



Persona of Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji:A Message to Humanity

Dr. Kuldeep Kaur Pahwa Associate Professor,
Department of Punjabi, SGTB Khalsa College, University of Delhi

Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji is revered by humanity for the supreme sacrifice of his life for upholding the freedom and identity of his fellow beings, and his message of selflessness and fearlessness when it is a question of defending the poor and weak, irrespective of their faith and religion. A peace-loving, tranquil, compassionate and a merciful religious leader, his bani is replete with the idea and symbolism of 'Nirbhau' and 'Nirvair'. He took forward the mission of Guru Nanak and walking ahead on the path shown by Guru Nanak, he stood for oneness of God; all human beings being equal, he supported to have love and regard for his fellow men and took the mission of Guru Nanak Dev Ji to even a higher pedestal by instilling the masses with the courage and zest to fight against tyranny and to protect the innocent ones.

It will not be an exaggeration to say that Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji did actually set the stage for his son and successor, Guru Gobind Singh Ji for the creation of Khalsa, where he turned the Sikhs with a saintly disposition into the saint soldiers. Thus Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji's legacy lies in his message of fearlessness, his message of fighting for the protection of one's rights and identity, his legacy outshines in his Bani which is full of enthusiasm and courage for his Sikhs and teaches them to fight against injustice and any kind of religious fanaticism, and above all, his legacy lies in his supreme act of sacrifice where he gives a practical shape to all his teachings by laying down his life for the protection of the religious identity of Kashmiri Brahmins. The central idea of Guru Sahib's philosophy can be summarized in the following verses of Guru Granth Sahib,

"Bhai Kaahoo ko det neh neh
bhai maanat aan Kaho Nanak
sun re mana
Giani taake taahe bakhaan"

(Guru Granth Sahib, Page 1427)

This roughly translates as,

“Nanak says that a person can only achieve the highest degree of knowledge only when he is neither afraid of anyone nor attempts to frighten anyone.”

The identity and behavior of an individual is directly associated to his social environs. The moral values incorporated in one's society, culture and religion play a major role in the development of a social being. This factors not only shape one's conscious behavior, but have a deep impact on the sub conscious mind and psychology. However, an individual's relationship with his collective consciousness is even more important in the development of a human psyche as it becomes the fundamental basis of his internalised ideology.

Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji's personal virtues and values along with his exemplary execution of the message of Guru Nanak Dev through his deeds of compassion, travelling and meeting masses in far off lands and helping them out in every possible way. This not only strengthened the

continuity of the philosophical and ideological base established by Guru Nanak. His acts of benevolence along with his stern determination to stand and fight against the evil forces gave a new identity and strength to Sikh philosophy and its adherents. One needs to understand here that Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji did not sacrifice his life to protect any single religion or community but he did so with a strong intention to protect the whole humanity and strengthen amongst them the idea and acceptance for multiculturalism and diversity, which has always been the principle of nature, and the truth of universal idea of creation and human existence.

As noted by Bhai Jodh Singh, the concept of Martyrdom can be found firmly grounded in Sikh ideology. The martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji, though gives a new turn to the evolution of Sikhism and its struggle against the evil with the ultimate cause of protecting the helpless and needy, but there is a need to identify the underlying continuity between the philosophy of Guru Nanak to stand against the oppressor and its culmination in the form of Guru Arjan and Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom. Guru Gobind Singh's message, '*jīn prem kīyo tīn hī prabh payo*' was an echo of Guru Nanak's, '*Jau tau prem khelan ka chao, sir dhar tali gali meri aao*'. The Sikh conception of Prem involved the willing acceptance of God's will. Guru Nanak says, "If you aspire to play the game of love, come with your head on the palm of your hand and follow my path." Guru Arjan further reiterates that if love could be purchased with gold then Raavan would not have given his head to Shiva. Thus there is a strong indication in the bani that the gift of love, does not come without sacrifice. For creating Khalsa also, the tenth Master, Guru

Gobind Singh invoked the principle of sacrifice in love. Thus the concept of martyrdom emerges out of continuity, wherein the verses of Guru Nanak and Guru Arjan refer to sacrifice 'on the path'

and the call of Guru Gobind Singh was 'to die for the path'. Guru Tegh Bahadur, takes the message of Guru Nanak Dev to its zenith and moulds it into a practical form by laying down his life for upholding the freedom of conscience.

Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji taught to uphold and protect human rights and the mutual feelings of love and respects amongst each other. He was of the opinion that every creature has the right to existence. Thus he was a strong supporter of multiculturalism and promoted to develop a feeling of love, acceptance, compassion and brotherhood amongst humanity. It is a well established historical fact that the Pratihthit Kashmiri Brahmins requested Guru Teg Bahadur Ji to save Hinduism from Mughal tyranny and brutality in response to which Guru Ji, following the percept of *nirvair* and *nirbhau* and sacrificed his own life. Guru Teg Bahadur Ji's martyrdom was a conscious act to bring forth a massive transformation in the then existing socio- political and religious arena. It was an unparalleled deed to reignite the spiritual fire of human rights and dignity in the hearts of the common man who had lost their dignity and self-confidence under the tyrannical contemporary circumstances. Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji presented the ultimate aim of human existence in the attainment of Moksha and enlightenment which propounds the conscious selection of a spiritual path unadulterated by the thoughts of vanity and material attachments. His self-awareness and enlightenment of the peculiarity of the cosmos and the sublime nature of Ram (onmi present) was articulated in the same philosophical and transcendental strain as was expressed in the *bani* of other sikh gurus when he said,

"Saadho rachna Ram banaee

Ikk binseia ikk asthir maanei

achraj lakheo na jayee"

(Guru Granth Sahib, Page 219)

Which roughly translates as,

Holy Sadhus! Lord fashioned the creation,

One person passes away and the other thinks he will live

forever, this is a wonder beyond understanding.

--O Nanak! One who knows the world is unreal, dwells in the Sanctuary of the Lord.

The idea of martyrdom in Sikh tradition is above all the religious and regional boundaries. It is timeless in its essence and spirit. The meaning of martyrdom in Sikh tradition stands for a selfless and supreme act of sacrifice where one chooses to lay down his life for the sake of upholding the life and freedom of conscience of not only the people of their own community but for the sake of whole humanity. Thus the idea and practice of martyrdom in Sikh tradition is acclaimed as an act of unparalleled courage which ensures love, respect and acceptance for all irrespective of any man made socio-cultural barriers. It reveals the idea of sacrificing the self for the larger universal and cosmological existence. Therefore, Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji's identity in totality emerges and develops from the simple principles of basic human welfare foregrounded in the transcendental ideology of cosmological relations which becomes a conscious model for his martyrdom and makes this act sublime and transcendental in its nature and experience. In this way, Guru Teg Bahadur Ji was not just the protective shield of *Hind* but rather of the entire creation and humanity espousing the development of a consciousness that works for the welfare of humanity and protection of human rights and dignity. Guru Teg Bahadur Ji is regarded as the protector of the world, when poet Senapat said,

“Pargat bhaye Guru Teg Bahadur Sagal
srisht pae dhaapi chaadar, Sagal srishti
ja ka jas bhayo
Jit te sarab dharam Banchyo”

This implies that Guru Tegh Bahadur was not just the protector of Hinduism, but he was the saviour of the whole Humanity and Universe. His martyrdom for the cause of protecting the values of freedom of faith and upholding ideals of religious tolerance and love for all, sets forth a unique example for times to come. Sacrifice in human history can be found in many religions, but sacrificing one's life for a cause, and that cause being the safeguarding and protecting the religious identity and faith of another religion stands unique and unparalleled in the whole of human history.

Guru Teg Bahadur ji is known to be a monumental figure of human sacrifice and a great ascetic whose teachings provide a scholastic experience and most importantly initiated a note of a spirit of selflessness that became a potent spiritual force against the destructive elements of the universe. This spirit which was away from all kinds of ego and attractions of the world, which uphold the subjective meaning of Guru Teg Bahadur's philosophy and encourages human beings to follow a thoughtful and selfless conduct in life which is revealed in the supreme authority of the universe.

Reference

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