

PEACE AT HOME, PEACE IN THE WORLD IN THE CONTEXT OF SIKH THOUGHT AND TRADITION (AS EXPRESSED AND PRESERVED IN THE SIKH SCRIPTURE)

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The motto of this Congress resounds in several verses, such as the following, of Guru Granth Sahib which being the sacred scripture of Sikhism, is also the only interfaith and non-denominational scripture of mankind :

1. ਅਚ ਮਹਿ ਸੁਖ, ਬਾਹਰਿ ਫੁਨਿ ਸੁਖਾ।¹ Ghar mein sūkh, bahar phun sūkha
2. ਅਚਿ ਸੁਖ ਵਸਿਆ, ਬਾਹਰਿ ਸੁਖ ਪਾਇਆ।²

Ghar Sukh wasya, bahar sukh paia.

(That is, peace and joy at home, peace and joy in the world around).
-Guru Granth Sahib, dt. 1604, A.D., pp. 619, 1136

It is a unique anthology of about 6000 hymns compiled in 1604 A.D. by its Fifth Spiritual Preceptor, Guru Arjan Dev (1563-1606) comprising holy utterances of 6 Sikh prophet-preceptors and 30 holy men (Hindus, Muslims and depressed classes) belonging to different periods, diverse faiths and social strata, hailing from various regions of the Indo-Pak subcontinent. Hence, observed Dr. J.C. Archer, Professor of Comparative Religion, in 1946 : “The religion of the Guru Granth is a universal and practical religion... The world needs today its message of peace and love”³, friendship and harmony.

In order to achieve such blessings of peace, love and joy through religion, the Third World Conference of Religion and Peace, held at Princeton (U.S.A in 1979, resolved and declared : “We believe that, as religious people, we have special responsibility for building a peaceful world community and a special contribution to make.

¹ Arjan Dev, Guru, compiler & editor, Sri Guru Granth Sahib, Amritsar-1604; Rag Sorath, M. 5, p. 619.

² Ibid., Rag Bhairo, M.5, p. 1136

³ Archer, Prof. Dr. J.C. , The Sikhs, in Relation to Hindus, Moslems, Christians and Ahmadiyas: a Study in Comparative Religion, Princeton - 1946, p.105.

We realize that far too often the names of our various religions have been used in warfare and community strife. Now we must reverse this, in short, by-

(a) Breaking down barriers of prejudices and hostility between religious communities and institutions;

(b) Confronting the powers of the world with the word of the teachings of our religions, rather than conforming to them when they do wrong and act contrary to the well-being of humanity;

(c) Building inter-religious understanding and community among ourselves on local level, particularly where prejudices run strong.

We all acknowledge restraint and self-discipline in a community of giving and forgiving, love as basic to human life and the form of true blessedness.

We are all commanded by our faiths to seek justice in the world, in a community of free and equal persons, in this search, conscience is given to every person as a moral guide to the ways of truth among us all.”⁴

The basic precepts, principles and objectives enunciated by the spiritual preceptors of the Sikh faith and incorporated by them in its Holy Book, four hundred years ago are pleasingly similar to those mentioned above.

This paper aims at explaining the same in the context of the Sikh thought and tradition as projected in it and in and tradition and the light of the following statement, dated 1960, of the reknowned historian, Prof. Arnold Toynbee : “The Indian and the judaic religions are notoriously different in spirit; and, where they have met, they have sometimes behaved like oil and vinegar. Their principal meeting-ground has been India, where Islam has impinged on Hinduism violently. On the whole, the story of the relations between these two great religions on Indian ground has been an unhappy tale of mutual misunderstanding and hostility. Yet, on both sides of this religious barrier, there has been a minority of discerning spirits who have seen that, at bottom, Hinduism and Islam are each an expressions are therefore reconcilable with each other and are of supreme value when brought into harmony. The Sikh religion might be described, not inaccurately, as a vision of this Hindu-Muslim common ground. To have discovered and embraced the deep harmony underlying the historic

⁴ Homer, A. Jack, Religion in the Struggle for World Community, New York- 1980, pp. ii-iii.

Hindu-Muslim discord has been a noble spiritual triumph; and Sikhs may well be proud of their religion's ethos and origin."⁵

Referring to this characteristic spirit and signal contribution of Guru Nanak (1469-1539), the founder of this religion, "Cut himself adrift", according to Professor R. C. Majumdar, "from all associations with prevailing sectarian religions... His was the first and also the last successful attempt to bring together the Hindus and Muslims in a common fold of spiritual and social brotherhood. "⁶ The very first words he uttered when called to take up the mission of his life after his intimate audience with God were:

"Nah ko Hindu, Nah Mussalman".⁷

"There is no Hindu and there is no Musalman." (all are human beings). "Those few words at one stroke felled the giant structures of caste, credal, sectional and religious differences."⁸ To a society torn by⁹ dissord and conflict, he brought a vision of common humanity --- a vision which transcended all barriers of creed and caste, race and country. He reminded men of their essential oneness. For him the terms, 'Hindu' and 'Mussalman', included Jains, Buddhists, Jews, Christians and so on. Guru nanak Was asking men of all faiths and denominations to look beyond external divisions and distinctions to the fundamental unity of mankind. In proclaiming the unity which lay beyond particular isms, Guru Nanak was not overruling any existing religious designation or tradition. His intention was more radical : he wanted to point men beyond their accepted condition to a new possibility a human community with a true spirit of fellowship and justice, with that deep ethical and spiritual commitment which expresses itself in concern for fellowmen. Nor was he seeking a syncretistic union between Hinduism and Islam or striving to achieve in his teaching a judicious mixture of elements from both to be acceptable to all. The beginnings of the Sikh faith go back to this revelation which Guru Nanak brought to light around 1469 A. D. soon after his enlightenment and just before his departure for his preaching odysseys undertaken in service of humanity to

⁵ Toynbee Arnold, Prof. in his 'Foreword' to *UNESCO'S Selections from the Sacred Writings of the sikhs*, London-1960, p. 10.

⁶ Surendrs Nath Banerjee as quoted in *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. IX (ii), Bombay-1977, p. 481.

⁷ For a detailed account see *Guru Nanak: The World-Teacher (Jagat Gurubaba)*, Chandigarh -1979, pp. 30-32; and *Teachings of Guru Nanak*, Chandigarh-1984, pp. 31-32 --- both by Dr. Harnam Singh Shan.

⁸ Mohan Singh (Dr.), *Sri Guru Nanak Dev & Nation building*, TarnTaran 1934, p. 8.

⁹ *Guru Granth Sahib*, op. cit. Rag Maru, M. 5, p. 1084; Harbans Singh, Prof., *Berkley Lectures on sikhism*, New Delhi-1983, pp. 9-10; *The Golden Temple : Amritsar*, a paper read by S. Kapur Singh at Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, on 24 Oct. 1977, p. 2.

bring about peace and harmony in India and abroad.

The Sikh Gurus (spiritual teachers) expressed their views regarding the situation and its solution during their life-time (1469-1708), in their verbal as well as written utterances, as preserved by them in it in their original form and spirit. They visualised, preached and practiced through them such a religion which initiated and successfully pursued the performance of all those functions in the best interests of humanity at large. They proved, both by precept and practice, that the Sikh faith knows no ethical, racial or regional limitations; recognises no distinctions on account of birth, sex, caste, creed, calling, colour or country; and embodies, on the other hand, universal respect and concern for all as free, equal and respectable persons. Its founder, identifying himself with the lowliest of the creatures, advised all and sundry

ਸਭ ਕੋ ਉਚਾ ਆਖੀਐ,
ਨੀਚ ਨ ਦੀਸੈ ਕੋਇ।
ਇਰਨਾ ਭਾਡੈ ਸਾਜਿਐ,
ਇਹੁ ਚਾਣੁ ਤਿਹੁ ਲੋਇ।¹⁰

Call everyone high (noble)
for, none seems low (mean).
As God, the Only 'Potter' (Maker):
has fashioned all 'vessels' (people) alike.
And it is His light alone
that shines in all creation.¹⁰

Saint Kabir (1398-1448?), the weaver, whose contribution to the Holy Granth is the largest among all non-Sikh holy men included therein, also maintained likewise:

ਅਵਨਿ ਅਨਹ ਨੂਰ ਉਪਾਇਆ,
ਦੁਰਦਰਤਿ ਰੇ ਸਭ ਬੰਦੇ;
ਏਹ ਨੂਰ ਤੇ ਸਭੁ ਜਗੁ ਉਪਜਿਆ,
ਰਉਨ ਭਲੇ ਕੋ ਮੰਦੇ? ¹¹

God at first created his Light
then all people were made from it.
As the entire world
has come from that one Light,
then who are superior, who inferior?¹¹

¹⁰ Guru Nanak Dev, Guru Granth Sahib, Amritsar-1604, Rag Siri, p. 62.

¹¹ Bhagat Kabir, Guru Granth Sahib, Rag Parbhathi, p. 1349.

Seikh Farid Shakarganj (1173-1265), chronologically the earliest contributor whose hymns also form an integral part of this Holy volume, similarly exhorted everyone :

ਇਕੁ ਫਿਰਾ ਨ ਗਾਨਾਇ, ਸਭਨਾ ਮੈ ਸਚਾ ਧਣੀ।
ਹਿਆਉ ਨ ਰੈਹੀ ਠਾਹਿ, ਮਾਣਰ ਸਭ ਅਮੋਲਵੈ।¹²

Do not utter even a single rude word to any one
as the True master abides in one and all.

Do not break the heart of any one
as every heart is a priceless Jewel.¹²

Emphasising these cardinal principles of equality and fraternity, justice and tolerance, arising out of their firm faith in the Creator and His creation, as the basic need for maintaining peace and obtaining harmonious relationship between various sections of society, Guru Nanak pronounced

ਐ ਜੀ ਨਾ ਹਮ ਉਤਮ, ਨੀਚ ਨ ਮਧਿਮ,
ਹਰਿ ਸਰਣਾਗਤਿ ਹਰਿ ਰੇ ਲੋਗ।¹³

We who have taken shelter with God,
are God's own people, O friend.

We are neither high-caste, nor low-caste,
nor of middling state.¹³

As for himself, he stated in utter humility :

ਨੀਚਾ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਨੀਚ ਜਾਤਿ
ਨੀਚੀ ਹੂ ਅਤਿ ਨੀਚੁ;
ਨਾਨਕੁ ਤਿਨ ਰੈ ਸੰਗਿ ਸਾਥਿ,
ਵਡਿਆ ਸਿਉ ਨਿਆ ਰੀਸ? 14

I myself am one among the innumerable ones,
rather the lowliest of the lowly.

¹² Sheikh Farid Shakarganj, ibid., Slok 129, p. 1384.

¹³ Guru Nanak Dev, ibid, Rag Gujri, p. 504.

And I seek the kinship of the lowliest,
the lowest among the low-born

For, emulation of the high-born is in vain.¹⁴

In order to “build inter-religious understanding” and “bring about greater bonhomie among the followers of various religious denomination he, therefore, exhorted people belonging to different persuasions and dispensations :

ਆਈ ਪੰਥੀ,
ਸਗਲ ਜਮਾਤੀ...¹⁵

Let universal brotherhood be

The highest aspiration of your religious Order.¹⁵

As regards “breaking down the barriers of prejudice and hostility” and promoting instead “the spirit of harmony, understanding and cooperation”, Guru Arjan Dev, the holy contributor-cum-editor of this Holy Book, underlining such a radical concept of equity, unity, fraternity and universality, went to the extent of asserting :

ਨਾ ਰੋ ਮੇਰਾ ਦੁਸਮਨੁ ਰਹਿਆ,
ਨਾ ਹਮ ਕਿਸ ਰੇ ਬੈਰਾਈ।...
ਸਭ ਰੋ ਮੀਤੁ ਹਮ ਆਪਨ ਰੀਨਾ,
ਹਮ ਸਭਨਾ ਰੇ ਸਾਜਨ।¹⁶

Neither is any my foe, nor am I enemy of any,

I have made all and sundry my loving friends.

And I am friend of one and all.¹⁶

Just two years before he was tortured to death in 1606. He even recorded the following assertion in the Holy Granth itself:

¹⁴ Guru Nanak Dev, *ibid*, Rag Siri, p.15.

¹⁵ Guru Nanak Dev, *ibid.*, Japu, st. 28, p.6.

¹⁶ Guru Arjan Dev, *ibid*, op. cit., Rag Dhanasri, p. 671.

ਨਾ ਰੋ ਬੈਰੀ ਨਹੀ ਬਿਗਾਨਾ,
 ਸਗਨ ਸੰਗਿ ਹਮ ਰਉ ਬਨਿ ਆਈ।...
 ਸਭ ਮਹਿ ਰਵਿ ਰਹਿਆ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਏਕੈ,
 ਪੇਖਿ ਪੇਖਿ ਨਾਨਕ ਬਿਗਸਾਈ।¹⁷

None is our enemy.

Nor is anyone stranger to us.

We are in cordial accord with one and all.

The One God pervades all

seeing whom, I am in bloom of joy.¹⁷

Thus centuries ago, the Sikh Gurus broke down the said “barriers of prejudice and hostility” not only “between religious communities and insitutions” but also between all individuals who constitute these.

Keeping such catholic aspirations and universal convictions in view, the Sikh Gurus also “confronted the powers of the world with the word of the teachings of their religion rather than conformed to them when they acted contrary to the well-being of humanity” Guru Nanak not only “confronted”, in 1521, the invading Mughal Babar but also called him the regent of death,” condemned the tyrannical deads of his hordes and voiced the agony of the oppressed humanity in some of the most heartrending hymns contained in Guru Ganth Sahib, as given below for instance,

ਖੁਰਾਸਾਨ ਖਸਮਾਨ ਕੀਆ,
 ਹਿੰਦੁਸਤਾਨ ਡਰਾਇਆ।...
 ਏਤੀ ਮਾਰ ਪਈ ਕਰਨਾਣੈ,
 ਤੈ ਕੀ ਦਰਦ ਨ ਆਇਆ?
 ਕਰਤਾ ਤੂੰ ਸਭਨਾ ਰਾ ਸੋਈ;
 ਜੇ ਸਰਤਾ ਸਕਤੇ ਰਉ ਮਾਰੇ,
 ਤਾ ਮਨਿ ਰੋਸੁ ਨ ਹੋਈ।
 ਸਰਤਾ ਸੀਹੁ ਮਾਰੇ ਪੈ ਵਡੇ,
 ਖਸਮੈ ਸਾ ਪੁਰਸਾਈ।...¹⁸

¹⁷ Ibid, Rag Kanra, p. 1299.

You, O God; saved hurasan from Babar' invasion
and have let loose terror on Hindustan.

The People were tortured so ruthlessly
that they, in agony, cried to heaven.

Did it not awake any compassion for
them in you, O Lord?

You, O Creator, Who belong to all, pray listen :

If the powerful one smites another equally powerful,
our mind is not much grieved over it.

But if a tiger falls upon a herd of kine,
then the Master of the herd must answer for it.¹⁸

He not only "confronted" the invaders and appealed to the Creation-of-all in such touching and dynamic verses, but also rebuked the then rulers (viz. Lodhi Pathens) of hindustan for their not putting up a stiff fight for it, and allowing such a precious gem (i.e. India) to be ravaged and snatched away so easily. It was so because they

ਸਾਹਾ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਗਵਾਈਆ,
ਰੰਗਿ ਤਮਾਮੇ ਚਾਬਿ।
ਬਾਬਰਬਾਣੀ ਫਿਰਿ ਗਈ,
ਕੁਇਰੁ ਨ ਰੋਣੀ ਖਾਇ।¹⁹

The rulers had lost their senses
in the pursuit of sensuous pleasures.

Now, when Babar's command has gone around
even the princes go about without a crust.¹⁹

The Guru not only exposed their betrayal of trust and moral degradation, but also their administrative setup in no less forceful terms such as these:

¹⁸ Guru Nanak Dev, Guru Granth Sahib, Rag Asa, p. 360.

¹⁹ Ibid., Rag Asa, p. 417.

ਰਾਜੇ ਸੀਹ, ਮੁਕਦਮ ਕੁਤੇ;
 ਜਾਇ ਜਗਾਇਨਿ ਬੈਠੇ ਸੁਤੇ।
 ਚਾਕਰ ਨਕਦਾ ਪਾਇਨਿ ਘਾਉ,
 ਰਤੁ ਪਿਤੁ ਕੁਤਿਹੋ ਚਟਿ ਜਾਹੁ।²⁰

The rulers are turned tigers and their officers hounds.

They do not let people to rest in peace.

Their servants wound them with their claws.

And lick up all their blood and marrow that is spilt.²⁰

Guru Arjan, whose own contribution to the content of Guru Granth Sahib is the largest, pronounced the following ‘Divine Manifesto’ during his time as people were threatened with another onslaught on their life, honour and fundamental rights :

ਹੁਣਿ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਹੋਆ ਮਿਹਰਵਾਣ ਦਾ,
 ਪੈ ਕੋਇ ਨੇ ਕਿਸੈ ਰਵਾਣਦਾ।
 ਸਭ ਸੁਖਾਨੀ ਵੁਠੀਆ,
 ਇਹੁ ਹੋਆ ਹਲੇਮੀ ਰਾਜੁ ਜੀਉ।²¹

The gracious Lord has now

promulgated His Ordinances ;

None shall domineer over others

or cause pain to them.

All shall abide in peace and joy,

as the governance shall be gentle and compassionate. ²¹

While preaching their message of amity, unity, equity, love and truth on the one hand, and also confronting the native and foreign “powers of the world” so candidly and courageously on the other, the Sikh Gurus also roused the conscience of the people to make them fearless, good and true; and endeavoured to take them on the path that led to God’s presence. But denial of freedom and suppression of human dignity by the government

²⁰ Ibid., Rag Malar, p. 1288.

²¹ Guru Arjan Dev, Ibid., Rag Siri, p. 74.

of the day obstructed that common and peaceful path. In order, therefore, to safeguard that path: to honour the sovereignty of God; to uphold the freedom of conscience; and to defend human rights and values on the one hand and to uproot intolerance, hatred, indignity and tyranny on the other, two of its holy contributors-Guru Arjan Dev and Guru Teg Bahadur (1621-1675)-laid down their lives in 1606 and 1675, in Lahore and Delhi, respectively.

The Sikh prophet-teachers did all that, thus, to promote peace and harmony as well as all those lofty ideals which, as projected in Guru Granth Sahib, equate the Supreme Lord with Truth and Love of Him with Service of Humanity. They also enjoined upon all human beings mutual love, understanding and cooperation on the one hand, and truthful living and social responsibility on the other, invoking thereby both social service and social action. They believed in :

A. Love for God and Humanity:

ਜੋ ਰਤੇ ਸਹਿ ਆਪਣੇ,
ਤਿਨ ਭਾਵੈ ਸਭ ਕੋਇ।²²

They who love God,
love everybod.²²

B. Devoted Service to God and Humanity :

i. ਜੇਤੇ ਜੀਅ ਤੇਤੇ ਸਭਿ ਤੇਰੇ,
ਵਿਣੁ ਸੇਵਾ ਫਨੁ ਹਿਸੇ ਨਾਹੀ।²³

All living beings are Your own creatures.

But none obtains any reward without rendering

devoted service to You and to Your created ones.²³

ii. ਵਿਚਿ ਦੁਨੀਆ ਸੇਵ ਰਮਾਈਐ;
ਤਾ ਦਰਗਹਿ ਬੇਸੁਣੁ ਪਾਈਐ।²⁴

A resting place at the Divine Portal

²² Guru Nanak Dev, Ibid., op. cit., Rag Wadhans, p. 557.

²³ Guru Nanak Dev, Guru Granth Sahib, op. cit., Rag Asa, p. 354.

can be found only
through devoted service
of the people in this world.²⁴

Envisioning and preaching, thus, a new cultural ethos and an ideal social order; and emphasising social justice, moral obligations and service to humanity, Guru Granth Sahib has all along been exhorting and asserting for the liberation of humankind from all kinds of degrading bondage - mental, spiritual, social, political and the like. Its sacred writings present unimpeachable evidence to the aims and impact of that radical and dynamic movement which was initiated by the Sikh prophet-preceptors in the 15th century for the liberation and well-being of all human beings. Thus spoke Guru Arjan Dev, also the founder of the Golden temple at Amritsar, in around 1600 AD, while summing up the impact and influence of this “noble spiritual triumph”²⁵ in the words of Toynbee :

ਫੂਟੋ ਆਡਾ ਭਰਮ ਰਾ,
ਮਨਹਿ ਮ ਭਇਓ ਪਰਛਾਸੁ;
ਕਾਟੀ ਬੇਰੀ ਪਗਰ ਤੇ,
ਗੁਰੀਨੀ ਬੰਦਿ ਖਨਾਸੁ।²⁶

The egg-shell of doubt has shattered
and the mind is illuminated.
The Master has freed us from bondage
by putting off fetters from our feet.²⁶

As regards the third postulate of the above resolution of the World Conference on Religion and Peace, the Sikh Gurus, Guru Granth Sahib and their teachings have always been striving to ward off “the root causes of hatred and violence” and to “buld inter-religious understanding in our local communities, particularly where prejudices run strong”

According to Dr. S. Radhakrishnan too, the blessed founder of Sikh religion, Guru Nanak, “strove to bring Hindus and muslims together. His life and teachings were a symbol of the harmony between the two communities”. A popular vers describes him as a” Guru of the hindus and a Pir of the Muslims :

²⁴ Ibid., Rag Siri, p. 26.

²⁵ Toynbee, Prof. Arnold, Unesco’s Selections from the Sacred Writings of the Sikhs, london-1960, pp. 10-11.

²⁶ Guru Arjan Dev, Guru Granth sahib, op. cit., Rag Maru, p. 1002.

Baba nanak Shah Faquir

Hindu ka Guru, Musalman Ka Pir.”

This was in spite of the glaring fact that he “was critical of the formalism of both the hindus and the Muslims”²⁷ and his historic thunderblast, when he took up the mission of his life at Sultanpur Lodhi in Panjab, as already quoted, was :

ਨਾ ਰੋ ਕਿੰਦੂ ਹੈ,
ਨਾ ਰੋ ਮੁਸਨਮਾਨ ਹੈ।²⁸

There is neither a Hindu

Nor a Muslim.

(All are uman beings,

born of the one Supreme Being).²⁸

“Here it was”, said Swami Viekanand in 1897, “that the gentle Nanak preached his marvellous love for the World. Here it was that his broad heart was opened and his arms outstretched to embrace the whole world, not only of Hindus but of Mohammedans too.”

It was Guru Arjan, the Fifth Nanak, who in a single hymn, indicative of his cosmopolitan attitude and universal good-will, using a good number of attributive names of God, drawn from both the Hindu and the Muslim traditions, e.g. Jagannath, Rishikesh, Narhar, Gopal, etc.; and Maula, Allah, Khaliq, Khuda etc. respectively, and shattering the age-old doubts and illusions about His name, declared at its and:

ਰਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਭੂਰਿ ਖੋਏ ਭਰਮ,
ਏਕੋ ਅਨਹੁ ਪਾਰਬ੍ਰਹਮ।²⁹

The Master has lifted my illusion

(about the Name of God

and has enabled me to realise)

That Allah (Muslim name of God)

and Par-Brahm (Hindu name of God)

are one and identical. ²⁹

²⁷ Radhakishnan, in his Introduction, to UNESCO Selection from the sacred writings of the Sikhs, op. cit., pp. 21&23.

²⁸ Prachin Janamsakhi, ed. by Mr. M.A. Macauliffe, Rawalpindi -1885, p.37.

²⁹ Guru Arjan Dev, Guru Granth Sahib, ap. cit. Rag Ramkali, p. 897.

It was he, again, who transcending all sectarian biases and parochial limits, using a composite name, Allah Rama, for God, also proclaimed unequivocally :

... ਨ ਹਮ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਨ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਨ, 30
ਅਲਹ ਰਾਮ ਰੇ ਪਿੰਡੁ ਪਰਾਨ।...

... We are neither Hindus nor Muslims

For, our body and soul belong to the one Supreme Being
who alone is both Rama and Allah for us.³⁰

To make such a revolutionary pronouncement and record it in one sacred scripture in a communally surcharged and racially divided atmosphere during an intolerant alien rule, speaks highly of the deep concern and sincere efforts made by him in the cause of peace and amity, for the promotion of “commonalities among diverse faiths”, inculcation of inter-faith understanding, and harmonious relationship of all for the development of “a peaceful world community; rather for the “creation of a family across the world, which respects human dignity, honours the sovereignty of God and promotes justice and peace.

These pronouncements were made at a time when Guru Nanak, expressing his anguish and agony over the chaotic and terrible situation as well as the total evil of the period, painfully exclaimed in verses such as the following :

i. ਨਾਨਕ ਦੁਨੀਆ ਫੈਸੀ ਹੋਈ?
ਸਾਨਕੁ ਮਿਤੁ ਨ ਰਹਿਓ ਰੋਈ।
ਭਾਈ ਬੰਧੀ ਹੋਤੁ ਚੁਕਾਇਆ,
ਦੁਨੀਆ ਰਾਰਣਿ ਦੀਨੁ ਗਵਾਇਆ।³¹

i. O what has the world come to!
no gude of the way, no friend is left in it!
Even brothers and relatives
have lost the element of love.
O, it is for the sake of this world that
people lose even faith in God.³¹

³⁰ Ibid., Rag Bhairo, p. 1136.

³¹ Guru Nanak Dev, Guru Granth Sahib, Slok, p. 1410.

ii. ਹਲਿ ਰਾਤੀ, ਰਾਜੇ ਕਾਸਾਈ,
ਧਰਮੁ ਪੰਖ ਕਟਿ ਉਡਰਿਆ।³²

ii. This age has turned into a drawn knife.

Kings behave like butchers

and righteousness has taken wings.³²

Guru Granth Sahib transcends not only such “religious barriers, mutual hostilities and strong prejudices,” but also all types of religious exclusiveness, dogmatism, formalism, chauvinism and egocentric individualism. It preaches that God, the creator of all, being one, and all people being His own creation, there is, therefore, only one basic religion for the whole humanity and that religion is Truth which can be adopted and practised by anybody, any time, anywhere.

Expressing this conviction in very clear terms, it states:

ਏਕੋ ਧਰਮੁ, ਦਿੜੈ ਸਚੁ ਕੋਈ;
ਗੁਰਮਤਿ ਪੂਰਾ, ਜੁਗਿ ਜੁਗਿ ਸੋਈ।³³

He, who grasps the Truth, realizes that

as the Creator is One and is ever the same age after age.

There is, therefore, one religion of all mankind.³³

Enunciating its own concept of that one religion of all mankind and the definition of its true adherent, it also observes:

ਫਨੀ ' ' ਜੋਗੁ ਨ ਹੋਈ,
ਏਕ ਦਿਸਟਿ ਕਰਿ ਸਮਸਾਰਿ ਜਾਣੈ,
ਜੋਗੀ ਕਹੀਐ ਸੋਈ।³⁴

Religion consists not in mere talk.

He who looks on all alike

and considers all as equals.

May be acclaimed as truly religious.³⁴

³² Ibid., Rag Majh, p. 145.

³³ Guru Nanak Dev, Guru Granth Sahib, op cit., Rag Basant, p. 1188.

³⁴ Ibid. Rag Suhi, p. 730.

Indicating also the way to such an ideal and equalitarian religion, it maintains:

ਅੰਜਨ ਮਾਹਿ ਨਿਰੰਜਨਿ ਰਹੀਐ,
ਜੋਗ ਜੁਗਤਿ ਇਵ ਪਾਈਐ।³⁵

The way to true religion is found
by dwelling in God.

And remaining detached
in the midst of worldly attachments.
(like a lotus in the water).³⁵

This sacred scripture has given optimistic hope to every person belonging to any caste or creed, sex or stratum for his or her liberation even when he or she is alive in this very world :

ਖੜੀ, ਬਾਹਮਣ, ਸੂਦ, ਵੈਸ,
ਸਭ ਏਰੈ ਨਾਮਿ ਤਰਾਨਬ।³⁶

Khatris, Brahmins, Vaishyas and Sudras
all can swim across the ocean of existence,
through loving devotion to the Name of the One Lord.³⁶

It can be surely attained while leading a normal householder's life of virtuous conduct, remembering God, adoring His Nature, doing honest work, performing social and familial duties, earning livelihood and sharing earnings with the needy, as opposed to pursuing enforced celibacy or barren asceticism and mortification of the body to obtain it. So said Guru Nanak Dev :

ਪੁਤ੍ਰ ਰਲ੍ਹ ਵਿਚੈ ਭਤਿ ਪਾਈ।³⁷

One can attain salvation
even while living a normal domestic life.³⁷

Guru Granth Sahib has addressed itself, thus, to the common man of the world and not to an ascetic or a recluse, it has brought religion out of the

³⁵ Ibid, Rag Suhi, p. 730.

³⁶ Guru Arjan Dev, Guru Granth Sahib, Rag Maru, p. 1001.

³⁷ Guru Nanak Dev, Guru Granth Sahib, Rag Dhanasri, p. 661.

cloister and related it to the living beings and to the realities of life, adding a noble, ideal, practical approach and social meaning to its fold. It advises and tells them, for instance,

1. ਜਗ ਨਗ ਦੁਨੀਆ ਰਹੀਐ ਨਾਨਕ,
ਕਿਛੁ ਫੁਲਖੁ ਸੁਣੀਐ, ਕਿਛੁ ਰਹੀਐ।³⁸

we should keep on communicating
with our fellow-beings,
so long as we live in the world.³⁸

2. ਮਿਥਿਆ ਤਨ,
ਨਹੀ ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰਾ।³⁹

The human body
that does not do good to others, is worthless.³⁹

3. ਮਿਠਤੁ ਨੀਵੀ ਨਾਨਕਾ,
ਕੁਣ ਚੰਗਿਆਈਆ ਤਤੁ।⁴⁰

Sweetness and humility are
the essence of all virtues and good qualities.⁴⁰

4. ਸਚਹੁ ਓਰੈ ਸਭੁ ਕੋ,
ਉਪਰਿ ਸਚੁ ਆਚਾਰੁ।⁴¹

Truth is higher than everything else;
but higher by far is the truthful living.⁴¹

5. ਸੋ ਕਿਉ ਮੰਦਾ ਆਖੀਐ,
ਜਿਤੁ ਜੰਮਹਿ ਰਾਜਾਨੁ।⁴²

Why revile woman, from whom even kings and great men are born?⁴²

³⁸ Ibid, Rag Dhanasri, p. 661.

³⁹ Guru Arjan Dev, Guru Granth Sahib, Rag Gauri, p. 269.

⁴⁰ Guru Nanak Dev, Ibid., Rag Asa, p. 470.

⁴¹ Ibid., Rag Siri, p. 62.

⁴² Ibid., Rag Asa, p. 473.

The aim and object of such instructions and exhortations has been all-round uplift and welfare of the entire humankind through love, devotion, selfless service and righteous deeds, contributing to universal peace, pleasure and prosperity. They embody the message of unity, equality, compassion, tolerance and non-violence; and evince socialistic and altruistic approach which is one of optimism, faith and joy in natural phenomena. They also enjoin upon its followers truthful living and social responsibility, invoking both social service and beneficent action, as advised in the following verse by the founder of sikh religion:

ਘਾਨਿ ਖਾਇ, ਡਿਛੁ ਹਬਹੁ ਦੇਇ;
ਨਾਨਕ ਰਾਹੁ ਪਛਾਣਹਿ ਸੇਇ।⁴³

They alone have known the right way
who eat the fruit of their own toil
and share it with those in need.⁴³

These, and all other counsels, teachings and exhortations of Guru Granth Sahib are meant not only for its adherents but also for the peace and welfare of the whole humanity, as is stated in the following verse:

ਪਰਬਾਇ ਸਾਖੀ ਮਹਾਪੁਰਖ ਬੋਲਦੇ,
ਸਾਝੀ ਸਗਨ ਜਹਾਨੈ।⁴⁴

Great men speak in the terms of particular
but their wisdom is applicable to the whole world.⁴⁴

These are also specifically addressed to various persons belonging to some particular categories, creeds and callings etc., such as Yogis, Hindus, Muslims, Jains, farmers and traders, etc.,

All are advised, none criticized or insulated, to be true and firm believers in their respective faiths and callings, Such sincere advice and impressive guidance to the followers of other religions and professions etc., in the sacred scripture of one's own faith, does not seem to have been given this way in the Holy Book of any other religion. Inclusion of the compositions of their 30 (23 Hindus and 7 Muslims), out of 36, spiritual teachers in its fold and giving them the highest scriptural and transcendental status,

⁴³ Guru Nanak Dev, Ibid., Rag Sarang, p. 1245.

⁴⁴ Guru Amar Das, Guru Granth Sahib, Rag Sorath, p. 647.

quite on par with the Gurus themselves, is no less a unique and remarkable feature of this Holy Book.

The fervent appeals, prayers and pleadings included in Guru Granth Sahib, 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 verses like the following :

ਸ਼ਭੇ ਜੀਅ ਸਮਾਨਿ,
ਆਪਣੀ ਮਿਹਰ ਕਰ।
ਅੰਨੁ ਪਾਣੀ ਖੁਚੁ ਉਪਾਇ,
ਦੁਖ ਦਾਨਦੁ ਭੰਨਿ ਤਰ।⁴⁵

Be merciful, O God I

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.⁴⁵

What a universal appeal embodying such a marvellous 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 his or her belief and faith, caste or creed, colour or country, sex or status.

Such prayers and teachings of Guru Granth Sahib have contributed considerably to the uplift and welfare of humankind by promoting goodwill, general happiness and collective moral values of the society for building a new, peaceful, prosperous and pluralistic world order based on the vision and pattern of such an ideal city-state as is envisaged, defined and projected in its following matchless evocative hymn by Bhagat Ravidas, one of its saint-contributors

⁴⁵ Guru Arjan Dev, Ibid., Rag Sarang, p. 1251.

ਬੇਗਮਪੁਰਾ ਸਹਰ ਕੋ ਨਾਉ,
 ਦੁਖੁ ਅੰਦੋਹੁ ਨਹੀਂ ਤਿਹਿ ਠਾਉ।...
 ਕਾਇਮੁ ਦਾਇਮੁ ਸਦਾ ਪਾਤਿਸਾਹੀ,
 ਦੋਮ ਨ ਸੋਮ ਏਹ ਸੋ ਆਹੀ।...
 ਤਿਉ ਤਿਉ ਸੈਨ ਕਰਹਿ ਜਿਉ ਭਾਵੈ,
 ਮਹਰਮ ਮਹਨ ਨਾ ਕੋ ਅਟਰਾਵੈ।
 ਕਹਿ ਰਵਿਦਾਸ ਖਨਾਸ ਚਮਾਰਾ,
 ਜੋ ਹਮ ਸਹਰੀ ਸੁ ਮੀਤੁ ਹਮਾਰਾ।⁴⁶

The name of my city is 'griefless',
 suffering and sorrow do not abide in it...
 Its sovereignty is firm and inviolate for ever.
 There is no second or third class,
 as all are alike, being in the first class...
 Its residents are prosperous and contented.
 They go about as they please...
 no one prevents their entry into it.
 So says Ravidas, the liberated cobbler,
 to whom all fellow-citizens are loving friends.⁴⁶

Herein lies the power, modernity and universality of the revelation, thought, teaching, message and appeal of Guru Granth Sahib who has all along been emanating new rays of love, light and liberty; peace, hope and happiness', equity and justice for all mankind all over the world. Hence, said Mrs. Pearl Buck, the Nobel-Laureate, in 1962*

"There is something strangely modern about these scriptures.
 They speak to persons of any religion or of none.
 They speak for the human heart and the searching mind. It is impressive and significant that in the study of these Sikh scriptures, we see the affirmation of the essential unity of science and religion...
 Through them we see a beyond that belongs to us all.
 The result is Universal Revelation.

⁴⁶ Bhagat Ravidas, Guru Granth Sahib, Rag Gauri, p. 345.

That is why, Professor Arnold Toynbee has called it “a catholic anthology” which is part of mankind’s common spiritual treasure”. Hence, according to him, “It is important that it should be brought within the direct reach of as many people as possible. “A book”, that has meant, and means, so much to such a notable community as the sikh Khalsa, deserves close study from the rest of the world.”⁴⁷ Concluding his ‘Foreword’ to the UNESCO’S Selections from the Sacred writings of the Sikhs, he has also stated; “Mankind’s religious future may be obscure; yet one thing can be foreseen: the living higher religions are going to influence each other more than ever before, in these days of increasing communication between all parts of the world and all branches of the human race. In this coming religious debate, the Sikh religion, and its scriptures the Adi Granth will have something of special value to say to the rest of the world. This religion is itself a monument of creative spiritual intercourse between two traditional religions (Islam and Hinduism) whose relations have otherwise not been happy. This is a good augury.”⁴⁸

This “something of special value” lies in the aim, object, schome and content of Guru Granth Sahib, a highly remarkable scripture of love and peace, world-wide celebration of whose Tercentery Day Falls on 29th October 2007, coinciding incidentally with this global meet of the International Congress of Asian and African Studies in Ankara, Turkey, with the motto of

Ataturk ‘Peace at Home, Peace in the World’.

⁴⁷ Toynbee. Selections from the Sacred Writings of the Sikhs, op. cit., p. 9.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 10.