

17

KARAM

Karam means actions according to which we get the resultant fruit. This is the theory of cause and effect. So far Sikhism accepts the *Karam* theory. In *Var Asa*, the first Satguru says :

The reward of good or bad actions shall have to be met by oneself.

ਮੰਦਾ ਚੰਗਾ ਆਪਣਾ ਆਪੇ ਹੀ ਕੀਤਾ ਪਾਵਣਾ ॥

The fourth Satguru in *Var Gauri* says :

In Kaliyug age body is the field of *Karam* : in it as one sows so one reaps.

ਕਰਮ ਧਰਤੀ ਸਰੀਰੁ ਕਲਿਜੁਗ ਵਿਚ ਜੇਹਾ ਕੇ ਬੀਜੇ ਤੇਹਾ ਕੇ ਖਾਏ ॥

But the theory that the operation of the *Karam* is inevitable and there is no possible escape from it and that the entire working in this world is subservient to it, has done an irreparable damage to the Indian nation and country. The great doings of great men, being labelled as just a result of some previous good *Karam*, lost their shine and lustre. Thus, the sufferings which Sri Ram Chander, Daropadi and others had to bear and the fatal shock which Raja Dasrath received at his son's exile, were all attributed to results of some bad deeds in previous life. As a result, when there was a calamity, oppression, tyranny, or bloodshed, it came to be regarded as a result of some previous *Karam* and was either tolerated with abject surrender and prostration or people slipped away from their homes and families and repaired to jungles and places not easily approachable. This created helplessness and imbecility. By and by, the idea of doing good to another, making a sacrifice, or bearing trouble for the sake of any one else, disappeared from people's

minds. The sentiment of sympathy, empathy, welfare of the people, etc., disappeared. The purpose of spiritual effort also took the shape of perfect calm, and static inaction with a stoppage of all thought and effort. The worldly responsibilities were dreaded as traps of *maya*. Any one who had any inclination towards spiritual advancement, gave up worldly activities, and feeling bored with life, repaired to the wilderness, the forests or the hills, practised controlled breathing and subduing the mind, in the false hope of hearing *anhad shabd* and to have visions. In the wilderness, they depended on the mercy of others, without doing any good to their own people or anyone else. This attitude combined with personal individual way of worship and caste divisions made the people devoid of any idea or sentiment of love of the country, love of nation or even pan-nationalism. They became incapable, thus, of defending themselves, their country, their hearths and homes and even their *dharam* and religion. And this was the cause of India's long slavery and serfdom.

This outlook of helpless inactivity was rectified by Sikhism. Sikhism accepted the *Karam* theory but not its automatic mechanical inexorability, nor its inevitableness. Sikhism subordinates its operation to the Will of the God-Guru and believes that as we are ourselves responsible for our actions, *Karam*, we are also capable of unmaking them with the Grace of the Satguru and undo their effect with power of *simran* and a drop of the Nectar of the Name. The fifth Satguru says in *Var Jait Sri* :

Millions of sins are destroyed on remembering the One God.

ਕੋਟਿ ਅਯਾ ਗਏ ਨਾਸ ਹਰਿ ਇਕੁ ਧਿਆਇਆ ॥

Again in *Rag Gujri*, he says :

By contemplating Whom we are rid of all our sins, and even our ancestors are redeemed,

ਜਿਸੁ ਸਿਮਰਤ ਸਭਿ ਕਿਲਵਿਖ ਨਾਸਹਿ ਪਿਤਰੀ ਹੋਇ ਉਧਾਰੋ ॥

Remember that Infinite Lord you also for ever.

ਸੋ ਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਤੁਮ ਸਦ ਹੀ ਜਾਪਹੁ ਜਾਕਾ ਅੰਤੁ ਨ ਪਾਰੋ ॥

In *Rag Bhairon*, Rav Das says :

When Knowledge (*Gian*) is attained, the action (*Karam*),

is nullified.

ਰਿਆਨੁ ਭਇਆ ਤਹ ਕਰਮਹ ਨਾਸੁ ॥

While in *Rag Bilaval*, Sadhna has crisply put it thus :

What is your merit, O Guru of the world, if the *karam* is not nullified ?

ਤਵ ਗੁਨ ਕਹਾ ਜਗਤ ਗੁਰਾ ਜਉ ਕਰਮੁ ਨ ਨਾਸੈ ॥

Why take refuge with a lion, if the fear of a jackal persists ?

ਸਿੰਘ ਸਰਨ ਕਤ ਜਾਈਐ ਜਉ ਜੰਬੁਕੁ ਗ੍ਰਾਸੈ ॥