

UNITY, INTOLERANCE AND CULTURE

The Need

No national integration can be brought about nor independence or sovereignty can be preserved without unity. For any progress, any development, any advancement and uplift, unity is of utmost importance. No organisation, political, social, or economic can function successfully without unity and disciplined teamwork. No industrial expansion, economic development or green or white revolution can be brought about or standard of living raised without peace and stability which depend on unity in the country. Above all, unity is essential for peace, prosperity, protection, and defence of the fatherland. It is necessary also for the happiness and well-being of the citizens. Even in playfield and in sports, it is team-spirit and unity which lead to laurels. For strengthening of independence, keeping the nation's head high and brightening its honour, unity is indispensable. Sanctity of national traditions and way of life can only be upheld by unity. To meet foreign high-handedness and aggression, it is unity in the country which is important. Even in spiritual considerations, unity of God-head is the ideal and the ultimate Truth. This holds good equally in national matters as well as in family and personal affairs.

Consequences

Lack of unity creates mutual distrust, mutual suspicion, bickering and bad blood. It can also lead to mutual confrontations

and bloody internecine conflicts. Ultimately, it can end in disintegration of the nation and Balkanisation of the country and in slavery and serfdom of its people.

Induction of a person of evil spirit in a well-knit happy family works like a drop of sour curd in milk, if there is no unity.

It was disunity at home which caused banishment of Shri Ram Chander and it was disunity again that brought about Ravan's fall and conquest of Lanka. In Ayodhya, the insistence of Ram's stepmother, Kekai resulted in his banishment for fourteen years while in Lanka, Ravan was vanquished because his brother, Vabhishan, turned a traitor.

India remained slave for almost a thousand years because of lack of unity. If one chieftain was subdued by a foreigner, the other celebrated his defeat, not knowing that his turn would follow soon.

India, of course, had never been a united country or a nation as such, until the British bound it together. But whatever territories in Northern India happened to be consolidated together during the reign of Ashoka began to disintegrate after his death, until the whole region was divided into small principalities and tribal chieftainships. This disunity offered the country on a platter to any foreign adventurer who took it into his head to invade and plunder Bharat.

The success of Mohammedan invasions of India and occupation of the country was mainly due to dissensions and disunity. And so was the British infiltration and overlordship of the country facilitated and made easy by native disunity. It was disunity based on traitorship in the Court of Lahore which so speedily extinguished the ruling line of Ranjit Singh.

With scores of lives lost and sacrifices offered, with thousands and thousands who courted arrest and with all the hardships suffered, if after getting even a mini-Punjabi-Suba, Sikh legislators cannot get together and form a government of their own, it is because of lamentable lack of unity among the Sikhs.

Causes

Causes that generate disunity and cause lack of unity and

disharmony are many and diverse. Complacency, individualism, self-centred mentality, frustration, profundity, ego, inferiority and superiority complexes, selfishness, and greed contribute to lack of unity.

With all our provincialism, regionalism, parochialism, lingualism, and growing allegiance and loyalty to outsiders, and acceptance without reasoning and proper examination of foreign thought, and the cult of the gun and dagger, we are, no doubt, heading towards disunity and, if it is not bravely faced and honestly checked, no wonder it may lead to dismemberment of the country and untold suffering of the people.

Communal bigotry and religious frenzy result in serious and bloody disunity. Ego, of any kind, is bad enough. But religious ego is the worst and most dangerous. It not only causes disunity but perpetration of brutal and inhuman atrocities on the members of the other faith, while the perpetrator is at perfect ease and equanimity of mind and carries a satisfied conscience as if a free visa to heaven is obtained. The heart-rending sufferings of the Blacks in America and still greater of the Sikhs in India are quite recent examples of this religious ego.

Favouritism, nepotism, jobbery, preferential treatment to one and denial of justice to another, discrimination, unfair treatment and injustice, cause heartburning, repugnance, and resilience, and if persisted in, lead to resistance resulting in badblood and disunity.

Policy of divide and rule pays dividends to those who rule, but it results in bloody conflagrations and enmities amongst the people and "post-mortem" dismemberment of the country. It is obviously meant to create dissensions, set one group of people against the other, and definitely to create disunity and break up of the country. We have witnessed the British rulers of India making use of this policy so successfully and effectively. We have also seen how it began on a firm footing with separate electorates, pampering of one section and putting down the other, and how finally it culminated in the division of the country and resulted in bloodshed, loot, arson, rape, annihilation, and genocide. They were foreign rulers. But our own national rulers who happen to be in

power at the moment, make use, unfortunately, of the same policy, unmindful evidently of its terrible and suicidal consequences.

When a minority, whether religious, social, or political, is dissatisfied, disgruntled, improperly and unjustly treated as unequal and second-class citizens, and feels insecure, oppressed, and pressurized, it becomes a potential danger to unity. It is always for the majority community to be not only just but magnanimous and to extend love and understanding to keep the minorities satisfied and content. In a democratic set up if the majority community becomes intolerant and bigoted, it can wreak havoc and create hell for the people.

Solution

Every country, at one time or another, had to face and solve the problem of a minority in some form or the other to maintain unity. The solution differed according to circumstances and conditions that prevailed, the period of civilization and the stage of its development.

Primitive tribes brought about unity by crude methods of fighting. They warred until one was annihilated or absorbed. Annihilation meant genocide. The vanquished males were killed and their womenfolk taken as prizes of war and absorbed by the conquerors among themselves. Philip of Macedon took a barbarian princess as his wife who mothered Alexander the Great. When Alexander conquered Persia, he took the Persian Princess Roxanne as his wife. A good many of his officers also married Persian women. In India too the Macedonian General Sleukos, who was deputed to govern the Punjab by Alexander, married the daughter of Chandergupt Maurya, the strongest ruler of the time in Northern India.

Later on in the 16th and 17th centuries also peace and harmony were sought through such marriages when the Rajput Princes of Rajputana offered their girls to the Mughal Emperors of Delhi. Akbar, Jahangir, and Shahjahan took Hindu Rajput girls into their harems as wives. Ranjit Singh also resorted to this strategy of political marriages when he merged the other *Misls* to consolidate

his Empire in the Punjab.

But in India we find this marriage business was not a very lasting solution. There were other obstacles and complications that defied solution. The success of the solution has depended not only on circumstances or conditions but very much on the mentality of the parties concerned.

Sometimes the solution was easy. When the Aryans, Dasyus, Pishachas, Hunas, Yueh Chis, Sakas, etc., came to India, they settled down in the country with an idea to remain here and became one of the people living here. In due course of time they lost all features of alienism and became Indians. Along with their language and culture which mainly centred round the modes of dining and wiving, these little streams merged lock, stock and barrel with the main all-assimilating sea of Hinduism. In the same way, towards the end of the eleventh century, the Normans of France invaded and conquered the English people. They settled down in England and began gradually to mix up with the local inhabitants until by the time of Richard II, the distinction between the conquerors and the vanquished disappeared.

But matter becomes complicated and solution difficult when the schism is caused by deep communal differences and religious convictions.

Turning over the pages of history, we find that once the Muslim sway extended right from the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea to the Atlantic in the West. Towards the end of the 15th century, the Muslims lost their sway over Spain. They ceased to be the ruling class there, though they still comprised a considerable part of the Spanish population. The new rulers were Christians. They failed to bring about a working union between the two sections. The Christians solved the problem, if it could be called a solution at all, by calling upon the Muslims to become Christians or go out of the country, bag and baggage.

The Jews met with even worse fate from country to country. They are still being haunted and hunted about. In Spain and Portugal they met the same fate as the Muslims. In 1290, they were expelled from England, though they were later on, after almost five centuries

admitted into Parliament in 1858. They were granted equality in Germany in 1871, but it was taken away again before the first Great War. How mercilessly they were massacred by Hitler is too well-known. They met the same pitiable fate in Russia and Poland. As many as eight million (80 *lakhs*) Jews are said to have been done to death in Germany during Hitler's reign and the number in Russia and Poland may also be not very much less, but what is admirable is the brave fortitude, courage, persistent determination, and planned organisation with which they have stood against and borne these inhuman atrocities and massacres by the intolerant majorities throughout these long centuries. They have set an example and provided a lesson which is well worth learning and emulating by the unfortunate minorities throughout the world, including India.

Europe has not been able to assimilate either the Jews or the Muslims because of distinctions in religions and cultures that could not be compromised. Cultures being the main and visible obstacles. The Turks having realised that, are now in great hurry to adopt Western dress and manners and evolve their culture to meet the Europeans on their own level.

United States of America and South Africa have not so far been able to solve their problems of the white and the black. It is a rancour that persists to prick their body politics. In Northern Ireland also they have not been able to solve their problem of Roman Catholics and Protestants even to this day, though both the contenders are Christians.

Akbar's Solution

It was the Mughal Emperor Akbar who made a serious and earnest effort to bring the different communities and schools of thought together. The impact of Islam on India began, almost seven hundred years before Akbar, with the Arab invasion of Sindh. When Mohammand Gouri conquered and established his headquarters in Delhi, the Muslims began to be domiciled here and became permanent part of the Indian population. With the conversion of local people, voluntary and forcibly, the Muslim population began to be as much Indian as the Hindus and other non-Muslims. Their

daily intercourse in life, mutual dealings, help and assistance, common sorrows and enjoyments, common dangers and safety, daily exchange of ideas, helped bring the people together. Having added large numbers of Hindus to their fold, the Muslims had begun by that time to cease to consider themselves as aliens. But they had kept their culture and Semitic base of their religion distinctly separate. People with intellect and farsight had begun to think of a rapprochement and a permanent reconciliation between the two. Akbar was the first ruler to have a vision of a united India with a population close-knit and united. He was not alone in it, nor was he the first to conceive of it. The whole genius of the age was with him. Akbar even tried to bring people over to a common faith which he called Din-e-Illahi, the Religion of God. But people become stiff and adamant where their religious beliefs are touched. So the attempt flopped. He then took to the way of peaceful penetration by approaching the people through the beauties of art and refinement of thought and language to obliterate the differences in cultures then prevailing in India. Havell said, "The Mohammedan rulers found in the practice of the arts and in the unprejudiced pursuit of learning for its own sake the best means of reconciling racial and religious differences." We find during Akbar's reign, Hindus and Muslims receiving the same treatment and equal status in the Mughal Court. Muslims began to study the Hindu books and the Hindus read Muslim books. Manners and dress and behaviour became mixed up. Persian and Arabic words began to be fitted into the framework of Hindi *Braj Bhasha*. This consequently developed into a common language in Northern India and during Shahjahan's time became prevalent as Urdu. It was the result of gradual assimilation of languages spoken by Muslims and Hindus. The imaginative descriptive genius of *Braj Bhasha* filled with the richness of realistic detail was immersed into the overflowing stream of reflective richness of Persian and Arabic metaphor. *Braj* was basically sculptural in design and execution while the other was beautifully pictorial, in a true mosaic fashion, with verse upon verse of exquisite diction, may be without any central unity. The virtues and beauties of both were combined in Urdu. Though it

received a set back during the post-Akbar period of bigoted court atmosphere, the writings of Mir Taqi, Hali, Azad and a host of others kept it alive, fit to become the national language of India. Urdu and Hindostani virtually came to mean the same thing. It had a better chance then because the vernaculars prevailing in India were much nearer to each other than now. The intervention of English as the common language of the literates had no affinity with the vernaculars, which, therefore, developed indigenous features of their own so much so that they looked quite alien to each other. While reading the compositions of Namdev, a Maharashtrian, Jaidev, a Bengali, and the Sikh Gurus from the Punjab, in the Guru Granth Sahib, no difficulty is felt to understand the others if anybody knows one of the languages. At the time of division of the country, Mr Gandhi shouted himself hoarse advocating the case of Hindostani for adoption as the '*lingua franca*' of the whole India. But the dutiful sons of the Father of the Nation refused to listen to his words of wisdom and have landed the country in a simmering, fermenting pot-full of languages. Today a Bengali or a Maharashtrian is linguistically far more distant to me, a Punjabi, than he was three centuries ago.

The other 'pincer movement' was through art, painting, architecture, dance and music, etcetera. Akbar's artistic tastes were a happy blending of the Hindu arts with those that Babar and Humayun brought along with them from Central Asia, their homeland. A really Indian national style was developed under his patronage and encouragement. Muslim and Hindu arts were harmoniously mingled to create an unprecedented beauty not only in architecture but in painting and music as well. Crossbreds are usually more virile, handsome, and profound in outlook. The buildings, for instance, had to be vast in design to accommodate Muslim congregations as compared to the Hindu need of sparse space for their individual rituals. But Persian and Arabic structural and decorative styles were combined with the Hindu sculptural designs, bracketed cornices, balconies supported on brackets and surmounted with Muslim arches and domes. Agra and Fatehpur Sikari present an eclectic evidence of this new totally Indian style

evolved during the time of Akbar. After him it continued without break as we see its glamour in the Taj Mahal. The Harmandir, Golden Temple, at Amritsar, is another splendid sample of this newly evolved art. At the Court of Delhi, it received a set back when Aurangzeb began to employ only Muslim architects. But it survived as a permanent feature elsewhere, for example in Punjab being adopted by the Sikhs, in Rajasthan, Gujarat and other corners of native liberty.

In music also significant and well-conceived developments were introduced by noted musicians like Tansen in Akbar's Court. To make it more suitable to the Mohammedan taste and ear, he made even more departures from the traditional modes of Hindu conservative schools. The addition of *Khyal* to *Dhrupad* and *Dhamal* was a significant development that took place during that period. *Thumri* and *Dadra* were later contributions to the Indian music under Mohammedan patronage. The Sikh way of *kirtan* and *Gurmat Sangeet* is a significant result of this evolution of music which took place during this very period.

In painting also, the meditative mood and depth of expression in the old Indian tradition was blended with the brightness of colour, meticulous symmetry, and the virile spirit which the Muslims brought with them.

The Satguru's Solution

When I said Akbar was not alone in his attempt to bring about unity in the country, I had in mind not only the gathering in large numbers of intellectual giants and genuine geniuses in different arts who adorned his Court in Delhi and were spread over different parts of India, but I had in mind the Court of the Sikh Satguru also in the Bari Doab area of the Punjab. Akbar's doings were undone in the Delhi Court by the bigotry of his great grandson, Aurangzeb. But the seed sown by the Sikh Gurus grew to be a large shady tree which bears fruit to this day.

The Satguru set this ideal when Akbar's grandfather Babar had put his first foot on this land. It was in fact Guru Nanak who first conceived of the idea to bring about harmony and peace through

art, culture, and tolerance, sowed the seed, and also saw it sprout. Akbar caught the idea and came all the way to Goindwal as a pilgrim to take lesson and study the developments in the Satguru's Court which he followed up at his Imperial Capital.

The idea of unity and integration of the country struck Guru Nanak at the first moment he laid the foundation of Sikhism, and raised the slogan, "There is no Hindu and no Musalman." It meant that everyone was a creation of God, His beloved sons and daughters, and it was wrong to divide them in various categories under various brands that quarrelled with one another. The Satguru taught :

It is the same spirit that pervadeth all.

ਸਭ ਮਹਿ ਜੋਤਿ ਜੋਤਿ ਹੈ ਸੋਇ ॥ (ਧਨਾਸਰੀ ਮ: ੧)

It is His Light which illuminates every being.

ਤਿਸਦੈ ਚਾਨਣਿ ਸਭ ਮਹਿ ਚਾਨਣੁ ਹੋਇ ॥

From One Light the whole universe was created; then whom to call good and whom bad.

ਏਕ ਨੂਰ ਤੇ ਸਭੁ ਜਗੁ ਉਪਜਿਆ ਕਉਨ ਭਲੇ ਕੇ ਮੰਦੇ ॥

The Creation is in the Creator and in the Creation is the Creator, who pervadeth everywhere.

ਖਾਲਿਕੁ ਖਲਕ ਖਲਕ ਮਹਿ ਖਾਲਿਕੁ ਪੂਰਿ ਰਹਿਓ ਸ੍ਰਬ ਠਾਂਈ ॥

The tenth Satguru explains it thus :

Some men are Hindus and others Musalmans among whom are Rafazis, Imams, and Shafis.

ਹਿੰਦੂ ਤੁਰਕ ਕੋਊ ਰਾਫਜੀ ਇਮਾਮ ਸਾਫੀ,

Know that all men are of the same caste.

ਮਾਨਸ ਕੀ ਜਾਤ ਸਬੈ ਏਕੈ ਪਹਿਚਾਨਬੋ ॥

The Creator (Hindu word *Karta*) and the Beneficent (Muslim word *Karim*) is the same. So is the Provider (in Persian *Razak*) and the Merciful (*Rahim*) the same.

ਕਰਤਾ ਕਰੀਮ ਸੋਈ ਰਾਜਕ ਰਹੀਮ ਓਈ

Let no one even by mistake suppose there is any difference.

ਦੂਸਰੋ ਨ ਭੇਦ ਕੋਈ ਭੂਲ ਭ੍ਰਮ ਮਾਨਬੋ ।

The temple and the mosque are the same. The Hindu worship and the Musalman prayer are the same.

ਦੇਹੁਰਾ ਮਸੀਤ ਸੋਈ ਪੂਜਾ ਔ ਨਿਵਾਜ ਓਈ

All men are the same. It is through error they appear different.

ਮਾਨਸ ਸਬੈ ਏਕ ਪੈ ਅਨੇਕੁ ਕੋ ਭ੍ਰਾਉ ਹੈ ।

Deities, demons, Yakshas, heavenly singers, Musalmans and Hindus,

ਦੇਵਤਾ ਅਦੇਵ ਜੱਛ ਰੰਧੁਬ ਤੁਰਕ ਹਿੰਦੂ

adopt the customary dress of their different countries.

ਨਿਆਰੇ ਨਿਆਰੇ ਦੇਸਨ ਕੇ ਭੇਸ ਕੋ ਪ੍ਰਭਾਉ ਹੈ ।

All men have the same eyes, similar ears, the same body, the same build,

ਏਕੈ ਨੈਨ ਏਕੈ ਕਾਨ ਏਕੈ ਦੇਹ ਏਕੈ ਬਾਨ

a compound of earth, air, fire, and water.

ਖਾਕ ਬਾਦ ਆਤਸ ਔ ਆਬ ਕੋ ਰਲਾਉ ਹੈ ।

Allah and Abhekh are the same; the Puran and the Quran are the same;

ਅਲਹ ਅਭੇਖ ਸੋਈ ਪੁਰਾਨ ਔ ਕੁਰਾਨ ਓਈ ।

they are all alike, it is the one Creator God who created all.

ਏਕ ਹੀ ਸਰੂਪ ਸਬੈ ਏਕ ਹੀ ਬਨਾਉ ਹੈ । (ਅਕਾਲ ਉਸਤਤਿ ਪਾ : ੧੦)

The guiding principle was :

There is only One Loving Master, the rest are all His consorts. One who is likened by the Master is the best.

ਏਕੋ ਪ੍ਰਿਉ ਸਖੀਆ ਸਭ ਪ੍ਰਿਅ ਕੀ ਜੋ ਭਾਵੈ ਪਿਰ ਸਾ ਭਲੀ ॥ (ਦੇਵ ਗੰਧਾਰੀ ਮ : ੪)

The Guru knew too well that there could be no conscious combination or compromise in the sphere of religion. People react and resist and become adamant when touched on any string of their faith and belief. So the cultural ideas lying behind religion were mainly handled. But the Satguru observed that permanent solution could not be evolved by cutting out and bypassing religion altogether. The beliefs in religious faiths were too deep-rooted to be ignored and brushed aside. This hurdle was crossed by advocating complete and honest tolerance. The Guru impressed upon everyone to adhere to his religion but remain truthful both in thought and action and always God-conscious. In tolerance, Sikhism stands unequalled. The holy Sikh Scripture, Sri Guru

Granth Sahib, contains, besides the divinely inspired compositions of the Gurus, sayings and spiritual experiences of thirty-five other men-of-God. Amongst these thirty-five persons, we find those who had faith in different religions, came from different parts of the country, and belonged to various castes and creeds. They are Hindus, Muslims, and also those who were regarded as untouchables. The Satguru gave all of them equal status and seated them by his side on the same throne. The Sikh Scripture contains such commands as are instances of synthesis, the like of which cannot be found in any Scripture in the world. The following are some excerpts addressed to the Musalmans telling them how to become true believers :

Make actions the land, sow the word as seed, and irrigate it with the water of Truth.

ਅਮਲੁ ਕਰਿ ਧਰਤੀ ਬੀਜੁ ਸਬਦੋ ਕਰਿ ਸਚ ਕੀ ਆਬ ਨਿਤ ਦੇਹਿ ਪਾਣੀ ॥

Never think that the Master can be approached by sheer talk.

ਮਤੁ ਜਾਣੁ ਸਹਿ ਗਲੀ ਪਾਇਆ ॥ (ਸ੍ਰੀ ਰਾਗ ਮ: ੧)

Let mercy be the mosque, faith thy prayer mat, and honest living thy Quran;

ਮਿਹਰ ਮਸੀਤਿ ਸਿਦਕੁ ਮੁਸਲਾ ਹਕੁ ਹਲਾਲੁ ਕੁਰਾਣੁ ॥

Self-control thy circumcision and loving behaviour thy fast, and thus you could become a true Musalman.

ਸਰਮ ਸੁੰਨਤਿ ਸੀਲੁ ਰੋਜਾ ਹੋਹੁ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਣੁ ॥

Clean actions be thy Qaba, Truth thy Teacher, and deeds thy prayer.

ਕਰਣੀ ਕਾਬਾ ਸਚੁ ਪੀਰੁ ਕਲਮਾ ਕਰਮ ਨਿਵਾਜ ॥

And if your rosary be His Will, the Lord will preserve thy honour.

ਤਸਬੀ ਸਾ ਤਿਸੁ ਭਾਵਸੀ ਨਾਨਕ ਰਖੈ ਲਾਜ ॥ (ਵਾਰ ਮਾਝ ਮ: ੧)

Another's due is like pork (for a Musalman) and beef (for a Hindu).

ਹਕੁ ਪਗਾਇਆ ਨਾਨਕਾ ਉਸੁ ਸੁਅਰ ਉਸੁ ਗਾਇ ॥

The Guru-Teacher will extend His support if one does not live on dishonesty.

ਗੁਰੁ ਪੀਰੁ ਹਾਮਾ ਤਾ ਭਰੇ ਜਾ ਮੁਰਦਾਰੁ ਨ ਖਾਇ ॥

Mere talk will not take one to heaven. Only truthful living will emancipate.

ਗਲੀ ਭਿਸਤਿ ਨ ਜਾਈਐ ਛੁਟੈ ਸਚੁ ਕਮਾਇ ॥

Condiments cannot turn forbidden meat into pure food.

ਮਾਰਣ ਪਾਹਿ ਹਰਾਮ ਮਹਿ ਹੋਇ ਹਲਾਲੁ ਨ ਜਾਇ ॥

Nanak, through false talk only falsehood is gathered.

ਨਾਨਕ ਗਲੀ ਕੂੜੀਈ ਕੂੜੈ ਪਲੈ ਪਾਇ ॥ (ਵਾਰ ਮਾਝ ਮ : ੧)

There are five prayers with five names and said on five different times of the day.

ਪੰਜਿ ਨਿਵਾਜਾ ਵਖਤ ਪੰਜਿ ਪੰਜਾ ਪੰਜੇ ਨਾਉ ॥

Let Truth be the first, honest living the second, and prayer to God for the good of all the third.

ਪਹਿਲਾ ਸਚੁ ਹਲਾਲ ਦੁਇ ਤੀਜਾ ਖੈਰ ਖੁਦਾਇ ॥

Let fourth be right intentions in the mind and fifth the praises of the Lord.

ਚਉਥੀ ਨੀਅਤਿ ਰਾਸਿ ਮਨੁ ਪੰਜਵੀ ਸਿਫਤਿ ਸਨਾਇ ॥

Let deeds be thy prayer and thus could you be called a Musalman.

ਕਰਣੀ ਕਲਮਾ ਆਖਿ ਕੈ ਤਾ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਣੁ ਸਦਾਇ ॥

Nanak, all those who are deceitful will earn falsehood.

ਨਾਨਕ ਜੇਤੇ ਕੂੜਿਆਰ ਕੂੜੈ ਕੂੜੀ ਪਾਇ ॥ (ਵਾਰ ਮਾਝ ਮ: ੧)

Farid says, they are like dogs who do not offer prayers; it is not a good way,

ਫਰੀਦਾ ਬੇਨਿਵਾਜਾ ਕੁਤਿਆ ਏਹ ਨ ਭਲੀ ਰੀਤਿ ॥

for they never visit the mosque five times.

ਕਬਹੀ ਚਲਿ ਨ ਆਇਆ ਪੰਜੇ ਵਖਤ ਮਸੀਤਿ ॥

O Farid ! get up early, perform ablutions and say prayers.

ਉਠੁ ਫਰੀਦਾ ਉਜੁ ਸਾਜਿ ਸੁਬਹ ਨਿਵਾਜ ਗੁਜਾਰਿ ॥

Chop off the head that does not bow before the Master.

ਜੇ ਸਿਰੁ ਸਾਂਈ ਨਾ ਨਿਵੈ ਸੇ ਸਿਰੁ ਕਪਿ ਉਤਾਰਿ ॥ (Shlok Farid)

Similarly, the followers of other religions, sects, and schools of thought are also addressed and impressed upon to be truthful believers in their *dharams*. For instance, a *Sanyasi* is told to be a true *Sanyasi* :

O man, practise asceticism in this way.

ਰੇ ਮਨ ਐਸੇ ਕਰਿ ਸੰਨਿਆਸਾ ।

Consider dwelling places as forests, and remain an anchorite at heart.

ਬਨ ਸੇ ਸਦਨ ਸਬੈ ਕਰਿ ਸਮਝਹੁ ਮਨ ਹੀ ਮਾਹਿ ਉਦਾਸਾ ।

Make self-control thy matted hair, union with God thine ablutions, and daily religious observances the growth of thy nails.

ਜਤ ਕੀ ਜਟਾ ਜੋਗ ਕੇ ਮਜਨ ਨੇਮ ਕੇ ਨਖਨ ਬਢਾਓ ।

Divine knowledge thy spiritual guide, instruct the mind and apply Naam as ashes to thy body.

ਗਿਆਨ ਗੁਰੂ ਆਤਮ ਉਪਦੇਸਹੁ ਨਾਮ ਬਿਭੂਤ ਲਗਾਓ ।

Eat little, sleep little, love mercy and forbearance.

ਅਲਪ ਅਹਾਰ ਸੁਲਪ ਸੀ ਨਿੰਦਾ ਦਇਆ ਛਿਮਾ ਤਨ ਪ੍ਰੀਤ ।

Ever practice loving behaviour and patience and you will be freed from the three qualities.

ਸੀਲ ਸੰਤੋਖ ਸਦਾ ਨਿਰਬਾਹਿ ਬੋ ਹੈਬੋ ਤ੍ਰਿਗੁਣ ਅਤੀਤਿ ।

Attach not the mind to lust, wrath, ego, covetousness, obstinacy, and worldly love.

ਕਾਮ ਕ੍ਰੋਧ ਹੰਕਾਰ ਲੋਭ ਹਠ ਮੋਹਿ ਨ ਮਨ ਸਿਉ ਲਯਾਵੈ ।

Thus you will attain to the Truthful Realith and obtain the Supreme Being.

ਤਬ ਹੀ ਆਤਮ ਤਤ ਕੋ ਦਰਸੈ ਪਰਮ ਪੁਰਖ ਕਹ ਪਾਵੈ । (ਰਾਗ ਰਾਮਕਲੀ ਪਾ : ੧੦)

In the same way, a Yogi is impressed upon to be a true Yogi in the following words :

O man, practise Jog in this way;

ਰੇ ਮਨ ਇਹ ਬਿਧ ਜੋਗ ਕਮਾਓ ।

Make truth thy horn, sincerity thy necklace and apply meditation as ashes to your body;

ਸਿੰਝੀ ਸਾਚ ਅਕਪਟ ਕੰਠਲਾ ਧਿਆਨ ਬਿਭੂਤ ਚੜਾਓ ।

Make restraint of the mind the lyre, and the support of the *Naam* your alms;

ਤਾਤੀ ਗਹੁ ਆਤਮ ਬਸ ਕਰ ਕੀ ਭਿਛਾ ਨਾਮ ਅਧਾਰੰ ।

Strike the strings of Primal Reality, and you will hear the Divine sweet music.

ਬਾਜੈ ਪਰਮ ਤਾਰ ਤਤ ਹਰਿ ਕੋ ਉਪਜੈ ਰਾਗ ਰਸਾਰੰ ।

Practise tunes of Divine knowledge and waves of sweet melody and rapturous pleasure will be produced.

ਉਘਟੇ ਤਾਨ ਤਰੰਗ ਰੰਗ ਅਤਿ ਗਿਆਨ ਗੀਤ ਬੰਧਨੰ ।

Demons and demigods in their celestial carriers will be amazed and Munis intoxicated.

ਚਕਿ ਚਕਿ ਰਹੇ ਦੇਵ ਦਾਨਵ ਮੁਨਿ ਛਕਿ ਛਕਿ ਬਿਯੋਮ ਬਿਮਾਨੰ ।

Admonish the mind, don the garb of restraint, and utter the name in quietness,

ਆਤਮ ਉਪਦੇਸ ਭੇਸ ਸੰਜਮ ਕੇ ਜਾਪ ਸੁ ਅਜਪਾ ਜਾਪੈ ।

So the body will ever shine like gold, and time will have no effect.

ਸਦਾ ਰਹੈ ਕੰਚਨ ਸੀ ਕਾਇਆ ਕਾਲ ਨ ਕਬਹੂੰ ਬਿਆਪੈ ।

(ਰਾਗ ਰਾਮਕਲੀ ਪਾ : ੧੦)

Nowhere else could one find such forceful and impressive preaching and guidance to the followers of another religion to be firm in and true to their beliefs.

Along with the Satguru are seated in the Sikh Scripture, Ravidas the shoemaker, Namdev, the calico printer, Kabir the Muslim weaver, Mardana and Satta and Balwand, Mohammedan musicians, Farid the Muslim Sufi Shaikh, and others from Bengal, Maharashtra, Eastern U.P., and other places. And it is before the whole holy assembly of them all that the Sikhs pay homage and obeisance when they bow before Sri Guru Granth Sahib. No comparison to such tolerance and humanism could be found anywhere else in the world religions.

Impact

About five centuries of intercourse between Islam and Hinduism in India had resulted in mutual exchange of some features acceptable to both sides. These were not only in the sphere of culture and social behaviours, but also effected to some extent the religious beliefs and observances. Superstitions, whims, talismans, ghosts and spirits, *Pirs* and occultists, devils and bad spirits and the ways to whisk them away, and ward off against their evil effects, shrines, *Takias*, tombs, and mausoleums of men with some following, petty gods and spiritual juggernauts, had become common to a great extent. We have a shrine to this day under the patronage of the Nawab Sahib at Malerkotla, where Sikhs, Hindus,

and Mohammedans all repair in crowds to pay homage every Thursday. Good and useful things were appreciated and adopted voluntarily by each side through daily intercourse. Muslim way of life in worldly comforts was superior to Indian way. Naturally, therefore, it was right to imitate them in certain things like the use of fruit (fresh and dry), cups and saucers, gardens and libraries, rugs and curtains to decorate the rooms and above all — dress. Before the advent of the Mohammedans, the Indians generally put a piece of cloth around their loins and went naked otherwise or were clad in a long piece thrown round their shoulders, the *Dhoti*. The dress we wear, tailored and draped, is a heritage given to us by the Mohammedans.

Emergence of Sikh Influence

This took place besides the obstacle created in this development by the priest class, both the Brahmin and the Mullah. The liberal ideas of Sufism rendered significant help to bring Muslims and Hindus nearer to each other. They soldered to a great extent the crease that cleaved the two communities. The Sufi saints were venerated equally by the Muslims and Hindus. They showed a way that completely bypassed the priest class. This impact of Islam and Sufism on Hinduism produced a fermentation in thought, which when churned, brought out a new system of views about God and man shared by all the communities. This 'butter', which was churned up, when cultured, cleaned, pasteurized, matured and fortified, became one with Sikhism. Most prominent points thus evolved were — (1) Unity of God in place of gods and goddesses; (2) Repudiation of caste and untouchability; (3) Assertion of Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man; (4) Love and devotion rather than knowledge, works, or rituals to be the basis of religion; (5) Necessity of a teacher instead of a priest class; and (6) Use of vernacular in prayer and worship instead of Sanskrit or Arabic. God itself remained no longer an abstract entity of the Aryan conception or a Being outside and above Nature as the Semitic people thought, but became a Personal Being at once Immanent and Transcendent, the Absolute Ultimate Truth.

The Sufi saints came very close to the Sikhs and Sikhism and were so much loved and revered that Saint Mian Mir was brought all the way from Lahore to Amritsar to lay the foundation stone of the Golden Temple, when Guru Arjun Dev, the fifth Nanak, started the construction of Harimandar.

The art and architecture of the Golden Temple is a unique and superb presentation of the Indo-Persian cultural synthesis that evolved in 16th century Hindustan. With its lovely kiosks (*chhatris*) with fluted metal cupolas that decorate the parapets, projections, and angles, the embowed windows supported on carved brackets and elliptical cornices, the arches decorated with foliations, and the low fluted collarless golden central dome, and with its marble walls inlaid with exquisite floral designs painted or embossed in metal and precious stones and decorated with attractive fresco paintings supported with exquisite works in *Jaratkari* and *Dehin* forms of the Sikh School in which Sikh draftsmen excelled, which decorate the walls of the Golden Temple, it stands as a monumental piece of art and can compare with any select piece appearing on the famous Taj Mahal of Agra.

Standing in the midst of a clear pool, it stands as an unrivalled specimen of Indo-Persian art evolved under the initiative and patronage of the Sikh Gurus and early Mughal Rulers. The art and architecture of the Golden Temple are generally followed while constructing Sikh gurdwaras of note.

In Sikh music also, the blending of the ancient system of Hindu *sangeet* with modifications to suit the taste and ear of the 16th century created by Mohammedan impact is distinct. *Rabab* was the first instrument selected by the founder of the Sikh religion to be played by his Mohammedan companion. *Rabab* was a Central Asian instrument. The induction and popularization of *Ragas* like the *Asa*, *Suhi*, and *Tilang* in the Sikh *kirtan* worship testifies to the Muslim impact. It will be worth noting that the musicians at the Sikh congregations during the Sikh Guru period were invariably Muslims, called *Rababis*. They remained the assets and masters of this fine art in the Golden Temple, the central Sikh seat of worship, and other places till the unfortunate partition of Punjab in

1947. This blending of Hindu-Muslim music was initiated by Guru Nanak Dev during Babar's time and was later taken up also by Tansen in Akbar's court.

Similarly, the mixture in the language is a masterly blending of the two into common man's language, Punjabi. Persian and Sanskrit and even Arabic words besides other dialects were freely used in *Gurbani* after due and proper Punjabi-iation. There are compositions in such distinct Punjabi-ied Persian and Sanskrit in the Guru Granth Sahib, that it is rightly called "the first great Scripture of Synthesis."

The Setback

After the death of Akbar, this laudable work was to some extent carried on by his son Jahangir and grandson Shahjahan. The structures of Taj Mahal at Agra, the Red Fort at Delhi, and others (after Fatehpur Sikri) are monumental examples of this. Some retrogression had started being noticed here and there after the passing away of Akbar, but there was a complete setback during the reign of his great-grandson, Aurangzeb who undid everything that Akbar had taken such pains to do.

Aurangzeb issued instructions that no architect be employed who was not a Mohammedan and banned music in his Empire. This created again a schism in art which Akbar had tried to close up. The fanatic bigotry of Aurangzeb brought down monstrous tyranny on those who were not Muslims and even on those who were not Sunni Muslims. This was the beginning of the end of the Mughal Empire which collapsed when Farrukhsiyar under communal frenzy, resorted to persecution and conversion of non-Muslims to Islam forcibly.

Indo-Persian cultural synthesis had thus been evolved in the 16th century and as a result, use of the vernacular in naming objects and buildings had become a common practice. The Sunehra Mahal in Akbar's Fatehpur Sikri which has its pillars carved with images of Hindu deities and other works of art are thus, standing monuments of the amity that had been brought about. All this was brought to naught by later Mughals, Aurangzeb downward. This

crack which Akbar tried to weld with Guru Nanak's formula of harmony and coexistence, began to appear again and continued to widen.

Later on we find reversion to the old moorings, prejudices, differences, and confrontations. This revival is of sectional cultures of pre-Muslim impacts in India. The Hindus started looking back to purely Mathura and Brindaban cultures and the Muslims towards Samarkand and Bukhara. The Hindus began to sing of the *koil* (cuckoo bird) and the Muslims of *bulbul* (Persian nightingale). Muslim buildings began to appear in distinctly Saracenic-style of architecture, while the Hindus began to build their *ashrams* and public buildings in purely Hindu style, carefully avoiding the use of arches and domes. Similar became the fate of pictorial art. Painters of Bengal were producing expressionless art. It may be perfectly Hindu in keeping with the meditative mood of old India. But it fails to take cognisance of the change brought about by the virile west, both Muslim and European, in India. While Muslim painters like Chughtai have become more fond of colour and less of depth of expression, only the Sikh painters like Thakur Singh and Sobha Singh remained realistic and kept the two effects combined. The naming of places like Brindaban Gardens, Hotel Shiraz, etc., are indications of the widening schism. The same is happening to philosophy with the cry "back to the ancient days" forgetting the work and contribution of medieval men-of-God, who combined the best in both and created a sense of joy in life and worldly duties. Even the language is not being spared. The *Rashtrya Bhasha* is being developed on purely Hindu lines and crammed with Sanskrit words and idioms, as if the Muslims and other non-Hindu people had nothing to do with it. This harking back to purely Hindu times in India and the Muslim times outside India, is aptly likened, by a learned friend, to an ill-married couple who destroy all chances of present love and happiness by talking too much of the past life enjoyed by each, away from one another, long before they had met. This resulted in movements called *Sangthan* and *Tanzeem* started by Bhai Parmanand and Mr Jinnah. This did the worst service to India.

Ultimately, this has resulted in the partition of the country. And still we do not take any lesson from it. With all our parochialism, provincialism, regionalism, lingualism, Indianisation which is only a covering for Hinduisation and in other words means the cult and culture of the U.P. revolving around Ayodhya and Banars in the east and Mathura and Brindaban in the west of the province and the tales of their ancient rulers, and with slogans instigating one class of people against another, and insulation of the so-called depressed and other sections of the community into permanent distinct compartments, we are not proceeding towards integration and unity in the country, but are creating cracks after cracks and new schisms and may even be heading towards disintegration of the country.

Base of the Sikh Way of Life

This formula to bring about peace, harmony, and co-existence through unity of tolerance and culture was evolved by Guru Nanak in the beginning of the 16th century. Eventually, though this movement could not be continued on the political plane as the subsequent rulers drew greater dividends from the policy of divide and rule. This formula, evolved by the founder of Sikhism, formed a part of the Satguru's way of life, having been inextricably interwoven in it.

In Sikh art, culture, music, painting, architecture, everywhere this synthesis of different cultures is prominently visible. Not only that, even the language, Punjabi, and the worship as well as Sikh religion, have grown and blossomed emitting fragrance of this synthesis. The sacred Scripture of the Sikhs stands unequalled as the Book of Synthesis in which Farid, Kabir, Ravidas, Nam Dev, Dhanna, and others of high and low castes coming from north, south, east and west of the country have been given equal status with the Satguru. It was never thought that they had different beliefs and religious loyalties.

During the first World War, a meeting of the Historical Society was held in Barnes Court at Shimla. It used to be the residence of the Punjab Governor. Sir Michael O'Dwyer was then

the Lt. Governor who presided over that meeting in which Sir Jogendra Singh read a paper on Guru Nanak. Malik Sir Umar Hayat Khan Tiwana remarked that Guru Nanak was as much theirs as of the Sikhs. That is why the Muslims got half of the sheet of the cloth that was left behind by the Guru after his passing away. At the end, Sir Michael O'Dwyer said that at that time Christians were not present, otherwise, they would also have laid their claim and wrested their part of the holy sheet.

It will be worth noting that we sometimes do have communal riots in the country and also hear about riots, etc., or rioting by anti-social elements. These communal riots are always between Hindus and Muslims. But we have never heard so far of any communal riot between Sikhs and Hindus or between Sikhs and Muhammedans anywhere. If the Sikhs have intervened anywhere it has been to provide relief, rescue, or shelter to the needy. This is the proof of success of the formula.

If, therefore, unity and integration are to be brought about in the country, some such formula will have to be found as Guru Nanak evolved and Akbar adopted.