

GURU NANAK'S WAY OF LIFE

The path Guru Nanak chalked and laid out for us is called Sikhism. He not only shows the way but actually takes us by the hand and teaches us to tread it. It took the Satguru two hundred years to make us proficient and self-confident enough to proceed on this path, face and conquer obstacles, and reach the goal. This way of life, i.e., Sikhism, is not based on any set of *mantras*, rituals, formalism or talisman, postures of worship, *yogik aasans*, fasts or penances, signs or symbols, ablutions or trances. In *Rag Suhi*, Guru Nanak says :

I do not believe in *tantra* and *mantra* or other hypocrisy.
Immanent God has set my mind at rest.

ਤੰਤੁ ਮੰਤੁ ਪਾਖੰਡੁ ਨ ਜਾਣਾ ਰਾਮੁ ਰਿਦੈ ਮਨੁ ਮਾਨਿਆ ॥ (ਸੁਹੀ ਮ: ੧)

The tenth Satguru, in *Bachittar Natak*, says :

By writing *jantras* one may get tired and get exhausted
by reciting *mantras*,

ਲਿਖੰ ਜੰਤ੍ਰੁ ਥਾਕੈ ਪੜੰ ਮੰਤ੍ਰੁ ਹਾਰੈ ।

In the end time shall have its toll.

ਕਰੇ ਕਾਲ ਤੇ ਅੰਤ ਲੈ ਕੈ ਬਿਚਾਰੈ ।

Some exhaust their lives in perfecting *tantras*.

ਕਿਤਿਓ ਤੰਤ੍ਰੁ ਸਾਧੇ ਜੁ ਜਨਮੰ ਬਿਤਾਇਓ ।

It is all useless, not a single one is of avail.

ਭਏ ਫੋਕਟੰ ਕਾਜ ਏਕੈ ਨ ਆਇਓ ।

One may do anything and may seek refuge in million
ways,

ਕਰੇ ਕੋਟ ਕੋਊ ਧਰੇ ਕੋਟ ਓਟੰ ।

No one will be saved; time shall strike.

ਬਚੈਗੋ ਨ ਕਿਉਹੂੰ ਕਰੈ ਕਾਲ ਚੋਟੈ ।

Let endless *jantars* be written and crores of *mantras* be recited.

ਲਿਖੰ ਜੰਤ੍ਰ ਕੇਤੇ ਪੜੰ ਮੰਤ੍ਰ ਕੋਟੰ ।

There is no other refuge except His protection

ਬਿਨਾ ਸਰਨਿ ਤਾਕੀ ਨਹੀ ਔਰ ਓਟੰ ।

There is no place in Sikhism for any *Karm Kand*, pilgrimages, austerities, giving up family life or renunciation of the world. Guru Nanak, in *Var Sarang*, says :

God is not pleased by wandering at the holy places and remaining naked.

ਨ ਭੀਜੈ ਤੀਰਥਿ ਭਵਿਐ ਨੰਗਿ ॥

Nor by doling out alms.

ਨ ਭੀਜੈ ਦਾਤੀ ਕੀਤੈ ਪੁੰਨਿ ॥

The ninth Satguru, in Bilawal, says :

Of what avail are fasts and pilgrimages if the protection of the Lord is not sought.

ਕਹਾ ਭਇਓ ਤੀਰਥ ਬੁਤ ਕੀਏ ਰਾਮ ਸਰਨਿ ਨਹੀ ਆਵੈ ॥

Yogic practices and *yagyas* are useless if God's praise is forgotten.

ਜੋਗ ਜਗ ਨਿਹਫਲ ਤਿਹ ਮਾਨਉ ਜੋ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਜਸੁ ਬਿਸਰਾਵੈ ॥

Mere reading of scriptures or mechanical repetition of prayers, attainment of supernatural powers or physical exercises, and show of miracles or magic, have no place in Sikhism. Sikhism is not based on dogmas or a set of commandments. Recitation of hymns and numbering of prayers with rosaries, etc., alms and charities, giving up of food and going naked do not help solve the basic problem. Any amount of hard thinking or trying not to think, possession of worldly goods, science or technology or any system of hollow philosophies or institutionalized religion, regimented society, attempts at mental discipline or esoteric introversion, planning or compulsion, social and moral laws, or any kind of imposition, can not quench the basic human thirst. All these things only fan and inflate the ego and do not show the right path. In the very beginning of the Holy Granth, Guru Nanak Dev, in *Japu* says :

Thinking avails not how-so-hard one thinks.

ਸੋਚੈ ਸੋਚਿ ਨ ਹੋਵਈ ਜੇ ਸੋਚੀ ਲਖ ਵਾਰ ॥

Nor silence avails, howsoever much one shrinks into oneself.

ਚੁਪੈ ਚੁਪ ਨ ਹੋਵਈ ਜੇ ਲਾਇ ਰਹਾ ਲਿਵ ਤਾਰ ॥

Nor hunger goes with the pleasure loads of the world.

ਭੁਖਿਆ ਭੁਖ ਨ ਉਤਰੀ ਜੇ ਬੰਨਾ ਪੁਰੀਆ ਭਾਰ ॥

Of a myriad clevernesses, not one works.

ਸਹਸ ਸਿਆਣਪਾ ਲਖ ਹੋਹਿ ਤ ਇਕ ਨ ਚਲੈ ਨਾਲਿ ॥

In the next line, the Satguru poses the question :

Then, how shall we attain the truth ? And how the veil of falsehood be rend ?

ਕਿਵ ਸਚਿਆਰਾ ਹੋਈਐ ਕਿਵ ਕੂੜੈ ਤੁਟੈ ਪਾਲਿ ॥

The answer is provided in the next line :

Nanak, by cheerfully following His Will which is inborn in us and ingrained.

ਹੁਕਮਿ ਰਜਾਈ ਚਲਣਾ ਨਾਨਕ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਨਾਲਿ ॥੧॥

Sikhism does not aim at salvation or deliverance which means a static merger with and reabsorption of the individual soul into the Universal Soul, and get finished with it. This will amount almost to suicide. This is left entirely to the Grace of Akal Purkh (ਨਦਰੀ ਮੇਖੁ ਦੁਆਰੁ). Our duty is confined to right thinking and right actions with pulsating love of the Omnipresent. The fifth Satguru, in *Dev Gandhari*, says :

I seek no dominion nor deliverance either :

ਰਾਜੁ ਨ ਚਾਹਉ ਮੁਕਤਿ ਨ ਚਾਹਉ

For, I crave for nothing but the love of Thy Lotus Feet.

ਮਨਿ ਪ੍ਰੀਤਿ ਚਰਨ ਕਮਲਾਰੇ ॥

Sikhism is based purely on rational understanding, intellectual argument, realisation of the Truth, and enlightenment through knowledge (*gyan*) and interpretation of the Word in actual life. Deeds and not the creed are essential. In the words of the fifth Guru in *Gauri Sukhmani*, it is based only on :

Meditate on the Lord's Name and do what is clean.

ਹਰਿ ਕੋ ਨਾਮੁ ਜਪਿ ਨਿਰਮਲ ਕਰਮੁ ॥

The Satguru's path is the shortest, straightest, and also the

clearest. The ascent may be tough as a short cut is bound to be, but the path is wide and well defined. It aims at forging of the individual character of man and formation of a society of men of God. It provides a straight approach by laying down the basic principle of attuning one's mind to the Will of the Supreme Being (ਹਰਕਮ) and extinction of selfishness (ਹਉਮੈ) by establishing harmony with Truth.

Guru Nanak's way of life, in short, is a guidance to us for living this human span of life successfully, effectively, actively, purposefully, fruitfully, usefully, forcefully and in accordance and in tune with the Will of the Creator, Who ordained us to live this life, and to live in such a way that we may earn His pleasure and blessing. To do so, it is only the right attitude of mind that counts. We have to try and control the mind and forge it into an attitude where it accepts without hesitation the Will and the Commands of the Master. Guru Nanak, in *Japu* says :

If the mind is subdued the world is conquered.

ਮਨਿ ਜੀਤੈ ਜਗੁ ਜੀਤੁ ॥

We have, therefore, to mould our mind to be attuned with the Divine Will and remain in complete harmony with it.

Sikhism is not a passive concept, but is an active pursuit. The Khalsa did not run after peace of mind alone but acquired power so that it may be employed to guarantee peace to those who were victims of political oppression and religious bigotry.

The Satguru's Way, therefore, is of harmony and action (*simran* and *sewa*). We have to be in complete harmony with the Will of the Providence both implicit (*Raza*) as well as explicit (*Hukam*). The Creator lives and functions in His creation, so we have to remain in perfect harmony with the working of nature. Harmony has to be created within ourselves, our surroundings, our fellow beings, and ultimately in the whole creation to attain to the top of development and provide the human mind with eternal peace and blessings.

To attain harmony with the Divine Will, complete surrender of the self is necessary. On arriving at this stage one finds oneself to be at a crossroads. One leads to abject surrender, renunciation, fatalism, pessimism, and inaction. This is the negative way, which

in *Sikhi* terms is called *Dhaindi kala*, where all enjoyment, happiness and pleasure in living is lost. It was this passive way that had landed the country in the lap of degradation and slavery. Satguru shows us the other way which is of positive action, enjoyment in life, and pleasure in everything He does. Disappointment and frustration are turned into hope and joyful optimism. This is called *Charhadi kala* (optimistic high spirits). Harmony with His Will would lead us to pleasure in positive action in tune with the Will. Inaction means lifelessness. Any discordant note struck has to be shut and obstacles in the way have to be cleared.

A positive example in this respect was set by the fifth Nanak, Guru Arjun Dev. In the burning month of *Jeth*, 1606 A.D., when the fifth Nanak, Guru Arjun Dev was being done to death at Lahore under the provisions of the ancient Mughal rule of *Yasa* which had laid down that if blood of a man of God was spilt, it brings down untold calamities. To avoid that spilling of blood, burning hot sand was poured on him and he was placed on a red hot iron sheet. On seeing this horrible spectacle, Saint Mian Meer got furious and offered to interfere and bring his miraculous powers into action. But the Satguru asked him to be calm and watch rapturously the Will of the Almighty Providence in action; if it were not the Divine Will such a happening could not come about. To interfere with the Master's Will will mean striking a discordant note and disturbing harmony.