

Sri Guru Granth Sahib: A Unique Secular Granth

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Abstract – Sri Guru Granth Sahib ji is the sacred scripture, spiritual authority and eternal living Guru of Sikhs as embodiment of ten Sikh Gurus. Sri Guru Granth Sahib ji consists of 1430 pages known as Angs (limbs) in Sikh tradition. It is the expansion of the greatest humanist Sri Guru Nanak Dev ji's philosophy of one almighty and the oneness of His creation. It is the most secular Granth on the Earth. It contains the Bani of great men of India, including 6 Sikh Gurus – Guru Nanak Dev ji, Guru Angad Dev ji, Guru Amardas ji, Guru Ramdas ji, Guru Arjun Dev ji and Guru Tegh Bahadur ji; 15 Bhagats – Jai Dev ji, Sheikh Farid ji, Trilochan ji, Namdev ji, Sadhana ji, Ramanand ji, Kabir ji, Dhana ji, Pipa ji, Sain ji, Ravi Das ji, Bhikhan ji, Sur Das ji, Bainsi ji, Parmanand ji; 11 Bhattas (Bards) – Kalashar ji, Gayand ji, Bhikha ji, Kirat ji, Mathura ji, Jalap ji, Salh ji, Bhalh ji, Balh ji, Harbans ji, Nalh ji; 4 Gursikhs – Bhai Mardana ji, Baba Sundar ji, Bhai Satta ji, Rai Balvand ji. All compositions included in it – whether written by Sikh Gurus, bhakats, bards or gursikhs – are treated as Gurbani, the guru's words. No distinction is made between Guru and the Bani. "Bani Guru Guru hai Bani vich Bani amrit sare. Gurbani kahe sewak jan manai paratakh Guru nisatare"¹ which means 'The word, the Bani is Guru, and Guru is the Bani. Within the Bani, the ambrosial nectar is contained; if His humble servant believes, and acts according to the words of the Guru's Bani, then the Guru, in person, emancipates him.' Guru Ramdas ji, the fourth Guru revered the scripture by describing it the home of Transcendent God, "Pothi Paramesar ka than"

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Guru Granth Sahib is a matchless treasure of wisdom, knowledge, experiences and teachings of six Sikh Gurus and thirty Indian saints – from different castes, sects and regions – who lived during a period of over 500 years, i.e. from Bhagat Jaidev ji (b.1170) to Sri Guru Teg Bahadur ji (1621- 1675). This is an exemplary revolution in the history of the religions of the world whereas even today, in many of the Hindu temples, so called low caste Hindus and non- Hindus are not permitted to enter. In Jew temples, non-Jews and in Zoroastrian temple, non-Zoroastrians are prohibited to enter. Similarly in the holy city of Mecca, non-Muslims are not allowed to enter. There is nothing sectarian in Sri Guru Granth Sahib ji. It contains lessons of universal truths, universal brotherhood, morality, and songs of divine love. Guru Granth Sahib ji has given equal status to all – the Sikh Gurus as well as Bhagats of different castes, creeds and classes – whether a weaver, a cobbler, a barber, a king, a butcher, a Muslim, a Jaat, a Brahmin, a Vaish or a Shudra – all are sitting on the same throne in Gurudwara Sahib, where every Sikh bows his head in reverence since more than 300 years.

Guru Granth Sahib is written in the Gurmukhi script but unlike other scriptures, it is a unique multi- lingual scripture written not in single scholarly language but in the mixed languages of the masses from different parts of the Indian sub- continent. Persian, Arabic, Hindi, Sanskrit and other Indian languages are used. These compositions, which are devotional hymns

and prayers to the supreme, contain the message of love and devotion, truth, humility, mercy, brotherhood, equality, service to others, adoption of virtues, renunciation of vices, purity of mind and soul. The scripture was firstly prepared by Shri Guru Arjun Dev ji, the fifth Guru in 1604 who installed it in Harmandir Sahib, popularly known as Golden Temple.

It was, initially, known as 'Aad Granth'. Later, the final shape as Granth Sahib was given by Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth guru in 1705. He bestowed it the Guruship in 1708, putting an end to the Guruship in an individual person. Formally Granth and Panth (community) were jointly made the eternal Guru, though it was already in practice during the life time of the 10 Gurus from 1469 to 1708. Its foundation was laid by Guru Nanak Dev ji who asserted, "Shabad guru surat dhun chela"³ which means 'The Shabad is the Guru, upon whom I lovingly focus my consciousness; I am the disciple'

The concept of oneness of Creator as well as His creation is the focal point of Sri Guru Granth Sahib ji. Guru Arjan Dev ji wanted to compile a scripture free from all kind of boundaries national as well as international, a universal scripture for the mankind because for him all are same as he mentions in SGGS, "Ek pita ekas ke hum baarik"⁴ which means 'The One God is our father; we are the children of one God.' So SGGS is unique amalgamation of the

writings of not only Sikh Gurus but Hindu and muslim saints from different communities. It advocates the unity and sanctity of life of all forms whether high or low in any strata of life. As Guru Nanak Dev ji gospels in Sri Guru Granth Sahib, “*Awal allah noor upaaya kudrat ke sab bande, ek noor te sab jag upjaya kon bhale ko mande*”⁵ which means ‘First, Almighty created the light; then by His creative power, He made all mortal beings. From the one light, the entire universe welled up. So who is good, and who is bad?’ Thus he emphasized the oneness of mankind. Similar views are presented by Guru Angad Dev ji, “*Manda kis no akhiai janh sabhna sahib ek*”⁶ which means ‘How anyone can be called bad as we have only one lord and master.’

The Gurus regard human beings as the crown of creation as through human consciousness creator is worshipped and is to be realized. The Gurus’ contention that all men have descended from the same being and there is none high or low is borne out by various hymns scattered throughout SGGS ji : Guru Nanak says, “*Sabh mah jot jot h soi, tis de chanan sab mah chanan ho*”⁷ which means ‘Amongst all is the light. (O! God) You are that light. By this illumination, that light is radiant within all.’

Guru Arjun Dev clearly tells us, “*Sagal banaspat mah baisantar sagal dudh mah ghia ,uch nich meh jot samani ghat ghat madhau jia*”⁸ which means ‘Fire is contained in all firewood, and butter is contained in all milk. God’s light is contained in the high and low; the lord is in the hearts of all beings.’ Kabir ji opposes the caste system by pointing out the equalities among mankind, “*tum kat brahman hum kat sud , hum kat lohu tum kat dudh*”⁹ which means ‘How is that you are a brahmin, and I am of low social status? How is that I am formed of blood, and you are made of milk?’ Guru Nanak seeks company of the lowest of the low class, the very lowest of the low. The friendship of the great is vain because where the weak are cared for, there doth the mercy rain; as written in SGGS, “*nicha andar nich jat nich hu at nich nanak tin kai sang sath vadia siu kia ris, jithe nich samalian tithai nadir teri bakshish*”¹⁰ Guru Ramdas Ji, in one of his hymns – gives examples of Bidar, Ravidas the cobbler and Namdev , the people of so called low class – asserts that when someone of low social class chants the Lord’s Name, he obtains the state of highest dignity, “*nich jat har japatia utam padavi pai*”¹¹ He presents similar view in one more hymn where he tells that there are four castes: Brahmin, Kh’shaatriya, Soodra, and Vaishya, and there are four stages of life. One who meditates on the Lord, is the most distinguished and renowned “*brahman khatri sud vais char varan char asram hah jo har dhiavai so paradhan*”¹² The fifth guru says, “*bij mantr sarab ko gian chah varana mah japai kou naam jo jo japai tis ki gat hoi sadh sang pavai jan ko*”¹³ it means ‘The Beej Mantra is spiritual wisdom for everyone, anyone from any class may chant the name: whoever chants it is emancipated’. He asserts again in another hymn “*khatri brahman*

sud vais sab ekai naam taranath”¹⁴ means ‘The Khshaatriyas, Brahmins, Soodras and Vaishyas all cross over, through the Name of the One Lord. Similarly Bhagat Ravidas ji asserts, “*brahman bais sud ar khatri dom chandar malesh man soi, hoi punit bhagvant bhajan te ap tar tare kul do*”¹⁵ which means ‘whether he is a Brahmin, a Vaishya, a Soodra or a Khshaatriya; whether he is a low caste, an outcaste or a filthy minded person, he becomes pure by meditating on the Lord God. He saves himself, and families of both his parents.’

In SGGS ji we can find so many hymns that preach the lesson of human equality and universal brotherhood. These are for the entire mankind. The need is to understand these and to follow the righteous path shown by SGGS through collective intellect and experience of 500 years of 36 divine personalities. That’s why its true followers are always secular and peace loving people praying for the welfare of the whole society as Sikhs sum up their Ardaas with the words “*Nanak naam chardi kala, tere bhaane sarbat da bhala*”

WORKS CITED

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