

SRI GURU TEG BAHADUR: AN ETERNAL GUIDE FOR DITHERING HUMANITY

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ABSTRACT

All would agree that the modern world of today is not only in flames but also in shambles! Literally speaking, this world is caught up between two forces -- on the one hand, we are running a mad rat-race for material prosperity, progress and all the fruits of modern life and, on the other, we are also seeking peace, stability and tranquility. This apart, greed for power, pelf, position, egoistic battles for supremacy, vindictive tendencies etc. have infested the mindset of the mundane people who seem to have outrightly renounced the virtues of value, ethics and humanity! It is well established that two World Wars jolted the mankind while third one is staring at us in the face as is evident in the ongoing animosity between Russia and Ukraine -- the two warring nations who are mercilessly destroying the peace paradigm, while not sparing the ammunition! To add to the long tally of misery and sufferings, the COVID pandemic has testified that the world sans values, ethics and moral code is destined and foredoomed to be in a disarray, ergo, paying obeisance to a divine guru, adhering to his holy preaching, following his numinous path seems the only antidote to all the trials and tribulations this acephalous world is passing through and probably even heading to! In such a hopelessly tenebrous scenario, the need of the hour is a guru, a holy mentor, a savior, an apostle of mercy, a messiah who could vouchsafe the much-needed deliverance from the rotten mundane life. In this most coveted morality-frame, nothing fits better than the Bani (holy verses) of Sri Guru TegBahadur, the ninth Guru, who holds a paramount place in the pantheon of Sikh faith and creed.

Therefore, **the present paper seeks to explore and explicate the strain of moral voice in the holy verses of Guru TegBahadur with a potential to inculcate, educate and inspire morality and ethics to the dithering humanity living in a God - forsaken, God - forgotten world.** Before delving deep into Guru TegBahadur's holy verses and their potential prowess to restore values and ethics to the prevalent order-dislocation, let's shine some light on the life and biographical pen-portrayal of Sri Guru TegBahadur.

KEYWORDS: Bani, Sikhism, Guru TegBahadur, Values & ethics, Sikh Theology

Sri Guru TegBahadur was the ninth Guru of Sikhism and was a great martyr in the history of the world and was also the youngest son of 6th Guru Hargobind Singh and his wife Nanki. Born originally as Tyag Mal, he was a trained rider and a marksman and for showing great skill in swordsmanship in the battles that his father fought, he earned the name TegBahadur which means the 'hero of the sword'. In his early youth, he seemed to have accepted a life of retirement and voluntary renunciation. His verses included in AdiGranth bear an ample testimony of the fact that he had strong contempt for earthly joys and riches and even active involvement with the secular world.

Guru TegBahadur had authored Bani which is very soulful, as it is found particularly at the end of Guru Granth Sahib. Not only this, but also he contributed significantly to many hymns and raagas to Granth Sahib including slokas, couplets and raags and so, his works include 160 shabds, 15 Ragas and his bhagats are credited with 782 compositions that are part of

Bani of Sikhism. After his father passed away in 1644 AD, he shifted to the village Bakala along with his mother and wife, his maternal village, where he lived in an

Ordinary house and spent most of his time in solitude and meditation. Guru Harkishan had pointed out before his demise that babaji would be found or traced at Bakala. It is said that other claimants to the throne also set up their gaddis at this place. All this led to chaos for a while a Sikh merchant Makkhan Shah Lubana is said to have found the true Guru in TegBahadur. Many other Sikh devotees not only welcome this decision but also hailed it with acclaim. This seems to have been an election by consensus -- the first ever in Sikh history in the case of a Guru. After acceding to the Guru gaddi. he devoted himself towards for the welfare of humanity. Immediately after this, he started visiting the places like Assam, Dhubi, Gaya, Patna, Kurukshetra, Agra, Ittawa and Prayag. Wherever he went, he distributed all the offerings he received from the devout among the poor and fed the hungry from his never failing community kitchen. He spent many years in travelling for the sake of humanity. In the span of two years -- between 1671 and 1673, the Guru returned to Anandpur in Punjab preaching on his way back the gospel of Guru and thus, bringing hitherto persecuted Hindus to his charismatic influence. By now, the religious persecution of the Hindus at the hands of Muslims and the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb was in full swing.

It is very difficult to trace the cause and effect of Aurangzeb successive steps in his reactionary policy towards Hindus. In such a period of crisis, a deputation which was consisted of 500 Brahmins from Kashmir under the leadership of Kirpa Ram, who was a famed Brahman of Mattan waited upon Guru TegBahadur at Anandpur and acquainted him with their tragic fate and requested him to lead at this situation to save humanity. Then a small child of just nine years Gobind Rai, son of Guru inspired his father for this sacrifice for the sake of humanity. Guru ji after a thought said to him, you go and tell the Mughal viceroy that the Brahmins will gladly accept to embrace Islam if Guru TegBahadur whom we revere as our guru is persuaded to do so.

Thus Guru took upon the highest challenge of an empire on behalf of a whole persecuted humanity. How, thus crucial time, a single man's soul with nobility of ideals to inspire him even to death can turn the course of human history is best illustrated by the exemplary manner in which Guru TegBahadur stood up to challenge of the times. The reply of guru ji was duly conveyed to the emperor through his viceroy in Kashmir and orders were issued for his immediate arrest. So Guru ji was arrested by the governor of Lahore. His faithful disciples came to his help and increased his influence. It was something that Aurangzeb never could tolerate. He gave orders of execution of guru ji. First earlier three companions of Guru Ji Bhai Sati Das, Bhai Mati Das and Bhai Dayala were given extreme tortures and put to death. After that order of execution of Guru ji came on Nov 11, 1675 at Chandni Chowk, Delhi.

It was dark and murky sky and a severe storm swept through the city. His life was although gone, but his glory was writ very large across the skies. It was a great sacrifice. Guru's martyrdom was the fulfillment of the purpose of his life. This sacrifice was the need of hour to kindle a sense of living courage and to revitalize the lost faith. It was his love for suffering humanity. He protected the lives of millions of people by giving his self-sacrifice. Even today, Kashmiri pundits are much in news by a movie Kashmiri FILES. In contemporary times, when everyone is inhuman and humanity is dithering very badly. Hence, such martyrs can save and change the world. He became the prop of the powerless pundits. He knew the consequences very well but still did not accept Islam.

Guru Gobind Singh writes in BACHHITAR NATAK –CHAPTER 5

“He protected the frontal marks and sacrificial threads of the Hindus and displayed great bravery in Kali Age. When he put an end to his life for the sake of holy men, He gave his head but uttered not a groan. He suffered martyrdom for the sake of religion; He gave his head but swerved not from his determination.”

Thus Guru Gobind Singh pays a great tribute to his father and Guru Gobind Singh was a unique son, who inherited Mughal enmity from his father and he returned back to him by giving his four sons and family. Such great examples we don't get anywhere in history all over the world. It is rare example to save a dithering humanity. This sacrifice is considered very significant and profound impact on the history of Punjab. Mughal Empire was tyrannical and oppressive in nature. They wanted to convert the whole masses into DARUL ISLAM. But Guru TeghBahadur's selfless sacrifice made almost impossible for such autocratic kings. It was the creative potency that released energy and that strong energy changed the outlook of people of Punjab. Now Punjab was ready for the leadership of guruGobind Singh. Under his dynamic leadership people got strengthened and got prepared for struggle in future. It awakened Guru Gobind Singh to grim reality of Mughal oppression and domination. He created the order of Khalsa and breathed life into the dead masses of Punjab.

B.S Gupta says that there are three major philosophical considerations are implicit in the Guru's exemplary martyrdom:

1. An enlightened acceptance of the challenge of History
2. The holiness of the will to sacrifice
3. The refusal to perform a miracle

It is not easy to insist on Morality and Ethics before a ruthless empire. Mughals were holding endless power, The guru met Aurangzeb with light of love, goodwill and truth in his mind. But government had no eyes to see all that. Sikh Gurus were spiritual teachers and creative religious leaders who not only expounded their teachings concerning God, Naam truth, virtue and happiness but also aware of the dark times of history in which they lived. He gave up his life for the faith for humanity, for human dignity and for free

Guru TegBahadur can be truly called the spiritual leader. It was a standard of conduct that involved self-surrender. It was a great lesson for posterity to lead a selfless life. He had attained self-enlightenment. His spiritual consciousness had interior relationships with God. He had realized by virtue of his meditation that the world is a flow of time and events. Everything is grounded in cosmic soul and that soul pervades the whole universe. He had high degree of perfection in his character.

The teachings of Guru, which were taught 400 years ago, are relevant till today. He preached the conviction it takes to be indifferent to misery and happiness to get rid of vices like flattery and allegation and every worldly pleasure. The brave Guru showed the path of divinity to his disciples by teaching them to overcome greed, desire, ego and pain. In Sikhism, to submit the will of God is not to abide in blissful passivity, but to let the will of God prevail.

In **BACHHITAR NATAK**, Guru Gobind Singh explicitly described his mission as follows:

“God sent him for the protection of Right, for spreading truth and for destroying wickedness.” Even it reminds us of the Bhagwad Gita's famous verse: “For the protection of

virtuous, for the destruction of evil-doers, and for establishing Dharma (righteousness), I am born from age to age.”

Guru TegBahadur is truly called Hind kiChadar and Master of art of self-control and selflessness. In today's time, when patience and contentment are the need of hour, everyone is aware of Russia Ukraine war, only dissatisfaction and greed are the root causes. Today we need Guru TegBahadurBani and ethics which could save the world from disaster.

SELECT HOLY VERSES OF GURU TEG BAHADUR AND THEIR MORAL LESSONS FOR DITHERING MANKIND

• God - The Absolute Truth

In the vision of Guru TegBahadur, the central issue [5-8] is the distinction between absolute truth and relative truth. Absolute truth is the only reality, the only lasting, permanent and eternal existence, which gives substance to everything else. It is the God Almighty, Creator of the universe, Omnipresent, Omniscient and Omnipotent, Most High and Most Gracious. Guru TegBahadur articulates;

ਜਨਨਾਨਕਸਭਹੀਮੈਪੂਰਨਏਕਪੁਰਖਭਗਵਾਨੇ॥

Devotee Nanak says: the One Primal Being, God, is permeating everywhere. (SGGS, M. 9, P. 1186)

ਸਭਸੁਖਦਾਤਾਰਾਮੁਹੈਦੂਸਰਨਾਹਿਨਕੋਇ॥

God is the giver of all peace and comfort. There is no other at all. (SGGS, M. 9, P. 1426)

All things in the universe are God's creation and last for a short period [9-14]. They are like a dream, a wall of sand, or a shadow of a cloud. In contrast with the truth of God's eternity, the universe is false, precisely because it is not everlasting. Guru TegBahadur enunciates;

ਜਿਉਸੁਪਨਾਅਰੁਪੇਖਨਾਐਸੇਜਗਕਉਜਾਨਿ॥ ਇਨਮੈਕਛੁਸਾਚੇਨਹੀਨਾਨਕਬਿਨੁਭਗਵਾਨ॥

One must understand that this world is like a dream or a show.

Nanak says, except God, none of this is eternal. (SGGS, M. 9, P. 1427) .

The whole life of a person has an air of unreality about it. The wealth one accumulates, the buildings one constructs, one's whole complex of social relations - such as wife, children, parents, relatives, friends, acquaintances, professional colleagues, etc., are all of the ephemeral characters. And one who is engrossed in them is engaged in the pursuit of unreality. He asserts;

ਦਾਰਾਮੀਤਪੁਤਰਥਸੰਪਤਿਧਨਪੁਰਨਸਭਮਹੀ॥ ਅਵਰਸਗਲਮਿਥਿਆਏਜਾਨਉਭਜਨੁਰਾਮੁਕੋਸਹੀ॥

Wife, friends, children, carriages, property, total wealth, the entire world - know that all of these things are illusory (unreal). The Lord's meditation alone is eternal (real). (SGGS, M. 9, P. 631) But it was not his thinking that because these things are not everlasting, they have no value at all. He has stressed again and again that while chasing them, their real character should never be lost sight of. They are not bad in themselves but become bad only when a person gets so inextricably entangled in them that he forgets all about the absolute truth and begins to think of these very things as the final goal. By this process of thinking, he repeatedly reminded us of the all-important distinction between ephemeral (the relative truth) and everlasting (the absolute truth).

- **Creation and Its Primal cause**

Humans have been staring up into space for thousands of generations, to have a rational and coherent description [19] for the creation and evolution of the universe. Guru TeghBahadur offers an elegant explanation of the origin and creation of the universe. His views strongly align with the worldview of his predecessor Gurus. He articulates:

ਸਾਧੋਰਚਨਾਰਾਮਬਨਾਈ॥

Holy Ones! God has fashioned the creation. (SGGS, M. 9, P. 219)

- **Human Body**

Sikh worldview [15-19] reports that a human being consists of a body, mind, and soul. Humans and the universe are similar to each other, having common essence and cosmic unity. A profound relation lies between the two. As the universe is made up of the five classical elements (air, water, fire, soil, and space), so is the human body. Human is like a microcosm to the macrocosm universe. After a human's life span is over, his/her body merges back into the constituting elements of the universe. Guru TegBahadur expresses such a view in his hymns as;

ਪਾਂਚਤਤਕੋਤੁਰਚਿਓਜਾਨਹੁਚਤੁਰਸੁਜਾਨ॥ ਜਿਹਤੇਉਪਜਿਓਨਾਨਕਾਲੀਨਤਾਹਿਮੈਮਾਨ॥

O, Wise One! Know it well that your body is a build-up of the five elements. Nanak says: It is a fact that you shall merge again into the same, from whom you had originated. (SGGS, M. 9, P. 1427) .

According to Guru TeghBahadur, the human body is impermanent (false) because it is perishable, subject to decay, sickness, and death. He articulates:

ਅਸਥਿਰੁਜੇਮਾਨਿਓਦੇਹਸੇਤਉਤੇਰਉਹੋਇਹੈਖੇਹ॥

You believed that this body was permanent, but it shall turn to dust. (SGGS, M. 9, P. 1353)

ਬਿਨਸਤਨਹਲਗੈਬਾਰਓਰੇਸਮਗਾਤੁਹੈ॥

Your body is like a hail-stone; it melts away in no time at all. (SGGS, M. 9, P. 1352)

o meditates on the Lord in his heart, is liberated, know it well. There is no difference between that person and the Lord: Nanak says: accept it as the truth. (SGGS, M. 9, P. 1428)

Thus, according to the Guru, spiritual enlightenment is achievable. Humans must make the best of their lives to achieve it. The state of spiritual enlightenment releases the resources of inwardness, fearlessness, and courage to face the troubles and turmoil of life. It even provides the resoluteness to sacrifice one's life for the well-being of others. It is gloriously exemplified in the life of the Guru himself.

CONCLUSION

The discourse of values, ethics and moral code in Guru TegBahadurJi's holy verses is so multi-sided and multi-dimensional that no final word can be said to come to a conclusion! Vast and diverse as an ocean, the Guru's numinous verses are a beacon for the modern civilization which seems to be in shambles! Emphasizing the gargantuan role Guru TegBahadurJi'sBani can play in shaping up the present and the future of the youth of India, **Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, ShriNarendraModi, during a meeting of the High-Level Committee (HLC) via video conferencing:**

"It is important to make the younger generation understand these lessons. It is easier to reach out to the younger generation world over to spread the message through digital means." "The occasion of the 400th PrakashPurab of Sri Guru TeghBahadurJi is a spiritual privilege as well as a national duty," he added.

A renowned Sikh Scholar Devinder Pal Singh, in his well-researched article titled *"Teachings of Sri Guru TegBahadurJi: A Perspective"* published in Journal of Studies in Sikhism and Comparative Religions 44 (2):48-69 (2020), aptly sums up the message of Sri Guru TegBahadur to the dithering humankind in the following words; a befitting paeon:

"He brightens our awareness of the ephemerality of the material phenomena, however instead of creating a sense of despair and depression, elevates the human mind and imbues it with the hope which permeates the cosmos. He fortifies our faith in human nature and makes it possible for us to rise above the irritants of the immediate problems of existence and keep our attention focussed on the everlasting and eternal."

Therefore, Guru TegBahadur was a living prophet, a poet, a martyr, a philosopher and the greatest humanitarian; a Crusader of human rights. Rightly remembered by his moniker, 'Hind Di Chadar' (savior of Hindus and their faith), the Guru exemplified his spiritual ideals to counter the brutal force, and his life thus became a great flame of sacrifice. In the contemporary times, the countries are being inhuman and animalistic for supremacy and the existence of mankind is at stake! If we are able to enjoy freedom today, it is because of the supreme sacrifice of martyrs like Guru Gobind Singh Ji, Guru ArjanDev and above all, Guru TegBahadur.

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