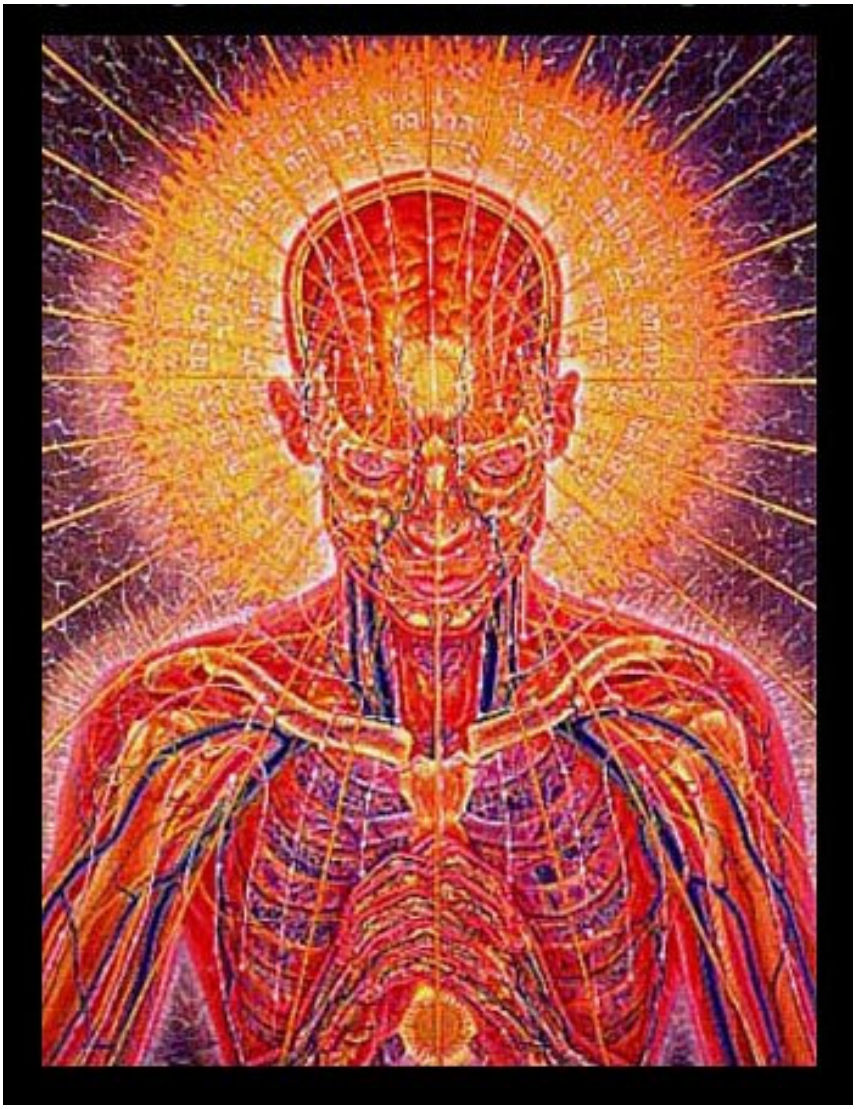
A Short Inspirational Analysis of ‘ਭੈ’, ‘ਭਉ’, ‘ਨਿਰਭਉ’ and ‘ਨਿਰਮਲ ਭਉ’ Through the Eyes of ‘ਭਾਉ’ - the Love Filled Base of the ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ



Dedicated To: The Khalsa Panth and the Sikh Dharam

Authored By: Harsimran Singh Bansal

Date: 13th November 2010

Why ‘ਭੈ’ Does Not Simply Mean ‘Awareness of God’

‘ਨਿਰਭਉ ਭੈ, ਮਨੁ ਹੋਇ; ਹਉਮੈ ਮੈਲੁ ਗਵਾਇਆ, ਬਲਿ ਰਾਮ ਜੀਉ ॥’
‘ਨਿਰਮਲੁ ਭਉ ਪਾਇਆ, ਹਰਿ ਗੁਣ ਗਾਇਆ; ਹਰਿ ਵੇਖੈ, ਰਾਮੁ ਹਦੂਰੇ ॥’
‘ਨਿਰਮਲੁ, ਹਰਿ ਪਾਇਆ, ਹਰਿ ਗੁਣ ਗਾਇਆ; ਮੁਖਿ ਬੋਲੀ ਹਰਿ ਬਾਣੀ ॥’ (ਲਾਵਾਂ ਦੇ ਵਿਚ)

There are many misrepresentations for the meaning of the word ‘ਭੈ’, mainly from Sikh scholars and the academics of our faith. This may be because one does not want to ‘seemingly contradict’ oneself in saying, ‘ਭੈ’ and ‘ਭਉ’ are the same thing, due to the notion that we must become ‘ਨਿਰਭਉ’. From this, incorrect or ‘watered-down’ translations are born while the true meaning of ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ becomes hidden.

Through becoming ‘ਨਿਰਭਉ’, we are blessed through the graces of God with ‘ਨਿਰਮਲ ਭਉ’. Becoming ‘ਨਿਰਭਉ’ from all else that exists, turns into ‘ਨਿਰਮਲ ਭਉ’ for God through singing God’s praises (and becoming the embodiment of ਨਿਰਭਉ); ‘ਨਿਰਮਲ ਭਉ ਪਾਇਆ, ਹਰਿ ਗੁਣ ਗਾਇਆ’. God Himself puts this ‘ਨਿਰਮਲੁ-ness’ within us (‘ਨਿਰਮਲੁ, ਹਰਿ ਪਾਇਆ’) when He is happy with us, all we can do is a ਬੇਨਤੀ for this blessing because ‘ਹੁਕਮ’ and ‘ਬੇਨਤੀ’ are the only two things that exist in all of existence (though, these two things are also the same thing as well) and, we have no ਜੋਰ to do anything ourselves, ‘ਜੋਰ ਨ ਮੰਗਣਿ...’.

The description of what happens within oneself through the awakening of ‘ਨਿਰਮਲ ਭਉ’ within oneself, is given in the line; ‘ਨਿਰਭਉ ਭੈ ਮਨੁ ਹੋਇ; ਹਉਮੈ ਮੈਲ ਗਵਾਇਆ, ਬਲਿ ਰਾਮ ਜੀਉ’. ‘ਨਿਰਭਉ ਭੈ’ is the same as, ‘ਨਿਰਮਲ ਭਉ’ because ਗੁਰੂਜੀ is talking about a singular aspect (i.e. what happens after becoming ‘ਨਿਰਭਉ’, but uses two terms interchangeably).

Thus, ‘ਭੈ’ *can be seen to be* the same as ‘ਭਉ’ (ਭੈ ਤੇ, ਭੈਜਲੁ ਲੰਘੀਐ, also the word ‘ਨਿਰਭੈ’ comes 16 times within ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ in various contexts), but talking about a totally different type of fear, a fear of God that has come from becoming fearless of the world and all else that exists apart from God, a fear that has come <u>through</u> loving God. Furthermore, the two terms ‘ਨਿਰਮਲ ਭਉ’ and ‘ਨਿਰਭਉ ਭੈ’ have been used for the same ਨਿਜਮ (the ਨਿਜਮ being ‘what happens after becoming ‘ਨਿਰਭਉ’). This teaches us that ‘ਭੈ’ does not mean awareness, but a fear of God that comes through becoming ‘ਨਿਰਭਉ’ from all else that exists apart from God, and most importantly loving God.

A child loves their parents but also has a *perceived* fear of their parents. This perceived fear within the child **<u>stems from</u>** a feeling of love for their parents which causes them to *further* feel, to ‘not to disappoint’ or ‘cause hardship’ to their parents through any of their (the child’s) actions. This is how we are to behave towards ਗੁਰੂਜੀ and God.

This sentient or ability to ‘not cause hardship’ has not just come from being aware of their parents existence (as most professors and doctorates of *Sikh Studies* will have us believe), but is stemmed from the <u>love</u> that a child has **<u>for</u>** their parents. This is not a foreign or outlandish concept to grasp; this is seen and experienced in all loving households. Some may call this the *‘Love-Hate relationship’* that a child has for their parents; to ‘not to disappoint’ or to ‘not cause hardship to their parents’, **<u>due to</u>** the love that the child has for their parents. This is called ‘ਨਿਰਮਲ ਭਉ’ or ‘ਨਿਰਭਉ ਭੈ’.

Thus, to say that ‘ਭੈ’ or ‘ਭਉ’ in this context simply means ‘The Awareness of God’ just as one is aware that the wind is blowing outside or that there is a ਕੜਾ on ones wrist, is to devalue the true meaning of ‘ਭੈ’/‘ਭਉ’.

ਗੁਰੂਜੀ further states 'ਭੈ ਤੇ, ਨਿਰਭਉ ਹੋਇ ਬਸਾਨਾ' and 'ਭੈ ਤੇ ਨਿਰਭਉ ਪਾਈਐ'; through 'ਭੈ', one also becomes 'ਨਿਰਭਉ'. This is a beautiful ਚੱਕਰ where fearlessness is fuelled through loving God, which then gives rise to 'ਨਿਰਮਲ ਭਉ', which further fuels fearlessness; within ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ, there are many ਚੱਕਰਾਂ (circular thoughts in the form of gems and) of beauty, in addition to this one. ਗੁਰੂਜੀ also states that 'ਭੈ ਤੇ, ਉਪਜੈ ਭਗਤਿ ਪ੍ਰਭ' which carries the meaning 'through 'ਭੈ', one forms the meditation on God', meaning that one becomes awakened as 'the mediator on God'. Our goal is to go through heaven and merge into the Almighty, which is done through meditating on God or 'ਸਿਮਰਨ'. ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ says: One attains the status of 'the mediator on God' through 'ਭੈ', therefore it is of utmost importance to understand the meaning that 'ਭੈ' carries.

ਗੁਰੂਜੀ says 'ਭੈ ਤੇ, ਬੈਰਾਗੁ ਊਪਜੈ; ਹਰਿ ਖੋਜਤ ਫਿਰਣਾ', which means, 'through 'ਭੈ', one becomes so joy-filled, that tears flow from the eyes (because one has got to the stage where one does the 'ਸੱਚੀ-ਬੇਨਤੀ for the ਦਰਸਨ of God, through the love that one feels for God', <u>to</u> God), we start to walk on the path (the inner true journey) to realise God'. ਗੁਰੂਜੀ further blesses us with such simplicity and depth, and says, 'ਸਾਗਰੁ ਦੇਖਉ, ਡਰਿ ਮਰਉ; ਭੈ ਤੇਰੈ, ਡਰੁ ਨਾਹਿ', which means: 'Looking outward toward the world, I lay dead in the heart of fear itself (or as per Prof. Sahib Singh's "ਗੁਰੂਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਦਰਪਣ": I fear death itself); but living immersed in your 'ਭੈ', fear itself looses all meaning'. The depth of this tool 'ਭੈ' given to us by ਗੁਰੂਜੀ Himself is utterly vast, but with such a simple formula of, 'Through loving God and living in 'ਭੈ', one becomes fearless of all', it is ever a wander why we do not take this opportunity to blossom within ourselves. Cultivating this opportune moment, this ਮਾਨਸ ਜੋਨ, <u>is</u> the reason why we are here on this earth; to spread goodness and love to believers, and atheists alike; to love all, as one; to die a cause-full, meaningful death; to inspire, through self inspiration.

ਗੁਰੂਜੀ also says 'ਭੈ ਤੇ, ਸਹਜੁ ਪਾਈਐ; ਮਿਲਿ, ਜੋਤੀ ਜੋਤਿ ਅਪਾਰ' Through 'ਭੈ', 'ਸਹਜ' is received; and meeting with the Almighty, one's own light, merges with the light of God.

ਪਉੜੀ ॥
ਆਪਿ ਉਪਾਏ ਮੇਦਨੀ, ਆਪੇ ਕਰਦਾ ਸਾਰ ॥ ਭੈ ਬਿਨੁ, ਭਰਮੁ ਨ ਕਟੀਐ; ਨਾਮਿ ਨ ਲਗੈ ਪਿਆਰੁ ॥
ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਤੇ, ਭਉ ਊਪਜੈ; ਪਾਈਐ ਮੋਖ ਦੁਆਰ ॥ ਭੈ ਤੇ, ਸਹਜੁ ਪਾਈਐ; ਮਿਲਿ, ਜੋਤੀ ਜੋਤਿ ਅਪਾਰ ॥
ਭੈ ਤੇ, ਭੈਜਲੁ ਲੰਘੀਐ; ਗੁਰਮਤੀ ਵੀਚਾਰੁ ॥ ਭੈ ਤੇ, ਨਿਰਭਉ ਪਾਈਐ; ਜਿਸ ਦਾ, ਅੰਤੁ ਨ ਪਾਰਾਵਾਰੁ ॥
ਮਨਮੁਖ, ਭੈ ਕੀ ਸਾਰ ਨ ਜਾਣਨੀ; ਤ੍ਰਿਸਨਾ ਜਲਤੇ ਕਰਹਿ ਪੁਕਾਰ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ, ਨਾਵੈ ਹੀ ਤੇ ਸੁਖੁ ਪਾਇਆ; ਗੁਰਮਤੀ ਉਰਿ ਧਾਰ ॥੨੨॥

The ਸਬਦ above in ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂਗ੍ਰੰਥ explains what ਦਾਸ fails to explain, on ਸ੍ਰੀ ਅੰਗ ੧੨੮੮. Particular attention should also be called to the line, 'ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਤੇ, ਭਉ ਊਪਜੈ; ਪਾਈਐ ਮੋਖ ਦੁਆਰ'. Here, ਗੁਰੂਜੀ says that 'ਭਉ' is brought about when one has given everything to ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ. This 'ਭਉ' is the fear of God that is brought about through one loving God aka, 'ਭੈ'. ਗੁਰੂਜੀ also explains that without 'ਭੈ' we cannot get rid of double-mindedness and doubt, and we cannot love the ever so graceful ਨਾਮ through which we meditate on God. N.B. 'ਭੈ-ਜਲ' means 'ਸੰਸਾਰ', {on another level, 'ਭੈ-ਜਲ' can mean 'ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ' to give the combined meaning: on/with the fear of God [ਭੈ ਤੇ], immersed in (or <u>on</u>) the ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ-ਨਾਮ [ਭੈਜਲੁ], we move through life [ਲੰਘੀਐ]}; 'ਲੰਘ' means 'to pass through'. The ਤੁਕ 'ਗੁਰ ਮਿਲਿ, ਭਉਜਲੁ ਲੰਘੀਐ' comes within ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ which further shows that 'ਭੈ' and 'ਭਉ' are interchangeable terms.

Understanding the vast unfathomable depth of ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ, as much as one is allowed to understand through the grace of ਗੁਰੂਜੀ, takes a great deal of time, effort and patients through doing ਤਤ-ਵੀਚਾਰ within one's own ਮਨ; all have been given the ਹੁਕਮ by ਗੁਰੂਜੀ.

ਮਃ ੩ ॥

ਜਿਨੀ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਸੇਵਿਆ, ਤਿਨੀ ਨਾਉ ਪਾਇਆ, ਬੂਝਹੁ ਕਰਿ ਬੀਚਾਰੁ ॥

ਸਦਾ ਸਾਂਤਿ, ਸੁਖੁ ਮਨਿ ਵਸੈ, ਚੂਕੈ ਕੂਕ ਪੁਕਾਰ ॥

ਆਪੈ ਨੋ ਆਪੁ ਖਾਇ, ਮਨੁ ਨਿਰਮਲੁ ਹੋਵੈ, ਗੁਰ ਸਬਦੀ ਵੀਚਾਰੁ ॥

ਨਾਨਕ, ਸਬਦਿ ਰਤੇ ਸੇ ਮੁਕਤੁ ਹੈ, ਹਰਿ ਜੀਉ ਹੇਤਿ ਪਿਆਰੁ ॥੨॥

(ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਅੰਗ ੮੬)

The ਮੋਰ (stamp) of ਗੁਰੂਜੀ given to the world by ਅਕਾਲਪੁਰਖੁ

The Handprint of Guru Nanak Dev Ji

The Body-print of Guru Nanak Dev Ji

The Footprint of Guru Nanak Dev Ji