

EQUALITY IN HUMANITY - DOCTRINE OF GURU GOBIND SINGH

ARTICLE

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INTRODUCTION

The Societal living environment in 18th century was no different than the existing standards presently as far as equality, indifference, discrimination, bigotry, prejudice, hatred and even neglect. The Indic people were not given equal opportunity to acquire relevant skills, competencies, and qualifications to compete. in their daily life. Thus inequality was rather ensuring that despite substantive differences in intellectual knowledge and skills, everyone will not end with the same outcome. Interestingly the policies, philosophies and actions adapted and promoted by zealots of all religious persuasions searching solace in spirituality further complicated the subtle understandings of ordinary Indians. Guru Gobind Singh highlighted fundamentals of the Sikhi for equality in humanity realizing the plight of suppressed Indian people facing discrimination, forceful conversion to Islam by persuasion and persecution that promoted inequality in every aspect of their lives. He vehemently emphasized the Nanakian philosophy for equality among all Hindu and Islamic religious philosophies of spiritual leaders. The paper will look into geopolitical conditions impacting Indic people, and societal changes subsequent to perpetuity of emphasized Sikhi fundamentals of equality and respect for human as an individual that was initiated by Guru Nanak and perfectly projected by Guru Gobind Singh.

GEOPOLITICAL ENVIRONMENTS IN 18TH CENTURY INDIA

Rajas and princes of variable estates ruled Indian civilization prior to Islamic invasions, despite the fact of casteism dividing the society. They were maintaining education standards progressing in mathematics, medicine, literature, natural science and philosophy scholarships to trade within the communities and even at international levels. In his memoirs referring to transfer of Indian knowledge to middle east, Nehru [3] wrote, "In subjects, like medicine and mathematics, they

ABSTRACT

Guru Gobind Singh signified fundamentals of the Sikhi for EQUALITY in every aspect of the humanity by practical creation of an armed unit called Khalsa. By comprising the Khalsa with every high and low caste people in it, the discrimination due to casteism and indifference prevailing in India during 18th century; was eliminated in the Sikhi. The paper will look into socio-political and religious indifferences impacting human lives and the transformation by Sikhi fundamentals of equality and respect initiated by Guru Nanak and succeeding Sikh Guru Sahiban and perfectly perpetuated by Guru Gobind Singh.

learned much from India. Indian scholars and mathematicians came in large numbers to Baghdad. Many Arab students went to Takshashila in North India, which was still a great university, specializing in medicine."

Casteism in India governed by the Brahmans, though favored the priestly classes, had created very fragmented society; where people of different castes had not much of interrelationship and communal understanding of equality among the communities and kingdoms as well. Every kingdom had its own defense army of kashatryas caste that will not sit together or share their foods during ordinary life and even more so during wars. Such divisional fragmentation of Indic society due to casteism finally became the cause of falling prey to the Islamic invaders and others (Britain and Portugal).

Inequality, diversity, and discrimination among Indian cultures became the benefitting tools for the invaders. High caste Brahman kept education restricted to their caste only while assigning defense to the second caste of Kashatryas, Agriculture and trade to the third caste and menial chores to the fourth class. The third and fourth caste group of people were untouchable meaning the upper two castes were not supposed to touch them or be touched by them.

The inequality, discrimination, diversity, and indifference prevalent in ancient India, despite the modern advances in understanding humanitarian relationships; unfortunately, is still

existing among the Indian cultures.

SIKHI FUNDAMENTALS AND PHILOSOPHY

The Sikhi fundamentals of Equality, Similarity, Indiscrimination, and love were promoted and promulgated by the initiator primal Guru, Guru Nanak in 15th century. He was well educated, travelled all over India and abroad to understand the humanity in its complex inhumane culture. In his early age, he mastered the prevailing academic natural science and religious Indic literature. Advanced his knowledge of foreign cultures and Islam through literatures available in the libraries of Islamic rulers and personal communications with religious leaders of all religions (religions of the Indic origin and Semitic religions).

Guru Nanak narrated and wrote his thoughts about the 'Truth' of nature and natural phenomena ministering every aspect of universe/s and human life on earth. He promoted and promulgated the responsibility of an individual to him/her self and to the community at large. Commenting on the discriminative aspects of casteism where Brahmin class considered itself as the superior and greater than anybody else, he wrote; ਵਰਨਾ ਵਰਨ ਨ ਭਾਵਨੀ ਜੇ ਕਿਸੈ ਵਡਾ ਕਰੇਇ |
varnā varan na bhāvnī je kisai vadā kare᳚i.

One class of people does not like the other, when one claims itself made great. ਵਡੇ ਹਥਿ ਵਡਿਆਈਆ ਜੈ ਭਾਵੈ ਤੈ ਦੇਇ |

vade hath vadī᳚᳚᳚᳚ jai bhāvai ṭai de᳚e. Greatness is only in the Great Hands of the Creator; given to those with whom ONE is pleased.

AGGS. M1, p.53

ਏਕੇ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਵਰਤੈ ਸਭ ਲੇਈ |

Éko hukam varṭai sabh lo᳚i.

The Command of the One Lord prevails throughout all the worlds.

ਏਕਸੁ ਤੇ ਸਭ ਓਪਤਿ ਹੋਈ |੭|

Ékas ṭe sabh opaṭi ho᳚i. ||7||

From the One, all have arisen. ||7||

ਰਾਹ ਦੇਵੈ ਖਸਮੁ ਏਕੈ ਜਾਣੁ |

Rāh ḡovai kḥasam eko jāṇ.

There are two routes, but remember that their Lord and Master is only One.

ਗੁਰ ਕੈ ਸਬਦਿ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਪਛਾਣੁ |੮|

Gur kai sabaḡ hukam pachḥāṇ. ||8||

Through the Word of the Guru's Shabad, recognize the Hukam of the Lord's Command. ||8||

ਸਗਲ ਰੂਪ ਵਰਨ ਮਨ ਮਾਹੀ |

Sagal rūp varan man māhī.

He is contained in all forms, colors and minds.

ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਏਕੈ ਸਾਲਾਹੀ |੯|੫|

Kaho Nānak eko sālāhī. ||9||5||

Says Nanak, praise the One Lord. ||9||5||

AGGS (1), M1, p.223

ਝੂਠ ਵਿਕਾਰ ਮਹਾ ਦੁਖੁ ਦੇਹ |

Jhūṭh vikār mahā ḡukḥ deḥ.

Falsehood and corruption cause terrible suffering.

ਭੇਖ ਵਰਨ ਦੀਸਹਿ ਸਭਿ ਖੇਹ

Bḥekh varan ḡīsēh sabh kḥeh.

All the religious robes and social classes look just like dust.

ਜੇ ਉਪਜੈ ਸੇ ਆਵੈ ਜਾਇ |

Jo upjai so āvai jā᳚e.

Whoever is born, continues to come and go.

ਨਾਨਕ ਅਸਥਿਰੁ ਨਾਮੁ ਰਜਾਇ |੪|੧੧|

Nānak asthir nām rajā᳚e. ||4||11||

O Nanak, only the Naam and the Lord's Command are eternal and everlasting. ||4||11||

AGGS. M1, p. 352

ਧਨਾਸਰੀ ਮਹਲਾ ੧ ਘਰੁ ੩

ḡhanāsri mēhlā 1 ḡhar 3

Dhanaasaree, First Mehl, Third House:

ੴ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ |

Ik᳚oāṅkār saṭgur parsāḡ.

One Universal Creator God. By The Grace Of The True Guru:

ਕਾਲੁ ਨਾਹੀ ਜੋਗੁ ਨਾਹੀ ਨਾਹੀ ਸਤ ਕਾ ਢਬੁ |

Kāl nāhī jog nāhī nāhī saṭ kā ḡḥab.

No, no, this is not the time, when people know the way to Yoga and Truth.

ਥਾਨਸਟ ਜਗ ਭਰਿਸਟ ਹੋਏ ਡੂਬਤਾ ਇਵ ਜਗੁ |੧|

Thānsat jag bhārisat ho᳚e ḡūbṭā iv jag. ||1||

The holy places of worship in the world are polluted, and so the world is drowning. ||1||

ਕਲ ਮਹਿ ਰਾਮ ਨਾਮੁ ਸਾਰੁ |

Kal mēh rām nām sār.

In this Dark Age of Kali Yuga, the Lord's Name is the most sublime.

ਅਖੀ ਤ ਮੀਟਹਿ ਨਾਕ ਪਕੜਹਿ ਠਗਣ ਕਉ ਸੰਸਾਰੁ |੧|| ਰਹਾਉ |

Akhī ṭa mīṭēh nāk pakṛēh ṭḡgaṇ ka᳚o sansār. ||1|| rahā᳚o.

Some people try to deceive the world by closing their eyes and holding their nostrils closed. ||1||Pause||

ਆਂਟ ਸੇਤੀ ਨਾਕੁ ਪਕੜਹਿ ਸੂਝਤੇ ਤਿਨਿ ਲੋਅ |

Āṅṭ seṭī nāk pakṛēh sūjh᳚ṭe ṭin lo᳚a.

They close off their nostrils with their fingers, and claim to see the three worlds.

ਮਗਰ ਪਾਛੈ ਕਛੁ ਨ ਸੂਝੈ ਏਹੁ ਪਦਮੁ ਅਲੋਅ |੨|

Magar pāchḥai kachḥ na sūjhai eḥu paḡam alo᳚a. ||2||

But they cannot even see what is behind them. What a strange lotus pose this is! ||2||

ਖੜੀਆ ਤ ਧਰਮੁ ਛੋਡਿਆ ਮਲੇਛ ਭਾਖਿਆ ਗਰੀ |

Kḥṭarī᳚ā ṭa ḡḥaram chḥḡodi᳚ā malechḥ bhākhī᳚ā ḡahī.

The K'shatriyas have abandoned their religion, and have adopted a foreign language.

ਸ੍ਰਿਸਟਿ ਸਭ ਇਕ ਵਰਨ ਹੋਈ ਧਰਮ ਕੀ ਗਤਿ

ਰਹੀ |੩|

Sarisat sabh ik varan ho᳚ī d̥haram kī gat̥ rahī. ||3||

The whole world has been reduced to the same social status; the state of righteousness and Dharma has been lost. ||3||

ਅਸਟ ਸਾਜ ਸਾਜਿ ਪੁਰਾਣ ਸੋਧਹਿ ਕਰਹਿ ਬੇਦ ਅਭਿਆਸੁ |

Asat sāj sāj purāṇ sod̥hēh karahi bed̥ ab̥hiās.

They analyze eight chapters of (Panini's) grammar and the Puraanas. They study the Vedas,

ਬਿਨੁ ਨਾਮ ਹਰਿ ਕੇ ਮੁਕਤਿ ਨਾਹੀ ਕਹੈ ਨਾਨਕੁ

ਦਾਸੁ |੪|੧|੬|੮|

Bin nām har ke mukat̥ nāhī kahai Nānak d̥ās. ||4||1||6||8||

but without the Lord's Name, no one is liberated; so says Nanak, the Lord's slave.

||4||1||6||8||

AGGS¹. M1, p.663

Supplementing philosophy (Bani) for equality in humanity initiated by Guru Nanak is further promoted by the fifth Nanak, Guru Arjan when he wrote:

ਬੇਦ ਕਤੇਬ ਸਿਮ੍ਰਿਤਿ ਸਭਿ ਸਾਸਤ ਇਨ੍ਹਰੁ ਪੜਿਆ

ਮੁਕਤਿ ਨ ਹੋਈ |

Bed̥ kat̥eb sim̥rit̥ sab̥h sāsāt̥ in̥h par̥iā mukat̥ na ho᳚ī.

One may read all the books of the Vedas, the Bible, the Simritees and the Shaastras, but they will not bring liberation.

ਏਕੁ ਅਖਰੁ ਜੇ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਜਾਪੈ ਤਿਸ ਕੀ ਨਿਰਮਲ ਸੋਈ |੩|

Ēk ak̥har̥ jo gurmuk̥h jāpai t̥is kī nirmal so᳚ī. ||3||

One who, as Gurmukh, chants the One Word, acquires a spotlessly pure reputation. ||3||

ਖੜੀ ਬ੍ਰਾਹਮਣ ਸੂਦ ਵੈਸ ਉਪਦੇਸੁ ਚਹੁ ਵਰਨਾ ਕਉ ਸਾਝਾ |

K̥h̥ar̥ī brāhman̥ sūd̥ vais up̥des̥ ch̥ahu

varnā ka᳚o sāj̥hā.

The four castes - the Kshatriyas, Brahmins, Soodras and Vaisyas - are equal in respect to the teachings.

ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਜਪੈ ਉਧਰੈ ਸੇ ਕਲਿ ਮਹਿ ਘਟਿ

ਘਟਿ ਨਾਨਕ ਮਾਝਾ |੪|੩|੫੦|

Gurmuk̥h nām̥ japai ud̥hrai so kal̥ mēh̥ gh̥at̥ gh̥at̥ Nānak māj̥hā. ||4||3||50||

One who, as Gurmukh, chants the Naam, the Name of the Lord, is saved. In this Dark Age of Kali Yuga, O Nanak, God is permeating the hearts of each and every being. ||4||3||50||

AGGS¹. M1, p. 747

It is obvious from the foregoing quotations of the Gurbani that promulgation of equality in humanity was initiated and promoted by the primal Guru Nanak and supplemented by succeeding Sikh Guru Sahiban. They realized the plight of Indian people condemned to lower castes and lower economic status of all castes and religions; and promulgated following approaches to bring sense of stability in human values:

Diversity

Similarity

Neutrality

Equality

Gobind Rai, at the young age of 9, subsequent to the sacrificial beheading of his father Guru Teg Bahadur; had Guruship bestowed upon him. The Indian people were fragmented in the extreme aspect at the time into social, economic, casteism, and religious diversity. The ruling Islamic King Aurangzeb had started forceful conversion of Indians (particularly Brahmins and Kashatryas) into Islam. Guru Teg Bahadur to emphasize Oneness of the God and humanity in all religious persuasions upon the ruling Kingdom, offered his head for sparing Hindu religion from forceful conversions to Islam.

Guru Gobind Singh realized various religious persuasions befooling populace to attain spiritual ecstasies

and peace of mind. He described the divisive patterns and various philosophies of religiosity. Guru Gobind Singh captures all four human values in his poetry discussed hereafter as follows:

By Thy Grace. Kabitt [2].

ਕੋਊ ਭਇਓ ਮੁੰਡੀਆ ਸੰਨਿਆਸੀ ਕੋਊ ਜੋਗੀ ਭਇਓ
ਕੋਊ ਬ੍ਰਹਮਚਾਰੀ ਕੋਊ ਜਤੀ ਅਨੁਮਾਨਬੋ ॥

Someone becomes a clean-shaven monk (Ramanandi Monk), or a Sanyasi (the renouncer); others happen to be yogis and some are assessed to have been Brahmcharis or celibates.

ਹਿੰਦੂ ਤੁਰਕ ਕੋਊ ਰਾਫਜੀ ਇਮਾਮ ਸਾਫੀ ਮਾਨਸ ਕੀ
ਜਾਤ ਸਬੈ ਏਕੈ ਪਹਿਚਾਨਬੋ ॥

Some are Hindus and others are Muslims. Someone is Iliifazi (ashiah=renouncer-follower of Ali) and another an Imam-Shafi (Sunni=adherent of the Prophet) but Ye recognize all human race as one.

ਕਰਤਾ ਕਰੀਮ ਸੋਈ ਰਾਜਕ ਰਹੀਮ ਓਈ ਦੂਸਰੋ ਨ ਭੇਦ
ਕੋਈ ਭੂਲ ਭ੍ਰਮ ਮਾਨਬੋ ॥

Karta=the Creator (of the Hindus) and Karim=the Beneficent (of the Muslims) is the same God; He is the Provider of the Livelihood and the Bestower of the Boons. Let none make the error of making distinction between His different names.

ਏਕ ਹੀ ਕੀ ਸੇਵ ਸਭ ਹੀ ਕੋ ਗੁਰਦੇਵ ਏਕ ਏਕ ਹੀ
ਸਰੂਪ ਸਬੈ ਏਕੈ ਜੋਤ ਜਾਨਬੋ ॥ ੧੫॥੮੫॥

They all serve (worship) the One Lord who is the only lightener of all. All have been created in His image; ye consider that His is the only light diffused in everyone.(15)(85)

ਦੇਹੁਰਾ ਮਸੀਤ ਸੋਈ ਪੂਜਾ ਔ ਨਿਵਾਜ ਓਈ ਮਾਨਸ ਸਬੈ
ਏਕ ਪੈ ਅਨੇਕ ਕੋ ਭਰਮਾਉ ਹੈ ॥

The Temple and the Mosque are the same; there is no difference between them. Neither is there any dissimilarity between the Hindu worship and the Muslim namaz=prayer. The whole human race is the self-same but due to illusion, they appear different.

ਦੇਵਤਾ ਅਦੇਵ ਜੱਛ ਗੰਧੂਬ ਤੁਰਕ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਨਿਆਰੇ
ਨਿਆਰੇ ਦੇਸਨ ਕੇ ਭੇਸ ਕੋ ਪ੍ਰਭਾਉ ਹੈ ॥

The demigods, the demons, yakshas (the heavenly dancers), gandharvas (celestial singers), the Muslims and the Hindus all appear dissimilar as they adopt customary dresses of their own countries.

ਏਕੈ ਨੈਨ ਏਕੈ ਕਾਨ ਏਕੈ ਦੇਹ ਏਕੈ ਬਾਨ ਖਾਕ ਬਾਦ
ਆਤਸ ਐ ਆਬ ਕੋ ਰਲਾਉ ਹੈ ॥

All human beings have the same eyes, the same ears, the same body and the same build. All creation is a blend of the earth, the air, the fire and the water.

ਜੈਸੇ ਏਕ ਆਗ ਤੇ ਕਨੂਕਾ ਕੋਟ ਆਗ ਉਠੇ ਨਿਆਰੇ
ਨਿਆਰੇ ਹੁਣਿ ਕੈ ਫੇਰਿ ਆਗ ਮੈ ਮਿਲਾਹਿਗੇ ॥

As from a big fire, millions of sparks of fire arise, they get scattered and again they merge in the same fire.

ਜੈਸੇ ਏਕ ਧੂਰ ਤੇ ਅਨੇਕ ਧੂਰ ਪੂਰਤ ਹੈ ਧੂਰ ਕੇ ਕਨੂਕਾ
ਫੇਰ ਧੂਰ ਹੀ ਸਮਾਹਿਗੇ ॥

As from a heap that consists of myriads of dust particles, those dust bits disperse and arise above and then As from a heap that consists of myriads of dust particles, those dust bits disperse and arise above and then those dust particles merge in the same dust.

ਜੈਸੇ ਏਕ ਨਦ ਤੇ ਤੰਗ ਕੋਟ ਉਪਜਤ ਹੈ ਪਾਨ ਕੇ
ਤੰਗ ਸਬੈ ਪਾਨ ਹੀ ਕਹਾਹਿਗੇ ॥

As from a river millions of waves of water are produced and these watery waves merge with water and will still be called as water.

ਤੈਸੇ ਬਿਸ ਰੁਪ ਤੇ ਅਭੂਤ ਭੂਤ ਪ੍ਰਗਟ ਹੁਣਿ ਤਾਹੀ ਤੇ
ਉਪਜ ਸਬੈ ਤਾਹੀ ਮੈ ਸਮਾਹਿਗੇ ॥ ੧੭॥੮੭॥

As both the animate (sentient beings) and inanimate (non-sentient objects) are manifested from the Universal Lord. They arise from Him and shall merge again in their primal source.

Dasam Granth Guru Gobind Singh [2].

The diversified five sects listed in the poem referred earlier as the clean shaven heads (mundyaa—orthodox Jainism), the renouncers (Sanyassi—Gorakhnath), Yogis of Buddhistic philosophy, Bachelors for life (Brahmchari), and the Celibates, together can be grouped under

Hinduism. Even though these sects are diverse but still hold similarity in the basic principles—One God and scattered into separate sects. Interestingly, neither they meditate, eat, or sit together, nor they unite in any religious or non religious ventures. They all have individual representations of the demigods belonging to their sect and worship it for obtaining boons in daily life.

Grouping sects of various religious philosophies, Guru Gobind Singh listed them as: Hinduism and Islam—Sunni and Shia. (ਹਿੰਦੂ ਤੁਰਕ ਕੋਊ ਰਾਫਜੀ ਇਮਾਮ ਸਾਫੀ).

Guru Gobind Singh Ji in compliance with the Nanakian Philosophy of One God and One humanity, promoted “Similarity and Equality” in the diverse human race that evolved from the Apes (ਮਾਨਸ ਕੀ ਜਾਤ ਸਬੈ ਏਕੈ ਪਹਿਚਾਨਬੋ ॥).

CONCLUSIONS:

Guru Gobind Singh, the last Guru in Sikhi religion having knowledge of the fundamentals of unity in diversity and similarity among the human race initiated by the primal Guru Nanak; confirmed the principles in practice by creating Sikhi brotherhood called Khalsa. He understood the complexities reflecting the real world of religious overstatements or understatement in keeping populations believing in diversity and inequality. However, he promulgated the concept of equality, similarity, unity in diversity and neutrality in the humanity. He promoted faith in One God and One humanity.

REFERENCES:

1. AGGS=Aad Guru Granth Sahib 1983 (Reprint). Publishers: Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar. (M=Mahala i.e. succession number of the Sikh Gurūs to the house of Nanak. M is replaced with the name of Bhagat/Bhatt for their Bani, P=page number in AGGS).

2. Dasam Granth. Guru Gobind Singh Kabit. (17)(87)
3. Nehru (1989), p. 151 466. Eaton (2000), p. 29.