



THE IDEAL MAN IN SIKHISM

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Abstract:

Sikh Gurus lay down a way of life for mankind which creates an ideal man. Ideal man in Sikhism is a householder who remains detached from worldly pleasures and sorrows. He is God oriented person and endeavors to establish an ideal society. He is enlightened soul and act as perfect microcosm of macrocosm (God) in true sense of the term. Ideal man in Sikhism is a saint-soldier who is aware of his spiritual and worldly responsibilities. An ideal man develops his intellect and ability to an extent that he can play positive, constructive and participatory role in transformation of evils into virtues. He plays multidimensional role of emancipator, vanguard and redeemer for human race.

Key Words: Gursikh, Gurmukh, Shabad-Guru, Sant-Sipahi.

INTRODUCTION:

All religions accept that human being is an 'ashraful makhluqat' (Greatest of all Creations). Every religion lay down its own way of life for human being to be an ideal. Religious Scriptures, Holy Books, Prophets, Saints and theologians tried to conceptualize the ideal man in numerous ways. In the 15th century Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, visualized the image of an ideal man. Guru Nanak gave the universal message of unity, peace and love to the mankind. He was born at the time when Indian society was in the critical stage. Medieval Indian society was characterized by social discriminations, religious extremism and political tyranny. Guru Nanak understood the root cause of prevailing social injustice, religious bigotry and unfair political rule. He found that the moral wickedness, political subjugation and mental slavery had turned aside the masses from the path of righteousness, truth and love. In order to come out of such distressing conditions society desperately requires the ideal persons who have potential to establish an ideal society. Guru Nanak and His successor Sikh Gurus laid higher moral standards of Sikh socio-spiritual ethics for an ideal man to rejuvenate the dying spirit of poor, deprived and marginalized sections of society. The aim of a human being as defined in Sri Guru Granth Sahib is to attain the True Lord in this life. All other activities are of no use. Meeting the congregation of saints one must recite only the naam. A Gurmukh does exactly this and achieves the aim of life by getting assimilated into the God. In Sikhism, a person with enlarged consciousness is a free moral agent and active in social life. His works are not motivated by any selfish desire but by the altruistic spirit. By his acts, he participates in the working of God, not under any moral obligation but spontaneously as functional expression of his evolved nature. By attuning to hukam (Divine Will), man attains spiritual enlightenment and such a person is denominated in the Holy Scripture as jivan-mukta, gurmukh or brahmgiyani and this state is known as sehaj-avastha, turiya avastha, param pad and amara-pad.

The Gurus were God-dedicated enlightened souls who sacrificed their all for the good of society. The masses of the times were steeped in ignorance, superstitions and inertia. They tried to transform them into a spiritually, morally, socially and physically sturdy people. They have depicted the ideal of a Gursikh in detail in Gurbani and have codes of conduct and daily routine to follow to become an ideal perfect man. Gurmukh literally means a person with his mukh (face) towards Guru Sahib. In other words, Gurmukh is

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one who looks at the Mukh (face) of Guru (for instructions and advice); one who follows the teachings of Guru Sahib: one who follows the command of Guru Sahib. Instead of one's own mind; one who is Guru-oriented and not self-oriented; one who lives his life according to the teachings of Guru Sahib. Gurmukh is Guru-ward, God-ward, highly virtuous.

The Gursikh who leads a philanthropic, altruist life is always imbued with the zeal to do well to others. Those who are truthful inwardly and outwardly are honest optimistic people, with a tender heart, holding everyone dear and love for one and all. When such people come forward attired in the Guru-bestowed robes, they are admired and venerated by the whole world. Such a person cannot be subjugated and cannot be subjected to the life of servitude or play a subservient role. When God's grace endows him with divine power, he uses it to worship His Name and reigns supreme for the common weal and welfare of all people, since he regards the whole of humanity as the sacred creation of God almighty and accepts them as children of one father.

Guru Arjan Dev, fifth Sikh Guru said, "One who calls himself a Sikh of the Guru, the True Guru, rises in the early morning hours and meditates on the Lord's Name. Upon arising early in the morning, he is to bathe, and cleanse himself in the pool of nectar. Following the Instructions of the Guru, he chants the Name of the Lord. All of his sins, misdeeds and negativity are erased. Then, at the rising of the sun, he sings Gurbani; whether sitting down or standing up, he meditates on the Lord's Name. One who meditates on my Lord with every breath and every morsel of food - that Gursikh becomes pleasing to the Guru's Mind. That person, unto whom my Lord and Master is kind and compassionate - upon that Gursikh, the Guru's Teachings are bestowed. Servant Nanak begs for the dust of the feet of that Gursikh, who himself chants the Naam, and inspires others to chant it".

Guru Amar Das, third Sikh Guru said, "He alone is the True disciple, friend, kinsman and brother, who walks in the Guru's will. He who walks according to his own will, O brother is separated from the Lord and bears hollows". Gursikh or Brahmgyani is imbibing with the spirit of equality. He is always prepared lay down any sacrifice to eliminate the discriminations and inequalities. Guru Nanak said, "The Guru-ward effaces enmity and envy. The Guru-ward does away with all the reckonings". Guru Amar Das said, "The True Sikhs of the Guru recite the ambrosial Word and recognize the Pervading Lord amongst all the hearts. Only One (God) do they serve, and one do they meditate upon. Ineffable is the discourse of the true Sikhs of the Guru". Guru Arjan Dev said, "The Knower goes God looks on all with equal eyes like the wind that blows alike on the King and the poor".

The concept of ideal man (Gurmukh) specified in Guru Granth Sahib is dynamic. It is believed that man is potentially capable of becoming perfect as well as Gurmukh. Man in the initial stages is a prisoner of his haumai (ego) and due to ignorance is also engrossed in Maya (duality). He wallows in the clutches of worldly desires, which hamper his ethical and spiritual progress. The progress of man implies a holistic approach towards human personality in which all the characteristics are harmoniously developed. Shabads (word) of Guru Granth Sahib are an effort to project the ideal personality of guru-oriented man (Gurmukh), which develops from within harmoniously and simultaneously with the continuous association of the Shabad-Guru. According to the hymns of Guru Granth Sahib, the Shabad-Guru is the regulative principle for making spiritual progress as well as transforming human personality.

Gursikh is alone capable do away with the duality and disillusion. He has unshaken faith in the will of the God. Guru Arjan Dev said, "This world is engrossed in wickedness and skepticism. God's divine alone, is saved". Gursikh is one who is remains detached from worldly joys and sorrows. Guru Arjan Dev said, "The Knower of God ever remains unattached like the lotus, which abides detached in water".

When the man has reached the highest goal of evolution, namely, the vision of God, he must not be absorbed back into God but must remain earth conscious so as to transform this mundane world into a higher and spiritual plane of existence. A Sikh cannot be religious in worship and immoral in conduct. Religion covers the entire domain of human life, whether it is family life, business activity, relations with the government or communication with God. Religion therefore works as a searchlight for the improvement of all round life. To the Gurus, religion was synonymous with the philosophy the struggle and movement for the upliftment of mankind. The Sikh religion is essentially different from others as it involves the whole of life in its different phases and tries to improve it rather than condemn it.

In Sikh ethos, Gursikh is not only an embodiment of Godly attributes but also a source of inspiration for masses. He is supposed to guide the humanity and motivate others to move on righteous path. Guru Ram Das said, "Servant Nanak asks for the dust of the feet of that Sikh of the Guru, who himself contemplates on God's Name and makes others contemplate thereon". Gursikh is a seeker of Ultimate Truth. He finds salvation by moving on pathway of truth. Guru Nanak said, "The Guru's slaves like not untruth. With sincere love they are dyed in nothing but Truth. The mammon - worshipper likes not Truthfulness. False is the foundation of the false". Guru Amar Das said, "Truth is in speech of the pious person and truth is in the pious person's eyes. The pious person does the True deeds. Day and night, he ever

tells the truth and also makes others utter the truth”.

The Gurus describe the qualities of the Gurmukh and the role he is expected to play in life. These draw a clear picture of the ideal life in Sikhism. The lives of the Gurus are another indication of the kind of life, the seeker and the Gurmukh are supposed to lead. Bhai Gurdas calls Guru Nanak a Gurmukh. A Gurmukh being the instrument of God exhibits in his life all the qualities attributed to God. Because on the one hand he is in touch with God who is all love, and on the other hand he is conscious of his close kinship with every other living being.

Nam-Realised persons must practice nam (meditation) while living in the world. Since in the eyes of Vismadi—who is in aesthetic union with Nam—there is no duality between individual and the universal. He is the right type of person who can do well to humanity. Such a person in Sikh religious parlance is called “Gurmukh”—always Guruward or Nam-ward. He does not abjure world, rather lives in it, beautiful it and endeavors to prevail upon his fellows to strive to comprehend 'Nam' to be in tune with it and to imbibe 'Nam' culture. He is a 'Panch' Plato's philosopher King, a Brahm Gyani, one who has realized god and has acquired Divine knowledge—the one which enables one to discover and identify the nature and working of the Immanence of God. Such a man does not fear anybody, nor does he frighten anybody. Panch or Gurmukh of Khalsa is the ideal man of the Guru.

The outstanding feature of Sikhism is the continuity of thought and mission from the Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh. Guru Gobind Singh created a Khalsa which is the fulfillment of Guru Nanak's mission. The word 'Singh' in Sikhism is used since times of creation of Khalsa. Guru Gobind gave instruction to all baptized Sikhs to use the word Singh as their surname. A Singh is one who has reached the goal, who has realized the self, and whose self, therefore, is no more, whose ego and little personality are shed off and destroyed, and who thus has no proper particular name and so is designated by the generic term, Singh, so long as he is active in the social and political context of the Sikh way of life. The term 'Sikh' implies a person who is a learner, who is set on the path of spiritual perfection and self-realization, but who has not yet fully realized the self, who has not yet found the truth in entirety, and who, has reached that final goal and he has ceased acting with the fulcrum of his little ego, he becomes a Singh, the perfected one. In a way, the Sikh of Guru Nanak, who is seeker of truth, when got enlightenment and transformed into realized soul, he will be called Singh.

The ideal of sant-sipahi, as such, was worked out by all the Sikh Gurus, from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh. In the first hymn of Japji the Guru Nanak raised the fundamental question of all Sikh thought, namely: How to become a Sachiar? Guru Nanak stressed this point all along in his search, that truthful living is higher than the truth itself. It becomes clear that the Guru was not in pursuit of yet another truth claiming system of abstract philosophy, but he was in the process of making a new man, a concrete socio-historical being who would live and struggle for truth. It is this ideal of sant-sipahi that figures in the hymns of the Sikh Gurus as Sachara, Gurmukh and finally as sant-sipahi.

Sant-Sipahi (Saint Soldier) is, as the term indicates, not just a soldier but also a saint. A soldier fights as a mercenary to secure the authority of his master over a certain region of the earth. While the sant-sipahi loves God and fights tyranny of rulers to protect the human and religious rights of all. This involves strong spiritual conviction, high courage and supreme sacrifice. Guru Nanak laid the foundations of the 'school. For training such volunteers and also started a never ending war against the religious and political tyrants. That is why he justifiably the first sant-sipahi.

Sikhism is a synthesis of knowledge, action and devotion. A Sikh is necessarily a householder and a man of the world. As a citizen of the world all his activities are based on Dharma (righteousness). His body, mind and wealth belong to the Guru. He is completely disciplined soldier of the Guru. For him the Guru is Sachcha Padshah, true king, whom he follows in action, mind and speech and who leads him both in worldly prosperity and spiritual advancement. Sikh is an amalgam of Shakti and Bhakti, Miri and Piri.

Guru Nanak and other Sikh Gurus practically identified themselves with the subaltern masses. The creation of the Khalsa is the micro-identity of Akalpurakh in the micro-identity of the individual realized self in history. He is likened to Kierkegaard "knight of faith" on the earth. He is, above all, the parochial groove of communalism, casteism and sectarianism. Principle of love as a cementing force of mankind is the essence of the Khalsa identity. The social structure of the Khalsa Panth is built on the matrix of individual Khalsa. It is possible through identification of feeling or empathy with other fellow beings. As with one candle other candles are enlightened, similarly one realized self enlightens other selves. Guru Gobind Singh identified himself with the entire Khalsa both individuals and the social order of the Khalsa.

From the above analysis, it can be concluded that Sikh Gurus gave a unique vision of an ideal man. They tried to create prototype of an ideal human being who carry forward the Divine mission of Sikhism in times to come. An ideal man in Sikhism is a true embodiment of Godly attributes. He is willing to fight against evil forces and to create socio-political and economic conditions which are contributing to social and spiritual development of mankind. To attain this goal, Guru Gobind Singh created Khalsa i. e. body of

truthful, brave, pure and dedicated persons who are above the parochial concerns and sectarian divisions. Khalsa is expected to struggle for social development and collective spiritual salvation.

END NOTES

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