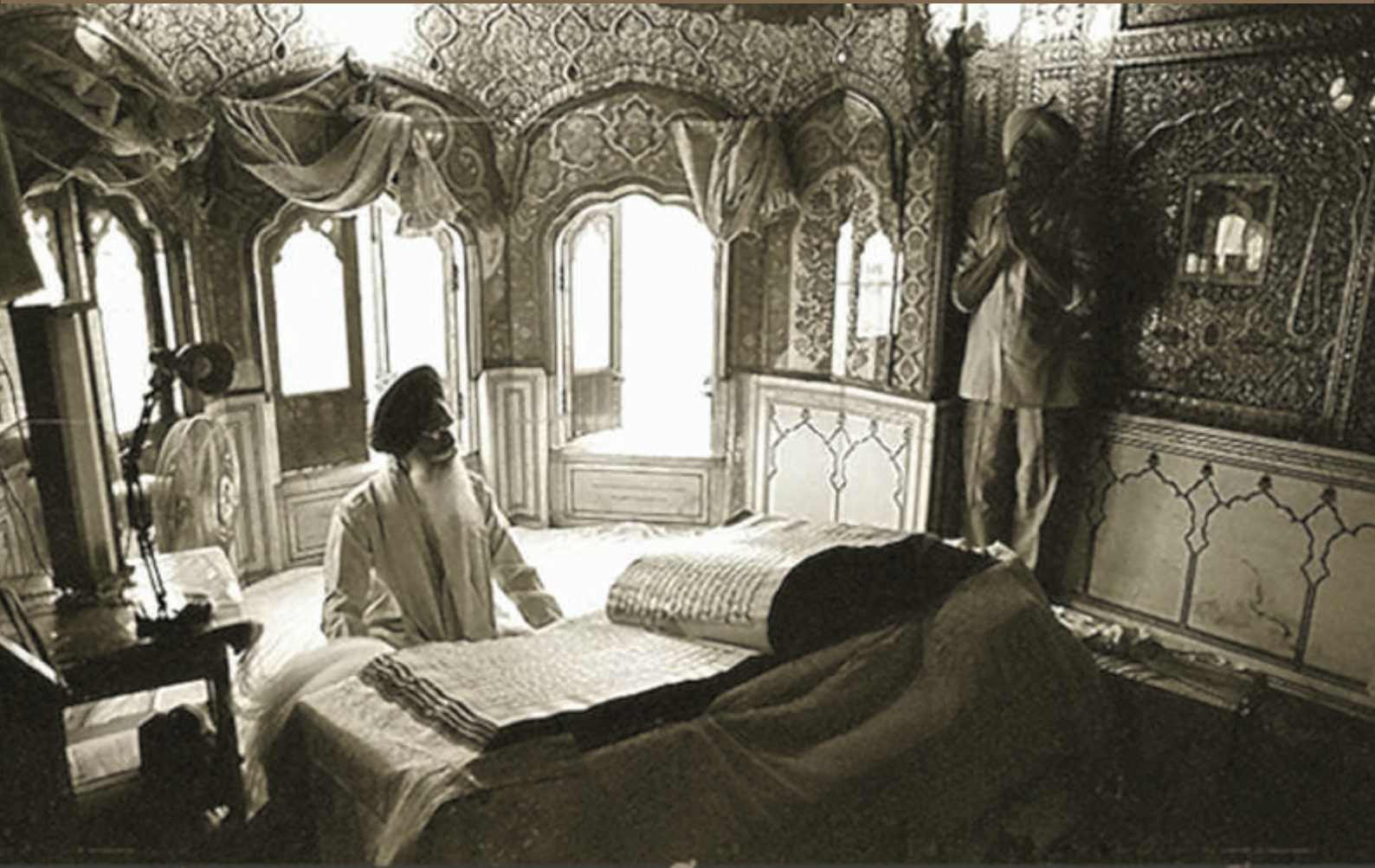


# Universal Relevance of Guru Granth Sahib

By Col (Dr) Dalvinder Singh Grewal



**Awal Allah noor upaai kudrat ke sab bande**

**Eik noor te sab jag upjeya kaun bhale ko mande. (1349)**

*(From the One and the same Light, the entire universe came into existence.  
How can there be good or bad among them?)*

"I have studied the scriptures of great religions, but I do not find elsewhere the same power of appeal to the heart and mind as I find in these volumes (of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*)."

- Pearl S. Buck, Noble Laureate

"In the coming religious debate, the Sikh religion and its scripture, *Guru Granth*, will have something special of value to say to the rest of the world."

- Arnold Toynbee, historian

"It would rank almost first in the world. Of no other religion can it be said that it has made a nation in so short a time."

- Dorothy Field

**O**n 10 December 1948, UNO General Assembly passed resolution No. 217-A on human rights stating, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."

*Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, the Supreme Sikh Scripture, already preaches all this vehemently and in much clearer and stronger terms. Guru Nanak had declared in sixteenth century:

**Sab meh jyot jyot hai soye**

**Tis de chanan sab meh chanan hoye. (663)**

*(The Divine Light is within everyone; It is that Light which shines within everyone.)*

Guru Nanak considered everyone else better than himself. He gave them the same respect and regard as he considered all having been created by the same God, whose light enlivened all His creation. For him, no one was lowly:

**Sab kau oochaa aakheeaí neech naa deesaí koye**

**Iknaí bhaand saajjai ik chaanan tih loye. (62)**

*(Call everyone exalted; no one seems lowly. The One Lord has fashioned the vessels (human bodies) and One Light pervades in the three worlds.)*

In the same century Kabir explained this by saying:

**Awal Allah noor upaáia kudrat ke sab bande**

**Eik noor te sab jag upjeya kaun bhale ko mande. (1349)**

*(From the One and the same Light, the entire universe came into existence. How can there be good or bad among them?)*

He asked the people not to get assailed by doubt. The Creation is in the Creator and the Creator is in the Creation, totally permeating all places:

**Maati eik aneik bhaant kar saaji saajanhaarey**

**Na kachh poch maatee ke bhaandei na kachh poch kumbhaarei.**

**Sabh meh sacha eiko soee tis ka keeya sab kachh hoee**

**Hukam pachhaneí su eíko jaaneí bandaa kahee-e-í soee**

**Allaah alakh na jaaee lakhia gur gurb deena meethaa**

**Keh Kabir meri sanká naasee sarab niranjan deethaa (1350)**

*(The clay is the same. He only fashioned it in various ways. There is nothing wrong with the pot of clay nor with the Potter. The True Lord abides in all; by His making, everything is made. Whoever realizes the Order of His Command, knows the One Lord. He alone is said to be the Lord's true servant. The Lord Allah is Unseen; He cannot be seen. The Guru has blessed me with this sweet molasses of God's Knowledge, says Kabir, so much so that my anxiety and fear have been taken away and I see the Immaculate Lord pervading everywhere.)*

This was the time when caste and religious inequalities were barbaric and humiliation of the downtrodden through subjugation was at its extreme. Guru Nanak and all those, whose verses appear in *Guru Granth Sahib*, spoke against this openly, even though they had to face opposition and ridicule not only from the ruling and upper class but also from their own people.

The second Guru, Angad Dev put this ideal into practice through *Pangat* and *Sangat*, where people from all castes and creeds used to sit together to have *Langar* and meditated and listened to *Gurbani* together in *Sangat*. This practice continues till date. The fourth Guru, Ram Das sang in the *Sangat*:

**Eiko pawan maati sab eika sab eka jyot sabhaeeya (969)**

*(Same air; same earth and the same light of God is in one and all.)*

Guru Arjan, the fifth Guru emphasized this further by saying:

**Kahau Nanak Gur khoye bharam eiko Alhau Parbhahm (897)**

*(Our Guru has removed all the doubt from our minds. There is only one Allah or Parbrabhm.)*

All human beings have the same religion. He repeated Guru Nanak's words saying:

**Naa ham Hindu naa Musalmaan Allah Ram ke pind pran (1136)**

*I am not a Hindu, nor am I a Muslim. My body and breath of life belong to Allah, to Ram - the God of both.)*

Everywhere unicity of God is emphasized. It was really a daring feat at the time when the rulers of the time, the *Qazis* used to get inflamed with such statements and awarded death punishment to infidels, who dared to equate Allah with Ram. Their Allah was considered to be superior to Ram, as they were from the ruling elite. As a result, Guru Arjan, the fifth Guru had to face the harshest punishment of bearing the pouring of burning sand over his head while sitting on a hot iron plate on an oven on one of the hottest summer days of June. When the Muslim saint Mian Mir saw this he was enraged. He wanted to curse the perpetrators of this punishment, but the Guru restrained him from losing calm:

**Naa ko bairi nahi bigaana sagal sang ham ko ban aayee (1299)**

*(There is no enemy or other one as I have equal affection for all.)*

Those who were administering the punishment were working as per order of the rulers and he was bearing the punishment as per God's order; there was none working against God's order hence all were within the same order:

**Sabhai Saanjiwal Saddaa-in tu kisse naa dissai bahraa jeeo (97)**

*(All humans form a common fellowship. O Lord! You are alien to no one.)*

Guru Arjan submits:

**Tera keeya meetha laage har Naam padarath Nanak mange (394)**

*(Your Order is the sweetest O Lord. I pray that You give me Your Divine Naam for recitation.)*

This was the terminal level of tolerance. The Gurus considered even their purported executioners as innocent since they were acting on the orders of God. If we compare the contents of the UNO resolution with the actions of the Gurus and their words recorded in *Guru Granth Sahib* we find that the resolutions are the preliminary steps towards human rights, which the Gurus considered most valuable. Even the person on call for duty to murder had the right to live. So say these hymns.

This was precisely the very reason that led Prof R.L. Bradshaw to believe: 'The Sikh Religion is a universal world faith, a message for all men. This is amply illustrated in the writings of the Gurus. Sikhs must cease to think of their faith as just another good religion and must begin to think in terms of Sikh religion being the religion for this New Age...'



This fact is already recorded in *Guru Granth Sahib*:

**Parthaye saakhi maha purkh bolde sanjhi sagal jahane (647)**

*(What ever the enlightened souls speak is meant for the entire world.)*

They do not think of one person, community, society, religion, country, or age. They think well of all the societies for all the ages to come. They pray for all to be salvaged from the burning pyre of the worldly *maya*, which is a complex outcome of the interaction of *kaam*, *karodh*, *lobh*, *mob* and *abankaar*. They pray for God's forgiveness and blessings on all the beings and to provide food and shelter to all to remove their sufferings:

**Jagat jalanda rakh lei apni kirpa dhaar**

**Jitt duarey ubhreh titte leho ubhaar. (853)**

*(O Lord! the world is in flames, save it by thy grace. Through whichever way it can be delivered, deliver it that way.)*

At that time India was badly divided into castes. The upper castes treated the lower castes as slaves, who were virtually in bondage. Their bonded life was made all the more horrible by continuous indignities being heaped upon them. There was no way out as there was none to help them out of this situation. Whosoever tried to speak and stand for their problems, was castigated and made to face the wrath of the upper castes. But the Gurus and the saints of *Guru Granth Sahib* refused to accept these man-made distinctions.

Guru Arjan considered:

**Braham meh jan jan meh Parbraham**

**Eikeh aap naheen kachh bharam (287)**

*(All beings are parts of the God and the God is the part of His creation. Everything is one without doubt.)*

Kabir explained:

**Jaako thakur oochaa hoe So jann par ghar jaat naa sohee (330)**

*(Who has Lord, the highest one, on his side, for him it does not seem graceful to go to another's house.)*

Their message was meant for all; the *Kshatris*, *Brahmins*, *Shudra* and *Vaish*; that those followers of the Gurus who meditate on God's Name will be redeemed; may they be from any caste since there were no caste distinctions in God's domain:

**Khatri Brahman Sood Vaish updesh chahau varnan kau saanjha**

**Gurmukh Naam japei udhrei so kal meh ghatt ghatt Nanak maajha. (748)**

*(All the Kshatris, Brahmins, Shudra and Vaish; all can be redeemed by the same Name of the God. Only those, who worship and meditate on God, cross the ocean of worldly evils, become pure and help their generations to swim across the ocean of worldly evils.)*

**On 10 December 1948, UNO General Assembly passed resolution No. 217-A on human rights stating, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."**

**Guru Granth Sahib, the Supreme Sikh Scripture, already preaches all this vehemently and in much clearer and stronger terms. Guru Nanak had declared in sixteenth century:**

**Sab meh jyot jyot hai soye (663)**

The Gurus and saints loved and made friendship with all high and low and treated all as equals since all belong to God:

**Sabh ko meet ham aapan keena Ham sabhnaa ke saajan (671)**

*(I have befriended all and am a friend of everyone.)*

They considered truth as the only religion of the universe; the only truth being God:

**Eiko dharam drirai sach koe Gurmat poora jug jug soee (1188)**

*(If someone grasps that there is one form of righteousness, one should then hold firm the truth.)*

They did not consider these *Yogis* as suitable aspirants of God because they only talked but failed to think of all as equal. The best *Yogis* in their eyes were those, who regarded all God's creation as equal and acted as such:

**Galee jog naa hoe Eik drist kar samsar jaanai jogi kaheai soee (730)**

*(By mere words, Yoga is not practised. One, who looks upon all mortals with the same eye and deems them all equals, is called a true Yogi.)*

Guru Nanak stayed with Lalo, the carpenter and refused to eat the food of the minister Bhago, who considered Lalo to be of low caste and the staying of Nanak with him against the rules of society.

Considering this thought as the hub of *Guru Granth Sahib* the famous scholar Archer endorsed Prof Bradshaw's view saying, "The religion of *Guru Granth Sahib* is a universal and



practical religion...the world today needs its message of peace and love."

The peace to the mind and love for the heart emanating through the *Gurbani* is well acknowledged by the Nobel Laureate Pearl S. Buck in following words:

"I have studied the scriptures of great religions, but I do not find elsewhere the same power of appeal to the heart and mind as I find in these volumes. They are compact in spite of their length and are a revelation of the vast reach of the human heart, varying from the noble concept of God to the recognition and indeed the insistence upon the practical needs of human body. There is something strangely modern about these scriptures and this puzzled me until I learned that they are comparatively modern, compiled as late as 16<sup>th</sup> century when explorers were beginning to discover that the globe, upon which we all live, is a single entity divided only by arbitrary lines of our own making. Perhaps this sense of unity is the source of power I find in these volumes. They speak to a person of any religion or of none. They speak for the human heart and the searching mind."

### Brotherhood of Man

Guru Granth Sahib is the matchless Divine Treasure of synthetic embrace for the whole global community. *Guru Granth Sahib* is a paradise of spiritual harmony. True integration, harmony and unity can usher in on a solid foundation of love. Love stands out beautifully, harmoniously and synthetically in its positive pristine purity and glory in *Guru Granth Sahib*, where the hymns celestial of divine lovers of different religions, faith and creed are enshrined in one religion of love in the brotherhood of man and sole

fatherhood of God. So through *Guru Granth Sahib* flows and glows the salvation of humanity.

The *Baani* of *Guru Granth Sahib* has the creative force of infinite rhythm. It creates the internal rhythm of the body and that of the being. The power and projection of the sound waves in the *Shabads* of *Guru Granth Sahib* are within ragas. These ragas are a methodology of harmonious play of the life force. The blessings of *Guru Granth Sahib* nurture the trees, human beings, bees and birds, demons and angels alike. *Gurbani* is a song celestial, which sings the glory of the sole God in one harmonious melody from the beginning to the end. Once honeybees sat on a branch and the tape of the *Gurbani* was played at a distance constantly. That beehive gave three times the honey compared to other beehives.

### Universality of God and monotheism

*Guru Granth Sahib's* total structure is built on the Oneness of God. It starts with *Ik Omkaar* i.e., only one God is the creator of the universe. He is neither established nor created by anyone. He has created Himself and created a Name too. This is a fact because He neither dies nor is reborn. He is immortal, ever living, beyond life and death and will continue to be so forever. He fears none as there is none equal to Him and all are His creation and hence subordinate to Him. They all serve as per His Order and according to His Will. Thus He has no enemy or enmity either. One can attain Him only by His Grace. The Lord is independent, limitless and infinite:

### Thaapia naa ja-ai keetaa naa ho-ai Aapai aap Niranjan so-ai (2)

(He can neither be manifested nor created by anyone. He, the pure one, is all-in-all Himself.)

The fact that *Omkaar* in the *Mool Mantra* is preceded by *Ik* shows that, despite the many-ness of the revealed world, its oneness is not lost sight of. The Lord, who created the universe is the sole Master of all. He is monistic in character, though pluralistic in content. *Gurbani's* belief is that God exists not merely as an idea or concept but as a real being, indescribable but not knowable:

**Ekam ekamkaar niralaa**

**Amar ajonee jaat naa jaalaa**

**Agam agochar roop naa rekhiaa**

**Khojat khojat ghat ghat dekhiaa (838)**

*(The unique Lord is Peerless, Immortal, Unborn and without caste and involvement. He is inaccessible, unknowable and has no form or outline. By searching and searching I have seen him in all the hearts.)*

He is prevalent everywhere and in everything i.e., in His creation. Thus the entire universe is His abode. He is settled in it to enjoy His creation. Only those can know the Universe and its parts, who have realized Him through His Word with the guidance of the Guru. His Word can be realized by practicing Truth and self-restraint acting upon Guru's teaching and contemplating over Lord's praises. By Contemplating the True Name, man gets to his own home (man's true home is Lord's abode) and attains the exalted Lord.

*Guru Granth Sabib* does not talk of many Gods. In fact it is against multiplicity of God:

"For Nanak there is one God, one soul, indivisible, self existent, incomprehensible, timeless and all-pervading... To be named, but otherwise indescribable and altogether lovely. Such was Nanak's idea of the Creation and was a conception which at once abrogated all petty distinctions of creed, sect, dogma and ceremony. The realization of such a God shatters the sophistries of the theologians and quibblings of dialecticians. It clears the brow from the gloom of abstruse pondering over trifles and leaves the heart free for the exercise of human sympathies." - Fredric Pincot, British Scholar

Thus the unicity of God is again and again re-iterated in *Guru Granth Sabib*.

### **Authentic and Original**

This is how Sikh faith is unique and different from all other religions. M.A. McAuliffe in 'The Sikh Religion - Its Guru, Sacred Writings and Authors' confirming the authenticity and uniqueness of Sikh religion writes:

"The Sikh religion differs as regards the authenticity of its dogmas from most other great theological systems. Many of the great teachers the world has known, have not left a line of their own composition and we only know what they taught through tradition or second hand information. If Pythagoras

wrote any of his tenets, his writings have not descended to us. We know the teachings of Socrates only through the writings of Plato and Xenophon. Buddha has left no written memorial of his teachings, King Fu-Tzu, known to Europeans as Confucius, left no documents in which he detailed the principles of his moral and social system. The founder of Christianity did not reduce his doctrines to writings and for them we are obliged to trust to the Gospels according to Mathew, Mark, Luke and John. The Arabian Prophet did not himself reduce to writing the chapters of *Qur'an*. They were written or compiled by his adherents and followers. But the compositions of Sikh Gurus are presented unaltered by copyists and we even become, in time, familiar with their different styles. No spurious compositions or extraneous dogmas can, therefore, be represented as theirs."

### **Universal Truth**

*Guru Granth Sabib*, thus, is built on total truth. It is a universal truth that everything in the universe is continuously changing - **Sab jag chalanhaar (468)**. Anything which changes is false. Only God is the One who remains the same and does not change, hence the dictum is true:

### **Aad sach jugad sach hai bhi sach Nanak hosi bhi sach (1)**

*(True in the primal beginning. True through all ages. True here and now. Nanak says, He shall ever be true.)*

God belongs to all and all belong to Him:

### **Sabna jeeyan ka ik daata (2)**

*(There is only the One, the Giver of all souls.)*

And again:

### **Sab meh jyot jyot hai soye Tis de chanan sab mein chanan hoye (663)**

*(The Divine Light is within everyone; It is that Light which shines within everyone.)*

These are some of the examples of truth which abound in the entire *Guru Granth Sabib*. The entire fabric of *Guru Granth Sabib* is built around the fabric of truth. This truth is universal and is beyond the boundaries of nations and earths and stars as it is applicable to the entire universe. Prof H.L. Bradshaw states, "The other religions contain the truth but Sikh Religion (*Guru Granth Sabib*) contains the fullness of truth."

*Guru Granth Sabib* is thus about the universe and for the universe and has the applicability for people from all walks of life globally. This universality needs to be expounded and propagated further so that the message of *Guru Granth Sabib* reaches all corners of the world, is understood and applied to make the world a better living place.

