

# KHALSA PANTH: CHALLENGES OF TWENTY FIRST CENTURY

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## ABSTRACT

*At the time of its tercentenary celebration the Khalsa Panth is going through a major transition towards its renaissance in the twenty-first century. The present strengths and deficiencies are analyzed with regard to their impact on the transition. The challenges we have faced during the past centuries and those to be faced are discussed. In the end a number of areas are listed with a view to initiate further discussions. The areas which will impact include, new technology, proliferating diversity, prosperity, globalization, roots in the Aad Guru Granth Sahib, significance of symbols, and mystiques, and determination of youth to indulgence in the community's future.*

## INTRODUCTION

The Panth who's tercentenary of coronation we are celebrating this year is going through a major transition. Although no community or ideology will be an exception to the onslaughts of this new age, the burden of transition will be more critical for a younger identity like ours. We had not have proper opportunity to solidify our place in today's civilization. As a result, there is a potential of 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 century, which is unlike any previous one in our history and which will have peaks never before seen by any one.

Where the mountains meet, the territory is always rocky and any expedition may cause injuries. Likewise, when old form of spiritual practice will meet 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 level so high that those living in less exciting times would have never experienced. The next decades soon to start will be such a time. In such times in history cultures are recreated. When years of dust are settled, nations are renewed. The Panth 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 of his own creation. On the contrary, we are bound to witness the renaissance of the Khalsa Panth in 21<sup>st</sup> century. In the

spirit of a major change that is imminent, we can already see signs of a movement towards this renaissance in many quarters.

From the upheavals that we experienced in the recent past, 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 our renaissance in the next century, all in the prediction of the Guru's plan for the *chardi kala* of the Panth. It is not a coincident that we are entering the twenty-first century with the memorial celebrations of two most significant Tercentenaries: Celebration of the Tercentenary of the Crowning of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699 immediately followed by the Memorial Celebration of the Tercentenary of the Installation of the Aad Guru Granth Sahib as the Eternal Guru of the Sikhs in 1708. Celebration of two tercentenaries in a continuous series must present a formative task for each of us. That is, it serves as a strong reminder that we are members of a religious community that may carry the religio-political flag of Guru's discipline in the next century. And, that we have a particular role to play in the future.

## THE PRECEDING CENTURIES

**i) Achievements:** In the last century, we made a number of leaps. As a result there are more than 22 million Sikhs making us the fifth largest religion in the World. We are spread in all Four Corners of the world; we have our scriptures read not only in our congregations but also all over the cyberspace. Times are gone when the scripture could not be with us on

account of severe limitations of the printed form; the CD and cyberspace technology has taken care of that. The newly emerging world of scholars and our youth alike use software engines to seek Guru's presence and to research spiritual treasures. Even though the scripture is read mostly in the language of the Gurus, its translations in the World's major languages are available and more are on the way.

We have our parliament well established in the organization and the unparalleled influence of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC). A similar committee is in formation in Pakistan for the Sikhs in all of the Islamic countries in the Mid-East. The efforts will be directed to manage our Gurdwaras also in Bangala Desh, China, and Iraq. The United Nation has opened its doors to Sikh organizations to be its NGO members and our members are active in other NGOs at international level. The Sikh centers of worship are found in many towns of the world. Sikh chairs of higher learning are sprouting in many universities world wide, the most recent one established at the University of California and the Valpraso University in Indiana along with the Kurekshetra University and others in India. Our identities as a distinct religion and as a distinct ideology that are suitable for the next century are on the move to world recognition.

We have material prosperity second to none. Our political influence is vividly felt in our homeland with the majority of legislators always to be Sikhs. We have the largest ever proportion of representation in the Indian cabinet at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Further, inroads of political representations were made in major countries of the world. We are represented in the Canadian parliament and there is opportunity to substantially increase our representation. We have representation in provincial and national legislatures of Pakistan. Sikh legislators are regularly elected to many states both inside and outside India. In parallel with our political presence our enviable economic prosperity can not be denied, Sikhs are among the millionaire and billionaire elite in many countries.

**ii) Failures:** Then what is the problem? I see it this way. Whereas, we are at a peak of economic prosperity and political power; whereas, we take pride in our mushrooming institutions and places of worship; whereas, we are on our way to recognition among the world's largest religions, our leaders and we as individuals are losing our spiritual rudder and it is

being felt at many levels of our behavior. In fact, we are a spiritual nation and our spirituality is the basis for our worldly activities as well as the mission of our life. The same is true of our belief that salvation of next century will lie in the religion that promotes divine living. Guru's prophecy is as follows:

ਬਲਿਓ ਚਰਾਗੁ ਅੰਧਾਰ ਮਹਿ ਸਭ ਕਲਿ ਉਧਰੀ ਇਕ ਨਾਮ ਧਰਮ ॥

AGGS, M 5, P 1387.

*The lamp is lit in the darkness of this age. In such an age, all are saved through the One Name and faith in the Dharma.*

ਏਹੁ ਅਹੇਰਾ ਕੀਨੋ ਦਾਨੁ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਕੈ ਘਰਿ ਕੇਵਲ ਨਾਮੁ॥

AGGS, M 5, P 1136.

*God has given this great gift. Nanak's home is packed with the Naam of the Lord.*

ਸਰਬ ਧਰਮ ਮਹਿ ਸ਼੍ਰੇਸ਼ਟ ਧਰਮੁ ॥

ਹਰਿ ਕੋ ਨਾਮੁ ਜਪਿ ਨਿਰਮਲ ਕਰਮੁ ॥

AGGS, M 5, P 226.

*Out of all religions the most honorable is the one that teaches experiencing of the Divine and to engage in cleansing behaviors.*

We are drifting away from the universal spirituality and not living unto our beliefs. This is counter to our survival. It is our neglect to this basic commitment that, to some extent, our decline has started to happen already. You only have to look at the headlines of your local paper. What is the headline news there? What about us that appears in our press most frequently? The most worrisome news appearing in headlines today concerns the gradual loss of our divine conscience and our *qaumi* ethics. Large sectors of our members at all levels of activity are seen slithering like snakes across a desert floor toward any hole where money, power, or

### **We are drifting away from the universal spirituality and not living unto our beliefs.**

worldly fame may lie. If I, along with many who think this way [3, 14], am even partially right, then such a condition is a signal of danger. The danger is that, without the spiritual wisdom of the Guru, we will be on our way to losing both

individual and collective wisdom. When wisdom is lost, our pride of being a Sikh is lost. We begin to slide down stream and this is beginning to happen.

The deterioration is happening at a time when we will be exiting an age of belligerency, which has lasted for almost three hundred years in our history. In contrast, we will be entering an ideological age for which we were well groomed by our Gurus but now we seem to

see it less of a value in our beliefs and on our national life.

## CHALLENGES AND CAPABILITIES

We must not forget that, in the next century, we will be passing through a dramatic time of our historical transition. Our psyches and our social orders will have to shift from one basic mode of civilization to another. Specifically, we, as individuals and as a nation, will be asked to shift our focus from confrontation and sloganeering to our real life values. This we will be obliged to do under the Guru's tutelage. Let us talk about this challenge a little more.

**i) The First Challenge:** 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, we are not accustomed to foresee such a freedom the expression leading to a strong resistance. To fight the drag created by our resistance during our entry into the new age will require heaps of entropy. If we continue to follow the Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS) that we were fortunate to inherit, the Guru's Way would infuse in the Panth the explosives of spiritual energy that no political or psychosocial maneuvering could limit. No matter how much some people might try to hold back the tide of change today, they will have less and less an effect on the Guru's vision now unfolding. The chaos of this time that I described above is only a reflection of a profound and inexorable reorientation of Sikh mind that is waiting to sprout. This explosion is coming from the deepest levels of the spiritual psyche of the Khalsa Panth. It is inevitable and no amount of repressive force or reactionary slogans would be able to contain it. We will be victorious in the long run. The following stanzas from the AGGS support the above views:

ਨਾਨਕ ਗਿਆਨੀ ਜਗੁ ਜੀਤਾ ਜਗਿ ਜੀਤਾ ਸਭੁ ਕੋਇ ॥

AGGS, M. 3, P 548.

*Says Nanak, the spiritually wise one conquers the world and every one included in it.*

ਜਗੁ ਜਿਤਉ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਣਿ ਮਨਿ ਏਕੁ ਧਿਆਯਉ ॥

AGGS, Kal, P 1397

*You have conquered the world by following the Guru's teachings as you meditate single-mindedly on the One Lord.*

ਜਿਹਿ ਪ੍ਰਾਨੀ ਹਰਿ ਜਸੁ ਕਹਿਓ ਨਾਨਕ ਤਿਹਿ ਜਗੁ ਜੀਤਿ ॥

AGGS, M. 9, P 1428.

*That mortal who chants the Praises of the Lord, O Nanak, conquers the world.*

The Sikh spirit is a transformation of human mind that is achieved by serving the causes of the Guru and seeking his divine vision.

ਗੁਰ ਸੇਵਾ ਤੇ ਹਰਿ ਪਾਈਐ ਜਾ ਕਉ ਨਦਰਿ ਕਰੋਇ ॥ ਮਾਣਸ ਤੇ ਦੇਵਤੇ  
ਭਏ ਧਿਆਇਆ ਨਾਮੁ ਹਰੇ ॥ ਹਉਮੈ ਮਾਰਿ ਮਿਲਾਇਅਨੁ ਗੁਰ ਕੈ  
ਸਬਦਿ ਤਰੇ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਸਹਜਿ ਸਮਾਇਅਨੁ ਹਰਿ ਆਪਣੀ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਕਰੇ॥

AGGS, M.3, P 90.

*Serving the Guru, the Lord is obtained the Glimpse of Grace is bestowed. They are transformed from humans into angels, meditating on the Naam, the Name of the Lord. They conquer their egotism and merge with the Lord; they are saved through the Word of the Guru's Shabad. O Nanak, they merge imperceptibly into the Divine, who has bestowed His Favor upon them.*

The Sikh spirit and the Sikh practices will neither be up for a vote from any section, nor will 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 AGGS:

ਮਾਂਦਲੁ ਬੋਦਿ ਸਿ ਬਾਜਣੇ ਘਣੇ ਧੜੀਐ ਜੋਇ ॥

ਨਾਨਕ ਨਾਮੁ ਸਮਾਲਿ ਤੂ ਬੀਜਉ ਅਵਰੁ ਨ ਕੋਇ ॥

AGGS, M 1, P 1091.

*Most of the people are paying heed only to the bugle of 'karam kaand' sounded by recitations from many religious scriptures such as Vedas. Says Guru Nanak, you should accept the path of Naam and do not sow the seeds of other actions.*

ਕਾਬੀਰ ਜਿਹ ਮਾਰਗਿ ਪੰਡਿਤ ਗਏ ਪਾਛੈ ਪਰੀ ਬਹੀਰ ॥

ਇਕ ਅਵਘਟ ਘਾਟੀ ਰਾਮ ਕੀ ਤਿਹ ਚੜਿ ਰਹਿਓ ਕਬੀਰ ॥

AGGS, Kabir, P 1373.

*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.*

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 Gurus left for us in the AGGS.

ਜਗੁ ਜੀਤੇ ਹੋ ਹੋ ਗੁਰ ਕਿਰਪਾਧਿ ॥ AGGS, M 5, P 1304

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

We must let the public know that, with this celebration of the Tercentennials, 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 [7], is ever-renewable through the Guru's Sabd, and is activated through our dedication to serve the humanity rather than preparing a list of self centered goals [9, 13].

**ii) The Second Challenge:** The second challenge 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 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 Khalsa energy. We are moving into 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 Khalsa consciousness and most importantly we need the willingness to adapt.

During the phase of our adaptation, our actions will annoy and anger our clergy and our politicians. It may also annoy our parents and other 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 was never 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 Brahmanic 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 [15]. Did we not succeed in marrying our youngsters in Anand Karaj ceremony in spite of many roadblocks from our own clergy [16] 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 cast? [17] Did we not stop the conversion of our youth by either Christian missionaries or godless ideologies such as communism in spite of many of our intellectuals openly taking sides with our enemy?

## PREPAREDNESS

My presentation on the coming of an age in our community is not a prophecy for the next century but rather a description of what is happening in the community at a number of levels. In spite of much progress made in the past century, as I illustrated earlier, we may be ill-prepared to jump on the opportunities that lie ahead in the twenty first century. There are many religiously and politically influential individuals who are active in our community today. They had failed to read deeply into the Guru's message of Vaisakhi or that of *Gur Gadi* in 1708; the message of kinship of humankind [13], globalization of faith and practices, discarding of hollow rituals and traditions [10], and making spirituality as the soul of our worldly activities. Those same individuals spent the last several years of our history striving to divert

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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.

On the other hand, we have new generations in Punjab and in all advanced countries. Today, they are either sitting on the school benches or occupying college and university chairs. They are educated, prosperous and productive. Our children in the next century will begin their earnings that we retired on. They will have wealth that will exceed those of our kings in the past centuries. More importantly, they will be leaders in innovation and visions of the new century. Enough of those youth and intellectuals are attracted to new attitudes based on the awareness of Sikhism's universal principles and their logical applications in our life. This is happening in Punjab and in other Eastern or Western countries. They clearly show potentials of making a mark in the next 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 to guide the nation. Under their insistence, all structures

and systems that remain primarily wedded to porous substance of the past have already begun and will continue to leak and collapse around us. These institutions and structures are dinosaurs. They will be replaced by structures just as real but that focus on the Guru's vision of the Khalsa 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 practiced 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.

### POINTS TO PONDER

This paper must be concluded with outlining a few of the areas of concern in terms of their relevance for our life in the new age of next century. The idea is first to be in tune with the roots: then to incorporate basic doctrines of Guru's way into the moral and ethical norms in the society. Beginning with the Sikh society, one may later attract the neighbors and then to the rest of the world. What follows is a brief outline of a number of points meant not to be all-inclusive but as examples of the areas where future discussions may be stimulated. The author invites suggestions on these points so that each may be developed in more specific details for our action plans.

**i) Returning to Roots:** Guru Gobind Singh advised us in his last sermon that we must derive all beliefs and practices from the divine principles given in the body of the living Guru, the Aad Guru Granth Sahib. Guru Nanak first initiated the philosophy of designating Sabd as the Guru. Its reiteration was continued by all of his successors. Finally, Guru Gobind Singh affirmed it as a specific injunction as his last sermon on this earth. He asked his followers to seek wisdom from the Granth only. Visions of the Granth are not developed out of constructions from old historical events as is done in Judeo-Christian religions. They are divine and, therefore, ageless in application. The Guru knew that future generations might find events of the parochial past less relevant to their circumstances in their times. Thus, he asked that the concepts that are meant to guide our life must be derived from the Divine principles enunciated in Gurbani, their pragmatic interpretation may differ from time to time and from one culture to another. Further, next generations may either use the conventional medium of a congregation

in seeking answers to their queries or they may simply take advantage of new technological environments and take personal responsibility to work out their problems directly with the Guru. They may not need or have a taste for interpretations or injunctions from the institutions situated in the distant lands. Their tendency may be to recognize doctrinal commandments found in the Guru Granth in relation to their larger universal context. This will involve establishing what the Guru exactly meant for the people who were originally addressed. The task of achieving a properly conceptualized understanding of Guru's teachings originally contained within the settings of fifteenth and sixteenth centuries must necessarily draw upon a full range of academic disciplines and new technologies in describing solutions to the human ills of all the time.

Recognize *Naam*, *Daan* and *Isnaan* as the basic Sikh teachings. Accordingly, define all facets of human life as a practice of those teachings. The concept of Naam implies experience and practice of Divine Presence;

### The message for the next century is to practice oneness of humankind and to globalize the Sikh relevance.

Daan is sharing of Divine favors with others and seeking of Divine guidance with a deep sense of thanksgiving and gratitude. Isnaan is the daily act of living

in which only those sets of behaviors and thoughts are executed that cleanse body, mind and their environment. At the same time it is required to discard those that pollute body, mind and their environment. The place of these principles as the foundation of Sikh beliefs was discussed earlier [6, 8].

**ii) Diversity, Globalization and Oneness of Humankind:** We are going to inherit the world inhabiting much greater religious and political diversity than in the past centuries. For example, a wide variety of Christians, Sikhs, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, Jains, native tribes, and all of the various combinations thereof will inhabit the next world. Each group will emphasize its own needs and its own point of view about the role of their religion in a pluralistic society. The world today is already plagued by religious violence all over the world. With the collapse of Communism, the danger in the rise of religious triumphism will become much more serious. The Sikh theologian of the highest repute, Bhai Gurdas, echoes the Guru's view as:

ਵਰਨਾ ਵਰਨ ਨ ਭਾਵਨੀ ਕਰਿ ਖੁਦੀ ਖਹੰਦੇ॥ ਜੰਗਲ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਸੀਂਹ ਦੁਇ  
ਬਲਵੰਤਿ ਬੁਕੰਦੇ॥ ਹਾਥੀ ਹਥਿਆਈ ਕਰਨਿ ਮਤਵਾਲੇ ਹੁਇ ਅੜੀ  
ਅੜੰਦੇ॥ ਰਾਜ ਭੂਪ ਰਾਜੇ ਵਡੇ ਮਲ ਦੇਸ ਲੜੰਦੇ॥ ਮੁਲਕ ਅੰਦਰਿ

ਪਾਤਿਸਾਹ ਦੁਇ ਜਾਇ ਜੰਗ ਜੁੜਦੇ॥ ਹਉਮੈ ਕਰਿ ਹੰਕਾਰ ਲਖ ਮਲ ਮਲ ਘੁਲੰਦੇ॥ ਗੁਰੁ ਸਿਖ ਪੋਹਿ ਨ ਸਕਨੀ ਸਾਧੁ ਸੰਗਿ ਵਸੰਦੇ ॥

(Bhai Gurdas, Var 38, Pauri 6) [5]

*Various ethnic groups do not like each other and quarrel among themselves while expressing their ego, like they are two lions in a jungle who roar mightily at each other. They are also like those intoxicated elephants, which stubbornly fight each other. The mighty kings capture large territories and fight with each other. Two emperors in a country will go to war with each other. Guided and controlled by ego numerous wrestlers wrestle with one another. This ego does not touch those who seek the Truth in the company of the Holy.*

We were given the spirituality to form the soul of all our worldly practices. However, our clergy is confusing this laudable principle of the Khalsa with religious ethnicity. Thus, the ancient traditions of sectarian religions and prevailing religious practices continue to be made partisan. They fail to exhibit any faith in the spiritual dimensions of human nature. The spirituality is entrapped in the walls of ethnic religiosity. There is a complete failure in religious leadership to transcend biological and ethnic differences that the Guru asked us to eliminate on this day of Vaisakhi. Instead, we regularly manifest the tunnel vision of ethnicity in all forms. First, we exhibit the adversarial relationship with other world religions. We enthusiastically glorify those who advocate supremacy of our religion over others. We give religious sanctions to redemptive violence against innocents. We bestow glorification on struggles between social classes and religious groups. Selfish motives can be found underlying most of political struggles that we launch. There are numerous expressions of divisiveness in cultural and religious organizations that have been progressively consolidated in our social life over the past century. As a result, the way in which most of our institutions carry out their day-to-day activity presents a fundamental challenge to the concept of inculcating unity and spirituality into our life [11].

The message for the next century is to practice oneness of humankind and to globalize the Sikh relevance. Accepting every one as a kin will require rejecting the curse of distinctions based on caste, creed, gender, color, parental lineage, geographical or political nationality, and individualized faiths or beliefs. Global relevancy of our faith will require new planning that is not based on any local origin. This will mean getting out of *Punjabiati* as our relevant point. Instead, we must show our relevance in all the cultures and countries at all the time. Any thinking inconsistent

with global our dreams will have to be faded away. Further, global consistency must be combined with local autonomy, i.e. world ambitions consistent with local sensitivities. Like our fixation with *Punjabiati*, other people have loyalties to their own local cultures and traditions; they have to be convinced that they would not be micromanaged by some one else particularly imported from far off cultures. Further, effective implementation and relevance of globalization will be achieved using strong local teams who understand the particular culture, historical and social nuances that are likely to influence appeal of our ideas. Conversations are never one way. Our Gurus respected local languages, cultures, and attitudes. They incorporated them in spreading the divine mission. They took into account local environments in finding solutions to their problems. For example, Guru Arjan and Guru Gobind Singh responded differently to the similar challenges in two different centuries. The challenge was from the powers to destroy their mission. The response of Guru Arjan was to offer his martyrdom in saving the divine institution; the tenth Guru took up arms to defend the same institutions.

**iii) Spiritual Soul in the Flesh of Politics:** We must come to realize that political power without spiritual morality would promote shoddy levels of intrigues, back-biting, self-assertion, opportunism, compromise on principles, ease in backing out of the promises or manifestos, injustice, conflict, and wars. Values such as universal brotherhood, moral living, social responsibility, self-surrender, commitment to help the needy, respect for life and rights of others, and truth in human dealings, all but disappear. In the absence of spiritual values of the Khalsa as a driving force, powerful interest groups have sprung up in the past few years. They fight against one another to promote their own separate agendas, without anyone to speak with credible authority for the common good. As the Guru said of those rulers in his times,

ਰਾਜੇ ਧਰਮੁ ਕਰਹਿ ਖਰਬਾਏ ॥ AGGS, M 1, P 1024.

*The kings acted righteously only out of self-interest.*

Guru Gobind Singh wrote the following in response to a letter from the Mogul Emperor, Aurangzeb.

*Hama ko tura padshahee badad, bama daulatey deen panahee badad, Tura turkatazee be makar va riyaa, mara chareh saazee be sidak vafaa. Na zedad tura naame Aurangzeb, xe Aurang Zeban na yabad fareb [4].*

*By Whose grace you are made king and your writ sweeps everything, His very grace endowed us to protect the faithful and the low. When your aim is to loot and plunder, to cheat and fraud, we are there to*

*shield, save, and protect. Our arms are the Truth and faith in Almighty. You do not really deserve to be a king when you resort to hoax and fraud and thus betray the trust of God as a king.*

As is illustrated in his letter, the Guru's displeasure with the mogul emperor was not so much on account of imperial designs on Hindu or Sikh population, but rather, that the emperor forsake the tenets of a true religion during his reign and warfare. It is very clear from this example that Guru Gobind Singh held the rulers of the day responsible for leading others to be God fearing and believers of the faith. They were held responsible for the protection of the people and their rights to be safe, employing the strength of their belief in the Creator.

With the realizations of the perils of godless politics, our Guru urges us to consider spiritual basis of 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.

Today, we remember the Guru's call as the Miri-Piri principle. The term was coined at the time of Guru Hargobind (1606-1644) and is symbolized by the crossing of two swords in the Sikh insignia. However, the symbolism representing interaction of politics and spirituality goes far back. In the Jewish Star of David, a pyramid points to heaven representing divine and another pointing to earth representing humanity. The Christian cross similarly reflects the power pointing to heaven as it crosses the power that covers the earth [18]. Roughly at the same time when Guru Hargobind introduced Miri-Piri, Frances Bacon (1597-1625) wrote [2]. "Concerning the means of procuring unity; men must beware that in the procuring, or mutinying, of religious unity, they do not dissolve and deface the laws of charity, and of human society. There be two swords amongst Christians, the spiritual and temporal; both have their due office, and place, in the maintenance of religion."

Political practices under the principle of Miri-Piri are nothing else but implementation of a political system of governance that blends the spiritual pursuits with the material well-being of people. The spiritual roots of political governance provide the kind of visionary inspiration that will lead us to achieve and maintain our role as a free and democratic people in the global society of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The same spiritual basis

imparts a fundamental equality upon all human beings. This equality sanctioned by the Holy Spirit that is manifested in everyone irrespective of nationality, social status, gender or color ought to form the basis of the political governance in every nation of the world (for additional discussion, see Lal, 1999). The perception of the spiritual basis of equality and governance is inherently democratizing.

The Guru's plan was that, by means of awakening the spiritual consciousness of human oneness, the spiritual democracy would be evolved and the spiritual democracy would be made the foundation of national unity towards the development of the new society. The Guru actually talked about building a nation based upon these principles.

ਘਰੁ ਬੰਧਹੁ ਸਚ ਧਰਮ ਕਾ ਗਡਿ ਬੰਮੁ ਅਹਲੈ ।

ਓਟ ਲਹਿ ਨਾਰਾਇਣੇਂ ਦੀਨ ਦੁਨੀਆ ਝਲੈ ॥

AGGS, M 5, P 320.

*You should build your homeland of true righteousness, with the unshakable pillars of spirituality. Take the Support of the Lord, who gives support in the spiritual and material worlds.*

Laying the groundwork for global civilization according to the principles of *miri-piri* and *sarbat ka bhala* calls for the destruction of divisive boundaries. It calls for creation of cultures, rituals, laws and institutions that are universal in both character and authority. We should listen to the vision that Guru Ram Das provided centuries ago.

ਮਿਥਿਆ ਦੂਜਾ ਭਾਉ ਧੜੇ ਬਹਿ ਪਾਵੈ ॥ ਪਰਾਇਆ ਛਿਦ੍ਰੁ ਅਟਕਲੈ  
ਆਪਣਾ ਅਹੰਕਾਰੁ ਵਧਾਵੈ ॥ ਜੈਸਾ ਬੀਜੈ ਤੈਸਾ ਖਾਵੈ ॥ ਜਨ ਨਾਨਕ ਕਾ  
ਹਰਿ ਧੜਾ ਧਰਮੁ ਸਭ ਸ੍ਰਿਸਟਿ ਜਿਣਿ ਆਵੈ ॥

AGGS, M 4, P 366.

*People form alliances in the false love of duality. They complain about other peoples' faults, while their own self-conceit only increases. As they plant, so they shall harvest. Nanak has joined the Lord's alliance of spirituality, which system shall triumph everywhere.*

Similarly, Bhai Gurdas emphasized.

ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਪੰਥ ਸੁਖ ਚਾਹਤ ਸਕਲ ਪੰਥ ॥

(Bhai Gurdas, Kabit 58) [5]

*The nation of the Guru-oriented people would wish well of all nations.*

**iv) Keep the Symbols relevant:** Nations surviving in the next century will keep their symbols and mystiques relevant to new century. Most people in the next century would like choices; they would assess intrinsic and extrinsic returns from their beliefs. It is dangerous

to assume that “mystique” per se will still be credible or relevant. The mystique will have to be replaced by a true psychological contract between the faith and the seeker. Any charismatic identity must go hand in hand with delivery of the functional values; symbols just don't add but multiply the value. We must discover this relevance from our scripture. For example, the symbol of sword may be considered representing lightening of knowledge that destroys ignorance and evil instincts as enemies. Guru helped us in this conceptualization.

ਗਿਆਨ ਖੜਗ ਪੰਚ ਦੂਤ ਸੰਘਾਰੇ ਗੁਰਮਤਿ ਜਾਗੈ ਸੋਇ ॥

AGGS, M 3, P 1414.

*Those who kill the five demons (Addictive desires, anger, greed, attachment, ego) with the sword of spiritual wisdom given by the Guru are awake to the teachings of the Guru.*

ਮੇਰੇ ਠਾਕੁਰ ਕੈ ਦੀਬਾਨਿ ਖਬਰਿ ਹੋਈ ਗੁਰਿ ਗਿਆਨੁ ਖੜਗੁ ਲੈ ਮਾਰੇ ॥

AGGS, M 4, P 983.

*When the news reached the Court of my Lord and Master, the Guru took up the sword of spiritual knowledge and destroyed the enemies of human consciousness.*

ਗਿਆਨ ਖੜਗ ਕਰਿ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਦੀਨਾ । ਦੂਤ ਮਾਰੇ ਕਰ ਧਈ ਹੈ ॥

AGGS, M 5, P 1072.

*With the Lord's blessing I was given the sword of knowledge or gnosis. With this sword I succeeded in slaying the enemy.*

ਕਾਮੁ ਕ੍ਰੋਧੁ ਅਹੰਕਾਰੁ ਨਿਵਾਰੇ ॥ ਤਸਕਰ ਪੰਚ ਸਬਦਿ ਸੰਘਾਰੇ ॥

ਗਿਆਨ ਖੜਗੁ ਲੈ ਮਨ ਸਿਉ ਲੂਝੈ ਮਨਸਾ ਮਨਹਿ ਸਮਾਈ ਹੇ ॥

AGGS, M. 1, P. 1022.

*Taking up the sword of spiritual wisdom, A Sikh struggles with his mind, and keeps an hope and a desire deep in his mind. That I should employ this weapon to destroy my five enemies and get rid of my mind's addictive desires, anger and ego.*

Similar thoughts on relevance of sword one may find relevance of the other symbols of a Sikh. For example, the symbol of bangle may be promoted as a reminder of strengthening the chains of restraining our restless mind. The rest-less-ness of the human mind is a major impediment in the way of human progress toward spiritual living [12]. A symbol to remind us to shackle the restless mind would be of utmost importance to the Sikh way of living. The Guru wrote about the symbol of bangle as:

ਕਰ ਕਰਿ ਕਰਤਾ ਕੰਗਨ ਪਹਿਰੈ ਇਨ ਬਿਧਿ ਚਿਤੁ ਧਰੇਈ ॥

AGGS, M 1, P 359.

*When she fashions and wears the bracelet of the Creator Lord around her wrist, then she shall know the way to hold her mind and consciousness steady.*

The Khalsa insignia (origin is not known to author) of double sword, a circle of infinity and a double-edged dagger illustrate our founders' sense of our mission. This symbolism reveals Khalsa's role as a vehicle for the realization of humanity's goals. The circle reminds us that we are larger than any limited minded person. We are part of the Infinite. The expansion into this larger self is the purpose of human evolution. This evolution will proceed not through adaptation but through illumination from our Creative Soul, *Karta Purakh* and the *Jagat Jot*, spiritual principles and beliefs placed in the heart of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh.

## CONCLUSIONS

With the beginning of new century, we must clarify who we want to be and then evolve into something much more than our present position in this century. According to the guru's definition of the Khalsa, 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 lightening 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.

Let our people wholeheartedly embrace the concept of the Grace of God applicable to the whole humanity and apply it in every action and not just as part of our prayer or our leaders' political sloganeering. Let us reorient ourselves away from the age-old demons of ethnic and religious strives. Let there be a dawn of consciousness that all members of Guru's Panth constitute a single people under Guru's flag and free worship and open inquiry is their birth right under the law of the Guru's wisdom. The people who have not done so should now turn away from the patterns of conflict that have dominated social, religious and political life of many in the past. Let our people learn to increase the ways of sharing and conciliation. Once this threshold is crossed, only then we will gather a charisma to set in motion so the peoples of the world are drawn to our beliefs in formulating common goals of the *sarbat ka bhala* [9] and join us in attaining our goals.



The Gurus laid down the principles for human living in the next century. Now let the leaders propagate these principles through their actions, educational systems and the media of mass communication. We will not be alone in this venture. The coming century will witness a newer level of commitment to spiritual living everywhere. The social as well as the political thinkers have begun to seek vision for evolving the new social and political systems that are consistent with spirituality in every heart. Following our Guru's verdict, we must take hold of this opportunity to work for the new order and make all of the world's citizens as its beneficiaries. Further, the effort required to create appropriate environments must now go beyond merely sermons, seminars, public oratory, resolutions or appeals. As our mentors exhorted us:

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 ॥

AGGS, M. 3, P 89.

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

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 ॥

(Bhai Gurdas, Vaar 26, Pauri 1) [5]

*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.*

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