

Teachings of Founder of Sikhism

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ABSTRACT

The word Sikh (pronounced means 'disciple' or 'learner.') The Sikh religion was founded in Northern India in the fifteenth century by Guru Nanak Dev Ji and is distinct from Islam and Hinduism. Sikhism is monotheistic and stresses the equality of all men and women. Sikhs believe in three basic principles; meditating on the name of God, earning a living by honest means as well as sharing the fruits of one's labour with others. Sikhism rejects caste and class systems and emphasizes service to humanity. The seed for the reformation of humanity which was sown by Guru Nanak and watered by his successors, ripened in the time of Guru Gobind Singh and culminated in the creation of the Khalsa. The sword that carved the Khalsa's way to sublime glory was undoubtedly forged by Guru Gobind Singh but its steel was provided by Guru Nanak. The whole program of Guru Nanak's initiation reached its exalted state of finality when the tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh passed on 'Gur Nanak Jot' to the Adi Granth, Holy Scripture- par excellence, and proclaimed it as Guru Granth Sahib, the last Guru for ever. From the moment of its initiation by Guru Nanak to its consecration by the tenth Master, Guru Gobind Singh, a period of 239 years, Sikhism acquired its holy scripture, signs and symbols, and unmistakable form or stance. Transformation from one Guru to the other happened in the same way as one lamp were to lit from another.

1. Introduction

In Sikhism, Guru-ship does not stand for mere order of mystics, since the Guru attached no values to renunciation of worldly life. Those who practiced renunciation such as Yogis and Sadhus were condemned as shirkers of responsibilities - they were considered as escapists and runaways from social responsibilities and obligations. In Sikhism a man is called upon to accept the Will of God and thus sublimate his suffering and loss. Sikhism believing in the conquest of sorrow and suffering, stipulates ceaseless endeavour. The holy transformation of ten Gurus is recognized as ONE, since all of them came from the same Divine Flame in continuity of the same Divine Mission. The establishment of Guru-ship, the story of succession, the founding of Amritsar and other seats of Sikhism, the compilation of the Adi Granth, the institution of Sangat (holy congregation) and Pangat (Guru's free kitchen), the martyrdom of the Gurus, the panoply and plumage of power, the investiture of the Khalsa, all these and many other events which make the Sikh chronicle, give Sikh religion a colour of the highest distinction.

2. Ethical and moral teaching

Guru Nanak established three main features for everyday conduct:

1. Naam Japo: Constant remembrance of God (meditation) because as a body is dead without life and so life itself is dead without Naam (Name of God). The whole base is Naam.
2. Kirat Karo: Earn your livelihood by honest means.
3. Vand Chhako: In His Name share the fruits of your labour as an expression of love and compassion for mankind.

It is further emphasized:

- a) Truthful Living: The entire edifice of Sikh Religion is built on truthful living. Guru says, "Truth is high but higher still is truthful living."
- b) Moral Restraint: Adultery is absolutely prohibited in Sikh Religion
- c) Do not smoke or indulge in drugs
- d) Do not indulge in Calumny (falseness or misrepresentation)

3. Purpose of life

According to the Guru, moral life is not a matter of a few commandments or a code or a ritual, but the fruit of a life directed towards spiritual quest involving incredibly hard discipline. Most people generally believe in enjoying materialistic life to the brim. Thus, the life goes on till a person ultimately finds oneself physically spent up and spiritually bankrupt. Lured by the charm of success in this materialistic world, one gives little or no thought to the Eternal values of life. According to the eastern religions, there are eighty-four lakhs (8.4 million) of lives in the world, half of which are in the water and the other half are on the land and air. All life is transient. It moves on and on through the wheel of transmigration in accordance with its 'karmas' or actions good or bad.

Kirat Karo, Naam Japo and Vand Chako are the three pillars of Sikhism.

1. **Kirat Karo-** The term Kirat Karo means to earn an honest, pure and dedicated living by exercising one's God-given skills, abilities, talents and hard labour for the benefit and improvement of the individual, their family and society at large. This means to work with determination and focus by the sweat of one's brow and not to be lazy and to waste one's life to time. Meanwhile, Simran and dedication to the work of God, not personal gain, should be one's main motivation.

There are some jobs which aren't allowed in Sikhism, such as a worker in brothels, prostitute, fortune-teller, astrologer, worker in taverns and pubs, worker in places where gambling is dealt, and many more. He expected the Sikhs to live as honourable householders and practise KiratKarni. To honestly earn by one's physical and mental effort while accepting both pains & pleasures as GOD's gifts and blessings. One is to stay truthful at all times and, fear none but the Eternal Super Soul. Live a life founded on decency immersed in Dharam - life controlled by spiritual, moral & social values. Dharam di Kirat Karni - To work and earn by the sweat of the brow in an honest way, to live a family way of life, and practice truthfulness and honesty in all dealings. Both of the above terms mean to carry out good deeds and earn an honest, pure and truthful livelihood by exercising one's God given skills, abilities, talents and hard labour for the benefit and improvement of the individual, their family and society at large.

This means to work with determination and focus by the sweat of your brows and not to be lazy and to waste your life to time. To do these things without 'personal gain' becoming your main motivation. Make Simran and dedication of the work to God your main motivation. To perform Kirat is like saying a prayer or performing meditation. It is equal to your 'Sunday Service' attendance at your place of worship.

Kirat Karo means Earn your money righteously and honestly. This is a guideline given to the Sikhs by Guru Gobind Singh. The idea is based on the concept of karma. Concept of karma relates to conduct of previous births rewarded in this one. This does not tally with Sikh view. Here while you may be born in human form due to any previous birth privilege, you cannot get any rewards like that. This life depends on your work and conduct which will result in His grace. Good conduct and character will make you eligible for grace. Freedom from avagaman will come through Lord's grace. One should therefore work honestly in accordance with Guru's advice to reach that level.

2. Naam Japna: The Gurus led the Sikhs directly to practise Simran and Naam Japna meditation on God through reciting, chanting, singing and constant remembrance followed by deep study & comprehension of God's Name and virtues. The inner voice of the Sikh thus stays immersed in praises and appreciation of the Creator and the ONE ETERNAL GOD Waheguru and his WILL. The Sikh is to intuitively practice and stay focussed on the True Path through every breath throughout his life. Various ways were gifted to the Sikhs to remember and tread on this path of righteousness. To begin with and as a social habit, recite the Nitnem banis daily in remembrance of the grace and blessing of the Almighty. 'Early to bed & early to rise...' is the first step towards the Gate to Sikhism. In the Guru Granth Sahib, Guru Nanak Dev ji says: "Those who have meditated on the Naam, the Name of the Lord, and departed after having worked by the sweat of their brows -O Nanak, their faces are radiant in the Court of the Lord, and many are saved along with them!

Naam Japo is the remembrance of God by repeating and focussing the mind on His name or identity. The names given to God primarily refer to the attributes of the Almighty and His various qualities. The guideline in the Rehit Maryada of Guru Gobind Singh demands that the Sikh engages in Naam Simran as part of his or her everyday routine.

This concept is also permeated in the Sri Guru Granth Sahib as the way in which humans can conquer ego, greed, attachment, anger and lust, together commonly called the Five Evils or Five Thieves and to bring peace and tranquillity into one's mind. The Sikhs practise both the quiet individual recitation of Naam in one's mind commonly referred to as Naam Simran or the audible and often communal recitation of Naam that is called Naam Jaap. However, this is not a strict definition of these phases as variations are found among the different Sikh communities.

The term Naam refers to the various names given to God as used by the Sikhs. Naam Japo refers to the meditation, vocal singing of Shabads or hymns, from the Sri Guru Granth Sahib or the chanting of the various Names of God, specially the chanting of the word Waheguru, which means Wonderful Lord. The singing of hymns with musical accompaniment is generally referred to as Kirtan. This act of meditation, singing and chanting is a one of three main pillars of Sikhism and is the term used to refer to this very important activity in the everyday life of a Sikh – the singing, quiet meditation, listening of sacred text or sacred words. Critical importance is given to meditation in the Shri Guru Granth Sahib.

Naam is not mere repetition of God's name. It is opposed to form adopted by those indulging in idol worship. Naam here stands for attributes. It is a noun which describes the qualities of a person, thing, the Lord. We find many such forms in Mool Mantra. Naam Simran therefore is to concentrate on attributes of Waheguru and realize his grandeur and mercy. It leads to our realization of reality and its acceptance. Guru Granth Sahib further elaborates how realizing God's nature through the recital of his Name leads us to happiness and bliss, rather than being in the wilderness of idol worship or such other meaningless rituals.

In Sikhism, it refers to the meditation, vocal singing of hymns from the Sri Guru Granth Sahib or contemplating the various Names of God or qualities of God, especially the chanting of the word Waheguru, which means "Wonderful Lord" representing the formless being, the creator of all the forms and the being omnipresent in all forms. Singing called Naam Simran of hymns generally is also referred to as Naam Jap, sometimes also. Singing of hymns with musical accompaniment is generally referred to as Kirtan. While contemplating God's names a devotee is able to get naam, the divine connection with God. Naam is able to fulfil all desires and cleanse the mind of its impurities distress. Through Naam the devotees are able to harness Godly qualities and remove the five thieves.

Naam Japna requires the remembrance of God or the Akal Purkh, the supreme formless power that is timeless and deathless, by repeating and focusing the mind on God's various names or qualities. Some of the names of Gods can be found in the Mool Mantar, which is repeated throughout the Guru Granth Sahib, and also found in Guru Gobind Singh's Jaap Sahib, which contains 950 names of God. The guideline in the Rehat Maryada of Guru Gobind Singh demands that the Sikh must engage in Naam Simran as part of his or her daily routine.

Critical importance is given to the meditation in the Guru Granth Sahib as the way in which humans can conquer ego, greed, attachment, anger and lust, together commonly called

the Five Evils or Five Thieves and to bring spiritual bob peace and tranquillity into one's mind .

3. Vand Chakna: The Sikhs were asked to share their wealth within the community by practising Vand Chakna – “Share and Consume together”. The community or Sadh Sangat is an important part of Sikhism. One must be part of a community that is pursuing flawless objective values set out by the Sikh Gurus and every Sikh has to contribute in whatever way possible to the common community pool. This spirit of Sharing and Giving is an important message from Guru Nanak. It means to share what you have and to consume it together as a community. This could be wealth, food, etc. The term is also used to mean to share one's wealth with others in the community, to give to charity, to distribute in Langar and to generally help others in the community who need help. A Sikh

is expected to contribute a portion of their wealth and income to people in need or to a worthy cause. An alternative spelling and meaning, "Vand Ke Chakna", means to share the fruits of one's labour with others before considering oneself, thus living as an inspiration and a support to the entire community.

4. Conclusion

Bhai Gurdas Ji on page 20 of his Vaars says:

"The Gurus of the Sikhs inspire the Sikhs of the Guru to serve. Serving the holy congregation, they receive the fruit of happiness. Sweeping and spreading the sitting mats they bathe in the dust of the holy congregation. They bring unused pitchers and fill them with water. They bring sacred food and distribute it among others and eat.

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