

Universal Values in Guru Granth Sahib

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THE ETHOS and exhortations of Guru Granth Sahib are meant not only for followers of the Sikh faith but for all humanity, as is stated in the sacred text, illustrated by the following verse attributed to Guru Amar Das (1479-1574),

ਪਰਬਾਇ ਸਾਖੀ ਮਹਾ ਪੁਰਖ ਬੋਲਦੇ ਸਾਝੀ ਸਗਲ ਜਹਾਨੈ ॥ [SGGS:647]

Even as great seers speak in the terms of the particular

Their wisdom is profoundly applicable to the whole world

Then, as now the divisive caste-ridden society is reeling under discrimination. But ponder Guru Arjun's comforting words:

ਖੜੀ ਬਾਹਮਣ ਸੂਦ ਵੈਸ ਉਪਦੇਸੁ ਚਹੁ ਵਰਨਾ ਕਉ ਸਾਝਾ ॥ [SGGS:747]

This common spiritual message is meant for the people of all the castes;

Whether Kashatriya, Brahmin, Sudra or Vaisya.

ਗੁਰੁ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਉਪਦੇਸੁ ਕਹਤੁ ਹੈ ਜੋ ਸੁਨੈ ਸੋ ਪਾਰਿ ਪਰਾਨਥ ॥ [SGGS:1001]

Such is the teaching and message of Guru Nanak:

Whoever listens to it is ferried across the Ocean of Existence.

Society at any stage of development consists of distinctive categories, creeds and callings. The Scriptural message embraces every one. Guru Granth addresses:

The Yogis:

ਗਲੀ ਜੋਗੁ ਨ ਹੋਈ ॥ ਏਕ ਵਿਸਟਿ ਕਰਿ ਸਮਸਰਿ ਜਾਣੈ ਜੋਗੀ ਕਹੀਐ ਸੋਈ ॥ [SGGS:730]

Yoga consists not in mere talk or chatter.

He, who looks on all-alike and regards all as equals, may be acclaimed as a true Yogi.

The Adherents of Hinduism:

ਹਿੰਦੂ ਮੂਲੇ ਭੂਲੇ ਅਖੁਟੀ ਜਾਹੀ ॥ ਨਾਰਦਿ ਕਹਿਆ ਸਿ ਪੂਜ ਕਰਾਹੀ ॥

ਅੰਧੇ ਗੁੰਗੇ ਅੰਧ ਅੰਧਾਰੁ ॥ ਪਾਬਰੁ ਲੈ ਪੂਜਹਿ ਮੁਗਥ ਗਵਾਰ ॥

ਓਹਿ ਜਾ ਆਪਿ ਡੁਬੇ ਤੁਮ ਕਹਾ ਤਰਣਹਾਰੁ ॥

[SGGS:556]

The Hindus having strayed from the Primal Lord,
are going the wrong way.

They worship idols as instructed by Narad...

They, the ignorant ones, worship stones,

not realizing that stones,

which themselves sink,

cannot ferry others across.

Those of Islamic Persuasion:

ਮਿਹਰ ਮਸੀਤਿ ਸਿਦਕੁ ਮੁਸਲਾ ਹਕੁ ਹਲਾਲੁ ਕੁਰਾਣੁ ॥

ਸਰਮ ਸੁਨਤਿ ਸੀਲੁ ਰੋਜਾ ਹੋਹੁ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਣੁ ॥

[SGGS:140]

Let compassion be your mosque,

faith your prayer-mat,

and righteousness your Quoran.

Let modesty be your circumcision, and uprightness your fasting.
Thus you will become a true Muslim.

Guru Granth Sahib proceeds to speak of Jainism :

ਦਇਆ ਦਿਰੀਬਰੁ ਦੇਹ ਬੀਚਾਰੀ ॥ ਆਪਿ ਮਰੈ ਅਵਰਾ ਨਹ ਮਾਰੀ ॥ [SGGS:356]

The true Digambar Jain is he who cherishes compassion and probes his inner self.
As he kills (i.e. subdues) his own self,
He does not kill (i.e. hurt) others.

In so far as India is predominantly agricultural, Guru Granth address the farmers thus :

ਮਨੁ ਹਾਲੀ ਕਿਰਸਾਣੀ ਕਰਣੀ ਸਰਮੁ ਪਾਣੀ ਤਨੁ ਖੇਤੁ ॥

ਨਾਮੁ ਬੀਜੁ ਸੰਤੋਖੁ ਸੁਹਾਗਾ ਰਖੁ ਗਰੀਬੀ ਵੇਸੁ ॥

ਭਾਉ ਕਰਮ ਕਰਿ ਜੰਮਸੀ ਸੇ ਘਰ ਭਾਗਠ ਦੇਖੁ ॥

[SGGS:595]

Let the mind be the ploughman,
good deeds the ploughing,
honest strivings the water
and your body the field.

Let God's Name be the seeds,
content the leveler,
and humility the garb.

Let your actions be
those of love amity.

The seed will then sprout,
the crop will grow.

And you will see your home

Blessed with prosperity.

Those who earn their living by commerce must heed these words:

ਵਣਜੁ ਕਰਹੁ ਮਖਸੂਦੁ ਲੈਹੁ ਮਤ ਪਛੋਤਾਵਹੁ ॥

[SGGS:418]

Carry on your commerce

By pursuing your BASIC objective (of fairness in profit).

Lest you should repent afterwards.

The human race is indeed advised to be loyal to God as firm believers in their respective faiths; and alert and active workers in their respective callings. Means and morality are important ingredients. The fervent appeals, prayers and pleadings included therein are also applicable to the entire humankind. These have been made by the Sikh Gurus to the Creator of all and sundry, for and on behalf of the whole humanity, for the maximum good of every creature, for the well being of the whole world. They find their highest and noblest expression in the following verses, for example:

Guru Nanak pleads with God:

ਤੇਰੇ ਜੀਅ ਜੀਆ ਕਾ ਤੋਹਿ ॥ ਕਿਤ ਕਉ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਆਵਹਿ ਰੋਹਿ ॥

ਜੇ ਤੂ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਆਵਹਿ ਰੋਹਿ ॥ ਤੂ ਓਨਾ ਕਾ ਤੇਰੇ ਓਹਿ ॥

[SGGS:25]

All creation is Yours, O Lord:
and You are the Only Master of all.
Why are they visited, then, with Your wrath?
In spite of Your having wrath on them,
they are still Yours and You are theirs, O Lord !

Guru Amar Das appeals to God:

ਜਗਤੁ ਜਲੰਦਾ ਰਖਿ ਲੈ ਆਪਣੀ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਧਾਰਿ ॥

ਜਿਤੁ ਦੁਆਰੈ ਉਬਰੈ ਤਿਤੈ ਲੈਹੁ ਉਬਾਰਿ ॥ [SGGS:85]

The world is in flames!

Save it, O God, out of Your mercy;

Save it, through whichever dispensation

It can be saved, O Lord!

Guru Ram Das sings a truly universal prayer:

ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਿ ਕੈ ਸੁਨਹੁ ਪੁਭ ਸਭ ਜਗ ਮਹਿ ਵਰਸੈ ਮੇਹੁ ॥

[SGGS:652]

Listen to our prayers, O God!

And let Your Grace rain

Over the whole world.

Guru Arjun's hymn seeks peace on earth, thus:

ਸਭੇ ਜੀਅ ਸਮਾਲਿ ਅਪਣੀ ਮਿਹਰ ਕਰੁ ॥ ਅੰਨੁ ਪਾਣੀ ਮੁਚੁ ਉਪਾਇ ਦੁਖ ਦਾਲਦੁ ਭੰਨਿ ਤਰੁ ॥[SGGS:1251]

Be merciful, O God !

and keep all beings in Your care.

Let grain and water be in plenty,

shatter their suffering and penury,

and ferry them across the Ocean of Existence.

What a universal appeal embodying such a marvelous altruistic spirit, cosmopolitan outlook, liberal essence and tolerant attitude, seeking boons and blessings for the peace, prosperity and welfare of every human being, irrespective of one's belief and faith, caste or creed, colour or country, sex or status!

The universality of Guru Granth Sahib has to be savoured in song and thought to realize its depth and compassion for all human kind for promoting goodwill, general happiness and collective moral values of the society, for building a new, peaceful, prosperous and pluralist world order. Consider, in conclusion, the vision of such an ideal city-state as is envisaged, defined and projected in the following evocative hymn of Bhagat Ravidas.

ਬੇਗਮ ਪੁਰਾ ਸਹਰ ਕੋ ਨਾਉ ॥ ਦੂਖੁ ਅੰਦੋਹੁ ਨਹੀ ਤਿਹਿ ਠਾਉ ॥

ਨਾਂ ਤਸਵੀਸ ਖਿਰਾਜੁ ਨ ਮਾਲੁ ॥ ਖਉਫੁ ਨ ਖਤਾ ਨ ਤਰਸੁ ਜਵਾਲੁ ॥੧॥

ਅਬ ਮੋਹਿ ਖੂਬ ਵਤਨ ਗਰ ਪਾਈ ॥ ਉਹਾਂ ਖੈਰਿ ਸਦਾ ਮੇਰੇ ਭਾਈ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥

ਕਾਇਮੁ ਦਾਇਮੁ ਸਦਾ ਪਾਤਿਸਾਹੀ ॥ ਦੋਮ ਨ ਸੇਮ ਏਕ ਸੋ ਆਹੀ ॥

ਆਬਾਦਾਨੁ ਸਦਾ ਮਸਹੂਰ ॥ ਉਹਾਂ ਗਨੀ ਬਸਹਿ ਮਾਮੂਰ ॥੨॥

ਤਿਉ ਤਿਉ ਸੈਲ ਕਰਹਿ ਜਿਉ ਭਾਵੈ ॥ ਮਹਰਮ ਮਹਲ ਨ ਕੋ ਅਟਕਾਵੈ ॥

ਕਹਿ ਰਵਿਦਾਸ ਖਲਾਸ ਚਮਾਰਾ ॥ ਜੋ ਹਮ ਸਹਰੀ ਸੁ ਮੀਤੁ ਹਮਾਰਾ ॥

[SGGS:345]

The name of my city is felicity
Suffering and sorrow do not abide in it.
There is neither any worry of paying taxes or trade,
nor any fear of a default in the one
and anguish for a decline in the other.
I have now found a wonderful place in my homeland
where there is always peace, my brother!
Its sovereignty is firm and inviolate forever.
There is no second or third class,
as all are alike, being in the first class.
It is ever populous,
and enjoys ever enduring reputation,
Its residents are prosperous and contented.
They go about as they please.
As they are intimates of the Mansion and its Lord,
no one prevents their entry into it.
So says Ravidas, the liberated cobbler,
to whom all fellow-citizens are loving friends.

Herein lies the power, modernity and universality of the revelation, thought, teaching, message and appeal of Guru Granth Sahib which radiates new rays of love, light and liberty; peace, hope and happiness for all mankind all over the world.

Hence, said Mrs. Pearl Buck, the Nobel Laureate, in 1962, describing her personal experience after reading the four volumes of its English Version “slowly and thoughtfully” in her “quiet Pennsylvania home” in United States of America, “Sri Guru Granth Sahib is a source book, an expression of man’s loneliness, his aspirations, his longings, his cry to God and his hunger for communication with that Being. I have studied the scriptures of other great religions, but I do not find elsewhere the same power of appeal to the heart and mind as I find here in these volumes. They are compact in spite of their length, and are a revelation of the vast reach of human heart, varying from insistence upon the practical needs of the human body.

Likewise Dr. J.C. Archer, Professor of Comparative Religion at the Yale University, Princeton (U.S.A), maintained in 1946: “The religion of the Guru Granth is a universal and practical religion.... The world needs today its message of peace and love”.

Herein also lies the unequalled beneficence and significance of Guru Granth Sahib.

