

GURU TEGH BAHADUR JI- AN EPITOME OF HUMANITY, SPIRITUAL AND ETHICAL TEACHING

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ABSTRACT

*Guru Tegh Bahadur – Hind Di Chadar. The religion that the great Guru taught is thus the art of living like a beautiful flower- a life of fullness in all its aspects, a life of Light, Love and Service, a life of vigour, vitality and valour. Prayer and contemplation on the Naam are the means to God realization. He taught the ethos of self-sacrifice for the common good of mankind and this is enshrined in his spiritual legacy. **Never in history has the religious leader of one religion sacrificed his life to save the freedom of another religion.** Guru sacrificed his life for upholding the principle of freedom of conscience. The dominant theme of Guru Tegh Bahadurji's composition is spiritual liberation and way to it. The state of liberation is called Mukti, Nirbanpadu and Nirbanipadu. The Guru wants man to ponder over this truth and not neglect his spiritual life. Happiness and fearlessness are the characteristics of a perfect devotee. Guru Tegh Bahadurji is truly a hero to be revered and emulated who gave his life for religious freedom for all peoples and taught the ethos of self-sacrifice for the common good of mankind and this is enshrined in his spiritual legacy.*

Keywords: *Spiritual liberation, Jivanmukti, Naam Simran, Self-Sacrifice, Human ideals & values.*

Guru Tegh Bahadar, the ninth Sikh Guru undertook the **supreme sacrifice for the protection of the most fundamental of human rights** - the right of a person to freely practice his or her religion without interference or hindrance.

Guru Teg Bahadur was of a deeply meditative character. He is stated to have spent his early years in seclusion at Bakala, a place near Amritsar. When called upon to resume the responsibilities of Guruship, he undertook long and extensive tours towards the east, and spread his message of the spiritually-awakened life far and wide. Feeling deeply grieved at Aurangzeb's policy of religious persecution, he moved over to the areas of eastern Punjab and Haryana to steal the people's resolve to resist tyranny. His religious teaching drew upon his hostility of the state, and after being arrested, he was offered the alternative to embrace Islam or face death. He naturally refused to apostate himself. Guru Tegh Bahadurji's martyrdom led to far-reaching political effects. The Mughal State had, not long

after, face stiff resistance from the Sikhs. Sikh opposition contributed significantly to the collapse of the Mughal Empire.

The Sikh movement under the devoted leadership of Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji gathered much momentum and strength. In addition, the people of Northern India, particularly the Hindus, found their natural 'Saviour'. Brahmins of northern India, under the leadership of Pandit Kirpa Ram of Mattan (Kashmir) appealed the Guru to save Dharma, which meant the religion, traditions and ideals of India from threatened extinction by the virulent repression let loose by Aurangzeb. Even Muslims venerated him for his noble and deeply spiritual life. The Guru readily espoused their cause, for which he had to make the supreme sacrifice under the orders of Aurangzeb on November 11, 1675. Guru Teg Bahadurji's martyrdom not only saved the Sikh Church from imminent dangers, but also fostered a spirit of fearlessness and sacrifice for Dharma among the suffering Hindu masses.

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It should be remembered that Guru ji did not believe in the practices of the Hindu religion and had issued various holy Shabads denouncing various Hindu practices like Sati, Purdah, Idol worship, etc. However, this had no bearing when it came to the decision to protect these Kashmiri Hindus - for the right of a person to freely practice their religion was considered to be predominant over their own personal beliefs and preferences. Guru Tegh Bahadurji did not renounce the world but renounced the worldliness. He lived in the heart of the city with his family but lived detached. In the Sikh way of life, home ties are never snapped.

Guru Tegh Bahadurji continued to live in loneliness, amidst the busy surroundings of Bakala, wholly absorbed in the 'Dhyanam' of his Beloved. Those who occasionally sought him were deeply impressed by the glory and celestial bliss on his face and the dignity of his manners. His eyes were wise but silent in innocence. His inner light was concealed in his humility. His pensive smile showed the compassion in his heart for those in sorrow and suffering. But all the while he continuously abided in the Realm of Truth and Beauty, unnoticed by common man.

Throughout the teachings of the Ninth Guru, therefore, love of mammon and worldly goods is strongly deprecated, so that for their sake the inhabitants of Hindustan were not tempted to change their religion. If the bulk of the Hindu majority changed their religion in fear or greed, there was a great danger of the Sikh minority being persecuted and crushed.

"O Man, hold firmly to this truth in thy mind; the whole world is like a dream and like a dream will soon be no more. A man may elaborately build a wall of sand, but it will not last even for a short while. Similarly transient are pleasures of Maya (mammon) why art thou entangled in them, O ignorant man." (Sorathi 8).

A God-illuminated person is not one who wisely talks about gnosis, but a person knowing his soul to be immortal. He does not fear anyone nor does he terrorize others. (Sloka 16) Guru Amardas proclaimed: "Man, thou art an image of light, realize thy source." The Ninth Guru emphasized this truth:

"Good men, know this body to be mortal. Recognize God that dwells in it alone to be everlasting." (1 Basant)

In Gurbani terms such as "maya" and "prakriti", used in "Sankhya" and "Vedantic" literature have been employed, but their connotation is different. Sankara says maya is neither real nor unreal; it is "anirvachani" i.e. inexpressible in words. It is some power outside Brahmana and when it envelopes Brahmana, it limits Brahmana into "jiva". But in Gurbani, "Maya is a slave of the Lord; it serves those in constant communion with Him". Maya functions to hide the reality. "Maya makes us forget God, creates delusion and makes man love the other. Gurbani does not picture the universe as a creation of Prakriti of Maya." The world comes into existence by His decree ("Hukam"), but Hukam cannot be described in words. By His decree jivas come into being. Liberation does not come through knowledge, but by the destruction of egoism by being in tune with the Infinite. The jiva does not become Brahmana when his ignorance is destroyed. "The rivers and streams fall into the ocean, but do not know its extent."

The religion that the great Guru taught is thus the art of living a beautiful flower-like life, a life of fullness in all its aspects, a life of Light (Gyan), Love (Prem) and Service (Seva), a life filled with the fire and fervour of God, a life of vigour, vitality and valour in the midst of perils.-(mode of operandi: "Nam" Simran, His constant remembrance in thought, word and deed, and a feeling of living in His presence always).

If you want constant happiness, take refuge in God.

Sayeth Nanak, listen O mind, the human body is very precious and very hardly obtained.

He has wasted his life in vain, who has never sung the praises of God.

Sayeth Nanak, O mind live in his constant remembrance as fish lives in water.

Why are you indulging in sensual pleasures and vice and do not withdraw from them even for a moment

Sayeth Nanak, meditate on God, O mind, so that you may not be caught in the noose of Yama.

The dominant theme of Guru Tegh Bahadurji's composition is spiritual liberation and way to it. The state of liberation is called Mukti, Nirbanpadu and Nirbanipadu. The liberated being is called Mukta and Giani. The Guru discusses the way to liberation (Mukti Panth) and describes the virtues and characteristics of a liberated person in detail.

The idea of God is at the centre of Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji's soteriology. Although God is called Ram, Hari, Gobind, Prabhu, Brahm Murari and Swami of Lord, He is not conceived anthropomorphically after the Puranic fashion. He who knows God as the one and only reality is knower indeed. Such a person practices constant mindfulness with regard to the Lord God. This constant mindfulness of God's presence is called nam-simran. This is the way to liberation.

Guru Tegh Bahadurji says God is the master of joy and liberation. He is therefore the supreme object of human devotion. In the first stanza of his composition in Ragu Gaudi, he tells that those who discern the truth and seek the unconditioned transcend pairs of opposites. They are even-minded towards both happiness and suffering, honour and insult and they remain untouched by joy and grief.

The path of liberation consists of devotion to God, leaving pride, delusion and attachment to possessions one should give one's heart to singing the glory of God. He alone is delivered in whose heart dwells God. Since God is all- pervasive and formless we cannot conceive of his abode as a kind of heaven and heaven is not the goal of a devotee in Sikhism.

Happiness and fearlessness are the characteristics of a perfect devotee. He alone is happy who sings the virtues of God; the other folk misguided by the cosmic illusion do not attain the fearless abode. The means of liberation, according to Guru Teg Bahadurji, is devotion to God. One goes beyond the ocean of trans-migration by singing the praise of the Merciful.

Since all things of the world, no matter how much nourishment and satisfaction they may appear to give, must pass, there is nothing permanently valuable in them. Their value as well as their existence is ultimately derived from the

eternal source of Being, God. It is, therefore, short-sighted to seek lasting happiness in worldly things as such, without realizing that the happiness we associate with them does not proceed from them but from God. On the other hand, since prayer and contemplation on the Naam are the means to God realization, the enjoyment of the ephemeral things of the world, accompanied by these, becomes an enjoyment of the perennial Divine Reality. Without constant remembrance of the Divine Naam such enjoyment remains absorption in merely short-lived things and is, therefore, bound to end in grief. While advocating devotion to God, the slokas also preach detachment from worldly pleasures.

Transience of worldly things must be recognized by a person who seeks spiritual progress. While performing worldly duties towards near and dear ones he must not forget his duty to God. Our relations with wife, children, brothers, sisters, friends and companions end with death. The Guru reminds us that even our body which accompanied us when we were born, is left behind when we depart. The Guru wants man to ponder over these truth and not neglect his spiritual like.

“One untouched by avarice, attachment, egotism and pursuit of evil passions, And one risen above joy and sorrow “know such a one to be God's own image.”

Guru sacrificed his life for upholding the principle of freedom of conscience. Thus, Guru Tegh Bahadurji is truly a hero to be revered and emulated. Guru Tegh Bahadurji is honoured as a man who gave his life for religious freedom for all peoples, not just Sikhs. The shrine holds the symbolism of war against injustice, a determination to stand up to atrocity, though it may mean sacrifice of the self.

He taught the ethos of self-sacrifice for the common good of mankind and this is enshrined in his spiritual legacy. **Never in history has the religious leader of one religion sacrificed his life to save the freedom of another religion.**

Guru Teg Bahadurji performed the mighty deed under the inspiration of high human ideals and values. Some of these may be mentioned as: Compassion (karuna) for suffering humanity, for oppressed and exploited people; Protection of

Dharma (Moral Law) recognised in Sikh tradition as the basis of human society; resistance to tyranny resulting from a breach of the norms of Dharma; respect and tolerance for modes of living and thinking other than one's own, what is today termed as the ideal of plural society. Mystic Saint Kabir in one of his verses says, **“The true hero is one who in defence of the helpless may be hacked limb to limb, but flees not the field,”** and there can be no greater testimonial to the Guru's unflinching courage which earned him the praise as “one who covered dharma (religion) and protected it.”

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