੀ ਵਰਤਮਾਨ ਅਵਸਥਾ, ਗਿਣਤੀ ਪਖੋਂ ਬਹੁਤ ਹੀ ਚਿੰਤਾਜਨਕ ਹੈ। ਹੁਣੇ-ਹੁਣੇ ਹੋਈ ਮਰਦਮਸ਼ੁਮਾਰੀ ਵਿਚ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੀ ਗਿਣਤੀ ਦੋ ਕਰੋੜ ਤੋਂ ਵੀ ਲਗਭਗ, ੯ ਲੱਖ ਘੱਟ, ਮੰਨੀ ਗਈ ਏ। ਇਹ ਸਭ ਕੁਝ ਗਿਣਤੀ ਅਤੇ ਹਿਸਾਬ-ਕਿਤਾਬ ਦੀ ਹੀ ਗੱਲ ਨਹੀਂ ਬਲਕਿ ਕਈ ਸਵਾਲਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਜਨਮ ਦੇਣ ਵਾਲੀ ਘਟਨਾ ਹੈ। ਸਾਨੂੰ ਇਤਿਹਾਸ ਯਾਦ ਕਰਵਾਏਗਾ ਕਿ ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਦੇਵ ਜੀ, ਆਪਣੀਆਂ ਚਾਰ ਉਦਾਸੀਆਂ, ਦੌਰਾਨ ਹਿੰਦੁਸਤਾਨ ਅਤੇ ਨਾਲ ਲਗਦੇ ਦੇਸ਼ ਅਫਗਾਨਿਸਤਾਨ, ਈਰਾਕ, ਈਰਾਨ, ਤਿੱਬਤ ਅਤੇ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਲੰਕਾ ਆਦਿ ਤੱਕ ਗਏ ਸਨ। ਹਿੰਦੋਸਤਾਨ ਦਾ ਵਿਸ਼ਾਲ ਖੇਤਰ ਅਤੇ ਆਬਾਦੀ ਹੀ ਆਪਣੇ ਆਪ ਵਿਚ ਇਕ ਬਹੁਤ ਵੱਡਾ ਤੱਥ ਹੈ। ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਦੇਵ ਜੀ ਜਿਥੇ ਜਾਂਦੇ ਸਨ ਕਿਸੇ ਸੈਰ ਸਪਾਟੇ ਲਈ ਨਹੀਂ ਜਾਂਦੇ ਸਨ। ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੇ ਇਹ ਕਦੇ ਵੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਕੀਤਾ ਕਿ ਕਿਸੇ ਥਾਂ ਅਰਾਮ ਦਾ ਇਕ ਥਾਂ ਲੱਭ ਕੇ ਰਾਤ ਕੱਟੀ ਅਤੇ ਅਗਲੀ ਸਵੇਰ ਕਿਸੇ ਅਗਲੇ ਪੜਾਅ ਵਲ ਤੁਰ ਪਏ। ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦਾ ਕਿਸੇ ਵੀ ਥਾਂ ਤੇ ਜਾਣ ਦਾ ਇਕ ਵਿਸ਼ੇਸ਼ ਉਦੇਸ਼ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਸੀ। ਅਸੀਂ ਚੰਗੀ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਜਾਣਦੇ ਹਾਂ ਕਿ ਇਹ ਵਿਸ਼ੇਸ਼ ਉਦੇਸ਼ ਕੇਵਲ ਧਰਮ ਪ੍ਰਚਾਰ ਸੀ। ਉਹ ਇਕ ਪ੍ਰਭਾਵਸ਼ਾਲੀ ਵਕਤਾ ਅਤੇ ਪ੍ਰਚਾਰਕ ਸਨ। ਰੱਬੀ ਸ਼ਕਤੀਆਂ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਕੋਲ ਸਨ। ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀ ਵਿਦਵਤਾ ਅਤੇ ਸਮਝਦਾਰੀ ਬਹੁਤ ਹੀ ਉੱਚੀ ਸੀ। ਜਿੱਥੇ ਉਹ ਜਾਂਦੇ, ਉਥੇ ਦੇ ਲੋਕਾਂ ਦੀ ਮਨੋਵਿਗਿਆਨਕ ਰਹਿਣੀ-ਬਹਿਣੀ, ਵਹਿਮ ਭਰਮ ਅਤੇ ਅਗਿਆਨਤਾ ਨੂੰ ਚੰਗੀ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਸਮਝਦੇ ਸਨ। ਇਸ ਸਭ ਅਨੁਸਾਰ ਹੀ ਉਹ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਲੋਕਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਉਪਦੇਸ਼ ਕਰਦੇ ਅਤੇ ਜੀਵਨ ਦੇ ਚੰਗੇ ਰਾਹਾਂ ਉਤੇ ਤੋਰਦੇ। ਇਹ ਚੰਗਾ ਰਾਹ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਦਾ ਹੀ ਰਾਹ ਸੀ। ਇਸ ਉੱਤੇ ਕੋਈ ਸ਼ੰਕਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਕਰ ਸਕਦਾ ਕਿ ਗੁਰੂ

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ਨਾਨਕ ਦੇਵ ਜੀ ਨੇ ਬੇਅੰਤ ਲੋਕਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਸਿੱਖ ਬਣਾਇਆ, ਧਰਮਸ਼ਾਲਾਵਾਂ ਸਥਾਪਿਤ ਕੀਤੀਆਂ ਅਤੇ ਉਥੇ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਤੋਂ ਬਾਅਦ ਥਾਪਿਆ ਗਿਆ ਮੁਖੀ ਨਿਰੰਤਰ ਧਰਮ ਪ੍ਰਚਾਰ ਸਤਿਸੰਗ ਅਤੇ ਸਮਾਜਿਕ ਕਾਰਜ ਕਰਦਾ ਰਿਹਾ। ਜੇ ਮਿਸਾਲ ਦੇਣੀ ਹੋਵੇ ਤਾਂ ਕੌਡਾ ਰਾਕਸ਼ ਜੋ ਆਂਧਰਾ ਪ੍ਰਦੇਸ਼ ਦੇ ਜੰਗਲੀ ਅਤੇ ਪਹਾੜੀ ਇਲਾਕੇ ਦਾ ਆਦਮਖੋਰ ਸੀ ਪਰ ਹੈ ਸੀ ਚੰਗੇ ਗਿਆਨ ਵਾਲਾ। ਇਸ ਕੌਡੇ ਰਾਕਸ਼ ਦਾ ਨਾਂ ਇਹਦੇ ਆਦਮਖੋਰ ਹੋਂਦ ਕਰਕੇ ਅਤੇ ਕਿਸੇ ਪਹਾੜੀ ਦੇ ਆਸ ਪਾਸ ਰਹਿਣ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੀ ਪਿਆ ਹੋਵੇਗਾ ਕਿਉਂਕਿ ਆਂਧਰਾ ਪ੍ਰਦੇਸ਼ ਦੀ ਤੇਲਗੂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਕੌਡੇ ਸ਼ਬਦ ਦਾ ਅਰਥ ਪਹਾੜ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ। ਇਸੇ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਸੱਜਣ ਠੱਗ, ਦੇਵ ਲੂਤ, ਬੰਗਾਲ ਦੀ ਜਾਦੂਗਰਨੀ ਜਿਸ ਨੇ ਮਰਦਾਨੇ ਨੂੰ ਭੇਡ ਬਣਾਇਆ ਕਿਹਾ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰ ਅਨੇਕਾਂ ਜਿਹੜੇ ਆਸਾਮ, ਬੰਗਾਲ, ਉੜੀਸਾ, ਲੰਕਾ, ਤਿੱਬਤ, ਚੀਨ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰ ਮੁਸਲਿਮ ਦੇਸ਼ਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਸਨ ਉਹ ਸਾਰੇ ਹੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਦੇ ਚਰਨੀ ਲੱਗ ਕੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਬਣ ਗਏ ਸਨ ਅਤੇ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਆਉਣ ਵਾਲੇ ਖਾਨਦਾਨਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਪ੍ਰਫੁੱਲਿਤ ਹੋ ਕੇ ਵਧਦੀ ਰਹੀ ਸੀ। ਮਹਾਂਰਾਸ਼ਟਰ ਤੇ ਆਂਧਰਾ ਦੇ ਨਾਇਕ ਲੋਕ, ਈਰਾਕ ਅਤੇ ਅਫ਼ਗਾਨਿਸਤਾਨ ਦੇ ਕੁੱਝ ਕਬੀਲੇ ਇਸ ਸਭ ਦੇ ਅੱਜਕਲ ਵੀ ਪੱਕੇ ਸਬੂਤ ਹਨ।

ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਦੇਵ ਜੀ ਵਲੋਂ ਚਲਾਇਆ ਗਿਆ ਸਿਲਸਿਲਾ ਅਗਲੀਆਂ ਪਾਤਸ਼ਾਹੀਆਂ ਵਿਚ ਵੀ ਚਲਦਾ ਰਿਹਾ। ਕਾਬਲੀ ਸੰਗਤ, ਬਨਾਰਸੀ ਸੰਗਤ, ਦਿੱਲੀ ਵਾਲੀ, ਕਸ਼ਮੀਰੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰ ਬਹੁਤ ਸਾਰੀਆਂ ਸੰਗਤਾਂ ਦਾ ਜ਼ਿਕਰ ਸਿੱਖ ਇਤਿਹਾਸ ਵਿੱਚ ਆਉਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਆਸਾਮੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀ ਅਜੇ ਪਿਛਲੇ ਸਾਲ ਹੀ ਇਕ ਪੁਸਤਕ “ਠਹੌਟਹੌਟ ਸ਼ਕਿਹਸ” ਇਕ ਬੰਗਾਲੀ ਵਿਦਵਾਨ ਵਲੋਂ ਛਪੀ ਹੈ, ਇਹ ਸਿੱਖ ਨੌਵੇਂ ਪਾਤਸ਼ਾਹ ਵੇਲੇ ਸਜੇ ਸਨ। ਪਿਛੇ ਜਿਹੇ ਜਦੋਂ ਅਗਰਵਾਲ ਸਮਾਜ ਨੇ ਆਪਣੇ ਪੁਰਖੇ ਅਗਰਸੇਨ ਦੀ ਰਾਜਧਾਨੀ ਅਗਰੇਹੀ ਦਾ ਪੁਨਰ ਨਿਰਮਾਣ ਕੀਤਾ ਤਾਂ ਉਥੇ ਵੱਡੀ ਗਿਣਤੀ ਵਿੱਚ ਅਗੇਰੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਵੀ ਸ਼ਾਮਲ ਹੋਏ।

ਇਹ ਅਗਰਵਾਲ ਸਿੱਖ ਨੌਵੇਂ ਪਾਤਸ਼ਾਹ ਵੇਲੇ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਵਿਚ ਪ੍ਰਵਿਸ਼ਟ ਹੋਏ ਸਨ। ਇਸੇ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਮਹਾਰਾਣਾ ਪ੍ਰਤਾਪ ਨੂੰ ਔਖੇ ਵੇਲੇ ਮਾਇਕ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੇਣ ਵਾਲਾ ਸੇਠ ਭਾਮਾਸ਼ਾਹ ਇਕ ਉਦਾਸੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਸੀ। ਅੱਜ ਹਿੰਦੋਸਤਾਨ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਰ ਕਰੋੜ ਦੇ ਆਸ-ਪਾਸ ਬਾਬਾ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਚੰਦ ਨੂੰ ਮੰਨਣ ਵਾਲੇ ਉਦਾਸੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਹਨ, ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨਾਲ ਸਹੀ ਰਾਬਤਾ ਨਾ ਰਹਿਣ ਕਰਕੇ ਉਹ ਬਾਬਾ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਚੰਦ ਨੂੰ ਵਿਸ਼ਨੂੰ ਦੇ ਅਵਤਾਰ ਦਾ ਅਖੀਰਲਾ ਰੂਪ ਮੰਨ ਕੇ ਉਦਾਆਸੀਨ ਸਿੱਖ ਕਹਾਉਂਦੇ ਹਨ, ਜਿਸਦਾ ਭਾਵ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਪਹਿਲਾ ਅਵਤਾਰ ਵਿਸ਼ਨੂੰ, ਜਿਸ ਤੋਂ ਧਰਮ ਚੱਲਿਆ ਤੇ ਅਖੀਰਲਾ ਅਵਤਾਰ ਬਾਬਾ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਚੰਦ ਜਿਸ ਤੋਂ ਅਸਤ ਜਾਂ ਅਸੀਨ ਹੋਇਆ। ਅਲਾਹਬਾਦ, ਬਨਾਰਸ, ਹਰਿਦੁਆਰ ਦੇ ਆਸ-ਪਾਸ ਦੀਆਂ ਪਹਾੜੀਆਂ ਵਿਚ ਉਦਾਸੀ ਮੱਠਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਆਸ਼ਰਮਾਂ ਦੀ ਵਿਸ਼ਾਲਤਾ ਅਤੇ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਸੇਵਕੀ ਵੇਖਿਆ ਹੀ ਪਤਾ ਲੱਗਦਾ ਹੈ। ਨਿਰਮਲੇ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦਾ ਵੀ ਕੋਈ ਘੱਟ ਪ੍ਰਭਾਵ ਨਹੀਂ। ਇਸ ਤੋਂ ਬਗੈਰ ਜੋ ਅੱਜਕਲ੍ਹ ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਬਾਰੇ ਕਾਫੀ ਚਰਚਾ ਚਲ ਰਹੀ ਹੈ ਉਹ ਹਨ, ਸਿਕਲੀਗਰ, ਵਣਜਾਰੇ, ਜੌਹਰੀ, ਸਤਿਨਾਮੀ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰ ਕਈ ਕਬੀਲੇ ਅਤੇ ਜਨਜਾਤੀਆਂ। ਵਣਜਾਰੇ ਅਤੇ ਸਿਕਲੀਗਰ ਆਪਣੇ ਗੌਰਵਮਈ, ਬਹਾਦੁਰ ਅਤੇ ਖੁਸ਼ਹਾਲ ਪਿਛੋਕੜ ਕਰਕੇ, ਗੁਰੂ ਕਾਲ ਵਿਚ ਕੌਮ ਦੀ ਰੀੜ ਦੀ ਹੱਡੀ ਬਣੇ ਰਹੇ ਹਨ। ਜਦੋਂ ਸਿੱਖ ਕੌਮ ਉਤੇ ੧੭੧੧ ਤੋਂ ਬਾਅਦ ਸੰਕਟ ਆਉਣੇ ਸ਼ੁਰੂ ਹੋਏ ਤਾਂ ਸਿੱਖ ਕੌਮ ਦੇ ਇਹ ਸਾਰੇ ਹੀ ਅੰਗ ਖੇਰੂ-ਖੇਰੂ ਹੋਏ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਕਿ ਕਿਸੇ ਕੀਮਤੀ ਮੋਤੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਲੱਭਣਾ ਵੀ ਮੁਸ਼ਕਿਲ ਹੋ ਗਿਆ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਉਤੇ ਕਈ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀ ਧੂੜ-ਮਿੱਟੀ ਆਦਿਕ ਜੰਮ ਕੇ ਇਹ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਗੁਣਾਂ ਦੀ ਚਮਕ ਵੀ ਘਟਾ ਬੈਠੇ। ਬਦਕਿਸਮਤੀ ਦੀ ਗੱਲ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਨਾਲ ਸਾਰੀਆਂ ਗਤੀਵਿਧੀਆਂ ਪੰਜਾਬ ਵਿਚ ਹੀ ਕੇਂਦਰਿਤ ਰਹੀਆਂ ਅਤੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਕੌਮ ਦੇ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਅੰਗਾਂ ਨਾਲ ਕਿਸੇ ਨੇ ਰਾਬਤਾ ਨਾ ਰੱਖਿਆ। ਜਿਸ ਦਾ ਨਤੀਜਾ ਇਹ ਹੋਇਆ ਕਿ ਇਹ ਲੋਕ ਮੁਖ ਧਾਰਾ ਤੋਂ ਕੱਟ ਕੇ ਕੇਵਲ ਆਪਣੀਆਂ ਹੱਦਾਂ ਦੇ ਵਿਚ ਹੀ ਬੰਦ ਹੋ ਕੇ ਰਹਿ ਗਏ। ਅੱਗੇ ਜਾ ਕੇ ਇਹ ਸਿਰਫ਼ ਨਾਨਕ ਨਾਮ ਹੀ ਯਾਦ ਰੱਖ ਸਕੇ। ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਅਤੇ ਗੁਰਮੁਖੀ ਵੀ ਭੁੱਲ ਗਏ।

ਹੁਣੇ ਹੁਣੇ ਕਿਹਾ ਗਿਆ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਇਹ ਬਦਕਿਸਮਤੀ ਦੀ ਗੱਲ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਸਿੱਖ ਸਮਾਜ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਬੰਧਿਤ ਸਾਰੀਆਂ ਹੀ ਗਤੀਵਿਧੀਆਂ ਕੇਵਲ ਪੰਜਾਬ ਵਿਚ ਹੀ ਸਿਮਟ ਕੇ ਰਹਿ ਗਈਆਂ। ਇਥੇ ਇਹ ਵੀ ਯਾਦ ਕਰਨਾ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਇਹ ਦੁਖਾਂਤ ੧੮੪੯ ਤੋਂ ਬਾਅਦ ਵਰਤ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਤੋਂ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਤਾਂ ਸਿੱਖ ਯੋਧੇ ਪੇਸ਼ਾਵਰ ਤੱਕ ਨੂੰ ਆਪਣੇ ਘੋੜਿਆਂ ਦੇ ਪੌੜਾਂ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਲਿਤਾੜਦੇ ਰਹੇ ਸਨ। ਸ਼ੇਰੇ-ਏ-ਪੰਜਾਬ ਮਹਾਰਾਜਾ ਰਣਜੀਤ ਸਿੰਘ ਦੇ ਦਾਦਾ ਜੀ ਸਰਦਾਰ ਚੜਤ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੰਮੂ ਅਤੇ ਸ਼ਿਵਾਲਿਕ ਦੀਆਂ ਪਹਾੜੀਆਂ ਵਿਚ ਕਿਸੇ ਰਜਵਾੜੇ ਦੀ ਮਦਦ ਅਤੇ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੇ ਵਿਰੋਧ ਵਿਚ ਮੁਹਿੰਮਾਂ ਤੇ ਆਉਂਦਾ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਰਿਹਾ ਸੀ। ਇਸ ਤੋਂ ਵੀ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਕਾਬਲ ਵਿਚ ਅਹਿਮਦ ਸ਼ਾਹ ਅਬਦਾਲੀ ਅਤੇ ਉਸਦੇ ਜ਼ਮਾਨ ਖਾਨ ਵਰਗੇ ਉਤਰਾਧਿਕਾਰੀ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਬਾਰੇ ਬਹੁਤ ਕੁੱਝ ਸੋਚਣ ਸਮਝਣ ਦਾ ਯਤਨ ਕਰਦੇ ਰਹੇ ਹਨ। ਰੁਹੇਲਖੰਡ ਦਾ ਇਕ ਰੁਹੇਲ ਸਰਦਾਰ ਸਿੱਖ ਸਜ ਗਿਆ ਸੀ, ਜਿਸ ਬਾਰੇ ਸਿਰਦਾਰ ਕਪੂਰ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੀ ਨੇ ਬੜੇ ਵਿਸਥਾਰ ਨਾਲ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਹੈ। ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਹਵਾਲਿਆਂ ਤੋਂ ਇਸ਼ਾਰਾ ਇਸ ਪਾਸੇ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਸਿੱਖ ਸਮਾਜ ਨਾਲ ਗਤੀਵਿਧੀਆਂ ਪੰਜਾਬ ਤੱਕ ਹੀ ਸੀਮਿਤ ਨਹੀਂ ਸਨ। ੧੮੪੯ ਤੋਂ ਬਾਅਦ ਜਦੋਂ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਨੇ ਇਕ ਖਾਸ ਕਿਸਮ ਦੀ ਹਾਰ ਸਵੀਕਾਰ ਕਰ ਲਈ ਤਾਂ ਪੇਂਡੂ ਜੱਟ ਜਮੀਨਾਂ ਉਤੇ ਬਹਿ ਗਏ ਅਤੇ ਸ਼ਹਿਰੀ ਅਰੋੜੇ, ਖੱਤਰੀ ਵਣਜ-ਵਪਾਰ ਵਿਚ ਲੱਗ ਕੇ ਬਸ ਢਿੱਡ ਭਰਨ ਦੇ ਆਹਰ ਹੀ ਲੱਗੇ ਰਹੇ। ਸਿੱਖੀ ਕਾਰਜਾਂ ਦਾ ਮਾੜਾ ਹਾਲ ਸੀ। ਇਰਾਕ ਤੋਂ ਕਾਬਲ, ਕਾਬਲ ਤੋਂ ਅਸਾਮ, ਅਸਾਮ ਤੋਂ ਲੰਕਾ ਦੇ ਵਿਚਕਾਰ ਬੈਠੇ ਹੋਏ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੀ ਸੂਝ ਬੂਝ ਕਿਸੇ ਨੂੰ ਨਹੀਂ ਸੀ, ਜਿਸਦਾ ਨਤੀਜਾ ਇਹ ਨਿਕਲਿਆ ਕਿ ੨੦੦੧ ਵਿਚ ਹੋਣ ਵਾਲੀ ਮਰਦਮਸ਼ੁਮਾਰੀ ਵਿਚ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੀ ਗਿਣਤੀ ਦੇ ਕਰੋੜ ਤੋਂ ਵੀ ੯ ਲੱਖ ਘੱਟ ਆਂਕੀ ਗਈ, ਜੋ ਸੱਚ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਕਮਜ਼ੋਰ ਹੁੰਦੀ ਜਾ ਰਹੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਕੌਮ ਨੂੰ ਖਾਤਮੇ ਵੱਲ ਦਿੱਤਾ ਜਾਣ ਵਾਲਾ ਇਕ ਹੋਰ ਧੱਕਾ ਹੈ।

ਸਮਝਿਆ ਇਹ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਸਿੱਖ ਅਖਵਾਉਣ ਵਾਲਿਆਂ ਦੇ ਘਰ ਪੈਦਾ ਹੋਣ ਵਾਲੀ ਔਲਾਦ ਹੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਹੁੰਦੀ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਜੰਮਣ ਅਤੇ ਵਧਣ-ਫੁੱਲਣ ਵਾਲੀ ਨਸਲ ਭਾਵੇਂ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਦੀ ਰਹਿਤ ਛੱਡ ਕੇ ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਤੋਂ ਬਿਲਕੁਲ ਹੀ ਅਣਜਾਣ ਕਿਉਂ ਨਾ ਹੋਵੇ। ਅੱਜ ਮਾਝੇ, ਦੁਆਬੇ ਆਦਿ ਵਿਚ ਨਸ਼ਿਆਂ ਵਿਚ ਗਰਕਿਆ ਨੌਜਵਾਨ ਕੇਸਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਦਸਤਾਰ ਤੋਂ ਹੀਣਾ ਹੋ ਕੇ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਗੌਰਵ ਤੋਂ ਹੀਣਾ ਹੋ ਚੁੱਕਾ ਹੈ। ਜਿਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਪੰਜਾਬ ਦੇ ਦਰਿਆਵਾਂ ਦਾ ਪਾਣੀ ਤਾਂ ਲੁੱਟ ਲਿਆ ਹੈ ਪਰ ਸੁੱਕੇ ਦਰਿਆ ਦੇ ਵਹਿਣ ਨੂੰ ਅਜੇ ਵੀ ਦਰਿਆ ਹੀ ਆਖਿਆ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਇਸੇ ਹੀ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਦੀ ਰਹਿਤ ਛੱਡ ਚੁੱਕੇ ਨੌਜਵਾਨਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਵੀ, ਜੇ ਉਚਿਤ ਸਮਝੇ ਤਾਂ ਸਿੱਖ ਆਖੀ ਜਾਉ। ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਭਟਕੇ ਹੋਏ ਨੌਜਵਾਨਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਨਾ ਤਾਂ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਉੱਤੇ ਫ਼ਖਰ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਨਾ ਹੀ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਗੌਰਵ ਦੀ ਸੂਝ। ਦੂਜੇ ਪਾਸੇ, ਵਣਜਾਰੇ ਅਤੇ ਸਿਕਲੀਗਰ ਇਹ ਯਾਦ ਕਰਕੇ ਆਪਣੇ ਅੰਦਰ ਉਮਾਹ ਦਾ ਸੰਚਾਰ ਕਰਦੇ ਹਨ ਕਿ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਵੱਡੇ-ਵੱਡੇ ਭਾਈ ਬਚਿੱਤਰ ਸਿੰਘ, ਭਾਈ ਬਾਜ ਸਿੰਘ ਅਤੇ ਭਾਈ ਮਨੀ ਸਿੰਘ ਸਨ। ਉਹ ਗਰੀਬੀ ਕਰਕੇ ਪੰਜ ਕਕਾਰ ਵੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਖਰੀਦ ਸਕਦੇ ਪਰ ਜੇ ਕਿਤੇ ਕਦੀ ਕੋਈ ਸੰਸਥਾ ਜਾਂ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਦਰਦ ਵਾਲਾ ਗੁਰੂ ਪਿਆਰਾ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਦਸਤਾਰ ਜਾਂ ਕਕਾਰ ਦੇ ਦਿੰਦਾ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਉਹ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਆ ਕੇ ਬਹੁਤ ਹੀ ਆਨੰਦ ਅਨੁਭਵ ਕਰਦੇ ਹਨ। ਪੰਜਾਬ ਵਿਚ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਬੰਧਿਤ ਆਡੰਬਰਾਂ ਉਤੇ ਕਰੋੜਾਂ ਰੁਪਏ ਖਰਚ ਹੋ ਰਹੇ ਹਨ। ਕੀਰਤਨ ਦਰਬਾਰ, ਖਾਲਸਾ ਮਾਰਚ, ਵੱਡੇ ਵੱਡੇ ਜਲੂਸ ਤੇ ਹੋਰ ਕਈ ਕੁਝ ਅਜੇ ਤੱਕ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੀ ਗਿਣਤੀ ਵਿੱਚ ਇਕ ਦਾ ਵੀ ਵਾਧਾ ਕਰਨਾ ਤਾਂ ਦੂਰ ਸਾਇਦ ਕਿਸੇ ਇੱਕ ਜਣੇ ਦੇ ਵੀ ਨਸ਼ੇ ਜਾਂ ਪਤਿਤਪੁਣੇ ਨੂੰ ਛੁਡਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਸਕੇ। ਇਹੋ ਜਿਹੀਆਂ ਗਤੀਵਿਧੀਆਂ ਹੋ ਰਹੀਆਂ ਹਨ, ਪੰਜਾਬ ਵਿਚ, ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਦੀ ਪ੍ਰਫੁੱਲਤ ਵਾਸਤੇ ਦੱਸਿਆ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਦੂਜੇ ਪਾਸੇ, ਕਰੋੜਾਂ ਦੀ ਗਿਣਤੀ ਵਿਚ ਵਣਜਾਰੇ ਆਦਿ ਕਬੀਲੇ ਬਿਲਕੁਲ ਹੀ ਅਣਗੌਲੇ ਕੀਤੇ ਗਏ ਹਨ। ਬ੍ਰਾਹਮਣਵਾਦ ਏਥੋਂ ਤੱਕ ਪ੍ਰਚਲਿਤ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਨੀਵੇਂ ਅਤੇ ਅਛੂਤਾਂ ਵਰਗੇ ਸਮਝਿਆ ਗਿਆ ਹੈ। ਅਜੇ ਪਿਛਲੇ ਸਾਲ ਦੀ ਹੀ ਗੱਲ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਨਾਗਪੁਰ ਸ਼ਹਿਰ ਵਿਚ ਇਕ ਅਮੀਰ ਸਿੱਖ ਵਪਾਰੀ ਮਰ ਗਿਆ। ਉਸਦੇ ਪਰਿਵਾਰ ਨੇ ਉਹਦੀ ਮਿਰਤਕ

ਦੇਹ ਨੂੰ ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰੇ ਮੱਥਾ ਟਿਕਾਉਣਾ ਸੀ ਪਰ ਉਹ ਆਪਣੇ ਘਰ ਦੇ ਐਨ ਕੋਲ ਇਕ ਸਾਫ਼ ਸੁਥਰਾ ਚੰਗੀ ਇਮਾਰਤ ਵਾਲਾ ਨਵਾਂ ਉਸਾਰਿਆ ਵਣਜਾਰਿਆਂ ਦਾ ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰਾ ਛੱਡ ਕੇ ਉਹਦੀ ਮਿਰਤਕ ਦੇਹ ਨੂੰ ਪੰਜ-ਛੇ ਕਿਲੋਮੀਟਰ ਦੂਰ ਇਕ ਉਚੀ ਜਾਤੀ ਵਾਲੀਆਂ ਦੇ ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰੇ ਲੈ ਕੇ ਗਏ। ਇਹੋ ਜਿਹੇ ਲੋਕ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਤਾਂ ਇਹਨਾਂ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਜਾਂ ਸੰਭਾਵਿਤ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਸਿੱਖ ਹੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਮੰਨਣਗੇ। ਜੇ ਇਹ ਲੋਕ ਬਦੇ-ਬਦੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਬਣ ਵੀ ਗਏ ਤਾਂ ਇਹ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨਵੇਂ ਬਣੇ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਸਿੱਖ ਹੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਮੰਨਣਗੇ। ਜੇ ਇਹ ਧੱਕੇ ਹੀ ਮਾਰਨਗੇ ਫਿਰ ਸਿੱਖ ਕੌਮ ਦੀ ਗਿਣਤੀ ੨ ਕਰੋੜ ਤੋਂ ਆਪਣੇ ਆਪ ਹੀ ੯ ਲੱਖ ਘਟੇਗੀ ਅਤੇ ਜਿਸ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਦਾ ਬੋਲ ਬਾਲਾ ਗੁਰੂ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਨੇ ਮੱਕੇ ਤੋਂ ਈਰਾਕ, ਈਰਾਕ ਤੋਂ ਚੀਨ, ਤਿਬੱਤ, ਆਸਾਮ ਤੋਂ ਲੰਕਾ ਤੱਕ ਕੀਤਾ ਸੀ, ਉਸ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਨੂੰ ਕੇਵਲ ਪੰਜਾਬ ਰੂਪੀ ਖੂਹ ਦਾ ਡੱਡੂ ਹੀ ਬਣਾ ਕੇ ਰੱਖ ਦਿੱਤਾ ਜਾਵੇਗਾ। ਸੰਤਾਪ ਦੀ ਗੱਲ ਇਹ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਇਸ ਖੂਹ ਵਿਚ ਪਾਣੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਬਲਕਿ ਸ਼ਰਾਬ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰ ਨਸ਼ੇ ਹੀ ਹਨ। ਸਿੱਖੀ ਦਾ ਕੀ ਬਣੇਗਾ ?

ਦਸਵੇਂ ਪਾਤਸ਼ਾਹ ਨੇ ਪੰਜ ਪਿਆਰੇ, ਪੰਥ ਥਾਂਵਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਪੰਜ ਵਰਗਾਂ ਵਿੱਚੋਂ ਥਾਪੇ ਸਨ। ਅੱਜ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਕੇਵਲ ਜੱਟ, ਭਾਪਾ ਦੇ ਪੁੜਾਂ ਵਿੱਚਲੇ ਹੀ ਪਿਸ ਰਹੀ ਹੈ। ਗੁਰੂ ਨੇ ਪਾਤਸ਼ਾਹੀਆਂ ਗਰੀਬਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਦੇਣੀਆਂ ਹਨ, ਭੂਰਿਆਂ ਵਾਲੇ ਰਾਜੇ ਕਰਨੇ ਹਨ ਪਰ ਅੱਜ ਦੇ ਮਲਕ ਭਾਗੋ ਸ਼ਾਇਦ ਇਹ ਸੋਚ ਰਹੇ ਹਨ ਕਿ ਗੁਰੂ ਕਿਸੇ ਜ਼ਮਾਨੇ ਵਿਚ ਸੀ, ਅੱਜ ਕਲ੍ਹ ਤਾਂ ਗੁਰੂ ਹੈ ਹੀ ਨਹੀਂ। ਉਹ ਯਾਦ ਰੱਖਣ ਗੁਰੂ ਸ਼ਬਦ ਵਿੱਚੋਂ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਗੱਜੇਗਾ ਅਤੇ ਇਸਦੀ ਗੜਗੜਾਹਟ ਨਾਲ ਵਣਜਾਰੇ, ਸਿਕਲੀਗਰ, ਜੌਹਰੀ, ਸਤਿਨਾਮੀ, ਦਲਿਤ, ਅੰਬੇਦਕਰੀਏ ਆਦਿ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਵਿਚ ਪ੍ਰਵੇਸ਼ ਕਰਨਗੇ।

ਭਗਤ ਕਬੀਰ ਜੀ, ਭਗਤ ਰਵੀਦਾਸ ਜੀ, ਭਗਤ ਨਾਮਦੇਵ ਜੀ, ਸੈਣ ਜੀ, ਪੀਪਾ ਜੀ ਤੇ ਹੋਰ ਸਾਰੇ ਭਗਤ ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਵਿਚ ਗੁਰੂ ਰੂਪ ਦਾ ਰੁਤਬਾ ਰਖਦੀ ਹੈ, ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਸਾਰੇ ਭਗਤਾਂ ਦੇ ਅਨੁਯਾਈ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਤੋਂ ਦੂਰ ਨਹੀਂ ਹਨ। ਨਾਲ ਸੱਚਾਈ ਇਹ ਵੀ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਨੇ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਸਮਾਜ ਤੋਂ ਦੂਰ ਰੱਖਿਆ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਨੇੜੇ ਲਿਆਉਣ ਦਾ ਕਦੇ ਯਤਨ ਨਹੀਂ ਕੀਤਾ। ਅੰਬੇਦਕਰ ਸਿਆਸੀ ਲੀਡਰ ਦੇ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਸਾਰੇ ਹਿੰਦੁਸਤਾਨ ਦੇ ਦਲਿਤਾਂ ਦਾ ਮਸੀਹਾ ਬਣ ਗਿਆ ਪਰ ਬ੍ਰਾਹਮਣਵਾਦੀ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਨੇ ਸਾਰੇ ਹੀ ਦਲਿਤਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਦੂਰੋਂ-ਦੂਰ ਕੀਤਾ। ਅਸੀਂ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦਲਿਤਾਂ ਦੇ ਪੂਜਨੀਕ ਭਗਤਾਂ ਦੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਨੂੰ ਸ਼ਬਦ ਗੁਰੂ ਤਾਂ ਮੰਨਦੇ ਰਹੇ ਪਰ ਕਦੀ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨਾਲ ਅਪਣੱਤ ਪੈਦਾ ਨਾ ਕੀਤੀ। ਭਾਈ ਦਿੱਤ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੀ ਨੂੰ ਚਮਾਰ ਆਖ ਕੇ ਅਪਮਾਨਿਤ ਕਰਨਾ ਅਤੇ ਪ੍ਰੋ. ਗੁਰਮੁਖ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੀ ਵਰਗੇ ਉਚ ਕੋਟੀ ਦੇ ਵਿਦਵਾਨ ਨੂੰ ਰਸੋਈਏ ਦਾ ਪੁੱਤਰ ਕਹਿਣਾ ਇਹ ਉਚੀ ਜਾਤ ਵਾਲਿਆਂ ਦੀ ਬਹੁਤ ਹੀ ਨੀਵੇਂ ਦਰਜੇ ਦੀ ਹਰਕਤ ਸੀ, ਜਿਸ ਨਾਲ ਸਿੱਖ ਪੰਥ ਨਿਵਾਣਾਂ ਵੱਲ ਹੀ ਗਿਆ।

ਇਹ ਪਰਚਾ ਮੁੱਖ ਤੌਰ ਤੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਸਮਾਜ ਦਾ ਧਿਆਨ ਸਿਕਲੀਗਰ, ਵਣਜਾਰੇ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰ ਭੁੱਲੇ-ਭੁਲਾਏ ਕਬੀਲਿਆਂ ਵੱਲ, ਦਿਵਾਉਣ ਲਈ ਪੇਸ਼ ਕੀਤਾ ਜਾ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ। ਵਣਜਾਰਿਆਂ ਨੇ ਆਪਣੇ ਸਮਾਜ ਨੂੰ ਆਪ ਵੀ ਸੰਗਠਿਤ ਕੀਤਾ ਹੈ। ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀ ਗਿਣਤੀ ਜੇ ਭਾਰਤ ਸਰਕਾਰ ਵਲੋਂ ਕਰਵਾਈ ਗਈ ਉਹ ਸੱਤ ਕਰੋੜ ਤੋਂ ਉਤੇ ਦੱਸੀ ਜਾਂਦੀ ਹੈ। ਸਿਕਲੀਗਰ, ਜੌਹਰੀ, ਸਤਿਨਾਮੀ, ਕੌਡਾ ਰਾਕਸ਼ ਉਰਫ਼ ਕੌਡਾ ਮਹਾਂਪੁਰਖ ਦੇ ਵੰਸ਼ਿਜ ਆਸਾਮੀ ਸਿੱਖ, ਅਰਬੀ ਕਬਾਇਲੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਆਦਿ ਦੀ ਗਿਣਤੀ ਵੱਖਰੀ ਹੈ। ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਸਭ ਦਾ ਪਿਛੋਕੜ ਗੁਰੂ ਕਾਲ ਤੋਂ ਹੀ ਗੁਰਸਿੱਖੀ ਵਾਲਾ ਹੈ। ਅੱਜ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਵਲ ਵੇਖ ਵੇਖ ਕੇ ਈਸਾਈ, ਆਰ ਐਸ ਐਸ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰ ਕਈ ਸੰਗਠਨ, ਧਰਮ ਪਰਿਵਰਤਨ ਲਈ ਲਲਚਾ ਰਹੇ ਹਨ। ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਕੋਲ ਸਾਧਨ ਅਤੇ ਪੈਸਾ ਹੈ ਆਪਣੇ ਕੋਲ ਅਣਗਹਿਲੀ ਅਤੇ ਬੇਪਰਵਾਹੀ ਹੈ। ਸਾਡਾ ਨੌਜਵਾਨ ਵਰਗ ਪਤਿਤਪੁਣੇ ਅਤੇ ਨਸ਼ਿਆਂ ਵਿਚ ਡੁੱਬਾ ਹੈ। ਸਾਡੇ ਵੱਡੀ ਉਮਰ ਦੇ ਜ਼ਿਮੀਂਦਾਰ, ਵਪਾਰੀ ਤੇ ਅਫਸਰ ਉਚੀ ਜਾਤ ਦਾ, ਬਿੱਲ ਲਾ ਕੇ ਆਪਣੀ ਧੌਣ ਵਿਚ ਕਿੱਲਾ ਠੋਕੀ ਫਿਰਦੇ ਹਨ। ਸਿੱਖ ਸਮਾਜ ਦੀਆਂ ਲੜਕੀਆਂ ਵਿਧਰਮੀਆਂ ਨਾਲ ਵਿਆਹ ਕਰ ਰਹੀਆਂ ਹਨ। ਇਸਤਰੀ ਅਤੇ ਪੁਰਖ

ਅਨੁਪਾਤ ੭੪੦ ਪਿਛੇ ੧੦੦੦ ਹੋ ਗਿਆ ਹੈ। ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਕੰਮਾਂ ਤੋਂ ਗੁਰੂ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਨੇ ਮਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਕੀਤਾ ਸੀ, ਉਹ ਅੱਜ ਪੂਰੇ ਜ਼ੋਰ ਜ਼ੋਰ ਨਾਲ ਬਗੈਰ ਕਿਸੇ ਸ਼ਰਮ ਹਯਾ ਦੇ ਕੀਤੇ ਜਾ ਰਹੇ ਹਨ। ਕੌਮ ਆਪਣੇ ਵਾਧੇ ਦੇ ਥਾਂ ਆਪਣੇ ਘਾਟੇ ਲਈ ਬਹੁਤਾ ਕੰਮ ਕਰ ਰਹੀ ਹੈ। ਯਹੂਦੀ ਕਿੱਥੇ ਪਹੁੰਚ ਗਏ ਹਨ ਪਰ ਸਿੱਖ ਕੌਮ ਕਿਉਂ ਸੁੱਤੀ ਪਈ ਹੈ? ਸਭ ਸਿੱਖ ਨੂੰ ਬਰਾਬਰੀ ਅਤੇ ਅਪਣੱਤ ਨਾਲ ਵੇਖਣਾ ਅਤੇ ਵਰਤਣਾ ਜ਼ਰੂਰੀ ਹੈ। ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਸੰਸਥਾਵਾਂ ਦੀ ਗਿਣਤੀ ਹਜ਼ਾਰਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦਾ ਬਜਟ ਵੀ ਮੋਟਾ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ। ਅੱਜ ਜਦੋਂ ਸੂਚਨਾ ਦੇ ਅਧਿਕਾਰ ਦਾ ਕਾਨੂੰਨ ਲਾਗੂ ਹੋ ਚੁੱਕਾ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿ ਇਹ ਸੰਸਥਾਵਾਂ ਬੇਸ਼ਮਾਰ ਪੈਸਾ ਖਰਚ ਕੇ ਆਪਣੇ ਵੱਲ ਪੰਥ ਦੀ ਪ੍ਰਫੁੱਲਤਤਾ ਬਾਰੇ ਕੁੱਝ ਦੱਸ ਸਕਣਗੀਆਂ ਜਾਂ ਸਿਰਫ ਬੇਅੰਤ ਰੁਪਇਆ ਕੀਰਤਨ ਦਰਬਾਰਾਂ, ਖਾਲਸਾ ਮਾਰਚਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਜਲੂਸਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਚੱਲਣ ਵਾਲੀਆਂ ਜਰਾਂ-ਬੱਸਾਂ ਦੇ ਤੇਲ ਦੇ ਰੂਪ ਵਿੱਚ ਹੀ ਫੂਕਿਆ ਜਾ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ।

ਸਿਕਲੀਗਰ ਅਤੇ ਵਣਜਾਰਿਆਂ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਬੰਧਿਤ ਪ੍ਰੋਜੈਕਟਾਂ ਬਾਰੇ ਪਿਛਲੇ ਬਜਟ ਵਿੱਚ ਸ਼੍ਰੋਮਣੀ ਕਮੇਟੀ ਨੇ ਇਕ ਕਰੋੜ ਰੁਪਇਆ ਰੱਖਿਆ ਸੀ। ਇਸ ਰੁਪਏ ਦੀ ਕਿਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਵਰਤੋਂ ਕੀਤੀ ਗਈ ਅਤੇ ਕੀ ਕੀ ਹਾਸਿਲ ਹੋਇਆ? ਇਸ ਬਜਟ ਵਿੱਚ ਸ਼੍ਰੋਮਣੀ ਕਮੇਟੀ ਨੇ ਕੁਝ ਨਹੀਂ ਦੱਸਿਆ। ਦੁੱਖ ਦੀ ਗੱਲ ਤਾਂ ਇਹ ਹੈ ਕਿ ੨੦੦੬ ਦੇ ਬੱਜਟ ਵਿੱਚ ਇਹ ਰਕਮ ਇਕ ਕਰੋੜ ਤੋਂ ਘੱਟਾ ਕੇ ਵੀਹ ਲੱਖ ਕਰ ਦਿੱਤੀ ਗਈ। ੨ ਕਰੋੜ ਤੋਂ ਵੀ ਘੱਟ ਲੋਕਾਂ ਉੱਤੇ ੨੮੦ ਕਰੋੜ ਰੁਪਿਆ ਖਰਚ ਕੀਤਾ ਜਾਵੇਗਾ ਪਰ ਦਸ ਕਰੋੜ ਤੋਂ ਵੱਧ ਲੋਕਾਂ ਤੇ ਕੇਵਲ ਵੀਹ ਲੱਖ। ਕੀ ਇਹ ਸਿੱਖ ਸਮਾਜ ਦੇ ਦੁਆਲੇ ਇਕ ਵਾਰ ਕਰਨ ਵਾਂਗ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿ ਕੁਰਬਾਨੀ ਅਤੇ ਸੇਵਾ ਦੇ ਮਹਾਨ ਪਿਛੋਕੜ ਵਾਲੇ ਵਣਜਾਰੇ ਅਤੇ ਸਿਕਲੀਗਰ ਸਿੱਖ ਕੌਮ ਦਾ ਹਿੱਸਾ ਨਾ ਬਣ ਸਕਣ।

ਜ਼ਰੂਰੀ ਇਹ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਦਸ ਕਰੋੜ ਵਣਜਾਰੇ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰ ਕਬੀਲੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਨਾਲ ਜੋੜਨ ਲਈ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਵਿਦਿਆ, ਰੁਜ਼ਗਾਰ, ਪ੍ਰਚਾਰ, ਆਦਿ ਦਾ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧ ਕੀਤਾ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਪਰ ਦੋ ਚਾਰ ਗਿਣੀਆਂ ਮਿਥੀਆਂ ਸੰਸਥਾਵਾਂ ਤੋਂ ਬਗੈਰ ਕਿਸੇ ਵੀ ਸੰਸਥਾ ਨੂੰ ਇਸ ਪਾਸੇ ਵੱਲ ਧਿਆਨ ਨਹੀਂ ਦਿੱਤਾ। ਲੁਧਿਆਣੇ ਦੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਅੰਗਦ ਦੇਵ ਵਿਦਿਅਕ ਅਤੇ ਲੋਕ ਭਲਾਈ ਕੌਂਸਲ, ਵਣਜਾਰਾ ਵੈਲਫੇਅਰ ਟਰੱਸਟ ਅਤੇ ਸੰਸਾਰ ਸਿੱਖ ਸਰੰਗਠਨ ਵਲੋਂ ਜਰੂਰ ਪੂਰੇ ਉਤਸਾਹ ਨਾਲ ਸੇਵਾ ਕੀਤਾ ਜਾ ਰਹੀ ਹੈ। ਦੂਜੀਆਂ ਸੰਸਥਾਵਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਵੀ ਜਲੂਸਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਮਾਰਚਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਪੈਸਾ ਰੋੜਨਾਂ ਛੱਡ ਕੇ ਇਸ ਕਾਰਜ ਵੱਲ ਧਿਆਨ ਦੇ ਕੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਕੌਮ ਨੂੰ ਸੁਰੱਖਿਅਤ ਕਰਨਾ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ। ਸਾਡਾ ਆਪਣਾ ਤਜਰਬਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਸੱਚੇ ਦਿੱਲ ਅਤੇ ਲਗਨ ਨਾਲ ਕੀਤੀ ਗਈ ਸੇਵਾ ਨਾਲ ਇਕ ਸਾਲ ਦੇ ਅੰਦਰ ਅੰਦਰ ਹੀ ਪੰਜ ਹਜ਼ਾਰ ਤੋਂ ਵੱਧ ਲੋਕਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਵਿੱਚ ਪ੍ਰਵੇਸ਼ ਕਰਵਾਇਆ ਗਿਆ, ਜੋ ਸਾਡੇ ਵਰਗੇ ਨਾਚੀਜ਼ ਕਰ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਨ ਉਹ ਸਾਡੇ ਤੋਂ ਵੱਧ ਸਮਰੱਥ ਕਿਤੇ ਵਧੇਰੇ ਕਰ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਨ। ਇਸ ਲਈ ਹਰ ਪੰਥ ਦਰਦੀ ਨੂੰ ਇਸ ਪਾਸੇ ਜੁਟ ਕੇ ੯੬ਵੇਂ ਕਰੋੜੀ ਖਾਲਸੇ ਦੇ ਸੰਕਲਪ ਨੂੰ ਹਕੀਕਤ ਬਣਾਉਣਾ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ।

□

*Fruitful is the birth and advent in this world of him,
Who by serving the True Guru, relises the Name.*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 602

ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਸੇਵਿ ਜਿਨਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਪਛਾਤਾ ਸਫਲ ਜਨਮੁ ਜਗਿ ਆਇਆ ॥

BRIG GURDIP SINGH – A TRULY NOBLE SOUL

KARTAR SINGH*

He was born on 13th Dec, 1935, to S Surain Singh, a mining professional who was then employed in Bihar. S Surain Singh later rose to be the Director General Mines in the Indian Government. Gurdip's schooling took place in Dhanbad and he graduated from the elite Government College, Ludhiana with distinction. His father preferred that Gurdip take up an engineering as a profession, but the boy had different ideas. Being an intellectual and a sportsman with a special attraction towards football and tennis, a number of career options beckoned this young man. He, however, preferred to join the Indian Army as he felt that soldering was a noble and adventurous profession.

Gurdip was commissioned into the Army Service Corps in 1956. He had a distinguished career throughout. In Oct 1962 he was married to Bibi Gurdarshan Kaur. This brought together two Gursikh families of Punjab. Bibi Gurdarshan Kaur is the daughter of a distinguished lawyer of the times S Dara Singh, also father of Capt Kanwaljit Singh, former Finance Minister of Punjab, who we all know is a prominent member of the Shiromani Akali Dal. The young couple had hardly been married ten days when the call of duty made Gurdip rush back to Nagaland – a disturbed area. The marriage was, however, blessed by the Gurus to be a very happy one. They begot one son and two daughters, all of whom have distinguished careers in lucrative professions. The son is a Software Engineer, one daughter a Professor and the second daughter has achieved a Doctorate in Urban Planning and Environment Pollution. All are working in Michigan State in the USA.

* Lt Gen (retd), # 1801, Sector 34-D, Chandigarh

Then came the 'Blue Star' in 1984. Gurdip by then had risen to the prestigious rank of a Brigadier and was posted to Northern Command HQ, Udhampur, as Deputy Director of Supplies and Transport. Being a devoted Sikh and a religious person, Gurdip was highly disturbed by the events in Punjab. He expressed anguish and desired to visit Punjab to see for himself the actual situation in the holy Darbar Sahib. Circumstances and contingency of service, however, did not allow a visit and, in fact, this devout officer's genuine fears and anguish were misinterpreted. His career from then on saw a downhill slide. He was asked to move out at seven days' notice and proceed towards the East – away from his home state.

In addition to an ideal career in the ASC where he served with distinction in various command, staff and instructional appointments, Gurdip had by competition proceeded to the prestigious Defence Service Staff College, Wellington. He passed out with honours and was thus destined for higher ranks. This was however not to be, as his promotion beyond Brigadier was not approved by the Authorities. As per his family's views, this was the outcome of the events of 1984. Gurdip never reconciled to this setback, as he had given his best in the service of his country. He sought voluntary retirement soon after this setback and in 1989 came to Chandigarh where his family had chosen to settle.

He decided not to sit back, and was very soon active in the midst of Sikh scholars fighting for the Sikh cause and the revival of the state. In spite of his family's close ties with the Akali Dal and its politics, he chose the scholar's path rather than the politician's. He started writing for Sikh publications and himself did a research on methods of promoting the cause of global Sikhs. He published a pamphlet in this direction and was soon deeply involved in the affairs of the Vishav Sikh Sammelan of 1999 and the subsequent emergence of the World Sikh Council (WSC). Rightly, he was chosen to the prestigious post of Secretary General of the WSC in which capacity he served with rare dedication. Alas, by then, the affairs of the WSC were muddled by infighting within and interference from without. With the resignation of the Chairman, Justice Kuldeep Singh, this very prestigious and vital organization of global Sikhs received a shattering setback from which it has yet to recover.

Whether this great setback had its impact on the delicate health of this devout Sikh will always remain an enigma. He was certainly affected. However, he did remain active in the Sikh Core Group led by Justice Narula in Delhi, playing the key role of a convenor. Bibi Gurdarshan Kaur feels that though he was disappointed with the WSC incident, he never gave up. He turned towards writing a book titled *Sarbat Da Bhala* which was only half finished when tragedy struck. Cancer of the stomach had slowly developed within and was detected late. In spite of top medical aid rendered by the PGI and the Fortis Hospital, this brave Sikh soldier and scholar succumbed to the side effects of the intense medical treatment and strong medication. He passed away in the ICU of Fortis Hospital, with his devoted wife, all the children and family members by his side on 20th April, 2006. A true disciple of the Guru had died fighting for a cause dear to his heart – *Sarbat Da Bhala*.

May the Guru grant his loved ones the strength to bear the loss of this gem of a Sikh, whose devotion to the cause he espoused was truly laudable.

□

*The True-Lord Manifests Himself in the heart of him,
Who does good deeds under Guru's guidance.*

*True is the reputation of the true person,
Within whose mind the True-Lord dwells.*

*They who meet the True Being separate not, again
They secure abode in their own home.*

O' my Omnipresent Lord ! I have no other except God.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 27

ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਕਾਰ ਕਮਾਵਣੀ ਸਚੁ ਘਟਿ ਪਰਗਟੁ ਹੋਇ ॥
ਅੰਤਰਿ ਜਿਸ ਕੈ ਸਚੁ ਵਸੈ ਸਚੇ ਸਚੀ ਸੋਇ ॥
ਸਚਿ ਮਿਲੇ ਸੇ ਨ ਵਿਛੁੜਹਿ ਤਿਨ ਨਿਜ ਘਰਿ ਵਾਸਾ ਹੋਇ ॥
ਮੇਰੇ ਰਾਮ ਮੈ ਹਰਿ ਬਿਨੁ ਅਵਰੁ ਨ ਕੋਇ ॥

REVIEW

ARTICLES OF FAITH

A REVIEW BY GAJINDER SINGH*

Author : Dr Major Singh

Publisher : Sardar Harbhajan Singh, Gurmat Pustak Centre, Ludbiana

Pages : 66; Price : Rs 66/-

A lot of literature has been produced on the theme of the five symbols of the Khalsa bestowed by the Tenth Master Guru Gobind Singh to the Sikhs on the Baisakhi day created by caste, region and customs. That the baptism was a well-conceived, sagacious and calculated move of the genius of the Tenth Master is acknowledged by all. Dr Major Singh has performed a commendable task by compiling some of the well-written essays on the subject in a short hand-book of 66 pages, directed towards the young generations of the Sikhs in India and abroad to bring home the message of Guru Gobind Singh and its significance and its need in today's world.

In the Imprimis, the author has spelt that the symbols do not purport to be mere identification, which has been a wholly misplaced notion lither to, but are, indeed, 'Artcles of Faith'. On this subject full volumes can be penned. The modern generation of the Sikhs, unfortunately, for lack of guidance their elders, has lost sight of the right values and true import of faith. To that extent, the youth are not to be blamed for the ills of their generation. This small book has all the valid reasons to take stock of the high values of the Sikh tradition and re-establish the significance of the five 'Ks'.

Dr Trilochan Singh, in his essay, has emphasised the importance of *keshas*, which is the epitome of the Sikh faith and identity as ordained by the Gurus earlier than Guru Gobind Singh, Sirdar Kapur Singh, in his inimitable style gives meaning and content of symbolism. Prof

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Puran Singh's essay reveals the ecstasy of Faith. These essays are presented as original research documents while the articles by Dr Shamsheer Singh, Dr I J Singh stress the correct perception of the basic issue of rekindling the Faith. Unless Faith is invoked, mere window dressing cannot be sustained for long.

The printing is of good quality, and the title page and its back page are inviting and informative.

□

*Obtain Guru's instruction, O' my dear !
Repeat God's Name and contemplate over Lord God.
Apply the touch-stone of Truth-fullness to thy soul,
And see if it weighs its full weight.
No one has found its worth.
Invaluable is the value of the soul emerald.
O' Brother ! God, the jewel resides in the Guru.
In the society of Saints, the True Guru is obtained.
Day and night praise God's Name, (O' Man!)*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 22

ਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਜਪਹੁ ਪਿਆਰਿਆ ਗੁਰਮਤਿ ਲੇ ਹਰਿ ਬੋਲਿ ॥
ਮਨੁ ਸਚ ਕਸਵਟੀ ਲਾਈਐ ਤੁਲੀਐ ਪੂਰੈ ਤੋਲਿ ॥
ਕੀਮਤਿ ਕਿਨੈ ਨ ਪਾਈਐ ਰਿਦ ਮਾਣਕ ਮੋਲਿ ਅਮੋਲਿ ॥
ਭਾਈ ਰੇ ਹਰਿ ਹੀਰਾ ਗੁਰ ਮਾਹਿ ॥
ਸਤਸੰਗਤਿ ਸਤਗੁਰੁ ਪਾਈਐ ਅਹਿਨਿਸਿ ਸਬਦਿ ਸਲਾਹਿ ॥

NEWS & VIEWS

SWAMI AGNIVESH GOES BACK ON HIS COMMITMENT TO REMOVE OBJECTIONABLE REMARKS FROM SATYARTH PARKASH

Swami Agnivesh, President of the World Council of Arya Samaj, declared in no uncertain terms that objectionable remarks in the *Satyartha Prakash*, which offended the Sikh sensibility would be removed. He made this statement with a full sense of responsibility as President of the WCAS, in his keynote address delivered at the International Seminar organised at Amritsar on the 10th of June, by the SGPC on the solemn occasion of the 400th Anniversary of the Martyrdom of Guru Arjun Dev ji. He even appealed to Sikh scholars present at the Seminar to assist him in the task of drafting the material to replace contents which hurt the Sikh sensibility. This announcement was greeted with *Jaikaras* by the audience, and was widely reported in the press on the following day.

It seems, however, that his peers did not approve of his noble initiative. This is evident from his letters to the Editor published in *The Tribune*, dated June 16, 2006, and *The Indian Express*, in which he is trying to wriggle out of his commitment. Both of his statements are reproduced below.

– Editor

I

The World Council of Arya Samaj (WCAS) will remove objectionable words, if any, from the 150-year-old book “*Satyarth Prakash*” authored by Swami Dayanand Saraswati in its endeavour to

end mistrust between Sikhs and Hindus. He said the WCAS held Guru Nanak and Sikhism in high esteem.

Swami Agnivesh, President of the WCAS, stated this while talking to the Tribune after addressing an International Seminar organised by the Dharam Parchar Committee of the SGPC to mark the 400th martyrdom of Guru Arjun Dev here today.

He said he would soon hold a meeting with Sikh scholars and eminent leaders and try to remove objectionable material from the book and try to resolve the issue amicably. He said it would further help in uniting Arya Samajis and Sikhs.

He said whatever Swami Dayanand had mentioned in the book had already been said by Guru Arjun Dev 400 years ago and that was why Punjabis, especially the Sikhs had joined the Arya Samaj.

Commenting on the atrocities on women, he said India was the only country in the world where brides were being burnt for dowry. (Courtesy : *The Tribune*, June 11, 2006)

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II

RELIGIOUS HARMONY

Apropos the news-item, "Arya Samaj to remove offensive words from book" (June 11), I, as President of the World Council of Arya Samaj, propose to initiate a series of dialogue between scholars from both sides to transcend differences and heal hurt feelings, if any. It is not my intention to rewrite or alter the original text of Maharishi Dayanand.

There is, however, a real need to offer appropriate footnotes on texts that are likely, if misunderstood, to disrupt the harmony of religions. This would help, additionally, to explore and honour the spirit of *Satyartha Prakash* and promote spiritual solidarity for social transformation.

What is envisaged is not changing and chopping off the text of *Satyartha Prakash* but the incorporation of explanatory footnotes so as to avert misinterpretation and to make true meaning of this great and demanding text clearer to contemporary readers.

Maharishi Dayanand was against dogmatism and obscurantism in religion. He strove for solidarity of all religions by promoting better understanding between them. He also pioneered inter-religious dialogues for which he was condemned by religious obscurantists. The Light of Truth (or *Satyartha Parkash*) calls for open minds towards each other.

Openness to religious reform, in Maharishi Dayanand's view, is a sign of spiritual robustness and in a multi-religious society like ours it is vital for the health and wholeness of our country.

– Swami Agnivesh, New Delhi

(*Courtesy : The Tribune, Letters to Editor, June 16, 2006*)

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SRI AKAL TAKHT SAHIB GURMATTI NO A:3/06/3488*

No A: 3/06/3488

Dated 17.1.06

Sri Guru Granth Sahib is not only a religious scripture but the eternal Guru for the Sikhs. The Sikh Gurus have themselves put a seal of approval on its perfection and authenticity as a sacred source of Divine knowledge. Therefore, there is no controversy among the Sikh *panth* regarding the historicity and authenticity of its text.

It requires an optimum degree of mental concentration and honesty of purpose for undertaking the study and research on its history and philosophy. But it is a matter of regret that certain scholars, under the pretext of academic pursuit, have been creating unnecessary controversies about Guru Granth Sahib during the last few years. The names of Mr Piar Singh, Pashaura Singh and Gurinder Singh Mann can be particularly mentioned in this category of scholars. It must be remembered that Sikh scholars and Sikh *sangats* had raised serious objections about Piar Singh's and Pashaura Singh's interpretations about the text and the compilation of text of Sri Guru Granth Sahib based on controversial sources and their careless study of these sources. Both these scholars had appeared before the Akal Takht one after the other and begged forgiveness for their (irresponsible acts). Pashaura Singh had even accepted punishment (*tankhab*) meted out to him by Sri Akal Takht after his appearance at Akal Takht following his written petition for forgiveness on June 25, 1995. He had also promised not to publish his thesis in its original form and had committed to make necessary amendments in it.

Now various Sikh *sangats* in India as well as from foreign countries have complained to Sri Akal Takht Sahib that Pashaura Singh had repeated his controversial conclusions in his book; "*The Guru Granth Sahib Canon, Meaning and Authority*." Sri Akal Takht Sahib had issued directions vide its order dated July 1, 2005 for the constitution of a

* Translated by Prof Kulwant Singh from the Original in Punjabi.

committee consisting of Sikh scholars to investigate the above-mentioned charges. This committee, after the study of Pashaura Singh's book, had concluded that Mr Pashaura Singh, by including his subjective conclusions arrived at in his earlier thesis into his new publication in a book form, had demonstrated his act of obduracy and egoism, which completely violates the spirit of his pledge taken before the Akal Takht on June 25, 1994.

The Singh Sahiban and Jathedar of Sri Akal Takht Sahib had issued a written direction to Mr Pashaura Singh in this context on July 1, 2005. Subsequently, Mr Pashaura Singh had submitted his explanation to Sri Akal Takht Sahib. In this rejoinder, he had referred to Gurinder Singh Mann's (similar) use of Manuscript No 1245, a document that allegedly existed prior to Sri Guru Arjun Dev ji's version of 1604, besides referring to some other issues and protested against singling out his name alone for making use of controversial sources and (on the basis of these arguments) he alleged that charges against him were baseless. Sri Akal Takht Sahib vide its order dated August 15, 2005 directed Mr Pashaura Singh that he must provide a categorical explanation to the following questions besides providing the material pertaining to the controversial research work done by Mr Gurinder Singh Mann:

- 1 Has the date Jeth Sudi 4 Samvat 1663 (1606 CE) as the day of Sri Guru Arjun Dev ji's martyrdom been recorded in the original handwriting of the original author in Manuscript No 1245? OR has it not been done so?
- 2 Has he (Mr Pashaura Singh) or has he not written on page 46 of his book that Manuscript No 1245 had been prepared by Sri Guru Arjun Dev in 1599?
- 3 Has fictitious *Bani* (ਕੱਚੀ ਬਾਣੀ) not been recorded under the authorship of Sikh Gurus in this Manuscript under reference?
- 4 Has he (Mr Pashaura Singh) or has he not mentioned about Sri Guru Arjun Dev ji's presentation of this Manuscript, containing fictitious *Bani* to the emperor Akbar on pages 45-46 of his book?
- 5 Has he (Mr Pashaura Singh) or has he not arrived at a conclusion on page 31,46-42 of his book that Guru Arjun Dev had utilised this Manuscript for finalising the text of Guru Granth Sahib?
- 6 Has he or has he not confirmed on pages 23,42-43 of his book about Baba Buddha ji's role in the safe custody of the above-mentioned Manuscript?

- 7 Has he or has he not concluded on pages 80-86 of his book that original *Mool Mantra* was different from the present version of *Mool Mantra* and that both Sri Guru Ram Das and Sri Guru Arjun Dev ji had made changes in it from time to time?
- 8 Has he or has he not arrived at a conclusion on pages 90-96 of his book that Sri Guru Arjun Dev ji made amendments in the wording, language and poetry of the text of *Japji* on the basis of his accepting the text of *Japji* as original contained in the Manuscript No 1245.
- 9 Has he or has he not mentioned on page 102-105 of his book that Sri Guru Arjun Dev ji made amendments in the wording and poetic diction of Sri Guru Nanak Dev ji taking Manuscript No 1245 as original?

(Sri Akal Takht had directed Mr Pashaura Singh to Submit a Categorical explanation to these queries made in the above mentioned Questionnaire).

Mr Pashaura Singh, vide his letter dated September 12, 2005, has submitted the controversial material from Mr Gurinder Singh Mann's book, *The Meaning of Sikh Scripture*, but he has not submitted any explanation about the questions which he was required to submit regarding his own writings.

Let it be made clear to the whole Sikh Panth that Mr Pashaura Singh has made a flagrant violation of the pledge that he had undertaken at Sri Akal Takht on June 25, 1994, to amend his thesis as well as that of the subsequent (edict) Hukamnamah issued by Sri Akal Takht on June 27, 1994. This act of violation and disobedience of the edict is a reprehensible act of religious impropriety that deserves severest condemnation. Mr Gurinder Singh Mann has committed an offence of leveling accusations against Sri Guru Arjun Dev ji of first canceling the *Bani* of the Bhagatas and then including it in the Sikh scripture, besides his other controversial conclusions. Both Mr Pashaura Singh and Mr Gurinder Singh Mann have attempted to prove that Baba Budha ji and his family had already prepared and preserved the Manuscript No 1245 prior to Guru Arjun Dev ji's preparation of this manuscript in 1600, in order to arrive at their subjectively concocted conclusions regarding the compilation, originality and the history of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. This conclusion drawn by both of them does not conform to any historical or academic evidence. Similarly, both of

these worthies have attempted to make the Sri Guru Har Sahai *pothi* and the Goindwal *Pothis* the basis for arriving at their pre-conceived conclusions and linked the preparation and history of these *Pothis* to Sri Guru Nanak Dev ji and Sri Guru Amar Das ji, respectively.

The research methodology adopted by these two scholars for the study of *Guru Har Sahai Pothi*; *Goindwal Pothis* and Manuscript No 1245 is not analytical but primarily aimed at propounding their pre-conceived conclusions. They have employed expedient, concocted formulations during their analysis and evaluation of these *pothis* ignoring the established historical and academic norms. The research undertaken by Sikh scholars on these *pothis* makes it (absolutely) clear that there is no contribution whatsoever either of these *pothis* or of any Sikh personage involved in the preparation and preservation of these *pothis* during the compilation, editing and finalisation of the text of Sri Guru Granth Sahib (by Sri Guru Arjun Dev ji).

Let it be made clear to the (whole) Sikh Panth that Guru Harsahai *Pothi*, Goindwal *pothis* (booklets) and Manuscript No 1245 abound in fictitious *Bani* (*Kachi Bani*). Sri Guru Amardas, while upholding the supremacy of *Sachi Bani* (Real *Gurbani*) had given a direction to the Sikh Panth that fictitious *Bani* (*Kachi Bani*) is of no significance to the Sikhs. Both Sri Guru Arjun Dev first in 1604 and then secondly Sri Guru Gobind Singh in 1706 had rejected these above-mentioned *pothis* replete with fictitious *Bani* (*Kachi Bani*). Therefore, these booklets – are the creation of anti Sikh/anti Sikh Guru lobbies. Their aim is to muddying the waters for the dissemination of true *Bani* (*Sachi Bani*) and its principles. Therefore, these *pothis* are completely irrelevant and meaningless for the Sikhs from the religious point of view. The Sikh Panth must guard against such conclusions/formulations based on such fictitious resources regarding the compilation, originality and publication of Sri Guru Granth Sahib's text.

It is a matter of (grave) concern for the Sikh Panth that Oxford University Press (OUP) has published these books based on the above-mentioned *pothis*. Why should Oxford University Press (OUP) publish those books which do not conform to historical and academic norms rather than proper analyses, and which mean to create doubts overtly or covertly regarding the Sikh principles and traditions in the minds of readers? We must deliberate upon these designs.

Finally, we appeal to the Sikh Panth and especially to the Sikhs

living in foreign countries that they should neither give any credence to the research work done by the Pashaura Singh and Mr Gurinder Singh Mann nor associate any of them with Sikh institutions and organisations. Along with these, the Sikh institutions should make appropriate arrangements for the dissemination of correct, authentic information about the text/history and teachings of Sri Guru Granth Sahib.

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### *Letters to Editor*

#### **FUTURE OF SIKH YOUTH**

Dear Editor,

It is really heart warming and a matter of immense pride to see that International Sikh Confederation (ISC) the Sikh apex body's Constitution is being finalised and Institute of Sikh Studies, Chandigarh, (IOSS) is doing a yeoman's service and laudable work to preserve the soul and heritage of Sikhism. Further, it is protecting Sikhism from being polluted / distorted by the enemies of Sikhism and, in addition, it is projecting the problems faced by Sikh community forcefully in right perspective, and that too by the cream of Sikh intelligentsia and visionaries in a very selfless and highly dedicated manner.

The primary objective in front of us is to spread the teachings of Guru Nanak Dev Ji and Shri Guru Granth Sahib. This is only possible if the community remains economically strong and is adequately represented in the Government and all other spheres. At present we are reasonably represented in the country, and Sikh immigrants have also created a very prominent place for themselves in whichever country they have gone. However, if you look at the future the picture appears to be very gloomy.

If we have a glance at the younger generation after 1984, it vividly emerges that two generations have either destroyed or failed due to poor education system or disorientation, and over 45% are drug addicts. We need to take charge of the present young generation with strong determination, farsightedness and rich vision. To implement this, I have the following suggestions:

There are going to be 19 districts in Punjab soon and it has 12341 villages. We have got to ensure that we bring up the ambition, education and intellect level of Sikh youth at all levels and make them competent to

join the IAS, Armed Forces, Corporate Sector, IT, etc. The action plan is :

1. Earmark nodal schools / colleges.
2. Screen Students at ninth class level to find their potential.
3. Get them admitted in the Model Schools / Colleges and provide them financial and academic support.
4. Monitor their progress and assess their capabilities, according to potential. They will be guided to take up suitable careers based on competitive examinations.
5. We will provide for the appropriate wherewithal competitive examinations.
6. Identify a panel of most competent teachers who will prepare these candidates for the respective examinations.
7. A very high-value remunerative reward be fixed for those teachers whose students clear the competitive examination. This amount will be fixed and announced in advance.

This efforts of ISC will produce financially strong youth who will automatically get involved in the affairs of Sikhism and will carry the banner of Sikhism forward as is being done now.

It seems very easy, but requires planning and sustained field work with dedication, devotion and gusto.

Maj Gen (retd) G S Sohi  
Ex-Chairman, Service Selection Board, Bhopal

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### **BRIG GURDIP SINGH'S DEMISE – A GREAT LOSS**

Dear Editor,

It was a shock to hear the news that Brig (retd) Gurdeep Singh Grewal passed away on April 20, 2006.

I came to know him in year 2001 when I attended one of the Sikh Core Group meetings in Chandigarh. We become good friends. He was a perfect gentleman and a concerned activist in Sikh affairs. He was a skilled organizer and promoter of group participation. During my involvement with Sikh Museum at Smithsonian Washington DC, some of his ideas and suggestions really helped me a lot in setting up the museum.

His untimely death is great loss to the cause of Sikhs and personal loss to me as a good friend and advisor. Please convey my heartfelt condolences to the family, friends and SCG members.

Dilawar Singh Dhatt <[sdbhatt30@yahoo.com](mailto:sdbhatt30@yahoo.com)>

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