

Philosophy of Guru Gobind Singh

The Guru did not believe in the existence of the so called Avtaras or Incarnations. Nor did he hold it possible that there could ever be an Incarnation of the Formless One. Some people have put forth that the Guru believed in Avtaras. They are misled by his verse on Ram Chandra, Krishna, Vishnu, Brahma etc., the 24 Avtaras included in the anthology of his works, the Dasam Granth. They adduce plausibly that since he praised them in his verses, he must have believed in their existence. But these gentlemen fail to take cognizance of the fact that nowhere in his writings had the Guru accepted them as Avtaras or Incarnations of the Formless Akal.

In reality he wrote about them in the language of the people, drawing from the mythological lore current at that time. He wrote about their exploits in glowing terms, using forceful words with telling effect, mainly to arouse the martial spirit of the people lying dormant then. It is too farfetched to assume that a writer's has written about something is a conclusive proof of his belief in its existence.

It is meaningless to make one's own unwarranted deductions ignoring the words of the Guru which are very clear. His words can be classified in two categories: firstly (a) those in which the refutation of Avtaras is implied or merely hinted at and secondly (b) those in which it is clear and pointed.

The First Kind

He writes in the *Akal Ustat* (the Praise of the Lord)

1. *Namastavang Akale.*

My salutations to the Lord who is above Death.

2. *Namastang Ajaname.*

My salutations to Him, who does not take birth.

3. *Ajanam Hai, Awaran Hai.*

He has no body and no birth, He has no caste. The Second Kind

The second Kind

1. *Kete Krishan se kit kotai upae.*

Usae garh pher mete banae. (96)

The Lord Akal creates millions of worms like Krishna, annihilates them and recreates and so

on.

The Guru writes in 33 Swayyas :

- a. *Kahuh lai thok badhe ur Thakur,*
Kahuh Mahesh kau ish bakhanyo. (12)

Some hang stones as gods, around their necks, while some others erroneously call Mahesh 'God'.

- b. *Kahan kahyo Hari mandar main Hari,*
Kahun masti ke bich pramanyo. (12)

Some people say that the Lord lives in the Mandir alone, while some others believe that He is in the Mosque only.

- c. *Kahan ne Ram kahyo Krishna kahun,*
Kahun manai avtar na manyo. (12)

Some people say that Krishna is God, while some others believe in the Avtaras of God.

- d. *Phokat dharam bisar sabai,*
Kartar hi kau karta ji janyo. (12)

I have discarded all these false religions and am of the firm view that He who is the creator of the Universe, is the only Lord.

2. *Jau kahuin Ram ajon(i) ajai at(i),*
Kahe kau Koshil kukh jayo ju.
Kal hun kahan kahai jih kau,
Kih karan kal ke din bhayo ju. (13)

You declare that the Lord does not take birth and is formless; then how could he be born of Kaushalya's womb, why was Krishna whom you describe as deathless humbled by death?

(13th Swayya)

3. *Kayo kaho Krishan kripd-nidh hai,*
Kih kaj te badhak ban lagayo,
Aur kulin udhdrat jo,
Kih te apno kul nas karayo.
Ad(i) ajan (i) kajde kaho,
Kim Devak (i) ke jathraritar ayo.
Tat na mat kahai jih ko,

Tih kiyo Basudeveh bap kandyo. (14)

How come that Krishna, whom you people call the gracious, was killed by the arrow of a hunter? You call Krishna the saviour of your race. Why did, he let his progeny, the Yadavs come to an end? Why was he whom you call as the One without a beginning and Unborn, conceived in the womb of Devaki and born? You call Krishna the One, unborn and without any father or mother. Then why was Vasudeva called his father?

(14th Swayya)

4. *Jat badhe sab hi mrit ke,*

Kou Ram Rasul na bachan pae.

Ant mar pachhtae prithi par,

Je jag main avtar kahde.

Re man lail ikel hi kal ke,

Lagat kahe na paen pae. (15)

Everybody is caught in the noose of Death, no Rama or prophet can escape from it. All of them who made grand claims of being the Avtaras of God, died repentant. Why dost not thou, O, hapless being seek the shelter of the One Lord?

(15th Swayya)

5. *Maui na Ganeseh pritham manauni,*

Kishan Bishan Kabhu na dhiauni.

Kan sune paihchan nd tin son.

Liv lagi mohi pag in son,

Mana kal rakhvar hamaro.

Maha loh mai kinkar tharo.

(Krishna Avtar, 434-35)

I do not seek the blessings of Ganesh first, I don't worship Krishna or Vishnu, etc. I do not recognize them. I am engrossed in the loving-devotion of my Lord alone. The Lord of Death, Akal, is my refuge and He saves me in all tribulations.

6. Krishna killed some demons and performed some other marvellous deeds. He declared

himself as the God. He was consumed by Death, so he could not be the Lord. How can he save those who have faith in him, since he himself was subject to Death. Only the Lord is All-Powerful and only He creates and destroys.

(Shabad Hazare)

7. The Lord has no friend, no foe. He does not desire His praise, neither is He angered by dispraise. He has no parents, neither has He any progeny. So He cannot be Krishna, who was born of Devaki's womb.

(Shabad Hazare)

On Gods and Goddesses:

He was as opposed to gods and goddesses as to the concept of Avtaras. He did not believe in them or in their worship.

1. One cannot obtain Liberation by chanting the names of Ram or Rahim, Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, the Sun, the Moon etc., they are all the thralls of death.

2. Krishan au Bishan japo tohe kotik,

Ram Rahim bhali bidh(i) dhiayo.

Brahm japio ar(u) sanbh (u) thapio,

Tih te tuhe ko kinhun na bachdyo.

Koi kari tapsa din kotik,

Kahun na kaudi ko kam kadhayo.

Kamak(u) mantra kasire ko kam na,

Kal ko ghao kinhan na bachayo.

(97/1)

You prayed to Krishna and Bishna and millions of others, millions of times, you worshipped Ram and Rahim also, supplicated Shiva and Brahma, but none of them could save you from death. You prayed to all of them millions of times for millions of days, but all these countless supplications were not worth a dime. Impelled by the greed of worldly things, you indulged in incessant incantations of Mantra and Tantric practices, but none of these could save you from mauling by death.

(Vachitar Natak)

The Guru considered himself no better than an ordinary person. He was well aware of the tendencies of the devotees and the temper of the times towards his deification and elevation to the status of an

Avtara. In order to forestall any such endeavours on the part of his followers, he unlike Christ, Moses, Mohammed, Krishna, Buddha, etc., who called themselves the dear and near ones, the prophet of God or God himself, called himself a lowly servitor of God.

The Guru declares in *his Vachitar Natak* :

Jo ham ko Parmesan uchar(i) hain.

Te sabh narak kuhd main par(i) hain.

Mo ko das tavan ka jano.

Ya mai bhed na ranch pachhano.

(32)

Main hau param Purakh ko dasa.

Dekhan ayo jagat tamasa.

(33/6)

All those who call me God, shall fall in the pits of Hell. Take me for a servitor of His, there is not the slightest doubt in this. I am a lowly servant of the Supreme Being and I have been sent to witness the world drama. This humility raises the Guru far above the other saints of the world.

The verses above give a clear reflection of his views on gods and goddesses and their worship. He does not subscribe to the Vedantic view that the Creator and His creatures are one and equal. He holds that the creature cannot be equal to his Creator.

Idol Worship:

When the Guru did not believe in the entity of gods, goddesses and Avtaras, how could he support their worship by men. He was undoubtedly opposed to idol-worship and so was he to the worshipping of the dead and their tombs. He has written many verses on this theme; a few specimens are reproduced below:

Phokat dharam bhayo phal hin,

Ju puj sila jug(i) kot(i) gavai.

Sidh kahan sil ke Parse bal,

Bridh ghati nav nidh na pai.

Aj hi aj samo ju bitiyo,

Naih kaj saryo kachh(u) lai na ai.

Sri Bhagwaht bhajyo na are jarh,

Aise hi ais su bais gavai.

(21)

The following of false religious way is a fruitless endeavour. If you worship a stone for millions of Yugas, it will not yield any good, you have simply wasted your time. You do not gain any

success. You destroy your energy and do not obtain the worldly riches. O, ignoramus you have wasted your life in idol-worship. Don't you feel ashamed of yourself for not worshipping your True Lord ?
(21st Swayya)

2. *Kaje ko pujaat pdhan kau.*

Kachhu pdhan mai Partnesar nahi. (20)

Why do you worship stones ? The supreme Lord is not in them and cannot be attained by stone-worship. Pray to the True Lord, whose worship removes all your grief and sorrow. Only utter His True Naam, which is a panacea for all ills. Keep away from the futile ways of false worship.
(20th Swayya)

3. *Jau jug tai kar hai tapsa,*

Kachh tohe prasann na pdhan kai hai.

Hath uthae bhali bidh so,

Jar tohe kachhu bar dan na dai hai.

If you worship a stone till the close of Yugic Cycles, it cannot express its gratification, it cannot raise its hand and bless you with anything, O, fool !

How have you come to believe foolishly that it can save you from any distress? You are simply degrading yourself by this kind of worship.
(22nd Swayya)

The Guru declares in *Vachitar Natak*

Pakhan puj hon nahin,

Na bhekh bhij hon kahin.

Anant nam gae hon.

Param Purakh pae hon.

(35/6)

I am not a worshipper of stones, I do not follow the false sects. I sing the glories of the Infinite and savour His Bliss.

In his famous supplication the *Chaupai*, he says :

Ta kau kar(i) pahan anumanat.

Maha murh kachh bhed na janat.

Mahadev ko kahat sada Siv.

Nirahkar ka chinat naih bhiv.

(16)

The fools, without realizing the mystery of His Infinite Glory, take Him for a stone. They call the god of gods as the True One without understanding the concept of the Formless Lord.

Wahe-Guru :

According to the Sikh Gurus, the word Wahe-Guru, is symbolic of the Formless Eternal Lord, who is the True Guru (Enlightener) of a man (in his life) and the Creator of the Universe. Guru Gobind Singh used this word in the same way as the earlier Gurus. He says in the *Chaupai*:

Ad(i) ant(i) ekai avtara.

Soi Gura samjhayhu hamara.

(9)

He who is the same one throughout, the only Incarnation of Himself is my Guru.

Tiratha

The Guru attached no great importance to the practice of bathing at Tirathas. He says :

Jal kai majan(i) je gat(i) hovai,

Nit nit menduk naveh.

Jaise menduk taise oe nar,

Phir(i) phir(i) joni aveh.

If washing one's body with water helped one attain Liberation, then all the frogs should have been emancipated. Like the frogs, the pilgrims, who pin their hopes in Tirathas, gyrate in the cycle of births and deaths.

He held the rites and rituals-ridden, old religion as false and warned the Khalsa, time and again to keep away from them. He forbade the Khalsa to use intoxicants and smoke tobacco.

God (Ishwar)

The Guru believed in the God who is Truth-Consciousness-Bliss, Eternal, Unborn, Unbegotten, All-pervading, Fearless, Infinite, Peerless, Formless, Immaculate, Just, Sustainer Universal. All his writing in his Granth amply bears this out.

Iham (Revelation)

The Guru always stressed that all his actions were done in obedience to the Will of his Lord. Unlike the old prophet he never claimed any revelations for his *Bani* (writings) or that the Word of God was revealed unto him. He did not believe in miracles nor did he claim to perform supernatural deeds. But he performed one of the greatest miracles of all times —The turning of cowards into heroes, the uplifting of the downtrodden of centuries to glorious heights of manhood.

His Writings

Dasam Granth is the famous anthology of the writings of the 10th Guru, Guru Gobind Singh. Some portions out of it were composed by him, while the other portions belong to the poets that he kept around him in his court. His writings bear the words *Sri MukhWak Patshahi dasween* (from the lips of the 10th Guru). It is a voluminous book having 1066 pages. A detailed review of this Granth is beyond the scope of this book. But I will briefly dwell on the writings contained in this Granth.

Some portions of this Granth have been written in very forceful words in an equally forceful style. To the portions of the book written by his court poets belong compositions on Avtaras and the goddess Durga, poems concerning battles and the composition *Istri Charitar*. The verses written by the Guru are interspersed throughout the Granth. It had been written in Gurmukhi script and Punjabi language and rightly so. The *Zafarnama* and the last portion of the Granth is in Persian, though written in Gurmukhi script which creates some difficulties for the reader.

This Granth is a vast storehouse of Lord devotion, of the Eulogy of His Traits and His Naam. Its main portions are :

- 1) **Jaap Sahib** It is his composition and can be considered as an exposition of Japji of Guru Nanak.
- 2) **Akal Ustat** : The Guru's composition, contains the Eulogy of the Akal in glorious terms.
- 3) **Vachitar Natak** : The wonderful drama in his own forceful words, of the Guru's life and that of his predecessors, an account of his taking birth.
- 4) **Chandi Charitar I** , A glowing account of the
- 5) **Chandi Charitar II** mythological fierce battles between Chandi goddess and the demons and her victories over them, in very stirring words.
- 6) **Chandi Ki Var** : It appears to have been written especially for arousing the martial spirit of the Sikhs.
- 7) **Gian Parbodh** : It is full of spiritual Lore concerning God and His praise.
- 8) **Chaubis Avtara** -: It is a forceful recounting of the exploits of 24 Avtaras of Vishnu from Hindu

Mythology, in the manner of *Chandi Charitars*.

- 9) **Mehdi Mir** : It is written about the future Imam Mehdi yet to come with what purpose or view in mind is unclear.
- 10) **Brahma Avtara** : An account of the mythical Avtaras of Brahma.
- 11) **Ruder Avtara** : An account of the mythical avtara of Ruder or Shivji.
- 12) **Shastar Nam Mala** : It is uncertain whether it is the Guru's composition or not. It is an account of the descriptions of various weapons and their praise.
- 13) **Sri Mukhwak 33 Swayyas** :In these verses, the teachings of the Quran and the Puranas have been shown at variance with his own teachings and that of his predecessors. To some extent the teachings of the Vedas have also been criticised.
- 14) **Shabad Hazare** : The Guru's own composition extolling the Glory of the Lord Akal and Devotion to Him.
- 15) **Istri Charitar** (The Wiles of Women): Not his own compositions, forms a big chunk of the Granth. It is an unnecessary appendage not worthy of inclusion in the Granth. It is an account of the female guiles and the sorrows of the other wife and the step-mother.
- 16) **Hakayat** : Written in Gurmukhi script but composed in Persian. In this Aurangzeb had been confronted with sample accounts of the cruelties he had perpetrated on the people and forcefully warned of the evil consequences.

It is quite probable that this Granth was put together after the death of the Guru. The Sikhs hold it in great reverence but it is not read, and recited as much and as often as Guru Granth Sahib. The Guru himself never gave any directions that only his Granth should be given the place of pride or that his Bani should be preferred to the Bani of the other Gurus.

The Guru got the Bani of his father Guru Tegh Bahadur included in the Adi-Granth but never made any effort for the inclusion of his own writings. He could have easily done so, if he wanted.

His poetic faculty, with its felicity of phrase and fruitfulness of imagination, is one of the special traits of the Guru. His writings have the universality of appeal as they touch the tender strings of the human heart with the lyrical strains of the Cosmic Brotherhood of Man, as they fill one with martial feelings, arouse the martial spirit and prepare for a life of purposeful action. His graphic descriptions of the gory battle scenes, bring out alive the battlefield itself before one's eyes, with the neighing of horses, the groaning of the wounded dying, the shrieking of violent death, the clashing of weapons, and the clamour of war.

The Guru was able to infuse new blood and vigour in the dying Hindu nation. From amongst the cowardly and supine Hindus, he created a new breed of virile and valiant people, the Khalsa, filled with the spirit of selfless service and self-sacrifice for the good of humanity and the Glory of Akal. This Khalsa, is a Living Testimony to the Guru's mirific qualities.