

Current Sikh issues-Sikh Historical Perspective,

chapter 4-part 18

Divine message of Sikhism to be conveyed to world-challenges to be faced- in 21st century

Sikhs should now have the assessment that what they have achieved for them and their religion in this long period and how far they have been able to understand and act upon the Divine teachings of GuruGranth Sahib.

Twenty first century Sikh perspective should be considered and the challenges to be faced by the Sikhs and that how to meet those challenges.

It has to be ensured that one uniform Sikh code of conduct and procedure to be followed by all the Sikhs and in all the Sikh Gurdawaras, being a collective Sikh decision. No doubt it is the failure of Sikh leadership but Sikhs have to decide themselves that how to get a better world Sikh leadership of honesty, integrity and capability, committed to Sikh cause, so as not to face such situations in future and how to have total unity in Sikhs and the correct understanding of Sikh religion, uniform Sikh code of conduct and practical Sikh way of life.

Sikh religion is the latest religion of the world, having been founded in the fifteenth century. It is now in the list of first five religions of the world. It is free from myths and superstitions and satisfies the developed scientific and juristic mind of today. It is the practical way of life with emphasis on Truth, Name of God and pious deeds, besides, the earning with honest means and sharing with the needy. In Sikhism, Truth is above every thing but higher still is Truthful living. The scholars of world religions like, H.L. Bradshaw have commented, Sikh religion to be a religion of the present age, capable to answer the problems of the modern age, and, Prof. Toynbee, that Sikh religion and its scripture will always have a special value for the world.

Some of the eminent scholars have blamed the Sikhs to have not discharged their duty to bring Sikh religion to the notice of the world. This blame may be justified, but Sikhs remained in struggle for religious freedom and sovereignty from the very beginning. They are to likely discharge this duty in this century as they are now spread over throughout the world. However Sikhs have to face some challenges, to which they can be successful with the honesty of purpose and selflessness, under the Divine guidance of the higher values of their religion. The first challenge is that most of the Sikhs and particularly the Sikh youth are drifting away from Sikh initiation and the code of conduct as prescribed by tenth Sikh Guru at the final phase of the completion of Sikh religion. Due to the lack of preaching of Sikh religion, some of them even think that perhaps it is not a part of their religion. It has to be explained to them that it is a part of Sikh religion.

Sikh religion was founded by Guru Nanak Dev and developed by his nine successors, while Guru Gobind Singh, tenth Sikh Guru, completed its final phase. He prescribed the Sikh initiation of Amrit, five Sikh emblems and the Sikh code of conduct, on Baisakhi of 1699 and himself prepared the Amrit and administered it to Panj Pyaras. He gave the authority to them to administer the Amrit to other Sikhs in that very manner and also to any five initiated Sikhs strictly adhering to Sikh code of conduct. He himself got the Amrit from those Panj Pyaras to whom he administered it. He directed all the Sikhs present there to get the Amrit at that time. It is more than sufficient to establish that Sikh initiation of Amrit was meant for all the Sikhs.

Guru Gobind Singh issued Hukam Nama to all the Sikhs in the very next month of Jeth to get the Sikh initiation of Amrit and to keep the five Sikh emblems and to strictly follow Sikh code of conduct as prescribed by him. He made it very clear in his divine proclamations that there can be no exemption to it,

being mandatory for all the Sikhs. Guru Gobind Singh had the authority to prescribe such Sikh initiation of Amrit and the code of conduct for Sikhs. All the Sikh Gurus had the same Divine Spirit. One who declares him to be a Sikh is bound to follow the injunctions of Guru Gobind Singh, tenth Sikh Guru, including the Sikh initiation and Sikh code of conduct prescribed by him, being a part of Sikh religion. The other divine declaration of Guru Gobind Singh was to ordain the Sikhs to accept Guru Granth Sahib, the Divine Spirit of Sikh Gurus, Eternal Sikh Guru in perpetuity for all the times to come and to get the Divine wisdom from its Divine proclamations with purity of heart, being the Word of God. Every Sikh and even others admit that Guru Granth Sahib is the perpetual eternal Guru of Sikhs and there is no controversy over it. Suffice it to quote British Scholar, Jeans Culler, -

" Eliminate your symbols, my ear Singh, and watch the Khalsa crumble. Take off the turban, Shave the beard, cut the hairs, throw aside the Kara, I can tell you truthfully the result would be Embarrassing as well as disastrous. These five symbols had held the Sikhs in united brotherhood. They serve to make a Sikh and act as a Sikh. They endow him with courage to accomplish feat which otherwise would be impossible for an average man. To make a long story short, the Five symbols have a psychological bearing on the man who wears them. They are manifestation Of Guru, the Eternal."

Prof. Puran Singh, the eminent Sikh scholar, remarked, "It is very strange that when a Sikh is baptized, he feels new life come to him as if the Guru still Lives and sends in one glance a wave of life and inspiration."

British eminent historian, J.D.Cunningham, commented, " It was on the basic principles of Guru Nanak, that Guru Gobind Singh formed such a nation Which elevated every one politically and religiously after doing with class system/

" The second challenge for Sikhs is that false assertions and glaring misrepresentations have been made as to several important aspects of Sikh religion and history since long. These are now even made in the textbooks published by NCERT, for syllabus of schools throughout India, which is under the supervision of Govt. of India. The Divine Sikh Gurus have even not been spared. It may amount to blasphemy of a religion. Guru Nanak Dev has been mentioned to have abandoned house holder life while Guru Gobind Singh to be a devotee of Durga, the Hindu Goddess, which are in total contradiction to their Divine teachings and altogether false. Sikh religion has been propagated to be a part of Hinduism and Sikhs to be sect of Hindus, obviously a false assertion as Sikh religion is a separate and independent religion just like other world religions and Sikhs are a separate nation.. If the false assertions and misrepresentations are not negated fully then there can be no correct understanding and appreciation of Sikh religion, The Sikhs, as a whole have not taken the desired action in this serious matter of far reaching consequences, which should no longer be overlooked. In fact the entire Sikh history needs to be reviewed as it has been written by most of the Sikh adversaries initially, when the Sikhs were engaged in the struggle for freedom and sovereignty.

The third challenge for Sikhs is, of their Sikh leadership, which needs to be of, honesty, integrity, capability and committed to Sikh cause. The Sikhs are now spread over throughout the world and they need one united world Sikh leadership, under which Sikhism may be brought to the notice of the world with uniformity in organized manner and the managements of the Sikh Gurdawaras may be made dispute free. The Sikh leadership needs to be well aware of world politics and history as admittedly due to its ignorance it caused a great harm to Sikh cause in the past. Rules and regulations need to be framed for the powers, appointments and dismissals besides other relevant matters for Jathedars of Akal Takhat and other Takhats by ascertaining the views of Sikhs world over. The holders of these offices must be honest and capable and befitting to these offices to preach Sikh religion with interse understanding and security of their tenure.

Infact the basic Sikh concept of-Guru Granth and Guru Panth-stands totally ignored by the Sikhs since long, which has made them incapacitated to take the panthic decisions on Sikh affairs by them through their representatives, which needs to be revived. A representative body of Sikhs residing throughout the world is the urgent need of the day, which should take decisions on the panthic issues to be acceptable to all the Sikhs, by ensuring the participation of all Sikhs to such decisions. Its blue print may be to take the representatives of the organisations to be elected by Sikhs, just as SGPC, Delhi Gurdawaras management committee, Sikh Takhats of Hazoor Sahib and Patna Sahib management committees and of such other Sikh institutions in India. The other world countries may be divided in 6 or 7 zones on the basis of their population and the Sikh Gurdawaras management committees of those zones and any other Sikh elected organizations may select their representatives as fixed. All such representatives can coopt some reputed Sikhs from each zone who are well known for service to the Sikh cause and their honesty, integrity and capability. Such a representative Sikh body may hold its meetings at Akal Takhat, having its secretariate here and nominate their spokesman to be called Jathedar Akal Takhat, to be responsible for the execution of the Sikh collective decisions.

The fourth challenge for Sikhs is that as yet there are no translations of the Sikh Scripture, Guru Granth Sahib in other languages of the world. The books on Sikh history and other relevant Sikh literature are also too insufficient. There is no newspaper, no journal, no T V channel of Sikhs to correctly present the Sikh religion, Sikh history and Sikh point of view effectively with authenticity, which is a must in the present day advanced media technology. Internet websites are the effective tools of communication, of which no substantial advantage is availed of by Sikhs for Sikh Cause. It is the age of press, TV, Internet

edia, to which no one should lag behind for world communication. Sikhs must own these medias to bring their religion to the notice of the world and of Sikhs and particularly Sikh youth residing outside India who are used to it. Due to the non availability of the authentic books on Sikh religion and history, some motivated writers distorted the crucial Sikh historical admitted facts to mislead the bona fide readers and some of other writers, who based their writings on those misrepresentations, which are harmful to the Sikh point of view. The fifth challenge for the Sikhs is that most of the Sikh educational institutions are no more Sikh oriented. It was during the Singh sabha movement that Sikh schools and colleges were sought to be set up to inculcate the knowledge of Sikh religion and history in the Sikh students, besides the general education. The Sikh schools and colleges were set up in Punjab and outside where there was Sikh population for this purpose. These Sikh institutions did a lot to teach the religion and history to Sikh students and to give them the practical training of Sikh way of life which they followed in their life span, observing the Sikh code of conduct.

However for the last few decades most of these Sikh institutions ceased to be Sikh oriented. Their managements remained no more in the hands of true Sikhs, resulting the teachers to be no more committed Sikhs. The natural consequence, the Sikh students drifted away from Sikh code of conduct and Sikh way of life. Sikhs must make these Sikh educational institutions to be Sikh oriented to serve the purpose for which these were set up. The managements should be in the hands of committed Sikhs observing Sikh code of conduct and so should be the teachers to ensure that Sikh students study Sikh religion and history in the schools and observe Sikh code of conduct. More Sikh schools and colleges may be set up, where there is the need for this purpose to ensure that all Sikh students come in Sikh way of life. Sikhs are now spread over worldwide. The Sikh Gurdawaras should be utilized for functioning the Sunday Gurdawaras schools once a week on the pattern of Sunday church schools for the teaching of Sikh religion and history and Punjabi language to Sikh students. Each and every member of the Gurdawaras must bring his children to the Sunday Gurdawaras School. Such schools for Sikh studies can cover all the Sikh students in the world as Sikhs have constructed the Gurdawaras in the areas of their residence throughout the world. The independent Sikh educational institutions can be set up in the times to come, wherever possible.

The sixth challenge for the Sikhs is the lack of missionary spirit, which is a must for the preaching of a religion. No doubt there is no dearth of Sikh preachers in the form of Sikh kirtni jathas, Sikh kathakars and Sikh saints but most of them are not above monetary considerations. There is no organized Sikh system to provide the basic needs to the Sikh preachers to sustain them and their families. It has resulted in getting money for their living from their religious services at their whims, creating the sense of greed in most of them as some of them charge very huge amounts according to their popularity and professional skills. The preaching of the religion has thus been turned to a profession. Most of the so called Sikh saints have gone to the extent of creating the groups of their admirers who touch their feats with currency notes which has resulted in the formation of their deras, ignoring the strict observation of Sikh code of conduct and the humility and individual equality which have a great emphasis in Sikh religion. The consequences, no effective preaching of Sikh religion even amongst the Sikhs and most of the Sikhs particularly Sikh youth drifting away from Sikh code of conduct and Sikh way of life. The managements of Sikh Gurdawaras mostly exhibit the narrow egoistic trends instead of the missionary spirit, without which the preachers cannot be expected to grow the missionary spirit. Similarly the Sikh leaders will have to acquire such a spirit instead of any selfish vested interests. This challenge can be met by inculcating the higher values of Sikh religion. The last but not the least challenge for Sikhs is that most of the Sikhs need to earnestly understand and act upon the dictums of Sikh religion. They have to live under the Will of God, the Almighty. They have to meditate in the Name of one and only one God, which inculcates the virtues, burns the ego and eliminates the vices, resulting in truthful living. Unless the Sikhs themselves practically live in the Sikh way of truthful living, it is difficult to impress the others.

Sikh history is a witness to the fact that Sikh religion spread automatically with the practical Sikh way of living of some of the true Sikhs. Sikhs have to consider them to be the ambassadors of Sikh religion to abide truly the dictums of their religion. The others will automatically become inquisitive to understand their

religion and its higher moral and ethical values. Sikh religion has rejected cast and creed system. What impression will others get if sub casts are still with Sikh names and even Sikh Gurdawaras are named on casts in contradiction to Sikh teachings. Honesty and earning with honest means and sparing out of it to the needy is the teaching of Sikh religion. What will the others learn if Sikhs use the dishonest means and corrupt practices. Great stress has been laid on Humility and selfless service to humanity in Sikh

religion. What will the others learn if Sikhs exhibit egoistic tendencies and selfish vested interests even in Sikh cause? Sikhs will have to adopt the real Sikh values and dictums to meet this challenge. Twenty first century will be the Sikh century, if; Sikhs act upon the higher values of their religion and convert their narrow egoistic self centered minds to God tuned of higher consciousness as taught in Sikh religion and activate in all the socio-political affairs during the span of their lives with such higher values, Sikh leaders have honesty, integrity, capability, and sincerity to Sikh cause in both religious and political domains, Sikh preachers remain under the higher values of their religion with humility and above monetary consideration and Sikh scholars and writers find out the correct aspects of Sikh religion and history where ever twisted with misrepresentations, not imposing their personal views on Sikh point of view and Sikh collective decisions. Sikh religion believes in, Fatherhood of God, Brotherhood of mankind and Truthful living. Concept of God is, one and only one, creator of the entire creation, its sustainer and destroyer, without any incarnation, unborn and self illuminated, whose light shines in all. Only His Name is to be meditated to abide in the mind, which burns ego, eliminates vices, inculcates virtues to lead a truthful living in Sikh way of life obeying the Will of God, the Almighty, awaiting His grace to unite with Him. Truth, Name of God and Pious deeds is the Divine message of Sikhism to convert the human mind from self narrow egoistic tendencies to God tuned of higher consciousness to be activated in all the socio-political affairs throughout the span of life. Divine knowledge is to be obtained from the Divine teachings of Sikhism but it is not the end of the matter as these are to be acted upon in the practical Sikh way of life. It automatically leads to truthful living in Sikh way of life, which is infact way of God.

Fatherhood of God also automatically leads to Brotherhood of Mankind, as the same is the creator of the entire creation, the same is His light which shines in all. The Divine message of Sikhism is that human race is one, without any distinctions or discriminations on any ground whatsoever. The religions, faiths, systems, which created divisions and discriminations in mankind were out rightly rejected in Sikhism and effective steps were taken to establish equality in mankind. Sikhism teaches love between man and man as love between man and God and the selfless service to humanity. The eminent scholars of world religions and history have appreciated it. Suffice it to quote, Max Arther Macauliff, British eminent scholar, author of, *The Sikh Religion*,

" It would be difficult to point to a religion of greater originality or to a more comprehensive ethical system than Sikh religion. The Sikh Scriptures contain sublime truths, the study of which cannot but elevate the reader spiritually, morally and socially. There is no tinge of sectarianism in them. They teach the highest and purest principles that serve to bind the man to man and inspire the believer with an ambition to serve his fellowmen, to sacrifice all and to die for their sake "

John Clark Archer, the eminent British scholar, " Sikhism, indeed itself reveals something of what in the last analysis religion is. It is an independent and conspicuous order of its own. The world today needs its message of Peace and Love"

Sikhs are now spread over throughout the world. It is expected that they would bring to the notice of world, the higher values of Sikhism in this 21 st Century. It is the appropriate time, as the World peace stands disturbed and moral and ethical values stand ignored. The Divine teachings of Sikhism of higher moral and ethical values, and its message of, coexistence, love and peace, have the potential to set it right. It would enhance the prestige of Sikhs in the world, as remarked by the eminent British Scholar, Max Arthur Macauliff, who resigned the high post of Divisional Judge in Punjab to author the prestigious book, *The Sikh Religion*, published by Oxford University,

" All the persons of discrimination acquainted with Sikhs, set a high value on them, but it appears that a knowledge throughout the world of the excellence of their religion would enhance even the present regard with which they are entertained. Not less important will be the result of Sikh teachings on the minds of religious Europe and America. Already the Khalsa has achieved a worldwide renown in the matter of bravery. In the matter of religion too the name of Khalsa will shine resplendently when the glorious deeds of their ancestors in the moral and religious world are made known far and wide."

The Sikhs had to suffer in the past due to their mistaken identity, as they could not establish in the countries to which they migrated, their own separate identity and of their religion by strictly observing the code of conduct and Sikh way of life. High tributes have been paid to Sikh religion by all the eminent scholars of word religions in spite of the fact that they belonged to other religions. The eminent western scholars and historians commented it to be a religion of the present age, capable to solve the problems of the modern man, being full of truth and the comprehensive higher moral and ethical values, and bind man to God and man to man as well, creating the desire in him to serve the humanity selflessly. There could be no reason for the Sikhs not to strictly live in Sikh way of life as their religion had a high reputation

already. The separate identity of a religion and its followers cannot be established unless the followers of the religion strictly observe the code of conduct of their religion and live in the way of that religion. Sikhs should now certainly ensure to make known their separate identity and their religion to the world so that there is no more mistaken identity about them.