

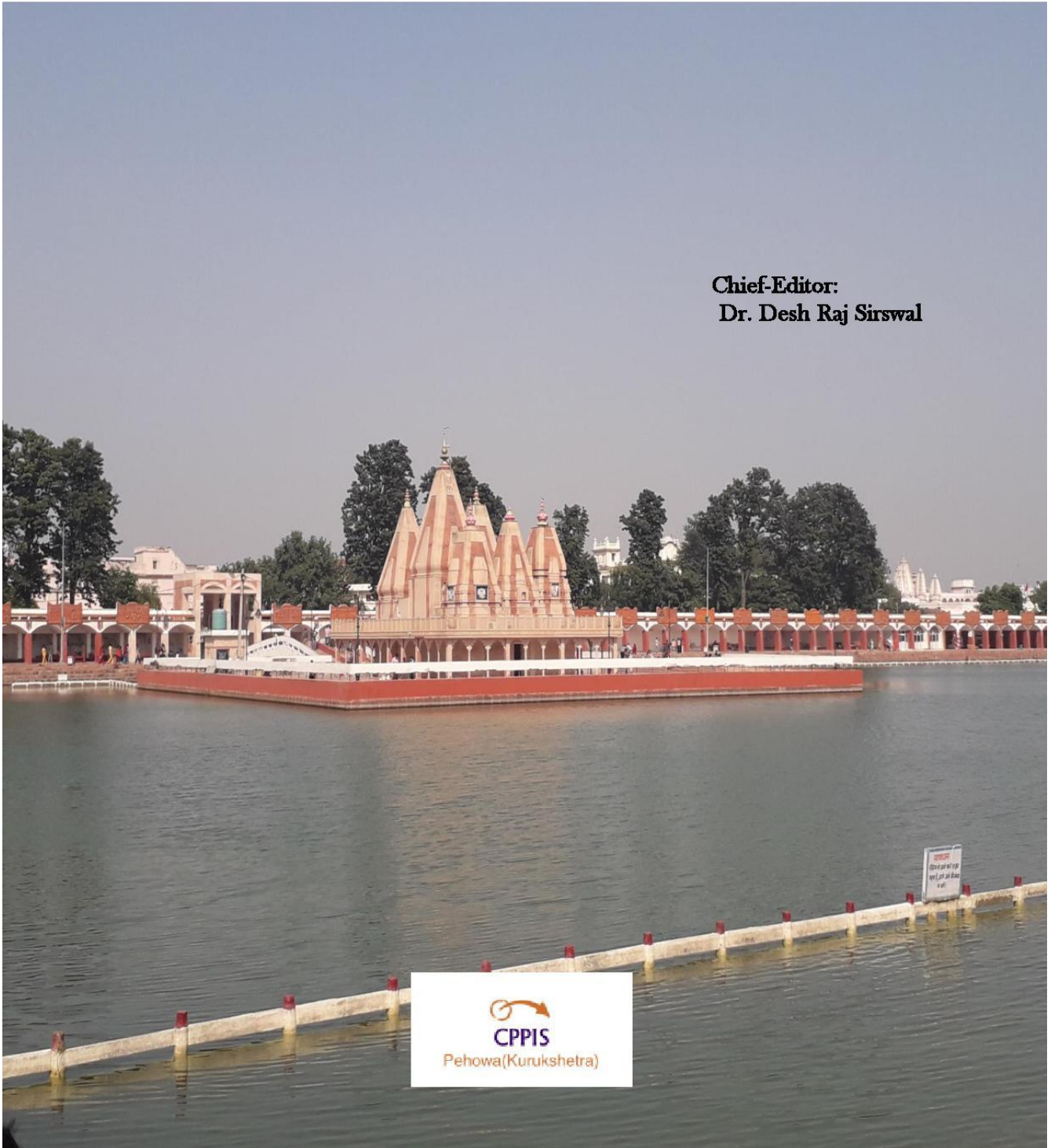
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## **Philosophy of Life of Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji**

**Desh Raj Sirswal**

### **Abstract**

Sikhism is a monotheistic religion founded during the 15th century in the Punjab region, by Guru Nanak Dev and continued to progress with ten successive Sikh gurus (the last teaching being the holy scripture *Gurū Granth Sāhib Ji*). It is the fifth-largest organized religion in the world, with over 30 million Sikhs and one of the most steadily growing. This system of religious philosophy and expression has been traditionally known as the Gurmat (literally 'of the gurus'). The Sikh Scriptures outline the ways in which one can bring their own thinking in line with the Hukam. If one engages in the service of God's creation, this is the best way of working in harmony with the Divine Will. Further, by remembering Waheguru one becomes aware of "God desires" and "Divine essence" within the person is realised. By following these "Divine Values" that benefit His Creation, one ends the cycle of Karma and Transmigration. The objective of this paper is to study the basic life values taught by Sri Guru Gobind Singh ji.

### **Indian Philosophy and Sikhism**

Philosophy in its widest etymological sense means 'love of wisdom'. It tries to know things that immediately and remotely concern man. In ancient Indian literature philosophy aims at knowledge of truth or 'the vision of truth' (darshana). Every Indian school holds, in its own way, that there can be a direct realisation of truth (tattva darsana). A man of realisation becomes free; one who lacks it is entangled in the world. Indian philosophy discusses the different problems of metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, logic and psychology but generally it does not discuss them separately. Indian philosophy denotes the philosophical speculations of all Indian thinkers, ancient or modern, Hindus or non-Hindus, theists or atheists.<sup>1</sup> In this list we also include materialists like Charvaka and unorthodox thinkers like Buddhist and the Jains, along with all medieval bhakti movements and teachings of saints and gurus. In this line Sikhism itself fall under the domain of Indian philosophy.

### **Basics of Sikhism**

Sikhism has a very sound philosophical attitude and the way of life. It gives true freedom to man for spiritual development. "The idea of Sikhs following a different path true to their moral and character is found in the earliest writings of Guru Nanak. In Siree Rag, Guru Nanak said, "Jin khin pal naam na visrey, te jan virley sansar" Or those who always remember God's name, act with a righteous

conviction that sets them apart from the rest of the world. 200 years before the Sikhs were united as the Khalsa brotherhood, Guru Nanak had also said, “Jau tau prem khelan ka chao, sir dhar tali gali meri aao It marag pair dhareejai, sir deejai kaan na keejai.” (Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1412) Translated, it means, if you wish to play the game of love, you should be ready to sacrifice your heart. For on this path, even the first step should mean that you will not hesitate to lay down your life to uphold righteousness and justice. Guru Gobind extended such thoughts and gave the Sikhs a very visible physical identity. The Sikhs responded enthusiastically to embrace this identity and pledged to uphold the virtues associated with it.”<sup>2</sup>

Guru Gobind Singh was the last and the Tenth Guru of the Sikhs. The Sikhs believe that after his death 'Guru Granth Sahib' was given the status of the Guru by Guru Gobind Singh himself. The Sikhs firmly believe in the teachings enshrined in Shri Guru Granth Sahib and did not tolerate any dissent group. Contribution of Guru Gobind Singh to Sikh Panth is an unparalleled in the history of human kind. He sacrificed his four sons, father and mother for the sake of Sikh religion. He fought a number of battles against the Mughals and several rulers of the hill States. In 1699 A.D. He founded the Khalsa Panth.<sup>3</sup> “Guru Gobind played a pro active role in shaping the Sikh society as we know it today. He took concrete and positive steps in formulating new structures and strategies to promote the cause of the Sikhs. He was the architect of the Khalsa, the Sikh society, which was a model deeply rooted in the concepts of equality, freedom and justice first proposed by Guru Nanak almost 200 years before him. During his lifetime, Guru Gobind Singh could not free the Indian society of bondage and slavery. However, he filled the minds of his followers with love for freedom and democratic ideals. He had dispelled the fear of authority and dispelled the fear of the Mughals. Guru Gobind had the satisfaction of knowing that he had sown the seeds for creating a just society against the tyranny and atrocities of the Mughal empire. He was sure that he was leaving behind in the Khalsa, an army of free, brave, selfless and sacrificing soldiers who would support the weak and innocent, and fight against oppression.”<sup>4</sup>

### **Dharma in Sikhism**

The word Dharma is commonly used in Indian religions. Religion in the Indian context means spiritual experiences, philosophy of life, man's duties to himself and to the community, and the practice of moral values. In Hinduism and Sikhism, Dharma has the following meanings, depending on the context:

- i. Duty: There is emphasis on duties and obligations, rather than rights.
- ii. Justice: Man's conscience is the judge of good or evil actions.
- iii. Truth: Its quest and perception.

- iv. Moral order of the universe.
- v. Ideal of life or spiritual goal.
- vi. Humanism: This includes charity, noble deeds, social service, caring of and helping others.

The need of Dharma arises from the realisation of the imperfect and sad condition of humanity.<sup>5</sup> Sikhism is a religion distinct from Hinduism with its own founder, scriptures, holy places, theology and philosophy of life.<sup>6</sup>

Preet Mohan S. Ahluwalia discussed about the balance in life which is achieved by subduing our egocentric propensities under God-oriented endeavour in Sikhism. Living in the world, yet not being of the world is the kind of balance to be achieved - overcoming haumai by such pursuits as:

- (1) "Kirat Kamavara" - Earning one's livelihood through honest labour.
- (2) "Vand ke Chakna" - Sharing one's earnings with others
- (3) "Sewa" - Service of mankind
- (4) "Simran" - Remembering God

Through such pursuits the wall of haumai that creates separation of man from God begins to dwindle and eventually the human soul awakens in God i.e., the atma merges[unites] into parmatma. Human life is the one opportunity of attaining the Lord. There is no other season suitable for achieving union with God.

"Now hath come Kali-yuga, Sow you the Name of the Lord No other season you need wait for Be not lost in delusion." (SGGS: 1185:6)

Through "Naam-simran" or practice of the presence of God, one is imbued with a great spiritual confidence ("Chardhi-kala") and feels as Guru Nanak declared:

"God does not die so I fear not death,

Indestructable is He, so I fret not.

He is not poor, nor am I in want.

He isn't grief, nor am I in trouble.

Except Him none can destroy." (SGGS: 391:1)

It is only when man attains this oneness with God that he escapes the throes of the cycle of births and deaths. Until then he is tossed from one form to another till he attains salvation. Even salvation,

however, is not the 'summum bonum' for the Sikhs. Only love of God is. The Guru says: "I covet neither sovereignty nor salvation, My love is for the lotus feet of the Lord."

However, even when he attains salvation, he works for the salvation of others. "Liberated himself, liberation to the whole world he brings, To such a one, sayeth Nanak, I ever bow in reverence."<sup>7</sup> After a review of this basic philosophy of Sikhism we will move to the study of philosophy of Sri Guru Gobind Singh ji.

### **Philosophy of Guru Gobind Singh ji:**

Guru Gobind Singh and his role in giving a final shape to the Sikh beliefs and ethics. "Guru Gobind Singh was formally installed Guru on the Baisakhi day of 1733 Bk/29 March 1676. In the midst of his engagement with the concerns of the community, he gave attention to the mastery of physical skills and literary accomplishment. He had grown into a comely youth spare, lithe of limb and energetic. He had a natural genius for poetic composition and his early years were assiduously given to this pursuit. The Var Sri Bhagauti Ji Ki, popularly called Chandi di Var. written in 1684, was his first composition and his only major work in the Punjabi language. The poem depicted the legendary contest between the gods and the demons as described in the Markandeya Purana . The choice of a warlike theme for this and a number of his later compositions such as the two Chandi Charitras, mostly in Braj, was made to infuse martial spirit among his followers to prepare them to stand up against injustice and tyranny."<sup>8</sup> There are some important points of Guru Gobind Singh's ethics:

- **Path of truth and enlightenment:** Guru Gobind Singh carried the torch of truth on his voyages and enlightened people who were suffering out of hatred, falsehood, greed and hypocrisy. He travelled and taught through practice and precept.<sup>9</sup>
- **Concept of social responsibility:** Guru Gobind Singh asserted the importance of helping the needy and the poor. He himself always helped the poor and he served food to them. Guru asserted that helping the destitute by activities like feeding the hungry and providing clothes to the naked makes the donor a recipient of God's grace, and emphasized that such donations should be made out of one's honest earnings.<sup>10</sup>
- **Equality of mankind:** Guru Gobind Singh gave the message of equality of mankind. He taught that God has created the universe and he is everywhere and in every being. So, one cannot discriminate people on the basis of caste and creed etc. when God has created them as equals. He introduced the practice of community kitchen where people from all castes and creeds sat together to eat without any distinction of social hierarchy.<sup>11</sup>
- **Cultivation of inner strength:** Guru Gobind Singh accentuated the value of virtues of the human character and advised control of vices. The vices like ego, anger, greed, lust and vanity



can be conquered through self-examination and self-realization. He said, "See the brotherhood of all mankind as the highest order of Yogis; conquer your own mind, and conquer the world".<sup>12</sup>

- **Dharmayuddha or Righteous War:** The Sikhs expressed in the form of devotional poetry, enunciating truths of the spirit, while lifting man into the sphere of transcends experience and confirming in him certain attitude, particularly those called vairag and bhakti, is also by virtue of idealism a great guide to conduct. But Guru Gobind Singhji flamed faith waging in Dharmayuddha or Righteous war. The reverences are to the devotional pieces of his composition. He said, "He cherishes the humble, protects the righteous and destroys evil-doers".<sup>13</sup>

### **Conclusion:**

Sikhism believes that the world is not illusionary, unreal or a mirage. It is a manifestation of the real. Guru Gobind Singh was in a time when there was communal disharmony and rulers and emperors repressed and exploited the common people, Guru Gobind Singh came with a mission to disseminate the spirit of universal brotherhood. He envisioned a classless and casteless society and planned to introduce an independent and distinct spiritual system. Guru Gobind Singh never ignored or out-casted people who did not possess good personalities but worked to reform and re-engineer them and was able to transform them into fine individuals. He was a real Guru in several manners and will guide future millennia.

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