



# Critical Appreciation Of Zafarnamah- An Epistle Of Victory With Reference To The Modern Age

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## Abstract

Guru Gobind Singh Ji was more than just a story. One of Guru Gobind Singh's most exquisite compositions, Zafarnamah - A Letter of Victory, is a remarkable masterpiece that promotes moral and spiritual stability. It essentially emphasises that fighting isn't only about gaining control of territory and power—it's also for bringing change throughout human history. This is one of the biggest lessons that squeezed out from Zafarnamah -A letter of victory. The goal of the current study is to analyse Guru Gobind Singh's idea of good governance in the context of Sikh ethics and the teachings of his forebear Sikh Gurus, with a focus on Zafarnamah. Guru Gobind Singh harshly criticised the cruel, unjust, and cold-blooded Mughal emperor Aurungzeb in the Zafarnamah (a letter of triumph). He begged him to adhere to the Holy Quran's teachings and to treat everyone with fairness, compassion, and understanding, even non-Muslims. He wished for political leaders and administrative officials to be spiritually minded, enlightened, devout, truthful, virtuous, ethical, compassionate, altruistic, and responsible.

**Keywords:** Zafarnamah, Spiritual and Moral stability, Change, Vision, Governance

## Introduction

Everyone should be aware about Shri Guru Gobind Singh Ji. He is a wonderful example of exceptional spiritual leadership. Shri Guru Gobind Singh Ji made the greatest contributions to the Sikhism that is practiced till today. Like Guru Nanak Dev Ji, he went beyond the boundaries of his faith and imparted wisdom and truths that are valuable and appealing to all people around the globe.

The word guru is derived from the Sanskrit word guru, which means mentor, instructor, or guide. Ten distinct gurus between the years of 1469 and 1708 created the Sikhism's traditions and ideology. The Sikh faith was developed as a consequence of the contributions and reinforcements made by each guru to the teachings of the one before them. The first guru, Guru Nanak, chose a follower to succeed him (Ahuja & Bajaj, 2016). The last guru to take on human form was Guru Gobind Singh. Guru Gobind Singh said that the Guru Granth Sahib will serve as the Sikhs' ultimate and eternal guru before he passed away.

Gobind Singhji, original name Gobind Rai (born AD 1666 in Patna, Bihar; died 7 October 1708 in Nanded, Maharashtra), was the 10th and last Guru of the Sikhs. He is best known for his creation of the Sikh Khalsa which means the Pure (Hegarty, 2017). He also trained youth to be self defendant and guard the helpless against injustice, suppression and tyranny of Mugal. Guru Gobind Singh was a divine messenger, a skilled warrior, a poet, a philosopher.

The compositions Guru Gobind Singh left for us, many of which are collected in the Dasam Granth, have helped us to understand his philosophy. The Sikh Panth has always been a haven for exceptionally outstanding poetry, and Shri Guru Gobind Singh ji was no exception. He was a master of a wide variety of poetry genres which makes his work outstanding. Nevertheless, it may be challenging to distinguish between a great religious leader's voice and that of his illustrious followers (Hegarty, 2017).

### Features of Educational Philosophy of Guru Gobind Singh

- **Hunt for truth and enlightenment:**

On his travels, Guru Gobind Singh conveyed the light of truth and helped those who were oppressed by hatred, lies, greed, and hypocrisy. He travelled and imparted knowledge via example and practise. He forbade erroneous rituals and superstitions and advised those quenching their thirst by presenting water to their deceased ancestors in the area of Sun to follow the road of truth and enlightenment.

- **Social Responsibility:**

Helping the poor, needy, and oppressed is seen by Guru Gobind Singh as the most important responsibility in life. He places a strong emphasis on serving others. Selfless service is defined as providing assistance to all members of the human race, regardless of caste, colour, faith, gender, or nation. He laid stress on social equality, universal brotherhood, and social service.

- **Diversity:** Guru Gobind Singh ji always stressed on diversity, not on inequality. His essential motto was ਮਾਨਸ ਕੀ ਜਾਤ ਸਬੈ ਏਕੈ ਪਹਿਚਾਨਬੈ – Recognising the whole human race as one. He dreamt of a society outside of the prevailing rituals and ethics, based on social equality. Ever sensitive to the need of social integration of the so-called low castes, he said:

“The service of these people, and I am not inclined to serve others of higher castes. Charity will bear fruit, in this and next world, if given to such people as these.....Whatever I call my own, all I possess or carry, I dedicate to these people.”

- **Cultivation of inner strength:**

Guru Gobind Singh emphasised the importance of human character qualities According to Guru Gobind Singh, introspection and self-realization helps to overcome vices such as ego, rage, greed, desire, and vanity. He remarked, "Conquer your own mind and you will conquer the world; see the brotherhood of all mankind as the highest order of Yogis.

- **Respect for every man:** Casteism never existed for the Guruji. The Guruji always preached uphold the moral values and respect every man.

ਆਪੇ ਗੁਰੂ ਚੇਲਾ

- **Clear plan and vision:**

Guru Gobind Singh arrived with a purpose to spread the spirit of global brotherhood at a period when there was intercommunal strife and kings and monarchs oppressed and abused the ordinary people. He has a distinct vision. He intended to establish a separate and unique spiritual system as well as a caste- and class-free society.

- **Loyalty and Sacrifice:**

There is no other case in history when a Prophet-Warrior gave his generations up for the benefit of humanity. In his lifetime, Guru Sahib engaged in over 17 fights against injustice and tyranny, yet not a single one was waged for territory or material success and worldly power. He is often revered as Sarbans Dani (Merciful Donor, who sacrificed his all (Singh, 2021).

- **Democratic spirit:**

Guru Gobind Singh was a proponent of democracy. He never asserted his own divinity. He claimed none of the credit for what he accomplished, attributing all of his wins, strength, and reputation to the Khalsa and the labours of his adherents.

### **Significance of the study**

The significance of teachings of Guru Gobind Singh Ji is not restricted to religion or region only, but has historical and national significance. Through his original and useful philosophy of life, he not only preserved India's great cultural legacy but also brought forth new innovations relating to social change, social transformation, and universal value patterns. He emphasized the necessity of fostering the spirit of unity for the sake of maintaining national unity. In order to lift the people up and give them the courage to stand out for justice, against injustice, and tyranny, he wrote the literary composition Zafarnamah. His poetic composition Zafarnamah instills a feeling of confidence among people. All of these concepts are considerably more important today, when mankind is exposed to tremendous perils. Because of this, Guru Gobind Singh's teachings are still relevant today, making a thorough examination of his philosophy is essential in day to day life.

### **Zafarnamah - The Epistle of Victory and its Critical Appreciation**

Zafarnama is an argument for justice written in the form of a letter to Aurangzeb, the sixth Mughal emperor, after the Battle of Chamkaur in the 18th century (Deol, 2019). It is an exemplary not just for its literary flair but also for being so outspoken against tyranny and injustice (Bedi, 2017).

In 1707 AD, Guru Gobind Singh Ji wrote the Zafarnama-The Epistle of Victory to Aurangzeb in Persian language. Guru Ji chastised Aurangzeb for breaking his oath and emphasized the importance of morality. Guru Ji sent Bhai Daya Singh and Bhai Dharam Singh to deliver the letter to Aurangzeb. Aurangzeb was deeply shaken by this letter and the Truth of the letter resulted in his demise.

There are 111 verses in Zafarnamah - The Epistle of Victory, 34 of which are entirely dedicated to praising God. 32 deal with the Guru's offer to meet with Aurangzeb and the Guru's unwillingness to do so; instead, the Guru requests that Aurangzeb come to see him; The Battle of Chamkaur, which took place on December 22, 1704, is described in 24 verses; 15 verses criticise Aurangzeb for breaching the Guru's pledge that he and his emissaries had made; Guru Gobind Singh also forewarned Aurangzeb in verses 78 and 79 of the Khalsa's determination to not stop until the Mughal Empire is destroyed; Aurangzeb is praised in six verses.

According to Singh (2017) in Zafarnamah Guru Gobind Singh urged his followers to always be prepared for the fight of righteousness (Dhram Yudh), the use of force was only advised as a last resort when all other means of mediating a dispute peacefully fell short. Khalsa was criticised even then for using brutality against the defenceless or vulnerable. Verse 22 of the Zafarnama is among the most often cited verses:

ਚੁ ਕਾਰ ਅਜ ਹਮਰ ਹੀਲਤੇ ਦਰ ਗੁਜਸਤ ॥

ਹਲਾਲ ਅਸਤ ਬੁਰਦਨ ਬ ਸਮਸ਼ੀਰ ਦਸਤ ॥

When all has been tried, yet -- Justice is not in sight,

It is then right to pick up the sword – Is then right to fight.

(Zafarnamah - The Epistle of Victory, Dasam Granth )

ਮਜ਼ਨ ਤੇਗ ਬਰ ਖੂਨ ਕਸ ਬੇ ਦਰੇਗ॥

ਤੁਰਾ ਨੀਜ ਖੂੰ ਚਰਖ ਰੇਜਦ ਬਤੇਗ॥

Do not be rash in striking your sword on helpless,  
otherwise the Providence will shed your blood.

(Zafarnamah- The Epistle of Victory, Dasam Granth)

In Zafarnamah, he emphasized how moral principles should take precedence over other considerations in both public and private action. The ultimate moral criteria were to be used to determine victory and defeat, not fleeting worldly gain. The Zafarnamah emphasizes that full honesty is a responsibility shared by all citizens, including the king. The core of Zafarnamah is that one must be upright and truthful in order to be just, virtuous, and human, and they must never be deceived by temptations to gain power and pelf (Kaur, 2007). This is a timely warning to individuals who desire to use unethical and violent methods to gain influence in the management of political authority and public trusts for their own personal gratification.

The Zafarnamah emphasised the significance of truth in statecraft and the need for rulers to uphold the same moral standards as those required of the ruled. In his letter to the emperor, Guru Gobind Singh reiterated his personal dedication to the democratic ideals of transparency and accountability. His ethical views i.e. openness and transparency were critical in the conduct of relations between the ruler and the ruled, was no less unusual for the times (Singh, 1999).

He denounces what is unfair and harsh in this letter of victory and extols what is real and morally just. The ultimate moral criteria should be used to determine victory and defeat, not fleeting worldly gain. The letter was a harsh condemnation of Aurangzeb, who was repeatedly reprimanded for his breach of faith in the Mughal forces' attack on the Sikhs after they had left Anandpur following serious guarantees from him and his officials (verses 13, 14). The Zafarnamah should be without a doubt the most frank diplomatic essay ever written due to the blunt and unmistakable words in which the Emperor and his policies are denounced throughout. It adamantly restates morality's supremacy over governmental activities as well as individual human behaviour, and it emphasises the value of the means above the aim. Absolute sincerity is a responsibility shared by all people, including the sovereign. The Guru spoke in favour of transparent diplomacy and the application of moral principles to political issues. Being spiritual means living a moral life. True religion actually involves a fight for sustaining moral principles and defending justice, equality, and freedom (Dogra and Mansukhani, 1996).

The Guru makes various remarks on what a king ought to or ought not to do. A monarch must understand that God could not have intended for him to sow discord among the people, but rather to foster peace, harmony, and tranquilly. The ruler should not harass the people, oppress the weak, or deprive the weak by using his might, authority, and resources. This will only make the State dangerous, damage society, and undermine his capacity to lead successfully. He shouldn't indiscriminately kill people to avoid incurring the wrath of God (Singh 2008).

## Conclusion

In a nutshell, Guru Gobind Singh ji was a personality beyond narration. He was more than just a story. It is impossible to overstate how much Guru Gobind Singh has contributed to the spiritual and religious life of Indians in general and Sikhs in particular. At a very personal level, Guru Gobind Singh's significance comes from his courage and the legitimacy he once again bestowed upon battle, bravery, and risking one's life in defence of one's Dharma (it is crucial to make this distinction between Dharma and religion). Destruction of oppressors and love for all people can coexist. It is important to distinguish between pacifism and cowardice. Militancy that is motivated by hatred or greed is not a struggle for the Dharma, and taking up weapons on the battlefield to uphold the fundamental values of the Divine and humanity is not militancy. The battles are not just fought for control of land and power—they are also fought for change. India has always been a pacifist country that is prepared to go to war; we are able to explain the most profound spiritual truths and to engage in the bloodiest of combat. That is the message that Guru Gobind Singh's life and teachings reaffirm. (Chaudhry,2017).

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