

RELEVANCE OF GURU NANAK'S TEACHINGS TO MODERNITY

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ABSTRACT

Guru Nanak's teachings are an all encompassing philosophy of life's aspects--from spiritual and mystical to socio-economic and administrative. I am examining certain of his thematic from the combined vantage point of both the human and social sciences. These involve socio-cultural, political and communicative issues on a broad spectrum ranging from a local dimension to regional, national and global areas which impinge on the organization of life, and on the very structure and dynamics of the Sikh community within these spectra. It is both apt and timely to analyze these themes in the context of Guru Nanak's internationally applicable philosophy and theorem. When accounting for today's sociological and cultural advances cum complexity. Emphasis is placed on Guru Nanak's and Sabd Guru's philosophies with other socio-religious ingredients and their applicability in today's global human relations and their trajectories for the future.

INTRODUCTION

Guru Nanak, the harbinger of new era, enunciated a comprehensive philosophy of universal nature which has relevance for all times. Guru Nanak's teachings are immensely beneficial to all human beings because those teachings, embodying all facets of society and life, transcend social, religious, color, creed, ethnic and national barriers and demarcations. He did not permit himself to be labeled or denominated and nor did he allow his Bani to become the channel and agency of a dominant and prevailing denomination. Guru Nanak declared, "*I am neither a Hindu, nor a Muslim*". Guru Arjan also categorically announced, "*The One Lord of the world is my God. He ministers justice to both the Hindus and Muslims.... I am neither a Hindu, nor a Muslim.*" [AGGS, M 5, p1136].

Guru Nanak espoused the amelioration of all human beings but emphasized equal opportunities, equal access to sources and resources; equal participation in decision-making; equal rights, egalitarianism, equitability and social justice for the marginal, disadvantaged, deprived and exploited ones because "One God is in all". His cardinal point was to live a life of

truthful living and to just perform good deeds - "*Truth is higher than everything else but highest is the Truthful living*" [AGGS, M 1, p 62]. As his philosophy is practical, creative, proactive and is to be lived, he negates and refutes asceticism, penances, ritualism and formalism. One is to lead a married householders' life and to act upon the three premier pillars of Sikhism, reciting Almighty God's Name (*Nāam Japna*); doing honest labor and earning by it [*Kirat Karna*], and to share those earnings with others, the needy ones (*Wand Chhakna*).

Guru Nanak lived what he preached and his whole life is a reflection of his philosophy. He lived among the people, he inter-acted and dialogued with them and he understood their psychology; that's why his perceptive micro and macro vision produced profound and extensive analysis of situations and problems. Due to his acute awareness of various issues and challenges, he advocated fitting and relevant remedial measures. As Cunningham delineates in his book, "*... It was reserved for Nanak to perceive the true principles of the reform and to lay these foundations which enabled his last successor, Guru Gobind Singh, to fire the minds of his countrymen with a new*

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nationality, and give practical effect to the doctrine....” [6, p 34].

Contemporary situation

Guru Nanak felt concerned with the prevailing socio-religio-political order as he witnessed the erosion of moral values in the every sphere of life. He depicted the situation ruthlessly but picturesquely in order to awaken people. He stated, “*False, immature and shallow is all others intellect*”. He further clarifies, “*In this age of darkness, men have faces like dogs and carrion is their food. They bark, they utter falsehood and they are devoid of righteous and pious thoughts.*” [AGGS, M 1, p 1242]. The rulers were oppressive and unjust and the people holding offices (administrators, religious advisors, police and justices (Qazis and bureaucrats - in present day terminology) had degenerated. What about our present day rulers, administrators, judges and police etc.? Outwardly, things seem different but what about the inner workings and public perceptions? Guru Nanak articulates, “*The dark age is the scalpel, the kings are the butchers, and righteousness has vanished. In the dark night of falsehood the moon of truth can not be seen anywhere*” [AGGS, M 1, p 145]. Is this applicable to present day scams, black money, encroachments and illegal money in foreign banks?

India's apex court, Supreme Court of India, felt compelled to become pro-active to force State and National governments to reveal illegal deposits (in foreign tax havens) of Indian nationals; asked a high court to transfer some of their “uncle judges”; ordered lower courts to cancel the bail granted to Hasan Ali, a billionaire in a money laundering case; and ordered a special court to hold a speedy trial in the 2G Spectrum case. Former Chief Justice of India, J.S. Verma stated that, “lawyers are judged by the value of their cars and Judges are making news for wrong reasons. Where is all this going to lead us”? [The *Sunday Tribune*, March 20, 2011, p 2]. Guru Nanak exposes the corrupt system in these words: “*Taking bribe, he does injustice. If someone asks him, then he quotes and reads out some aphorisms.*” [AGGS, M 1, p 851] Guru Nanak further reiterates, “*They take bribes and give false testimony; the noose of evil mindedness is around their necks. They read the Simiritis, the Shashtras and the Puranas; they argue and debate, but do not know the essence of reality*” [AGGS, M 1, p 1032].

Discrimination and inequality

Guru Nanak's judgments, teachings and philosophy are as appropriate and relevant today as they were five hundred years ago. Guru Nanak's truthful, logically and ethically convincing but cogent and apt pronouncements represent his all embracing philosophy about all aspects of life. He advises us to

consider the holiness of life and deem the body as “*the temple of God*”. Everybody has the fundamental right to possess all human rights and, if need be, to assert and strive to eradicate invidious distinctions, unjust divisions, discrimination and inequities [whether caste system, economic class system, racism, female subjugation, and any type of discrimination based on, race, ethnicity, nationality, color, language and belief system]. Guru Nanak was an ardent proponent of human's active participation to emancipate one-self and others suffering from inequality, suppression and denial of justice. Spiritual salvation will come along with righteous deeds performed in this world.

The prophets, or messengers or the founders of religion played a very significant role in critical times or during periods of transitional crisis. They proposed new sets of values, attitudes, behaviors and philosophies to the people at large or to particular sections of society who were bearing the brunt of the perplexed crisis situations. This amounted to a great contribution to socio-religious revolution. They articulated a very powerful, determined and candid criticism of the society existing in their times and proposed/profounded new reformed/revolutionary sets of values, new/modern socio-religious philosophies and interpretations which were/are of a universal nature. They also became forceful instruments to bring about a (revolutionary) change for a new system (new order).

Guru Nanak, committed to the cause of social transformation (new order), was engaged in the process of mobilizing people towards greater social consciousness. Structured religions had been playing a significant and legitimate role for the amelioration of people's conditions but the ruling classes had been utilizing (or abusing) religion as an weapon to control or manipulate masses for their selfish motives, while the people were unaware of the intrigues and stratagems of the ruling class.

The rulers have used religious systems to prevent masses from participating in movements of social transformation and mould them to comply with the wishes of the rulers. So either the people's ability to think independently is tamed or curbed and/or their sensibilities to injustice, oppression and inequality have been desensitized to protest/revolt against various types of immoral and corrupt or unjust conditions. Guru Nanak's teachings were radically transformative, for he denounced the prevailing values and prevalent socio-religio-political system and advanced new and different ideas and shifted paradigms.

Modernity

Modernity, a libratory search/odyssey, is qualitatively different and free from the interdctions of

traditionalism. Modernity brings dynamism, effects and produces mobility (vertical etc.) and provides wide ranging experience and exposure. Life is not static and change is the spirit of modernity. With modernization, it is difficult to retain a close, isolated and well insulated community but modernity has its own influences and implication. Durkheim (1951; 1965) was very concerned with the growing **anomic** disorder in modern societies. "Modernity" and "modernism" refer to a tendency among some religions to re-equip themselves by acquiring concepts and approaches (techniques) from the modern secular world. Sometimes, these words are used as a kind of second part in a dichotomy [13]. But the word fundamentalist can hardly be used in the same sense as it is of United States fundamentalist. Since European Enlightenment, the modernizing thought has been in practice to disregard any use of premise of exposition/interpretation which includes supernatural or anything that is beyond human understanding. But now many thinkers are feeling/seeing that their societies are deteriorating, their core values are eroding, traditions are crumbling, the youth and coming generations seem to slip away from the cherished beliefs, customs, moral codes and accepted standards of behavior; and they are trying to rejuvenate values by turning to their religions as a mechanism and strategy for survival, rehabilitation and reinvigoration. Some people have increasing suspicion/feelings of Western ways' encroachment (just as they infiltrate in social, economic and political spheres).

Modernity is related to the spirit of freedom which is embedded in the critical consciousness that it generates. Its implication is not to take things for granted but to submit them to critical scrutiny/analysis. Guru Nanak stated (more than 500 years ago), "*O dear eyed bride, hear thou the words of deep and infinite wisdom. First examine the goods, and then must thou strike a bargain. Proclaim thou that thou shalt not associate with the evil persons and would heartily welcome the good friends.*" [AGGS, M 1, p 1410]. The fundamental enlightenment spirit shattered taken for granted and legitimated superfluous religious rites and customs. Guru Nanak did not accept many established customs and institutions such as the caste system, *Janeu* ceremony, throwing water to the sun; traditional *Aarti*, formal and ritualized prayer and pilgrimages, asceticism and women's low status and degradation. He had critical appreciation and acceptance of other religions - asking their followers to find and follow the real spirit of their religions. He ushered new values, norms and thinking and asked people to discard fatalism and servility to unjust and exploiting authorities - even to a King. Modernity means a radical shift from fatalism to active action, from submissiveness and inertness to pro-activity and from ascription to drive and achievement.

Modernity replaces the traditional ways of life with uncomfortable change. Modernity encourages an individual and society to re-examine each and every aspect of existence. Guru Nanak did the same and he found new or hidden meanings in the human experience of the day.

Guru Nanak selectively implemented modernity's idea for discontinuing with the past through social and cultural change in life. Anything unjust and anti-human dignity was not sacrosanct for him. Sacred was honesty, honest living and performing virtuous deeds. As he says, "*He alone knows the path of righteousness, who earns his livelihood through honest means and shares it with others.*" [AGGS, M1, p 1245]. So acquiring wealth through unjust means is condemned by Guru Nanak's philosophy as one can not stockpile wealth without exploiting others and other's labor or without corrupt practices (as mentioned above). Nanak says, "*Without sinful acts, wealth is not amassed.*" [AGGS, M 1, p 417]. So he condemns exploitation and gathering wealth through illegal and illegitimate means; and categorizes it as sinful and morally tainted [as India's Supreme Court has categorized Indian's illegal money parked in foreign tax havens), "*If one's clothes are stained with blood, the garment becomes polluted. Those who suck the blood of human beings, how can their consciousness/minds be pure.*" [AGGS, M 1, p 140]. He exposed the ravaging and exploitative nature of the rulers [AGGS, M 1, p 1245] and advised people not to stand for an incompetent and unfair king/ruler. [AGGS, M 1, pp 1088; 1039; 1240].

Some state that Western style modernity's rationality has gone awry, and critique the economic (trade and markets) global harmonizing forces of narrow western modernity (also called McDonaldization of Society) which is well known in our times. Thomas Merton captured the spirit of the whole epoch when he wrote, "*The secular world depends upon the things it needs to divert itself and escape from its own nothingness. It depends on the creation and multiplication of artificial needs, which it then pretends to satisfy. Hence the secular world is a world that pretends to exalt man's liberty, but in which man is in fact enslaved by the things on which he depends.... In secular society, man is subject to his ever-increasing needs, to his restlessness, his dissatisfaction, his anxiety, and his fear; but above all to the guilt which reproaches him for infidelity to his own inner truth. To escape this guilt, he plunges further into falsity.*" [p 52]. Guru Nanak's philosophy, however, preaches communication, congregational participation and social (*Sangat* and *Pangat*) activism as an Endeavour in communal and collaborative worldly/material and

spiritual amelioration/uplift. As Guru Arjan Dev states, “unto religious congregational society, I am sacrifice, by associating with which human is emancipated.” [AGGS, M 5, p 987].

Equality for Women

The position of woman in society reflects the true image of the society. Woman has been the most suppressed and victimized human being in patriarchal society. One can well imagine the condition of the woman of the so called low castes. Women had been considered physically and mentally/intellectually inferior and also impure during the menstruation period. None of the prophets or messengers, before Guru Nanak, dared to champion her cause, rescue her from the wretched conditions and put her at par with man. He unbarred all avenues, encouraged her and empowered her right to be recognized as equal. He also awakened men to the reality that a female is equal to them because, “There is the same inner consciousness among all the beings.” [AGGS, M 1, p 24]. He also proclaimed, “Amongst all there is one Light and that Light art Thou.” [AGGS, M 1, p 13]. Guru Nanak attempted to divinize the life of woman and man by abolishing the ideas of superiority and inferiority. He was the pioneer to give a clarion call for male-female equality, for gender justice and for an overall egalitarian society. Women suffered from misogynistic attitudes in various religious traditions and customs. Guru Nanak stated, “Within a woman, the man is conceived, and from a woman he is born. With a woman he is betrothed and married. With a woman, man contracts friendship and with a woman the system of procreation keeps on going,” and he further says that great men are born of women. “Why call her bad, from whom are born the kings”? [AGGS, M 1, p 473].

Guru Nanak not only propounded equality in the male-female married householders’ life but in marriage too and proclaimed it a most sacred societal institution a healthy and beneficial for society as a whole. This institution is under question in some Western and North American countries with some calling, for example, same-sex marriages a frontal attack on the institution of marriage and procreation itself. Many religious organizations are mobilizing national and international opinion against the emerging trend against said marriage ‘institution’ which is sanctified in Aad Guru Granth Sahib. At the same time, however, the tragedy is that inter-caste marriages are not even being fully accepted yet- even among the Sikhs.

Though Guru Nanak's philosophy accorded equal status and human rights to women more than five hundred years ago, yet they are still struggling against

abuse, rape, domestic violence, dowry, burning of brides and foeticide. Even the police hesitate to register rape and wife battering cases in India. [“Protecting Women from Domestic Violence” in *The Tribune*, Jalandhar, March 19, 2011, p 13]. This article states, “Despite these legal reforms, societal response to domestic violence still largely excludes legal intervention. Women's access to these laws is very rare as male batterers are not arrested, prosecuted or sentenced as severely as other violent offenders.....” The National Records Crime Bureau, in its 2007 report, disclosed that dowry deaths have increased from 6208 (in 2003) to 8093 (2007). [NCRB- 2009]. A horrifying fact is that the heinous crime of rape has galloped from 2,487 (in 1971) to 20,737 (in 2007).

Guru Nanak extolled women's virtues, strength and dignified them with egalitarian status; but their female progenies are being killed inside wombs. Pratibha Patel, the President of India, had to manifest her grave worry about the ever increasing female sex ratio in Northern India. She said, “Women, particularly those who are already empowered, can be an effective voice for articulating women- related causes, including the fight against social evils like female foeticide, child marriage, dowry and addictions, as well as against discrimination and biases that exist in society against women.” [7]. Guru Nanak said the same centuries ago.

Female Foeticide: Women have been celebrating International Women's Day since 1909 and ultimately the Charter of the UN signed in 1945 was the first International agent to proclaim gender equality as a fundamental right. In 1977, UN invited member states to proclaim March 8th as UN Day for Women's Rights and International Peace. A child's civil rights were discussed in the UN Convention in 1989 and the year 1991 was designated as the year of the Girl Child throughout South Asia. At that time the Indian government also passed a National Policy for the Empowerment of women. The Akal Takht also issued its edict to the *Sangat* (congregation) to shun female foeticide similar to India's Supreme Court direction - but all these have remained mere declarations. Female foeticide has not declined. Two major studies and other reports conclude that female foeticide is actually increasing and the sex ratio is becoming skewed where boys are more in numbers than girls. “Malwa (in Punjab) has the poorest sex ratio. In fact, historically the districts of Ropar, Fatehgarh Sahib and Ludhiana share the lowest sex ratio.” [2]

Now female foeticide has surpassed previous female killings through Sati and infanticide [17]. A pioneering and comprehensive study by Dr. Supinder Kaur [16] provides shocking details about foeticide, and its socio-economic reasons. “Firmly entrenched institutionalized norms of which dowry and son preference are a part”,

alongside easily available non-invasive techniques of ultrasound scanning machines and abortion pills like MTP and Misprost and Baby Gender Member Kit (available on "pregnancy store. com") are contributors. She has compared India's sex ratios' with other countries and has also compared India's inter-provincial, Punjab's inter-district and inter-religious sex ratios. The data is shocking and very worrisome. She says, "The child sex ratio (girls per 1000 boys aged 0-6) in Punjab declined from 894 in 1961 to 793 in 2001..." [16, p 31]. Thousands of sex determining ultra sound clinics are working in India. Law and speeches alone are not enough to root out this evil. Guru Nanak's holistic approach and a "modernist" social movement, implementing his teachings in life, combined with stringent socio-religious and legal sanctions are the need of the hour.

Drug Abuse

Guru Nanak's philosophy deals with every aspect of life. However, I intended to discuss justice in society, females and caste situation, global interfaith relations and religious pluralism and drug addiction. Guru Nanak intended to abolish economic disparity so that all people will be fed adequately. His philosophy is to build a healthy society in which people should have nutritious food and shun every type of intoxicants including alcohol and drugs as they sap one's energy, numb the faculties and deprive one of true creative activity. He expected people to remain free from this disease. But, presently, the problem of drug addiction is on the rise. *The Times of India* (March 19, 2011) wrote, "Drug abuse on rise in Punjab. Though the Punjab government claims having controlled drug addiction among the youth, the rising drug abuse in the state has gained the attention of international educational experts." Consuming alcohol and getting inebriated has become part of Punjabi culture and getting high on narcotics has become a deadening need of Punjabi youth. B.B.C.'s Mark Dummet reports [8], "As Punjab is getting richer, it is getting more and more addicted". Raghav Ohri wrote, "According to a Punjab government survey, 66 percent of the school going students in the state consume *gutka* or tobacco; every third male and tenth female student has taken drugs on one pretext or the other and seven out of ten college going students abuse one or the other drug." [*Indian Express*, May 22, 2009]. Many youth are hooked on to opium, tobacco, cough syrups, capsules, charas, madrax, smack, heroin, synthetic drugs and now ecstasy may be entering market.

Sandhu's sociological study informs (based on Neerja and Goyal, 2001) that, "In the case of Punjab, according to a household survey in different regions of Punjab, the extent of drug addiction varies from 61 per cent to 68.6 per cent. It is observed that this problem is increasing

day by day...." (p 3). He further mentions the cause of easy availability of drugs, "Drug Mafia can easily buy the ruling elite and their officials, who are there to check the illegal activities." (p 121). Certain reports, such as that of Thukral [23], state that the rulers are not very concerned about the drug situation; "Intriguingly, the excise policy followed by the successive governments is liberal and aims at getting more and more taxes through more and more liquor vends. Currently the revenue is around Rs. 1728 crore as opposed to 1656 Crore in 2007-08." He further mentions that: "There is a well knit nexus that makes the supply and sale of drugs a smooth lucrative business and it puts to shame the government's lethargic corrupt functioning...." So a professional or a counselor is to provide adequate holistic treatment through professional treatment centers (as in Canada and USA), as it is a disease, along with socio-religious assistance and input....., and implementation of more stringent alcohol and drug laws. Stakes of the community are very high but the community does not seem to be aware. Guru Nanak reminded and awakened the community five hundred years ago: "By drinking the wine, man's intelligence departs, and madness enters his mind-----by drinking he forgets God, and he suffers the consequences---." (AGGS, M 1, p 554 and at pp 377, 721, 726, 1077).

Caste System

Indian society was and is suffering from various destructive ailments and caste system is one of the most deadliest and divisive diseases faced by the people of India. It impacts the social, religious, political and economic fabric of Indian society. Guru Nanak launched consistent campaigns against the caste institution which is based on vertical hierarchy and untouchability. *Sangat* and *Pangat*, the most esteemed institutions of Sikhism, were initiated to vanquish institutionalized inequality and/or caste exclusiveness. Guru Nanak and Sabd Guru vehemently reject any caste system. Guru Nanak says, "Preposterous is caste and vain the glory. The Lord alone gives shade to all the beings." [AGGS, M 1, p 83]. He further says, "God's name is the caste, honor, and glory of *Gurmukh*". [AGGS, M 1, p 230]. It has been emphasized that caste has no relevance and is against God's order, "Recognize Lord's light within all and inquire not the caste, as there is no caste in the next world." [AGGS, M 1, p 349.] His teachings are extensive, intensive and analytical perceptions (vision) which are full of knowledge, comprehension and are based upon illuminated mind/thought and a grass root understanding. He provided effective instruments to pursue a righteous path to realise virtuous and worthy objectives. Most people are not "abiding" by the teachings of Sabd Guru as Guru Amar Das announces,

“...the world is blind and does blind deeds. It fixes not its attention on Guru’s Word...”

Guru Nanak's objectives which were incorporated in moral codes and philosophy were/are seeking the wellbeing and benefit of all human beings. If those simple but practical values and morals (rules) are not implemented in life, society will face damaging and potentially fatal repercussions. Despite the Indian government declarations and Sabd Guru's followers' purported commitment, caste remains a factor that can not be ignored or swept under the carpet. We are indeed witnessing a resurgence of caste in social, political and religious sectors. There are egotists, bigots and hypocrites in every caste and religion, who maneuver and distort every issue to gain mileage out of it. Presently, this is happening with the caste issue. Some Sikh followers seem to be falling prey to it as some Sikh Gurdwaras and socio-religious institutions are being established in “caste names”. But no outcry or conscious raising campaign is in sight. Many of the old disparities and divisions between groups remain, and new inequalities between people are emerging (due to economic and reservation situation) [3]. The broad basis of positive discrimination to redress past injustices, has produced creamy layers who are trying to perpetuate their dominance and leadership in the name of caste/castes, while the poor sections of those castes and other economically needy people (of the so called higher castes) are still suffering.

Even “the members of the Constitution were well aware that enlarging the special provisions, whether relating to benefits or to beneficiaries, beyond a certain point, might subvert the principle of equal opportunity for which there were general endorsement in the Constituent Assembly...”. The Chairman of the Drafting Committee, B.R. Ambedkar wanted to ensure that they did not ‘eat up’ the general provision of equal opportunity for all.” [3, p 217]. The practice of inequality remains deeply embedded and the caste and sub-caste and sub-sub-caste prevail. Local to national, leaders seem to rejuvenate and reinforce the existence of sub-sub-caste categories so as to buttress their own ‘biradri’ (community) and thus to enhance and solidify political and economic positions and statuses. Now *Manusmiriti* of caste system, which has been condemned and slurred by (so called low) caste leaders, is being revived by them. Since these megalomaniac socio-political and caste leaders consider castes and sub-castes as their principalities, they try to perpetuate that division — as a vote bank.

The Governments in India (central and provincial) dominated by the concept of “vote bank politics” have sanctified castes and sub-castes. To gain economic benefits through reservations, some sub castes indulge

in disrupting daily life of people by blocking roads, highways and railway tracks and the national and provincial governments remain mook spectators and a sort of anarchic condition prevails (One can visualize the Jats agitating for that reservation in the near future). They seemed to have hijacked the communities and governments, until; once again, the apex judicial court of the country intervened. Economically weak and backward sections of society should get concessions and assistance through affirmative action for economically disadvantaged and deprived people/sections; but not permanent reservations.

There can be no radical change in real life without a revolution in ideas and many such revolutionary ideas in their day were provided by Guru Nanak. But, they have not been implemented. In all this, intellectual function is of crucial importance but intellectual function cannot be performed from above or from outside; it has to become a constitutive part of the society, and of Sikh society. Without active intellectual engagement, without people's participation and their implementation, society can degenerate into multiple divisions with consequential “immoral” acts. Forces of unity and nationalism seem to be weak and in disarray. Intellectuals and outstanding religious leaders, messengers and their teachings have a special role to play. “As, when Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt were taking stock of their possible allied forces, Churchill mentioned the Vatican. How many divisions had Vatican got, asked Stalin derisively? Intellectuals, outstanding religious figures and their philosophies are like Vatican. They command no vote banks. But they command an immense influence in the long run”. [5, p 123]. India's unity in diversity (religious pluralism) can only be retained through egalitarian, mutually beneficial and affirmative action (for the economically needy) policies.

Pluralsim

We are living in a world which is being coordinated and integrated as a whole. Religious plurality is a fact of our social existence the world over to-day. Religious pluralism does not oppose any religion but it talks about validity of all and invites equal participation of all. Religious pluralism leaves the different doctrinal systems intact within their own religious traditions. All different paths are considered valid and authentic. The heritage of India has been built out of many components. This becomes evident when we look at its linguistic and religious diversity. New components, whether from within or outside, have been continuously accommodated throughout history. In being accommodated, these components acquired new orientations, but their old identities were not allowed to lapse [4]. Accommodation without assimilation has been the characteristic of Indian civilization until modern times. This has enabled the coexistence of large

multiplicity not only of beliefs and practices but also of collective identities. Karve [15, p 7] puts it this way, “*The historical process is one of continuous. There does not seem to be a stage where a choice was made between alternatives, a choice involving acceptance of one alternative and a definite, final rejection of the others.*”

Religious particularism or exclusivism provides an ever-present danger but there were/are always people who challenged narrow visions and renounced exceptionalism in favor of interaction and dialogue. For Guru Nanak, no religion can claim a monopoly on truth, revelation and Ultimate Reality. Guru Nanak and Sabd Guru Philosophy do not condemn other religions but they castigate their followers who do not understand reality and do not practice the real essence and truthful meanings of their scriptures. So their formalism or ritualism is condemned. The objective is God/Truth realization. The Sikh scriptural hymns proclaim that the One and the same God is the Creator of this creation and that Creator lives in its Creation. “*Say not that the Vedas and the Semitic books are false. Rather false is the one who does not reflect on them.*” [AGGS, Kabir, p 1350]. Guru Nanak says, “*When the lamp is lit, darkness is dispelled. Similarly by reading the religious books (Vedas) the sinful intellect is destroyed*”. [AGGSM 1, p 791]. Understanding the Lord and to have compassion, tolerance and forgiveness for others is critical.

Guru Nanak and Sabd Guru do not ask followers of other religions to convert or to have faith in him. Rather he advises Muslims to become true Muslims [AGGS, M 1, p 41], and similarly asks Hindus to remain Hindus but must understand and practice the Truth and reality of their religions. Bigotry, sectarianism and exclusivism are antithetical to Guru Nanak's philosophy. Mushirul Hassan [14] writes that all human beings need to have an aspiration for the good of one's fellows to construct a theory of coexistence that would create the bedrock of moral society. Interfaith dialogue and religious pluralism help us to avoid misunderstanding, rivalries and splits. Guru Nanak's philosophy advocates dialogue, his Sidh Gosti is the prime example of dialogue and the method/technique/process to conduct and indulge in dialogue. He says, “*As long as we are in this world, O Nanak, we should listen and then speak.*” [AGGS, M 1, p 661]. The aim of true religion, with a pluralistic attitude (and to engage in a dialogue positively), is to live harmoniously and is to heal splits, injuries and apprehensions, as Bhai Gurdas says, “*the role of religion is not to tear asunder (the human social fabric) like a pair of scissors, rather it should play the role of a needle and sew the already torn fabric of our society*”. [Vaaran : XXXIII : 4].

Aad Guru Granth Sahib is an embodiment of dialogue,

religious pluralism and genial inter-religious relationship. Sikhism does not claim a monopoly over Truth or to be the sole vehicle for salvation. It states categorically, “*O Lord, the world is on fire. Save it by showering thy benediction. Through whichever way/gate it can be saved (delivered) deliver it that wise.*” [AGGS, M 3, p 853].

CONCLUSIONS

The perspective, technique and strategy of Guru Nanak was totally revolutionary as his non-acceptance of or to pander (gratify) to the impulses, whims and interests of anchorite, priest or other kinds of pretenders or claimants of piety pended his divinely assigned commission very difficult then had been the case with other teachers of religion in the medieval era, as they had touched the fringe only of the prevailing malaise and religion and life, and for the rest let the solid structure remained intact, and carry on to strangulate the moral and spiritual life – there vision was limited. The guru's vision extensive and overarching, and went on exploring, analyzing the roots of the problem which was to denude the religious idea of the fallacious accumulations that had overgrown it for hundreds of years. He instilled a new life in the spirituality of India which generated a forceful call/appeal for love, empathy and forbearance, and empowered the slaves and downtrodden of ages with new confidants, optimism, nobleness and dignity.

It is only Guru Nanak in the history of world religions who blessed the world and Sikhs by providing his written Bani to Guru Angad and then the total heritage (till the fifth Guru) was compiled by Guru Arjan Dev. The tenth Guru completed it by adding Guru Tegh Bahadur's Bani in it and consequently was declared Guru for the Sikhs. Sikhism is a way of life and the Gurus lived it and exhorted others to live that while also leading a householder's life. “*If we want a world free from the prevalent distrust, disharmony, divisions and violence, we must improve inter-religious relations and see people from other traditions as our brothers and sisters.....religiously pluralistic attitude has a vital role to play in inter-community peace. Sikh teachings are at the core of pluralism and can play a significant role in this process.*” [22]. Celebrate and implement Guru Nanak's and Sabd Guru's teaching today as they are just as relevant now....as they were five hundred years ago.

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