

CORE VALUES IN SIKHISM: A WAY OF LIFE

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ABSTRACT: *The values contained in the Sikh religion became operative in the Sikh way of life and have found embodiment in the social institutions to a greater extent. This paper intends to put forth the core values of Sikhism and surface their relevance in the present times. The paper is bifurcated into three aspects namely: highlighting Naam Japo, Kirat Karo and Wand Chhako as the core values of Sikhism., role of these values in transforming a human being into a man of character. The relevance of these values in the present times. The vibrant Sikh values with the message of Sikh Gurus need to be made a part of our life today.*

KEYWORDS: values, Sikhism, Naam Japo, Kirat Karo and Wand Chhako,

The religious philosophy of Sikhism arose primarily as a non-Vedantic process of thought in the historical conflict in opposition to the feudal value-pattern. The founder of the Sikh religion, Guru Nanak developed a harmonious theoretical setup which included a spiritual beginning that inspired an individual through the experiences in the day to day life. Sikhism a monotheistic religion believes that there are many ways of reaching God. It rejected idol worship, caste system and ritualism as these are irrelevant factor in the process of acquiring salvation. Sikhism propagated the virtues of the life of a householder and totally rejects asceticism.

The emergence and development of Sikhism is one of the most inspiring and exciting era of world religious history. The process was based on the features of democracy, secularism and socialism without any barriers. In Sikhism, Realisation of God leads to unity of mankind thus building the faith in the dignity of human values that strengthens and encourages the concept of live and let live. This concept of Supreme Value helps in creating an ideal society and further efforts can be put in to give it a practical shape.

Sikhism has numerous precepts in the Sikh Holy granth, *Guru Granth Sahib* which is a rich source of ethical and moral guidance to individuals. Thus, Sikh teachings stress that spiritually inspired morals and ethics must triumph over social, economic and political matters. It is therefore that Sikhism can be described as a 'Way of Life' that provides us a clear vision of the Ultimate Reality of our goal. Keeping in view the Sikh value system Guru's ideal society would consist of honest and hard working human beings, spiritual and secular, without any discrimination. It emphasises on inculcating the spirit of universal welfare. In the then prevailing socio-religious setup there was an urgency of creating a new ideal society.

Naam Japo, Kirat Karo and Wand Chhako as the core values of Sikhism.

Sikh thought provides a simple but most dignified synthesis of spiritual and temporal life through *Naam Japna*, *Kirat Karna*, *Wand Chhakna* and other values and virtues. Guru Nanak envisioned the three Pillars in the form of values of Sikhism as:

1. Meditation on God – *Naam Japna* and practise *Simran* that is reciting and chanting of God's Name. The Sikh is to recite the regular prayers daily in remembrance of the grace and blessing of the Almighty.
2. Sikhs to live as householders and practise *Kirat Karna*: to honestly earn by one's physical and mental effort, while accepting God's gifts and blessing.
3. Share their wealth within the community by practising *Wand Chhakna*—"Share and Consume together". Every Sikh has to give in whatever way possible to the community. This spirit of Giving is an important message from Guru Nanak.

Naam (Divine Name) and Naam Japna:

The word *Naam* has a distinct and significant meaning and is quite different from merely a 'Name'. Its definition can be traced through the Sikh scriptures.

a. *NAAM* (Divine Name) and God are synonymous. *Naam* is just another aspect of the Almighty, still Formless. *Naam* is the total expression of all that God is. *Naam* sustains everything:

b. *Naam* is not expressed as mere noun and it does not mean that there is a special name of God and by enchanting of which, one will meet Him. He is Infinite and can be called with infinite names

c. God may be called by countless names by the devotees, but the first and the foremost is clearly defined in the prime revelation of Japaji as '*SAT*' *NAAM* i.e. Eternal Truth which shows the ever-existence of God:

d. The word *NAAM* is a mystic Word used in practical religious life and in discipline of meditation. God is remembered by His attributive names.

There is another aspect of it called true Name which emanates from a prophet's personal experience. It emerges from a vision that the Prophet has of the Divine Being. Such a mystic Word in Sikh religion is called '*Waheguru*' or Wonderful God or 'Thou art Wonderful'. True Name is not the word by which we describe an object, but the total power, quality and character of Reality. Through the word '*Waheguru*' the prophet has tried to sum up mystic power and experience of His presence all around. Prophets have given us Divine Names of the nameless God, which reflect His presence in our consciousness. Contemplation or meditation on true Name (*Waheguru*) is called practicing the presence of God in one's conscious. The *Naam*, therefore, is a qualitative connotation and covers all the essential attributes of truth.

e. *Gurbani* (Divine Word) itself is *NAAM*: "*Gurmukh bani nam hai, nam ridai vasaie.*" (*Sarang ki Var-pauri*)

The term '*Naam Japo*' means to remember God and to invoke His presence in one's conscious. All modes of meditation take the devotee into the presence of God, but according to *Gurbani*, Hari Kirtan, the musical recitation of *Gurbani*, is the super form of meditation.

"*Har kirat utam Nam hai vich kaljug karni sar.*" (*Kanre ki Var Mohalla 4*)

The Guru explains that the recitation of the word '*Har Har..*' is *Naam Japna*:

"Har har har har nam hai gurmukh pavai koei."

Salvation cannot be attained without *Naam*. In other words anything that delivers salvation is *Naam*. Since *Gurbani* delivers salvation, therefore, *Gurbani* is *Naam*:

"Sachi bani mithi amritdhar Jinh piti tis mokhdwar."

It is therefore, very clear and evident that any form of recitation of *Gurbani*, may be simple reading with attention and devotion or meditation on any *Sabad* of *Gurbani* or *Kirtan* of *Gurbani*, is fully deemed as *Naam Japna* (meditation on *Naam*)

It is, therefore, *Naam* that ultimately leads a person to Eternal Bliss. For realization of God one must come in contact with *Naam*, but without Guru one cannot attain *Nam* and remain in darkness. This value of *Naam Japo* is embodied in the Sikh scriptures in such a way that human beings are able to win over mainly five evils of one's mind i.e ego, greed, attachment, anger and lust that ultimately brings peace and tranquility.

Guruji says:

*With my hands I do His work; with my tongue I sing His Glorious Praises.
With my feet, I walk on the Path of my Lord and Master. ((1))
It is a good time, when I remember Him in meditation.
Meditating on the Naam, the Name of the Lord, I cross over the terrifying world-ocean. ((1))*

*With your eyes, behold the Blessed Vision of the Saints.
Record the Immortal Lord God within your mind. ((2))
Listen to the Kirtan of His Praises, at the Feet of the Holy.
Your fears of birth and death shall depart. ((3))
Enshrine the Lotus Feet of your Lord and Master within your heart.
Thus this human life, so difficult to obtain, shall be redeemed. ((4))(51)(120))*

Practice of *Naam*

The guideline in the *Rehat Maryada* of Guru Gobind Singh demands that the Sikh engages in *Naam Simran* (recitation of *Naam*) as part of his or her everyday routine. *Guruji* bestows on everyone the right to do the *Naam Jaap* in a *Sehaj* way (simple way) i.e relaxed, without stress and tension free mode. It has to be practiced regularly with concentration. The mode of *Naam Japna* is stated in the Sikh Scriptures and therefore *Gurbani* is regarded as the instructor for the Sikhs. *Naam japna* excludes the sins that helps elevate an individual.

Real attainment by remembering God is His *Darshan* - seeing Him and feeling Him. An individual attains a new state of mind and starts living detached from the worldly attachments. The practitioner of the *Naam* attains peace, and becomes socially oriented and ethical with love for the human beings, God, Guru, and *Gurbani*. He submits to the will of God and attains the peace of mind. He is no more agitated, irritated, angry, disappointed, dejected and abandoned and becomes a God-oriented person through *Naam-Jaap* (recitation of His name). Such an evolved and saintly fellow is emancipated even when alive.

By meditating on the Name of Lord, all *Maya* was cast aside,

Removing the darkness and thus destroying its darker side. (*Gauri Bairagan*, III)

Kirat Karna (Honest means of Earnings)

This is one of three primary pillars of Sikhism. The term 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. Guru Nanak emphasized that his disciples must earn their living by the sweat of their brow. His disciple must forbid beggary, robbery, parasitism, prostitution, living on alms and offerings of temples. Amassing of wealth through exploitation of the weaker section of the society is strictly condemned. Guru Nanak himself lived on his earnings through productive labour. He forbade people to revere those who called themselves *Guru* or *Pir* and those who lived on alms. *Kirat Karna* (Honest earning) was later established as the instruction and order in *Rehatnama* (Code of conduct for Sikhs).

Bhai Gurdas says living on temple offerings is unlawful as these offerings are sugar coated poison. Meanwhile, dedication to the work of God, without personal gain, should be one's main motivations.

Guru Arjan Devji 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!" The Guru says that wealth cannot be amassed except through commission of sins of various shades and dimensions resulting in exploiting the society as a whole. *Papan bajho hovai nahi muea sath na jae*. The significance and the philosophy put forth in *Kirat Karo* is that it helps in developing self-respect and uprightness in an individual's character and in return can contribute to the welfare of the society.

Wand Chhako (Sharing)

Guru Nanak introduced a new practice of sharing one's income. *Wand Chakkō* is a technique and method which means share what you earn and to consume it together as a community. This could be wealth, food. et.al. 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* (free Kitchen) and to generally help the needy in the community. A Sikh is expected to contribute at least 10% (*daswand*) of their income (*Kirat Kamai*) to the needy people of the world or for a worthy cause. *Daswand* became a part of the Sikh code of conduct during the tenth Guru for the cause of Sikh social, religious, political and military order in the form of service to humanity.

In other words, to share the fruits of one's labor with others, before considering oneself so as to live as an inspiration and a support to the entire community.

Guru Ji says: *The twelfth day of the lunar cycle: Dedicate yourself to giving charity, chanting the Naam and purification. Worship the Lord with devotion, and get rid of your pride. Drink in the Ambrosial Nectar of the Lord's Name, in the Saadh Sangat, the Company of the Holy. The mind is satisfied by lovingly singing the Kirtan of God's Praises. The Sweet Words of His Bani soothe everyone. The soul, the subtle essence of the five elements, cherishes the Nectar of the Naam, the Name of the Lord. This faith is obtained from the Perfect Guru. O Nanak, dwelling upon the Lord, you shall not enter the womb of reincarnation again. ||12||*

I have enshrined the Lord's Feet within my heart. Contemplating my Lord and Master, my True Guru, all my affairs have been resolved. ||1||Pause|| The merits of giving donations to charity and devotional worship come from the Kirtan of the Praises of the Transcendent Lord; this is the true essence of wisdom. Singing the Praises of the unapproachable, infinite Lord and Master, I have found immeasurable peace. ||1|| The Supreme Lord God does not consider the merits and demerits of those humble beings whom He makes His own. Hearing, chanting and meditating on the jewel of the Naam, I live; Nanak wears the Lord as his necklace. ||2||11||30||

Bhai Gurdas Ji 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.

Values Transforms an Individual into good Human Beings

In the Sikh metaphysical concept, God is the Ultimate Reality, and man is capable of realizing the Ultimate through realization of the Divine Light, which is within him. To achieve this he has to organize his activities as per the teachings of the Gurus. Therefore the Sikh Value System is based on the compositions contained in the Sikh Scriptures. All the values help in enhancing the inner self of an individual. Values are spiritual, social, survival and ultimate.

Naam creates a feeling of the realization of God's grace within oneself. This feeling of harmony ultimately results in the utterer becoming one with the uttered. Practice of *Naam* leads to cultivation of virtues which is essential for becoming a good human being. Guru Nanak says that only the holy name is valuable, rest all is pride of self. By honest means of earnings one can prohibit oneself from getting involved in evils of the society such as robbery, prostitution, beggary etc. and build up an honest character.

The value of sharing what you have with the needy is a spiritual and secular service to mankind. Sikhs have been contributing to setting up of hospitals, educational institutions, accommodation at religious centres, renovation of old *gurudwaras* and *langar* system for all. This seems to be a proven tendency to implement the values in the present day life. The value system inculcates strength, confidence, sincerity, goodness, truthfulness, et.al that helps in transforming the life of an individual. His good deeds encourage him to lead to a contented life.

CONCLUSION

Sikh thought signifies a simple but most dignified synthesis of spiritual and temporal life through the value system. It attains universal salvation and leads the whole human society towards a higher moral life. Exercising the values and virtues in a normal domestic life is to be considered as the fountain head of moral values. Such a life

recommends a practical path and a way to overcome physical and mental stress. *Guru Granth Sahib* is the living embodiment of the ten gurus that guides an individual towards simple living heading towards humanity. In the present world life is influenced by the materialistic attractions and in the race of acquiring them the path adopted by the people ends at stress and frustration without any ethics attached to it. Values can help an individual to put an end to egoism, pain and frustration.

Thus, the value system embodied in the religion helps an individual in understanding of laws of righteousness leading to realization and development of a good character. Such a human character becomes a contributory factor in salvation for others.

Keeping in view the Sikh Value System, Guru's ideal society would be a society of honest and hard working humans, spiritual and secular, excluding all superstitions and distinction of caste, colour, class, race, religion and nationality. It would include ceaseless and unconditional value to guide their activities both individually and collectively, with transparent and peacekeeping spirit of universal welfare, service and sacrifice. At the same time this society would be devoted to the use of arms, when all other paths of redressed of wrong prove ineffective. All the values became operative in the Sikh Way of life and found embodiment in the social institutions. Thus, Sikhism is best understood as a way of life. Some famous directives in a nutshell show the practical life that a Sikh is enjoined to live to achieve the secular and spiritual upliftment of the individual as well as the society.

In the present times there are a number of small sects that mislead the innocent Sikhs on the subject of *Gurbani* and *Naam*. According to them *Gurbani* is not *Naam*. They secretly utter few words to the people and call it *Naam*. Thus, innocent Sikhs and others are misled into their fold. The Sikhs should, therefore, be very careful from such sects. The leaders of these sects misguide the people for their self-interest. However, a true Sikh is expected to believe in *Gurmat* (Guru's teaching), and therefore *Gurbani* (scriptures) is the epitome of all values. The Sikh believes that *Gurbani* forms the philosophical base of the Sikh Value System that is operative in Sikh way of life.

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