

CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE OF LIFE AND TEACHINGS THE NINTH MASTER: GURU TEGH BAHADUR JI

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to study the life work, philosophy and contributions of the ninth Master; Guru Tegh Bahadur. Understanding the meaning of philosophy practiced or rather lived by Guru Tegh Bahadur, his contributions and the true meaning of his compositions. The paper also focuses on the relevance of his teachings and thoughts in the present times. The objective of the study is to interpret the message of the Master in the right spirit, analyse the events occurring in his life to highlight the values preached and practiced by the Master, create awareness that humanity is the highest of all values, and to encourage the individual to live a meaningful and worth life. His early life is the indicator of determination towards acquiring knowledge & skill and depicting courage in applying the same in real life. The Mastership marks his spiritual connection. His journeys are touchstone for peace, humbleness, humanity, forgiving attitude, sharing and caring etc., episodes involving sacrifice of his life highlights. Humanity is above everything and service to humanity is service to God, compositions as interpreted by the comparatively layman writer underline the object of human species and its true connection with the spiritual being (The Creator). The inference finally leads towards understanding the relevance of human species, spirit, enlightened souls, and the bond among; in the present situations of life. Sant Kabir quoted.

*“yeh tan hai kaagaz ki pudiya, boondh padeh gal jayega,
Kahat Kabir suno bhai sadhou, naam bina pachhtayega”*

Keywords: Compositions and interpretations, Kashmiri Brahmins and Guru Tegh Bahadur, Sacrifice for humanity

“Sikhism” formed from the word “Sikh” literally means “learner” or “disciple”. The religion of Sikhism was formed around 15th century AD. Basic tenets of Sikhism were taken from the compositions and teachings of their first Guru i.e Guru Nanak. They are Naam Japna, Kirat Karna and Vand Chakhna.

The Sikhs had Ten Human Gurus. First was Guru Nanak Dev and the tenth was Guru Gobind Singh. The ninth was Guru Tegh Bahadur. He not only followed the basic tenets but also made contributions towards the philosophy so that the disciples can be guided to live a life which is meaningful and worthy of humanity.

The Sikhs follow a literature called “Guru Granth Sahib”. It is a book which contains all the teachings and the contributions of all ten Gurus. For a Sikh, Guru Granth Sahib gives the directions as to how to live a life worthy of living.

The writer wishes to focus on the life, work, philosophy and contributions of the ninth guru, Guru Tegh Bahadur. Understanding the meaning of philosophy practiced or rather lived by Guru Tegh Bahadur, his contributions in the form of compositions to the Guru Granth Sahib and its true meaning will help the individual in realising the true meaning of life that is given by the creator to us and how one can use it for its own development and that of others. The writer also wishes to focus on the relevance of teachings and thoughts of Guru Tegh Bahadur in the present time.

The writer intends to explain the following facts in the article:

- To spread awareness regarding the life and teachings of Guru Tegh Bahadur
- To facilitate the individuals to incidences and events of his life which depict humanitarian, ethical, moral and social values?

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- To enable the individuals to realise that spiritual development is a part of overall development.
- To remove the myths from the heart of the individuals that religion is more important than humanity
- To enable the individuals to interpret and understand the message of the Master provided through his compositions in the right spirit.
- To help the individuals to live a life that is worthy and meaningful.

Early Life

A child was born in early morning of April 1621 fathered by Guru Hargobind Singh (the sixth Guru). He was named Tyag Mal meaning one who has the power to abandon or who has the power of renunciation. He learnt Indian religious philosophies including the old classics and skills of Archery, horsemanship and swordsmanship. At the age of 13 he requested his father to accompany him to a battle against the Mughals as his village was attacked by them. He showed bravery in the battle field with the sword. After turning victorious in the battle, Tyag Mal was renamed as Tegh Bahadur (Brave/Best wielder of the sword).

He soon showed the bent in the direction of the teachings of earlier Sikh Gurus. He immersed himself in studies and would spend lot of time in seclusion and meditation living up to the meaning of his name. For next twenty years he spent most of his time in practicing meditation.

Interpretation and Relevance in the present times:

He had acquired philosophical knowledge and skills at a very early age. He also showed courage and was praised for the same by the people. However, he continued his learning and it did not stop him moving in the directions of his own interest.

This episode clearly indicates that we can also acquire knowledge and skills that are necessary in the current times provided we are ready to work towards it. Being connected with the creator especially in today's fast life can be helpful in maintaining a good balance between intellectual, emotional and spiritual development.

Journeys

Guru Tegh Bahadur as the Ninth Guru travelled to different parts of the country to preach the teachings of Guru Nanak. He first travelled to pay respect to Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple) in Amritsar. There He and His followers were not allowed to enter the shrine by the Masands of Amritsar. He waited outside patiently, when the gates did not open he left and went to a nearby village and stayed at the house of a peasant couple. Later the women of Amritsar came out for asking forgiveness for the shameful behaviour of the Masands. The Master praised their humble act.

He travelled to Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Patna, Assam, Bengal & Bangladesh. He visited Kiratpur in Punjab on three occasions. He also visited Majha, Malwa region in Punjab and Bangar district in Punjab. He travelled to many other places in succession. He purchased a land 100 km from Kiratpur and established a city which was later named Anandpur. Many places he visited and stayed became the sites of Gurudwara. He travelled through Kashmir and North West frontier province to meet the masses at the time of oppression of non-Muslims by Moguls was very high.

Interpretation and Relevance in the present times:

The episode of The Golden Temple clearly shows the Master's humble, patient and forgiving attitude. The action of the Master clearly indicates that the wish and the will of the Creator are of profound importance. His journeys also indicate that one should always diffuse the acquired skills and knowledge to others so that development of the individual and society can be brought about at the same time.

The lesson to be learnt here is that we must develop within ourselves patient and forgiving attitude. We should share our knowledge and skill. Sharing will help in increasing our knowledge and polishing our skills. Sharing always helps in multiplication of peace, happiness, and emotional bonding. Humble and forgiving attitude makes us highly tolerant to face the ups and downs of life without fear.

Kashmiri Brahmins and Guru Tegh Bahadur

Aurangzeb wanted to convert Kashmiri Brahmins to Islam. He told them if they refused they would face death. Fearing for their life to protect their faith and beliefs they approached Guru Tegh Bahadur. After hearing their plea, he became thoughtful as their problem was serious one. At that time his son Gobind Singh asked his father as to why he was worried. His father told him about the problem of Kashmiri Brahmins and said that it would take a holy man to lay his life to save them. His son responded by saying “who could be better person than you” to do the same. Tegh Bahadur decided that he would help the Brahmins. He told them to inform Aurangzeb that if he could convert Tegh Bahadur then they would all agree to convert to Islam.

Interpretation and Relevance in the present times:

The above story points towards the thought and outlook of a spiritual Master towards others. When the time came to prove that whatever he preached was for humanity and not religion he didn't hesitate to take a lead. He looked upon it as an opportunity whereby his teaching would become concrete and encourage humanity to follow ones philosophy in word and action.

The value of humanity needs to be clearly understood and caught after understanding the above mentioned scenario. Also one must remember that we should learn to follow the principle of “Do as I Do” and not “Do as I Say”. As teachers and teacher educators it is very important for us to practice this principle in our interactions with students while providing them with vivid learning experiences.

Sacrifice for humanity

As the news reached Aurangzeb he ordered the arrest of Guru Tegh Bahadur. Guru Tegh Bahadur and three of his followers were arrested and taken to Delhi. There they were asked to convert to Islam or face death. Tegh Bahadur and his followers denied converting and said rather they would face death. The three followers of Tegh Bahadur were tortured in a barbaric manner and were put to death one after the other in the presence of Tegh Bahadur so that he may agree to convert. But he did not agree. Aurangzeb tired of his repetitive refusal

ordered his execution in public. However Aurangzeb failed in converting Tegh Bahadur and his loyal band of followers to accept Islam. This sacrifice for the sake of others led to the end of His life's Journey and made the Sikhs more faithful and stronger towards the teachings of their Gurus.

Interpretation and Relevance in the present times:

The above incident focuses on the exemplary courage and tolerance shown by Guru Tegh Bahadur and his band of three followers versus the barbaric act by the Mughals.

The sacrifice of The Guru and his loyal followers teaches us the most important and useful lesson of life i.e. No matter what may come we should not give up our values, even though we may be fighting a losing battle. We should also learn to be selfless rather than being selfish. The belief and faith in the creator will help us in removing fear and face unpredicted situations of life. The value of high tolerance needs to be developed in us especially in the present times.

Contribution

- Guru Tegh Bahadur is remembered for his selfless service to people.
- He travelled across the country with the teachings of Guru Nanak - the first Sikh Guru.
- Guru Tegh Bahadur had set up community kitchens and wells for the local people wherever he went.
- Anandpur Sahib, the famous holy city and a global tourist attraction in the foothills of Himalayas, was founded by Guru Tegh Bahadur.
- Guru Tegh Bahadur instilled courage in Sikhs and non-Muslims in India to follow and practice their beliefs without fear of persecution.
- Guru Tegh Bahadur had resisted forced conversions of non-Muslims to Islam during Aurangzeb's rule
- Guru Tegh Bahadur sacrificed His life for the freedom of thought and beliefs.
- In the words of Noel King of the University of California, “Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom was the first-ever martyrdom for human rights in the world.”

Compositions

He is said to have composed 116 hymns and 15 ragas. Hymns written by him are in the form of

Compositions and its translations

Dhan, daaraa, sampat sagal, jin apunee kar maan
Wealth, Spouse and all Possessions that we consider as our own

In mai kachoo sangii Naahi Nanak sach eh jaan
None of these will go along with us in the end, know, this is the truth

Patit udhaaran, bhai haran, har anath ke nath
Saving grace of the sinners, the destroyer of fear, the master of masterless

Kaho nanak tih janiai, sadaa basatu tum saath
Realize and know him, he is always with you

Jo parani mamta thajai, lobh moh ahankar
One who renounces emotional attachment, greed, cross possessiveness and ego.

Kaho nanak apan tarai, aouran leath oudhaar
He shall save himself from drowning and save others as well.

Sukh mai baho sangi bahee, dukh mai sang na koe
In good times, there are many companions, but in bad times, there is none.

Kaho nanak har bhaj mana, anth sahai hoe
If we meditate the name of lord then he shall support us in the end.

Jatan bahut sukh ke kiya, dukh ko kiyo na koe
All sorts of efforts are made to get peace and pleases pleasure but no one tries to earn pain

Kaho nanak suun re mana, har bhaiye so hoe
Listen, mind, whatever pleases the lord happens

Teerath barath ar daan kar, man me dharai guman
People pride themselves by going on pilgrimages, observing fasts, doing charity

Nanak nihfal jat tih, jio kunchar isnan.
All their actions are useless like the elephant, who take a bath and then roll itself in the dust

Naam rahio, sadhu rahio, rahio guru gobind
Naam remains, holy saints remains, Guru, the Creator remain

couplets. His work is included in the holy book Guru Granth Sahib. Some of his compositions, translations and interpretations by the writer, are as under:

Interpretation by the writer

Once we die we shall be leaving all the things of this world here. Even our name cannot go with us. In spite of this we are running after collecting everything we can. We need to find and collect, what is going to go with us.

The creator is always with us. We need to feel and realise his presence. The moment we realise his presence, our fear will disappear, we shall not feel lonely and with his grace he shall protect us from sinning.

Renunciation of ego, emotional attachment, greed and possessiveness shall help the individual to

the ocean of birth and death. He shall even help others to achieve the same. These are considered to be the particular characteristics of the Guru or the Mystic.

In our life we want to accompany with people who are rising and are happy. No one wants to accompany sad people. If we always remember the creator in our life time he will be with us when we need him irrespective of the time whether good, bad or even at the time of our death when all others leave us alone. No matter what ever amount of efforts are made by the individual, only that shall happen that

the lord. It is similar to the adage “Jab Jab Jo Jo Hona Hai, Tab Tab Who Who Hota Hai”

People often feel that by visiting places of shrines, observing fasts and donating to charity makes them nearer to the Lord. However while doing this they feel pride which in turn fuels their ego and become more away from the Lord rather moving towards the Lord.

Ages may pass but the holy word, saints, Guru and the Lord shall always be there. There are very few in the world, which listen to their spiritual teacher

Kaho nanak es jagat mein kin jabpio guru mant
How rare are people those who chant Guru's mantra.

Sab sukh data ram hai, dusar nahin koe
Lord is the giver of all peace and comfort. There is no other at all

Kaho nanak suun re mana, tih simrat gath hoe
Listen, mind, meditating in remembrance on him, salvation is attained.

and practice the Guru mantra. (the next couplet)

Lord is the giver of all whether peace pleasure or pain. If we remember our creator in our every breath then we shall be free from the cycle of birth & death forever and become one with the creator.

*Guru is the best person to know the deep meaning of its compositions. The writer is comparatively a layman.

Interpretation and Relevance in the present times:

Nothing that we can see with our senses is ours. We often live a life in fear. We do not wish to be lonely and want to be surrounded by people. We often try amassing wealth and possessions in pursuit of peace and happiness. In the whole process we forget that we are born to die. We forget the lord who has given us life and every other thing in it. We are so attached that we consider that death is for others and not us. Even if we pray to lord it is solely for our earthly benefits. We go on pilgrimages, donate for charity and observe fast for the sake of some returns or rather to gain pride that we are doing so much good work. The result is that we move farther away from the creator.

The Lord is the giver of all. We need to understand the objective of getting human form. As mentioned by the Guru it is to be in one with the creator. The purpose can be achieved by meditating and remembering the creator. This shall help us to be free from the bondage of birth and death. Guru also clarifies that we must fulfil our responsibilities of this life as it is the work given by the creator itself. We should try to be happy with whatever creator has given to us and always be in touch with the creator. The synopsis of the above written paragraph is clearly depicted in the last two couplets mentioned above.

The Worthiness

- It shall help in understanding the significance of being connected with the creator.
- Awareness regarding the life and teachings of the Guru Tegh Bahadur can be brought

about.

- The events and incidences can create a profound impact on the reader regarding practicability of values depicted in them.
- Understanding the meaning of compositions by the Guru shall help the individual in taking one step forward towards developing spiritual progress.
- It will inspire them to take up challenges in life for benefits of their own and that of others without fear of being a failure.

The Practicability

- It would develop realisation that life is not only meant for us but also for others.
- It shall be useful in including spiritual development as a part and parcel of overall development of the individual.
- It shall help people bond together irrespective of caste, religion, etc.
- Considering value of humanity to be supreme shall help in bringing about national integration.
- It shall develop love for the creator within the individual irrespective of their social and economic status.
- It shall clearly emphasize and promote the adage "Service to Humanity is Service to God"

Thus from the above discussion we may conclude that humanity is the most important value that the human being should cling to. Spiritual development of the individual is necessary to lead a meaningful and worthy life. The object of human

species needs to be known. We should learn to follow and practice the suggestions given by the enlightened souls which shall help us to form strong bond with the creator. The question is how to bond with one whom we cannot identify. The answer lies in the following couplets by Guruji.

“Sukh dukh jih parsai nahi, lob moh ahankar”

One who is not touched by pleasure or pain, greed, emotional attachment and ego

“Kaho nanak sun re mana so murat bhagwan”

Says nanak, listen mind, he is the very image of Lord.

The ninth master, Guru Tegh Bahadur, Tyagmal.

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