

ACROSS FAITH BOUNDARIES –

THE UNIVERSALITY OF SIRI GURU GRANTH SAHIB'S MESSAGE

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ACROSS FAITH BOUNDARIES - THE UNIVERSALITY OF SIRI GURU GRANTH SAHIB'S[1] MESSAGE

Siri Guru Granth Sahib's message emphasizes belief in One God, Eternal, The Reality, Creator and Doer, All- Pervading, Without Fear, Without Rancor, Transcending Time, Unincarnate, Self-Existent, (understood) Through the True Guru's Grace.

God is also just and forgiving, constant provider and supporter of life, devoted friend, and loving parent. All that exists and all that happens in the universe is through God's Will. Different faiths exist by God's Will and, therefore, are to be respected. However, rituals and so-called "holy acts" like fasting, bathing at holy places, idol worship, austerities, etc., without love for God and His creation in one's heart, are fruitless. Bigotry, exclusivity, and hypocrisy, lead to one's spiritual ruin.

Siri Guru Granth Sahib teaches that one's soul does not belong to any particular religion. It shares divine attributes and is beyond birth and death. For example:

"Who is it that resides in this body? No one has found the final answer to this. It is neither human nor God; it is neither a Jati, nor a worshipper of Shiv; it is neither a Jogi nor an ascetic; it has neither mother nor is it a son. It is neither a householder nor a recluse; it is neither a ruler nor a beggar; it does not have a body or even a drop of blood; it is neither a Brahmin nor a Khatri. It is neither an ascetic nor a Sheikh; it is not seen to be born and to die – mourning its death (of the body) one only receives peoples' disdain. Through the Guru's grace I have found the way. I have risen above birth and death. O Kabir, say, it is part of God; it is joined to God just as ink is to paper." [page[2] 871]

All Act According to God's Will

The Guru teaches that all faiths praise God; all that happens in the entire universe is according to God's Will. Also, that love of God is worthwhile and all other pursuits are false. God Himself, in His mercy, blesses people with love for Him. For example:

"If You so will, some dance and sing or bathe in (holy) water[3]. If You so will, some smear ashes over their bodies and blow the horn. If You so will, some read the Books and be called Mullahs or Sheikhs. … If You so will, you get some attached to Your Name and through Your Will, they love You." [page 144-145]

"Muslims like the praise of Shariat. They read it and study it. They believe that those who follow the Shariat will see God. Hindus praise the beautiful Boundless God through the Shastras; bathe at places of pilgrimage, make offerings to idols using sandal, fragrance and other objects. Jogis remember God by getting into trances and saying Alakh, Alakh as God's Name. They believe in One who is infinitesimal in form and beyond the reach of *Maya* and the entire creation is His own form. Those who practice charity feel joy in thinking of giving - even though, in giving, they

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[1] Before he left the mortal world in 1708 C.E., Guru Gobind Singh Sahib instructed Sikhs to regard Siri Guru Granth Sahib, comprising verses given by six of his nine predecessors and selections from the works of several other saints and holy men, as their eternal Guru.

[2] Page numbers refer to location in Siri Guru Granth Sahib, printed version, 1430 pages, published by SGPC, Amritsar.

[3] The Guru is listing practices among different faiths.

pray to God for returning it to them a thousand-fold - and the world praises them. Countless thieves, adulterers, liars, bad men are there too who waste all they have accumulated and leave this world empty-handed. …" [page 465-466]

All Faiths, Created by God's Will, Praise the Same God

1. "… Then, the four Vedas blossomed through (God's) Divine Light; Smritis blossomed as well as the Books; Shankar, the master of Yoga and meditation blossomed. Kabir's Master pervades all." [page 1193]
2. "The Vedas and the Books[4] stand together in praising You. It is impossible to count how many are lying at Your Door. Brahmas, and Inders on their thrones, worship You. Many incarnations of Shiv and Vishnu sing Your praise; and Pirs, Prophets, Sheikhs, and holy men too. O Formless (God) You pervade all completely and are manifesting Yourself in all." [page 518]

Emphasizing the need to understand the Divine Will, the Guru teaches:

"Some people call you *Raam*, others call You *Khudaa.* Some serve *Gosain,* some *Allah*. O Merciful Creator and Doer, have mercy upon me. Some bathe at holy places and others go for *hujj*. Some do *pooja,* others bow their heads. Some read the Vedas, others the Books. Some wear blue, others white. Some call themselves Muslims, others Hindus. Some seek *bahisht,* some *suarg*. O Nanak, say; whosoever has understood the Divine Will has learnt the secret of God, the Master." [page 885]

People Are Lost In Rituals and Idle Pursuits; Only Love of God And Truthful Living Lead to Liberation

The Guru teaches:

"Hindus are lost in worshipping idols and Muslims in bowing (towards Mecca). Hindus burn their dead and Muslims bury them. Neither has understood Your ways. O my mind, this world is in deep darkness. All around, the noose of Death is laid out. Learned poets are lost in reciting their verses; Sadhus visit Kedar etc. and waste their lives; Jogis keep long knots of hair and believe that is the right Way but none have understood You. Princes spend their lives accumulating wealth, they bury gold treasures in the ground; Pundits pride themselves on their ability to read the Vedas; and women spend their lives looking at their beauty in the mirrors. O Man, look inside yourself, you will see that without God's Name, they are all lost. Kabir says that without God's Name no one has ever attained liberation." [page 654]

Regarding religious hypocrites, the Guru teaches:

"Those who call themselves pious and, sinning secretly, pretend they are pious; those who call themselves religious teachers and for love of money go to the homes of their disciples to teach; the woman who loves her husband only for the money he brings and (does not care) if he himself comes or goes. None of them (Brahmins) believes in the Vedas or the Shastras; they all are worshipping their own selfish ends. The Qazi sits to do justice, tells the beads of his rosary, and says God's name. But he takes bribes to go against peoples' rights and if anyone objects, quotes

[4] The "Books" are the religious texts of Judaism, Christianity, Islam and other faiths.

from the scripture. … There are Jogis who have matted hair and smear ashes over their bodies but they are householders and children are crying around them. They are neither householders nor Jogis. What did they gain by applying ashes upon their heads …" [page 951-952]

Advice To People of Various Faiths

Siri Guru Granth Sahib teaches that, regardless of one's professed faith, one should remember God, overcome sin through Guru's grace and in dealings with all people, be truthful, just, and honest to be called a proper Muslim, Hindu or Jogi. For example:

1. "Qazi tells lies and takes bribes; The Brahmin bathes at holy places but hurts people (of lower castes). The Jogi too is blind and does not know the correct lifestyle. All the three are in spiritual wilderness. The (real) Jogi is one who knows the correct way of life and through the Guru's grace understands the One (God). The *Qazi* is one who turns away from *Maya* and through Guru's grace, while living in the world, become unattached to it. The (real) Brahmin is one who thinks of God. He will swim across (the ocean of fear) along with all his family (followers). The wise person is one who washes his mind (of sin). A Muslim is one who rids himself of the dirt (of attachment to *Maya*). The learned one is he who understands the true Way; he has the mark of acceptance in God's presence. [page 662]
2. "Make kindness your mosque and faith your prayer-mat and rightful livelihood your Quran. Make avoidance of evil your circumcision, good attitude your fasting, and so become a Muslim. Make upright living your Kaaba, truthful life your guide, and your deeds your Kalma and Namaaz. Make whatever God likes your rosary; God will protect your honor. O Nanak, taking what is rightfully someone else's is like pork to one (the Muslim) and beef to the other (the Hindu); the Guru and the Pir will support you only if you do not take what belongs to another. Mere talk will not lead to heaven; one attains liberation only through practicing truth. Adding spice (of debate) to *haraam* (forbidden) will not make it into *halaal* (approved). O Nanak, false discussion only leads to falsehood. There are five types of Namaaz for the five times of the day and they have five different names. The first one should be truth; the second, rightful living; and the third, wishing God's blessings for all. The fourth should be clean mind and intentions; and the fifth, praise of God. Good character should be your Kalma; then only will you be a Muslim. O Nanak, all those whose life is not such practice falsehood, are false, and invite dishonor (at God's *dargah*)." [page 140-141]
3. "With your tongue you recite (the scriptures) with paraphrasing but you do not have God in you nor do you live a clean life. You preach to others and ask them to understand carefully but you yourself do not follow what you say to others. O Pundit, study the Vedas and get rid of the anger in you. You place the idol before you but your mind wanders in all ten directions. You apply the saffron mark (on your forehead) and fall at the idol's feet but you do all this to please the world. Performing the six good acts, sitting on a cushion and wearing a *dhoti*; going to a rich man's home and reading the book (for him); counting the beads on his rosary and then asking (the rich man) for money; my friend, no one has reached his destination in this manner. … All the four Vedas are in God's Name. O Nanak, (only a fortunate one) comes to the service of such a one." [page 887-888]

4. "Union with God is not through wearing the "*khintha*", carrying a stick, smearing ashes over the body, wearing ear-rings, shaving one's head, or playing the horn. The way to union with God is to think of Formless God even while living a normal life. We cannot meet God through talk alone. Jogi is one who perceives all to be equal. Union with God is not through going to crematoria and cemeteries, through sitting in a trance, wandering in various lands, or through bathing at places of pilgrimage. If we meet the True Guru, fear (of death) is removed, the wandering mind is controlled, love springs in our hearts, mind becomes restful in a state of equipoise, and we see God in our own hearts. O Nanak, we should work towards a union (with God) in which while living we abstain from sin; when there is music sounding in our mind without an instrument; then we attain the state of fearlessness." [page 730]

Guru's Universal Message

Siri Guru Granth Sahib teaches us to respect all faiths. The name any of us use for God is immaterial so long as we understand that God pervades all creation and live upright truthful lives in humility, contentment and love, treating all as equal, and controlling lust, anger, greed, attachment, and self-will. For example, the Guru teaches:

1. "(O God,) The Cause of all creation, Merciful, Provider of all, *Allah*, Unseen, Boundless, Yourself the Master of all, you are great beyond description. (O God,) The Master of creation, the Creator of all people, Omnipresent, I salute You. Master of the universe, Life of creation, Master of *Maya*, the Destroyer of fear, Worthy of remembrance in our hearts, Master of all senses, Preserver of the earth, Master of the world, Grantor of liberation, the All- pervading. Merciful God, You are the only one to liberate *pirs*, prophets and *sheikhs*. The Master of all hearts is just. He is beyond the Quran and the Books. The Abode of Mercy (God) is Himself *Narayan* and *Narsingh.* He pervades and supports all. He is *Baasdev* and his home is everywhere. His wonderful creativity cannot be described.
2. … O Creator, give me the gift of devotion and submission to You. Say, O Nanak, when the Guru rids one of doubt, *Allah* and *Parbrahm* are seen as one." [page 896-897]
3. "Remember God's Name and make your conduct pure. This is the supreme faith of all. Of all the holy acts the best one is that, in the company of the *Saadh* (Guru), one gets rid of the dirt of wrong thinking. Of all efforts the best one is to remember God's Name. Hear God's praises with your ears and sing them out with your tongue; of all words, these are the life-giving ones. Of all persons the best one is in whose mind God's Name resides."

[page 266]