

NEEDS OF SIKH COMMUNITY

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INTRODUCTION

Many years ago, Gurus recorded their teachings and philosophy in the Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS) [1] as if they could foresee the practical challenges which confront Sikhism today. The incredible growth of the Sikh religion across geographic, cultural and generational lines has resulted in multiple interpretations of the Ideology behind the AGGS. Unfortunately, the values and fundamentals of the Gurbani have been subjected to the frailty of the super-egotistical nature of humankind. For example, Sikhs living in India do not share some of the viewpoints of Western Sikhs, Sikhs of Indian heritage are uncomfortable among Sikhs of different ethnicity, and younger Sikhs do not always agree with older Sikhs about the validity of certain rituals. It is disheartening that at a time when the world offers plentiful methods of communicating information, the result is dissention rather than a greater sense of unity among Sikhs worldwide. Fortunately, the AGGS itself can return the Sikh community to the foundational belief system that our Gurus established. In order to do so, Sikhs must not only foster a renewed sense of community but also be willing to recognize and accept modern interpretations of the AGGS.

PROPOSED METHODS

1. Gurbani translation and Interpretation in simple and Understandable Languages

Ideally, there would be one universally accepted interpretation of the AGGS upon which all Sikhs could agree [2]. However, this is not only impossible but also repressive as it limits the opportunity for discussion and modernization. I would like to propose a collaboration of teachers, writers, philosophers and even the average believer of Sikhism to compile a short and easy-to-read handbook for daily life. It should enumerate simply the principles of Sikh belief and be general in its approach, so that it will appeal to all Sikhs whether they are 17 or 76 years old. Additionally, I would suggest that the handbook be printed in multiple languages so that it will be accessible to all Sikhs as well as non-Sikhs.

2. Analytical Research of Ethics and Fundamentals based on Gurbani

In fear of political, economic or religious protest, some members of the Sikh liturgy tend to rely on the strictest orthodox practice of Sikhism as a security system in which to hide from the changes of the modern world. Their literalistic religious convictions are thinly stretched over gaping anxieties and unanswered questions, and in some cases, even over unasked questions. Let's examine an incidence in 1998 year's debate in the Canadian Gurudwara about whether or not to eat langar on the floor. The issue forced a clash between orthodox and non-orthodox believers that ultimately resulted in weapons and violence being brought into a place of sanctity and worship. This example illustrates how the truth of the Gurbani is being undermined due to petty differences. However, both groups claim to believe in the Gurbani yet were unwilling to compromise. It is not my goal to criticize orthodox belief and practice, I am suggesting that we recognize that the integrity of the AGGS is being sacrificed at the hands of blind, fundamentalist adherence to certain practices.

The liturgy should represent a sense of brotherhood and a liberal approach on modern views. The result will be the affirmation of timeless truths that can be experienced afresh by every generation. It will be recognition that the truths of the Gurbani are not bound within the limits of time and can be moderately adapted to modern life.

3. Adaptation to changing environment

When Guru Nanak stated that *"There is no high or low, everybody is equal."* [ਸਬੁ ਕੋ ਅੰਤੁ ਅੰਕਿਅ ਨਿਦੁ ਨ ਦਿਸੁ ਕੀਏ]

iekniṁ Bwifj swij Ai ieku cwnx iqhu l iē] AGGS, M 1, P 62 [1] or when Guru Gobind Singh created the Khalsa, they both heroically challenged existing ideas and embraced and promoted change. I believe that the examples of our Gurus and the Gurbani itself should serve as an inspiration for today's worldwide Sikh community to join together and prepare for the 21st century. This "modernization" should lessen the differences among the many sects of Sikhs and enliven

a more cohesive ideology. This will be an impossible feat unless the chains of political, economical, social and cultural differences are broken down once and for all.

4. To describe the Principles and Ethics of the Khalsa based on Gurbani

Establishing the ethics and regulations, Guru Raam Das has written an excellent tenet in AGGS, as follows:

ਗੁਰ ਸਿਗੁਰ ਕੀ ਜੋ ਸਿਕਾ ਆਕੈ ਸੁ ਭੀ ਕਿਆ ਠਿਰਨਾ ਮੁਇ ਆ ਵੀ]
ਅਦਮੁ ਕਰ ਭੀ ਕਪਰ ਭੀ ਕ੍ਰਿ ਐਸ ਨਨ ਕ੍ਰਿ ਆ ਮੁਕ ਸਰ ਨਾ ਵੀ]
ਅਪਦਿਸ ਗੁਰੁ ਹਿਰ ਹਿਰ ਜ ਪੁ ਜ ਪੁ ਸਿ ਭਿ ਐ ਕੀ ਵਿਕ ਪੁਪੁ ਦੁਕੀ ਹਿ
ਜੁ ਵੀ] ਐ ਪਿਰ ਚੁ ਵੀ ਐ ਦੁ ਵੀ ਗੁਰ ਭੀ ਐ ਗੁਰੁ ਭਿ ਆ ਅਠਿ ਆ
ਹਿਰਨਮ ਐ ਆ ਵੀ] ਜੋ ਸੁ ਸਿ ਐ ਗਿ ਸਿ ਐ ਆ ਵੈ ਮੁਹਿ ਹਿਰ ਹਿਰ ਸੁ
ਗੁਰਿ ਕ ਗੁਰੁ ਮਿਨ ਭੀ ਵੀ] ਐ ਜੁ ਨੋ ਐ ਆ ਵੀ ਆ ਵੀ ਮੁਹਿ ਸੁ ਆ ਵੀ ਐ
ਗੁਰਿ ਕ ਗੁਰੁ ਆ ਪਦੁ ਸੁ ਸੁ ਕੀ ਵੀ] ਜੁ ਨੁ ਨੁ ਕੁ ਐ ਐ ਮੁਹਿ ਐ ਗੁਰਿ ਕ
ਕੀ ਜੋ ਆ ਵੀ ਜੁ ਪੁ ਆ ਵਰੁ ਨੁ ਮੁ ਜੁ ਪੁ ਵੀ] 2]

AGGS. M 4, P 305.

“One who calls himself a Sikh of the Guru, the true Guru, shall rise in the early hours of the morning and meditate on the name of the Lord. Endeavoring early morning, he is to bathe, and cleanse himself in the pool of the ambrosial nectar. Following instructions of the Guru, he is to chant the name of the Lord, Har Har. All sins, misdeeds and negativity against him shall be erased. Then, at the rising of the sun, he is to sing Gurbani; engrossed in the routine but meditating the Lord’s name whether sitting or standing. One who meditates on my Lord, Har Har, with every breath and every morsel of food- that Gursikh becomes pleasing to the Guru’s Mind. To whom my Lord becomes kind and generous, that Gursikh gets the Guru’s blessed instructions. Says Nanak, Guru Himself begs for the dust of that Gursikh’s feet, who, himself meditates on the Lord’s name and helps others to do the same.”

Guru Ramdas describes daily routine and ethics, to be followed by the Sikh in his/her daily life. It is true that the tenets or principals of *Rehit Maryada*, as advocated by various other scholars are not mentioned in the AGGS. It is also true that there is hardly any reference in the AGGS to ‘Khalsa’, although ‘*Gurmukh*’ and ‘*Gursikh*’ are mentioned favorably. Except for Bhagat Kabir used the plural of Khalis in one line of his verse: *ਖੁ ਕੁ ਭੀ ਕ ਜੁ ਬੈ ਕੁ ਸੁ ਪੁ ਭੀ ਗੁ ਗੁ ਐ ਜੁ ਹੁ ਜੁ ਵੀ]* AGGS, Kabir, P 655.

“*Kabir says that those who have comprehended the love for contemplation become pure (khalsae).*”

According to Ganda Singh [3] and Bhai Kahn Singh [6], ‘Khalsa’ is an Arabic word meaning a land or property belonging to the King.

I would like to bring your attention to the salutation of: “WAHEGURU JI KA KHALSA, WAHEGURU JI KI FATEH”

I do not believe that there is any doubt about the origin and significance of this salutation. When this was initiated, Guru Gobind Singh did not place ‘Khalsa’ above and supreme than the Aad Guru Granth Sahib. Instead the ‘Khalsa’ was instructed to the recommendation of Almighty (Akal Purukh), to Obey and Accept the AAD GURU GRANTH SAHIB as the ‘GURU’ [4]. The word ‘Khalsa’ has also been used in the same sense (property of the Guru) in some *Hukumnaamae* (edicts) issued by Guru Gobind Singh [5]. This fact is evident from his *Hukumnaamaa* # 46, 49, 61, 63, 64 and 65, in which Guru Gobind Singh has addressed all the Sikhs as “*Sangat is my Khalsa*” [5].

Accordingly, Khalsa belongs to Waheguru and not the other way around, as being projected by some of our self-righteous Preachers and Sikh Phonetics. The Sikhs created by Guru Nanak Dev were loved by Guru Gobind Singh ji as well. He even wrote in “AKAL USTUT”:

ਕਾ ਠੀ ਭੀ ਐ ਮੁ ਫੀ ਆ ਸਿ ਨ ਆ ਸੀ ਕਾ ਲੀ ਜੁ ਗੁ ਠੀ ਭੀ ਐ ਕਾ ਠੀ ਭੀ ਮੁ ਚੀ
ਕਾ ਲੀ ਜੁ ਆ ਨੁ ਮੁ ਠੀ ਠੀ ਠੀ ਠੀ ਕਾ ਠੀ ਠੀ ਪੁ ਠੀ ਠੀ ਮੁ ਠੀ ਮੁ ਠੀ ਮੁ ਠੀ
ਕੀ ਜੁ ਠੀ ਸੁ ਠੀ ਠੀ ਪੁ ਠੀ ਠੀ ਠੀ ਕੁ ਠੀ ਕੁ ਠੀ ਠੀ ਠੀ ਕੁ ਠੀ ਕੁ ਠੀ
ਐ ਠੀ ਠੀ ਠੀ ਠੀ ਠੀ ਠੀ ਠੀ ਠੀ ਠੀ ਠੀ ਠੀ ਠੀ ਠੀ ਠੀ ਠੀ ਠੀ
ਕੁ ਠੀ ਕੁ ਠੀ ਠੀ ਠੀ ਠੀ ਠੀ ਠੀ ਠੀ ਠੀ ਠੀ ਠੀ ਠੀ ਠੀ ਠੀ ਠੀ ਠੀ

Guru Gobind Singh, *Tav Prasad Kabit.*

“*One man shaves off and calls himself sanyasin, another yogi, bachelor or celibate. One calls himself a Hindu, another a turk, one a Shia, another a Sunni, but know ye, men all over are the same. He alone is the Creator of both the Hindus and Muslims, the compassionate One, the Allah, our great Giver: nay, for there is not another. Don’t make the mistake to believe, even in doubt. So serve they all the ONE alone: for He the One is the only God of us all: Believe in His only Form, His Light that is diffused in all.*”

Guru Gobind Singh for the humanity has detailed the definition of being a believer in Gurbani, without any kind of discrimination, rather than making the Sikh philosophy as some kind of noumenon. We are told that the four doors of Harmandar Sahib are depicting that the peoples from all four corners of the world and of all castes creed and religions are welcome there. Then why the discrimination of being a Sikh or a non-Sikh? If it has any political ramifications for Sikhism, let it be dealt with politicians, but outside the sanctity of Aad Guru Granth Sahib. Maintain the humanitarian and moderately liberal and progressive approach of Sikh philosophy written in AGGS. Guru Gobind Singh very emphatically warned against the adaptation of

Brahmanical ethics and regulations:

j b ieh gh'ibprn kl riqū m'ln krøien kl prqlqū

"If they follow the Brahmanical ethics, I loose all my trust in them."

Guru Gobind Singh, Sarab Loh Granth (Khalsa).

Mere shaving of face and cutting hair does not make one a Brahman, but in Brahmanical way of life limiting the readings of holy books and performance of various ceremonies, are restricted for every body but Brahmans. There are several other ethics, rituals and regulations, resembling those of Brahmanical behaviors; some of which are being practiced in the Gurudwaras and outside preaching by liturgy of various backgrounds. Again, there is need for thorough evaluation of our own ethics, rituals and regulations that are so different than the tenets of Gurbani and Gurus lives.

5. Gurudwaras to be a place of Worship

The *Sadh-Sangat* coming to Gurudwara is completely voluntary. They come to cherish Gurbani *keertan* and intelligent discussion (*Viakhia*), to attain some solace and peace of mind. They come to understand the meaning of life and how to apply in theirs and their children's lives, to make it all peaceful and better. But, from my personal experiences and observations, I can say that the status of our Gurudwaras in Punjab as well as abroad is in dire need of 'IMPROVEMENT'. The

very rituals and restrictions that were abandoned by our revered Gurus, are being practiced and promoted by some of our Gurudwara Granthis. Most of the Non-Sikhs and some of the Sikhs (particularly *Sehjdhari* Sikhs) are getting turned off, and are staying away from the Gurudwaras. It is my most humble request that the SIKH COMMUNITY should control these modern day MASANDS and bring back the respect and honor to the Gurudwara again.

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