

Sri Guru Granth Sahib: The Divine Resource for Holy Living

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The last century witnessed tremendous scientific and technical progress. For you, dear reader, as an individual, however, there has not been the same degree of progress in ethical, moral and spiritual areas. Your emotional and spiritual needs are not met. No wonder, you long for a happier, more joyous and a more contented life. You turn to religion, philosophy, science and technology to find a quick fix to achieve this objective. You not only think, but also believe that you can be happy only when needs of your *physical body*, whether real or perceived, are fully satisfied. To acquire this stage of lifestyle you think you need lots of money, and you get deeply engrossed in collecting wealth by fair and/or foul means. At times you may even resort to illegal means, like smuggling, dealings with drugs and bribery. Perhaps you may even be tempted to indulge in robbery, falsehood or other unscrupulous activities so you can become instantly wealthy.

When you look around you notice that use of alcoholic drinks and drugs has permeated our society. You therefore feel that to get ahead in life and to be part of the prevailing culture you start drinking the most expensive liquor believing it will provide you a better kick. A little step further you start believing that drinking of liquor is a cool thing to do - all in the name of acquiring happiness - what a sad state of affairs. According to a report by Punjab Agricultural University, nearly half of the male population in the villages of Punjab is addicted to alcohol and/or drugs. This does not speak well for our people.

Spiritual Vacuum: Sadly, with all the modern luxuries and comforts, you find you are not really happy because you feel shallow inside with an empty and discontented mind. You start feeling a spiritual vacuum. You feel spiritually empty because you are so much entangled in mundane activities to acquire so-called worldly happiness that, in the process, you killed your conscience by doing certain vicious deeds your conscience may not have approved. In the following hymn Guru Arjun reminds us that you are always ready for doing deeds which are bad, but you keep on doing them in the hope that you are going to become richer:

ਬੁਰੇ ਕਾਮ ਕਉ ਉਠਿ ਖਲੋਇਆ ॥

ਨਾਮ ਕੀ ਬੇਲਾ ਪੈ ਪੈ ਸੋਇਆ ॥੧॥

Burai kaam kau ooth khalauya

Naam kee baila pai pai sauyaa

For doing bad deeds (you) get up quickly, but at the time of remembering God you sleep like a carefree person."

Need for Divine Guidance: Once the realization comes to you that you are not doing the righteous thing by killing your conscience, you start struggling to awaken your conscience. What you really need is a rebirth, or a resurgence of your conscience from this age of crime, deceit, violence, and unscrupulous behaviour. You now begin to realize that your problems are social, moral and spiritual. During your sober moments you are therefore hungering and thirsting to find meaning of life and for your existence on earth. You yearn for a natural connection, a bond you can hold on for personal security and stability of your mind and body. You now want an authoritative set of principles and religious beliefs in consonance with the natural laws of the universe. You now recognize that the moral, ethical, social and spiritual values are not caught like a strain of flu. These values are not inborn and must be acquired. The religious scriptures are supposed to provide answers to above-mentioned troubling questions, but the real answers must lie in the realm of Absolute Truth - the Absolute Reality.

Untapped Divine Resource: All scriptures are intended to afford you with means to acquire "truthful" life-style of uplifting spirits. What you really need is a supremely universal and universally supreme source of scripture to provide you with the guidance, direction, wisdom and inspiration so that you can lead a spiritually satisfying truthful life. A holy scripture which meets this criteria is Sri Guru Granth Sahib (SGGS), also known as Adi Granth. This is a unique religious and philosophical sacred treatise. It contains only divinely revealed Word, and is written in poetry, in simple and readily understandable language. Because of its divinely inspired nature and its simplicity it appeals instantly to your psyche regardless of your religious belief, creed or faith. A source, which encompasses only the inspired Word, must be considered God's own Word, and thus would be an unrivaled and authoritative spiritual treatise on all kinds of value systems, be they ethical, moral, social, economic or spiritual. Such a source, then, becomes very sacred because God Himself speaks through the inspirer.

With deep humility I believe that the only source which is a repertoire of such divine hymns is SGGS. This must then be envisioned as literally "True". The beauty and splendour of SGGS is that the revealed Word and reason are consistent. There are no dogmas - only universal and eternal rational beliefs and practices. Its contents are fully understandable in relation to the world and to our senses, i.e. to our rational thinking. Unfortunately many people in the world, including some Sikhs, are ignorant of the worth and merits of this remarkable treasure house simply because they have not carefully read and seriously reflected on the messages contained in SGGS. This spiritual resource of wisdom must be first read attentively, comprehended thoughtfully, and practiced daily by the Sikhs, and then be propagated in its entirety to the spiritually bereft people of the world. At this time it is perhaps correct to say that the philosophy and the beliefs as enunciated in SGGS are not well read, nor well understood, nor fully practiced even by some of the Sikh people. Many Sikhs who go to Gurdwara regularly

don't really reflect and act on the instructions contained in SGGS because they are too busy making money. This trend must be reversed. You, as a Sikh, have an obligation to your Guru to do whatever you can to get personally involved in bringing this change.

Guru Granth - A Universal Scripture:

The universality of SGGS is apparent from two distinct facts. *First*, it contains hymns not only from six Sikh Gurus (spiritual preceptors), but also 29 other Hindu and Muslim holy men belonging to two of the prevailing religions in India at that time. *Second*, it contains names of popular Hindu deities such as Hari, Ram, Gopal, Thakur, Murari, and Muslim God, Allah. All these names are still widely used. The Muslims and the Hindus would thus find kinship with SGGS through these commonly used names for God in their respective religion. It is pertinent to note that the word Har has been used 8,344 times in SGGS. You must remember God has no specific name. Any name given to God is simply an expression of the Divine Power. No one name is superior to the other. However, because of your faith and belief you may prefer a particular name over the others. Sikhs prefer to use word Waheguru since it means wondrous God and it evokes very intense feelings of God consciousness.

It may be noted that compilation of SGGS was started by Guru Nanak Dev in 15th century and was completed by Guru Arjun Dev in 1604. G. Nanak always carried a notebook (*pothi*) with him in which he would record the divine hymn the moment he would be inspired by it. Whenever and wherever he encountered any hymn of another inspired saintly person, whose philosophy on truth was similar to him, he would include that in his notebook because of its universality. At the time of transferring Guruship to Guru Angad Dev, he handed over this very privileged and priceless document to Guru Angad. This treasure of holy hymns was then passed on to Guru Amar Das, then to Guru Ram Das and then to Guru Arjun Dev; each one of them in turn included its own hymns in the same notebook. Guru Arjun felt the dire necessity of organizing all the divine hymns in a systematic manner so that it would become a common source of spiritual guidance and spiritual advice not only to Sikhs (Guru's disciples) but also to all other persons who are seeking the truth.

The profound beauty of SGGS is that it has hymns pertaining to no particular sect, caste, region or even religion. In this sense it is truly a unique spiritual monograph, the kind of which does not exist in the world. Perhaps, a brief overview of the organization of SGGS is in order. Guru Arjun Dev neatly arranged all the collected hymns according to their musical character. He separated and divided hymns into *Shabads*, *Ashtpadis* and *Chands*. He gave title to each hymn along with its author. The intellectual mastery of skills in organization of SGGS, which G. Arjun demonstrated as Editor-in Chief of SGGS is unmatched, especially when one realizes the different languages, such as Punjabi, Sindhi, Marahati, Hindi, Sanskrit, Prakrit, Persian, Arabic, used in SGGS. It is obvious Guru Arjun Dev must have been a multi-linguist-*par-excellence*.

The Key to Happiness: TruthThe advent of cyber space and internet has made it easier to secure all kinds of information in a convenient way. However, none of the

technology in the world can compete with the discriminating and analytical human mind and brain that can separate the truth from falsehood. The laws of nature should help us shape our ethical, moral, social and spiritual values because natural laws can't be broken. These then can provide guidelines for human conduct so we can lead holy, happy and healthier life. These natural laws are principles for truthful or godly living, which point to their creator, God, whose manifestations are all around us and within each one of us, as is clear from the hymn:

ਗੁਰਮਤੀ ਘਟਿ ਚਾਨਣੁ ਹੋਆ

ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਰਵਿ ਰਹਿਆ ਸਭ ਥਾਈ ਰਾਮ ॥

Gurmatee ghut chaanun hoa

prubh ruv rahya subh thaaee Ram

SGGS: *suhi mahala 3 p 770*

" Through Guru's wisdom inner enlightenment comes and (one sees) God's presence everywhere."

The following hymns demonstrate, in no uncertain terms, the great significance of the revealed Word as truth and truth alone:

ਸਚ ਕੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਆਖੈ ਸਚੁ ਸੁਣਾਇਸੀ ਸਚ ਕੀ ਬੋਲਾ

Such kee baanee Nanak aakhai

such sunaaysee such kee bailaa

SGGS: *Tilang mahala 1, p 722*

"Nanak speaks the word of Truth, Nanak (will keep) speaking truth, this is the time for truth".

ਵਾਹੁ ਵਾਹੁ ਬਾਣੀ ਸਚੁ ਹੈ ਸਚਿ ਮਿਲਾਵਾ ਹੋਇ

Vah vah Banee such hai

such milaava hoai

SGGS: *slok mahala 3, p 514*

"Applaud, honor the Banee (Word) which is Nirankar (God), there is no one as great as Thee."

The Message of Truthful Living: It is now clear that SGGS is a repertoire of divinely inspired wisdom and truth and it advocates the ideal and practice of truthful living. The fundamental question then is "how can one become truthful". This is beautifully illustrated in the hymn below:

ਕਿਵ ਸਚਿਆਰਾ ਹੋਈਐ ਕਿਵ ਕੂੜੈ ਤੁਟੈ ਪਾਲਿ ॥ ਹੁਕਮਿ ਰਜਾਈ ਚਲਣਾ ਨਾਨਕ ਲਿਖਿਆ
ਨਾਲਿ

Kiv suc hiara haia kiv koorai tootai paal

hukum rajayee chulna Nanak likhyaa naal

SGGS: *jap ji*, p 1

"How can one become truthful, (and) how can the screen of falsehood be removed:

(by) following God's command, o Nanak, which is written with the person".

This hymn has profoundly meaningful purpose. When you start *believing* that whatever happens occurs under divine will, then you will not lament on any thing which happens to be not to your liking. Every thing happens with a purpose and for a purpose, but you may not realize its immediate significance. Only time convinces you that it was in your best interest, and in the process you may have unnecessarily agonized yourself. You must remember, "Higher Order Prevails Eternally (HOPE)".

You may now ask, "how will you know if you are living a life-style of truth", Guru Nanak provides the answer in the hymn:

Such taa purjaaniai ja ridhai sachha hoai

such taa pur jaaniai ja such dharai pyaar

such taa pur jaaniai ja jugut jaanai jeeau

such taa pur jaaniai ja sikh sachi lavai

SGGS: *slok mahala 1*, p 468

"When one's mind is truthful then one realizes truth; when one falls in love with the True One, then one realizes truth; when one learns righteous way of living then one realizes truth; (and) when one obtains truthful instructions then one realizes God".

One of the key message from above hymn is, getting the right instructions and getting the instructions right, which are disseminated throughout SGGS, and are succinctly summarized in the epilogue to SGGS, and is described in the hymn:

ਥਾਲ ਵਿਚਿ ਤਿੰਨਿ ਵਸਤੂ ਪਈਓ ਸਤੁ ਸੰਤੋਖੁ ਵੀਚਾਰੋ ॥ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਨਾਮੁ ਠਾਕੁਰ ਕਾ ਪਇਓ ਜਿਸ
ਕਾ ਸਭਸੁ ਅਧਾਰੋ ॥ ਜੇ ਕੋ ਖਾਵੈ ਜੇ ਕੋ ਭੁੰਚੈ ਤਿਸ ਕਾ ਹੋਇ ਉਧਾਰੋ ॥

Thaal vich tin vustoo paeeau

sut suntokh veechaarau

amrit naam thaakur kaa paiiau ,jis kaa subus adhaarau

jai kau khavai jai kau bhunchai, tis kaa hoai udhaarau

SGGS: *mundavani mahala 5, p 1429*

"On the platter are placed three things, (which are) truth, contentment and contemplation. Also placed is nectarous Naam (God's Word), which is the support of all. Whosoever eats (practices in life) that, whosoever tastes (keeps in mind) that, that person is emancipated (liberated)".

It is now easy to recognize that SGGS is the scripture which deals with the philosophy, religion and science of truth and truth alone. It needs to be made clear that the whole truth is limitless and, by its very nature, cannot be readily defined, for that would limit its scope. It is in the realm of personal inner experience. Guru Nanak tells us about "Truth" in the prologue to SGGS:

ਆਦਿ ਸਚੁ ਜੁਗਾਦਿ ਸਚੁ ॥

ਹੈ ਭੀ ਸਚੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਹੋਸੀ ਭੀ ਸਚੁ

Aad such jugad such

hai bhi such Nanak hosi bhi such

(Japji sahib, p 1)

"Truth (Reality) was in the beginning, Truth has been for ages, Truth is now , O Nanak, Truth shall ever be".

Absolute Truth is not easy to describe. It is, however, a spiritual experience and spiritual realization of Truth. Since SGGS is God's Word, it is undeniably the greatest source of wisdom on all aspects of life. It is loaded with practical advice on how to lead a holy,

happy and healthy life (the three H's of life). It is the most up-to-date divinely inspired instructional manual for your personal well-being physically, mentally, and spiritually. It is as relevant today as it was when it was first revealed and/or written. It is indeed God speaking to you. It is God instructing you to adopt the truthful way of living by showing love for all of God's creation, including but not limited to only human beings. In order to develop and build a strong personal relationship with God, you need to develop and embark on a warm, friendly, compassionate, generous and caring attitude and concern for God's creation and God's people, all the people and not just your family and friends. This is what truthful living is all about. God has blessed you with a wonderful gift of life. What you make of your life is your gift to God. What can then be a better gift to God from you than to do whatever good deeds you can, so that in the end your soul will find merger in God? Here is a practical recipe of five R's for you to faithfully follow so your soul will find union in and with God.

Read SGGS carefully and attentively.

Reflect on hymns in SGGS with focused mind.

Remember and meditate (*Naam simran*) using key words from SGGS.

Respond to the messages from SGGS by faithfully following and acting on them.

Reward Blessings of STP (serenity, tranquility, peace), and union with God in this life.

