

# Impact of Guru Granth Sahib on Indian Society

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Many a great saviour has appeared on the world scene from time to time to save humanity from the clutches of the evil forces and to disseminate the spiritual message of God: the source of all virtues. Many a religion has been founded by such saviours, sages and prophets. Each religion has played its part to curb evil and spread dharma, or Righteousness. The greatest need of the present times is that humanity's moral character and socio-economic standard be raised for peace and prosperity and, above all, for creating a God consciousness among all people of the world.

Guru Nanak's faith, popularly known as Sikhism, is the latest of world religions. The current year (2008) is the 539th year of Guru Nanak's birth. Comparitively short as the time-span may seem, the Scripture of the Sikh Gurus has an astonishingly original message for humanity, compelling in its logic and modern in its philosophic approach. Indeed Sri Guru Granth Sahib's spiritual message is universal in appeal. It became the scared book of the Sikhs and created consciousness among them of their being a developed community. It serves as the expository of Divine wisdom, felicity and bliss. Its fascinating hymns, chanted in deep reverence and devotion, inspire the minds of listeners to the lofty ideas of simple living and high thinking. The Granth serves as the symbolic representation of all the Gurus who are considered as only one Seer, Nanak, the light of whose soul passed on to each of his successors one by one.

**One of the greatest glories of *Adi Guru Granth Sahib* is its all-embracing character. It is a scripture completely free from bias, animus and controversy. Indeed the uniqueness of the *Granth* in this respect is all the more astonishing when we think of the obscurantism, factionalism and fanaticism of the period in which it was composed.** Perhaps, it is the only scripture of its kind which contains within its sacred covers the songs and utterances of a wide variety of saints, savants and bards. It is important to note that a fairly substantial part of the *Granth Sahib* carries the compositions of Hindu *bhagtas*, Muslim divines and Sufi poets and 'God-intoxicated' souls in quest of Truth and Love. **Of course, their hymns and couplets, rendered in their own language and idioms, are so dovetailed as to find a complete corresponding with themes or motifs in the compositions of the Sikh Gurus. Obviously, the idea of Guru Arjun Dev was to establish the fundamental unity of all religions and mystic experiences.** It was, so to speak, an integral congress of mind and souls, operating on the same spiritual beam. To have, thus, elevated the songs of the *bhagtas*, the *Sufis* and the *bhatts* to the status of the *logos* was to salute the power of the *Word* whatever it might take to reveal the glory of God. It may be noticed that the *Guru Granth* contains the compositions and utterances of the high-born Brahmins and the proud Kshatriyas, as also of the lowly Shudras and the agriculturist Jats. This was done at a time when the caste-system in India had almost paralysed the conscience of man.

The revolutionary egalitarianism which such a step symbolized has thereafter~ become the creed of the Sikhs. Above all, a poetic and mystic collage bespeaks the essential humility of the Sikh mind, **for humility has been given a place of pride in the table of virtues dawn up by the Gurus.** *Guru Granth Sahib*, then, is a *sui generis* Scripture. It is

indeed a magnificent compendium of the religious, mystic and metaphysical poetry written or uttered between the 12th and 17th centuries in different parts of India. It is also, at the same time, a mirror of the sociological, economic and political conditions of the day. The satire on the reactionary rulers, the obscurantist clergy, the fake fakirs and the like, is open, uncompromising and telling. In showing the path of spiritual salvation, ***Guru Granth Sahib* does not ignore the secular and social life of man. It conveys the message of ritual-free thinking and living, and stresses values which are ethical.** It rejects all formalities and ritualism. It stresses the significance of the poise and balance in life. There is equal stress on the physical and spiritual well being of individual and society and a balanced combination of knowledge, action and devotion. In the teachings of *Guru Granth Sahib* due reverence is given to the body since it is sanctified and regarded as the abode of the Lord.

Essentially, *Guru Granth Sahib* preaches the fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man. It lays emphasis on the equal status of man and woman in society. It warns against all type of exploitation and firmly conveys the message of social equality. It inspires man to recognize the light of God in all creatures because there is no inequality in the next world. The caste distinction are man-made; God is manifest in all the creatures, Bhai Gurdas, the scribe of *Guru Granth Sahib*, testifies to the effect produced by the Guru's teaching on the caste system. He writes that all the four castes have become one. All disciples of the Guru belong to the saintly realm.

It is no exaggeration to say that *Guru Granth Sahib* is universal in its outlook and propagates a global ideal. It rises above the ritual fasting, and speaks against the use of drugs and intoxicants. It advocates the excellence and utility of human life, the necessity of character, the inculcation of love, truth, contentment, humility, etc. Indeed, *Guru Granth Sahib* gives us the true picture of an ideal life.

