

Our Commitment
To
Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji

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During the congregation that took place immediately after the mortal remains of Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji were consigned to the electric crematorium chamber in Delhi on April 27, 1980, His Holiness Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj said: "Today, we say that Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji has been assassinated. It is not his assassination; it is the curcification of the ideals of those saints, Gurus and prophets who wished well for all; it is the murder of the sentiments, the feelings that guided great devotees like Bhai Kanhiya. None can *kill* Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji. The impression that he has made on the mind of every young and old is indelible indeed."

His Holiness added: "Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji always taught us to have goodwill for others and wish for the welfare of all. Bearing this in mind, let us continue to hold congregations regularly. Baba Ji dedicated his entire life to this voice of truth; let us take it further to the entire mankind. There can be no better a tribute to Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji than to follow his ideals."

On another occasion soon after, Baba Hardev Singh Ji declared: "On Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji's martyrdom, perceptions differ from people to people. The ignorant say that it may lead to bloodshed. The enlightened ones too say that this supreme sacrifice will not go in vain, but they feel that it shall usher in peace and harmony. It is with these feelings in our hearts that we have to take this message of truth more and more forward."

By saying so, Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj was not only unfolding his own agenda for the years to come but also holding out a promise to Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji on behalf of the entire Nirankari world that had flourished under his spiritual mentorship for over 17 years. He was voicing the commitment of every follower of the Sant Nirankari Mission to the memory of Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji. And after exactly 24 years today, we can say with a deep sense of satisfaction that the Mission, with the divine grace of His Holiness Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj, has kept its commitment, even though the crusade for Truth, love, peace and unity as also the campaign against ignorance has to continue.

The first commitment was, of course, peace. Like Bhai Kanhiya, we were to love all and hate none. Treating the supreme sacrifice of Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji as the will of God, we were not to be guided by the feeling of vengeance at all. Instead, we were required to continue to wish for the welfare of all. We were to spread the voice of Truth with goodwill at heart. And we did. Baba Hardev Singh Ji himself would explain to the devotees who were naturally under great mental stress on the sudden disappearance of Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji from amongst them in physical form in tragic circumstances that this was the kind of treatment the world had always extended to those holy men who preached love, peace and truth in the past also. He would describe the supreme sacrifice of Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji as the price he and his Mission had been called upon to pay for all these noble values. He would pacify them by reminding them that as in the past the world would realise the truth eventually.

No doubt Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj emerged as the greatest leading light for love, compassion, tolerance and goodwill. Wherever he went, people welcomed him as the 'apostle of peace'. Human unity, religious tolerance, communal harmony, peaceful co-existence – all based on oneness of God, were the hall mark of every holy discourse he delivered in India and abroad. People listened to him with rapt attention and his message went home easily. The followers of the Mission felt consoled and pacified so much so that they remained peaceful even in the face of all kinds of provocation. Many laid down their lives and many others suffered loss of property, but thanks to what Baba Hardev Singh Ji taught them, there was no sign of fury and feelings of vengeance anywhere. The families that lost their bread-earners too remained calm and peaceful despite their suffering, sorrow and pain. Today, when we look at ourselves, we have certainly the satisfaction of saying that with Baba Hardev Singh Ji's kind grace the Mission has not only been able to tide over the crisis and avert a disastrous mishap, but continued to move on the right track with greater and greater speed and spirit of goodwill for one and all. The torch that

was handed down by Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji has been carried forward successfully, with full sense of faith, devotion and dedication.

Expansion

In terms of expansion, a number of new branches of the Mission have been set up and so is the case with Satsang Bhawans. Today the Mission has more than 1600 branches in the country, while the number of Satsang Bhawans has also swelled to nearly 650. Many new Pracharaks have been appointed in order to reach out places far and wide. The North Eastern and Southern States of India are also now familiar with the Mission and its philosophy. Many branches have already been set up in Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Assam.

The idea of democratization of the Mission started by Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji with the setting up of the Working Committee in 1979 has also been carried forward and the organization has been further decentralized for administrative convenience. Today, Delhi has 30 Sectors, while the country is divided into 50 Zones. There is a provision of constant co-ordination at every level as also between the Headquarters and the smallest branch of the Mission. Every department at the Headquarters has an advisory committee comprising Mahapurushas having sufficient experience in the subject concerned. A number of Working Groups have been attached to some of the departments including Publications, Magazines, Press & PR and Computer & Internet. This is not only creating an effective second line of leadership but also providing the much needed expertise to ensure quality. The Mission is convinced that the youth must be encourage to come forward to participate in the various activities of the Mission. Moreover, all important decisions should be taken in consultation with those who know the subject.

Carrying forward the idea set out by Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji by convening two conferences of the Mission's functionaries in 1965 and 1973 in Mussoorie, His Holiness Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj also had a similar get-together in Delhi

in 1987. It reviewed the decisions taken at Mussoorie and re-emphasized the same in the contemporary perspective. In addition, it was decided to organize blood donation camps at different places on the occasion of Manav Ekta Diwas in April every year.

A similar conference described as a Special General Body Meeting was held in Delhi on March 20-21, 1997. More than 2000 delegates participated. The meeting reviewed the various decisions taken during the earlier three conferences and considered further improvements. Interestingly, most of the decisions taken earlier were found to be relevant even to the contemporary needs. However, the meeting decided that more attention should be paid to rural areas in the matter of spiritual tours, to the opening of new branches and building of more Satsang Bhawans. Another important decision was that the training of Pracharaks may be encouraged as an organised effort.

Another Special General Body Meeting was held in Delhi on March 28-29, 2002 where the main emphasis was on co-ordination. Attended by more than 2500 delegates from India and abroad, the meeting resolved to publish all its decision as also those taken right from the First Mussoorie Conference held in 1965 which found relevance to the present day needs of the Mission, so that every functionary of the Sant Nirankari Mandal as also the followers of the Mission in general could know the role they had to play to take this voice of Truth to the masses as effectively as possible. An important decision taken at this special meet was that the Regional and State-level Samagams should be organized by local Mahapurshas while the Center may provide only such assistance as is needed by the organizers.

Samagams

Besides Bhakti Parv, Mukti Parv and the Annual Nirankari Sant Samagam being held in Delhi every year in the months of January, August and November respectively, Manav Ekta Diwas is celebrated to pay homage to Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji, his devout bodyguard Chacha Partap Singh Ji and hundreds of other

devotees of the Mission who laid down their lives upholding the message of truth, love and peace. The number of State-level and Regional Samagams being held every year has also gone up. Besides Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh, such Samagams are now held regularly in Gujarat, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh as also the Eastern and Southern Regions. In fact, wherever Baba Ji goes on tour, the devotees turn up in such large numbers that every congregation turns into a big Samagam.

With the sweet memories of the Silver Jubilee Samagam held in Delhi in 1972 still fresh in their minds, the Mission celebrated its Golden Jubilee Annual Nirankari Sant Samagam from November 6 to 10, 1997 in Delhi. The historic Samagam was attended by a record gathering from all over India. The number of delegates from abroad was also the highest ever. The Samagam presented some new features including a Unity March by children and a cultural programme based on unity in diversity. It reflected clearly that the Mission has already become a global movement and its message is finding relevance to the needs of every society of the world.

During Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji's times, the Annual Samagam would be followed by a cultural programme better known as Sehra Bandi where Baba Ji and Rajmata Ji were presented Golden Crests as a mark of gratitude by devotees towards their Spiritual Master. The tradition, however, could not be continued in Delhi after Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji's supreme sacrifice in 1980. The Golden Jubilee Samagam proved all the more auspicious because the devotees got an opportunity to celebrate Guru Vandana based on a cultural programme with Sehra Bandi ceremony. Ever since, this happy legacy carrying the Mission's message of unity in diversity has also been continued by the devotees not only in Delhi but elsewhere also.

Since 2003, the Guru Puja Diwas has been shifted from August 15 to February 23 coinciding with the auspicious Birthday of His Holiness Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj. August 15 continues to be observed as Mukti Parv to pay tributes to all

such missionaries who dedicated themselves to the propagation of the Mission and served it till the last breath of their life.

Media

Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji loved to meet media persons and discuss the Mission with them. He was keen to take their help in spreading the message of Truth and removing the darkness of ignorance and superstition at as fast a pace as possible. Following his footsteps, the Mission is taking every co-operation from the mass media even today. Besides Delhi, Press Teams have been set up at 73 centres in different parts of the country. Their representatives had an all-India Meet in Mussoorie in June 1997 where they discussed the Mission's media approach and were blessed by His Holiness. Ever since, a number of Regional Workshops have been held in various parts of the country from time to time where the Press Team members are provided professional training with special reference to the message of the Mission.

The Press & PR department is utilizing the latest information technology including the global electronic networks and it is a matter of great satisfaction that the media have extended full co-operation. Even the cable networks and their operators in various parts of the country have been telecasting our cassettes based on Baba Ji's holy discourses and covering Samagams and other activities of the Mission. With Baba Ji's kind blessings, the Mission has its own studio which has already switched over to the use of digital cameras and non-linear system of editing. And since January 1997 the Mission is on INTERNET. By now, our Website has 19 branches in USA, Canada, UK, Australia and Europe. The work at Headquarters of the Mission has been computerized, with added facility of FAX and E-mail. A separate department has been looking after the computers and internet since 1996-97.

In order to provide the requisite momentum to the Mission's magazines, a new department has been created for the same since 1997. The circulation of 'Sant Nirankari', 'Ek Nazar' and 'Hansti Duniya' is increasing gradually. The

Publications Department has also received special attention. Besides new books in various languages, items like Diary, Calendar, photographs, Audio and Video Cassettes, Stickers, etc. have also been introduced which are becoming popular day by day. There is considerable stress on the quality of these products and uniformity in approach so far as the Mission's message is concerned. 'Sampuran Avtar Bani' has been translated into nine languages including English and Nepali.

Overseas

As we all know the Mission crossed the frontiers of India during the times of Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji in 1967. He was so keen to take the Mission's message to other countries that he and Nirankari Rajmata Kulwant Kaur Ji went abroad almost every year up to 1977. Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj, Rev. Rajmata Ji and Pujya Mata Sawinder Ji have also followed this practice. Consequently, the Mission has found considerable expansion overseas. The followers of the Mission have spread out to almost every part of the world. In almost every salvation tour of His Holiness some new areas or countries are included. Consequently, in addition to the better known areas of U.K., U.S.A. and Canada, the countries like Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Philippines, Indonesia, Spain, Austria, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria and several others have also received Baba Ji's blessings. The number of Sant Nirankari Satsang Bhawans abroad is also increasing gradually. Volunteers of the Sant Nirankari Sewa Dal abroad are not only making arrangements for congregations and Samagams but have also started extending support to the social welfare activities in their respective countries. Nepal has the distinction of holding a country-level Samagam every year.

Like Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji, Satguru Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj has paid special attention to the youth abroad. Born in the countries of their residence, they stood cut off not only from their parental language, but the noble values for which the Indian culture has been known in the world, also. Baba Ji has attracted them to the forum of the Mission saying that they can adopt these values without

coming into conflict with their environment. Today, the Nirankari youth abroad is an example to others.

Social Welfare

It may be recalled that during the Silver Jubilee Annual Nirankari Sant Samagam in 1972, Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji and Nirankari Rajmata Ji were weighed against currency notes by devotees as a mark of their faith and devotion. Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji declared that the amount would be spent only on missionary activities and public welfare. Consequently, one college, a number of schools and dispensaries were set up in various parts of the country. This has since been carried forward with full enthusiasm. Today, the Mission has two mini hospitals, one in Delhi and the other in Chennai, more than 140 dispensaries and half a dozen pathological laboratories - all working on charitable basis. The Mission contemplates to set up a full-fledged hospital in Delhi shortly.

The Mission today is one of the leading blood donating voluntary organizations in India. Scores of blood donation camps are organized in the month of April to commemorate the martyrdom of Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji. Since 1997, these camps have been staggered. Now they are organized throughout summer i.e. from April to August, when the blood banks normally face acute shortage of blood. In 1997, the Mission organized 50 blood donation camps at different centres in the country. The pattern was followed with 54 camps in 1998, 101 in 1999, 122 in 2000, 101 in 2001, 102 in 2002 and 129 in 2003.

The Mission has more than 50 tailoring and embroidery training centres in Delhi and other parts of the country, for the benefit of the widows and other needy women. As regards education in addition to one college and three aided schools, the Mission has nine public schools to provide good education even to those who normally find it out of their reach due to financial constraints. The stress in the Nirankari educational institutions is on moral education and preparing the children to rise as responsible citizens. The deserving and brilliant

students are given scholarships to pursue higher studies and professional courses.

The Sant Nirankari Sewa Dal symbolizes the Mission's commitment to the spirit of service to humanity, discipline and co-operation. Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji encouraged these volunteers – men and women in uniforms, to work shoulder to shoulder to make arrangements during congregations and big Samagams. In his earlier days, Baba Hardev Singh Ji himself donned the uniform as an active member of the Sewa Dal. Naturally, even after the martyrdom of Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji, he has continued to encourage Nirankari Sewa Dal volunteers not only to look after the arrangements for the congregations and Samagams growing thicker and thicker, but also to participate in social welfare activities like donation of blood and rescue and rehabilitation operations during natural calamities like floods, earthquakes and cyclones.

Social Reforms

Following the Mussoorie Conference held in 1973, Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji laid considerable stress on social reforms like prohibition, dowry-free and inter-caste marriages and so on. Taking inspiration, Baba Hardev Singh Ji organized 'Youth Forum' in 1975 with a view to promoting among its young members good habits like simple living, avoiding wasteful expenses and working towards social reforms. Even after Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji, this crusade has been followed up by Baba Hardev Singh Ji with great enthusiasm. The followers of the Mission are advised to refrain from taking any kind of intoxicants since their use becomes the root cause of various social evils. At the same time, the Mission stresses the need for austerity in the matter of marriage ceremonies and other social functions. In order to encourage dowry-free marriages, the Mission has started organizing mass marriage functions in a big way.

Nirankari Sarovar

Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji took keen interest in the development of the Nirankari Sarovar and add to the spiritual fervor attached to the place. Whereas devotees

carried on the voluntary labour, Baba Ji decided to put the land into agricultural use in 1966-67 and contribute whatever was possible to meet the acute shortage of food-grains in the country. For this, Baba Ji got dug about two kilometer long canal to fetch waste industrial effluent to mix with the soil and make it fertile. This experiment proved successful and the devotees could grow wheat and some vegetables. This surprised some of the top agricultural scientists of the country.

It was also during Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji's time that the Sarovar complex was electrified. This made it possible to apply the latest agricultural techniques and use modern appliances. Baba Ji also set up a modern dairy, which became famous for its hybrid cows.

In view of the ever-increasing interest of the devotees and other visitors, His Holiness Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj started the process of expansion and modernization of the Sarovar complex. In order to make the view more attractive, he started to beautify the Sarovar with roofed colonnade, which was completed by 1987-88. A separate Sarovar for women and children was also developed. Beautiful park with grassy grounds flanked by rows of flowers and rare varieties of trees and plants have become an important part of the outlay. A modern cafeteria, a publications stall and public call office are serving as a good attraction for the visitors to this pollution-free tourist place with picturesque surroundings and devotional music.

Conclusion

Thus we can say that we have carried forward almost every idea that Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji had or conceived for making the Mission a mass movement and relating its message not only to spiritual regeneration of the people but their social welfare also. Every ideal dear to Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji still finds relevance and is pursued with requisite zeal. So the supreme sacrifice he and others made for the Mission and its message of love, peace and understanding has certainly not been allowed to go in vain.

The crusade, however, is unending and we have to continue to march on the path of Truth, love and peace. The vast world is still shrouded by dense clouds of the darkness of ignorance. Dogmatism is still weighty as compared to spiritualism. Man continues to be distanced from God. The negative tendencies of hatred and violence are on the rise. There are ethnic wars, separatist conflicts and so on. The problem of international terrorism is inflicting more and more areas. World nations do talk about nuclear non-proliferation, but the arsenals already existing are enough to keep the whole mankind threatened with annihilation. Close at hand, we have the flames of violence, the menace of terrorism and sporadic communal riots in the country defying all efforts to prevent the same.

The Mission has, therefore, to intensify its endeavour to unite every individual's mind with God so that such negative feelings do not take birth at all. No doubt His Holiness is devoting all his time and energy to spread the voice of Truth, but the darkness is so widespread that each and every follower of the Mission has to act as a torch bearer and take the divine light to every nook and corner of the world.

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