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Interfaith Understanding and Cooperation - A Matter of Faith for Sikhs

by

Ranbir S. Sandhu
The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio 43210

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Presented at the Parliament of the World's Religions (PoWR), Chicago, Illinois

September 1, 1993.

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Distributed by:
Sikh Religious and Educational Trust. P.O. Box 1553, Dublin, Ohio 43017

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ABSTRACT

Some of the fundamental principles of the Sikh faith as they relate to interfaith understanding and cooperation are reviewed. It is shown that a Sikh is committed to love for all mankind, acceptance of all faiths, and interfaith tolerance and understanding as fundamental beliefs of his religion. History of the Sikhs shows remarkable consistency in the pursuit of these ideals and in the defense of the right to free worship of people of all faiths.

INTRODUCTION

The Sikh religion has been variously described as a vision of the common ground between Islam and Hinduism [e.g., 1,2], a reform movement in Hinduism [e.g., 3], a development within the Sant tradition in India [e.g., 4] and, rarely [e.g., 5], as an independent divinely revealed faith as claimed by its founders. Most people in western countries only know the Sikhs by their distinctive beard and turban although some might have read about them being praised in the literature as good farmers and excellent soldiers. Since the 1984 invasion of Harmandar Sahib (the Golden Temple) complex, Sikhs have often been in the news. Unfortunately, and unfairly, most of the news has branded them as gun-toting terrorists committing robberies, bombings and mass murders of bus and train passengers. Even some academicians [e.g., 6] have portrayed them as fanatics who love to get killed in order to become martyrs. Sikh emphasis upon equality, everyone's right to freedom of worship, interfaith tolerance, defense of the weak and the dispossessed, their long history of peaceful struggle and sacrifices for these causes, and their commitment to these principles even in their present hour of distress, are hardly noticed.

In this paper, we state some of the principles of Sikhism as given by the Siri Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the founder, and his successors up to the Tenth Nanak (all the Gurus were the light of Siri Guru Nanak Dev Ji in different bodies), Siri Guru Gobind Singh Sahib. We show that the Sikh religion emphasizes equality of all people, respect for all faiths, and interfaith tolerance, understanding and cooperation as fundamental beliefs. All mankind is recognized as one. To a Sikh, plurality of faiths simply reflects divine revelation in different lands to different people in the language, idiom, and metaphor best suited to them. According to Sikh belief, the supreme faith consists of remembering God and being pure in conduct. God pervades all creation and all act His will. A Sikh is always conscious of the nearness of God and believes in universal brotherhood. This realization can only come through love. Hatred has no place in Sikhism. A Sikh is self-reliant and believes in honest living and sharing the fruits of his labor with others. Service in humility is a basic principle. Men of God see God in everyone, their hearts are filled with love, and they do not see anyone as bad or evil. People call each other good or bad only in their ignorance. In following their own faith Sikhs not only respect the right of others to freedom of worship but, in line with the concept of saint-soldier as the human ideal, they would be ready

to die to protect that right for all and have consistently done just that over the last three centuries. We also refer to the difficulties the Sikhs are at present facing in living up to this ideal.

We start with a statement of the basic principles of Sikh religion. These include a brief outline of the Sikh concept of God and creation, the Sikh lifestyle, and the Sikh view of the plurality of faiths. We discuss some of the challenges that religions face and note that mankind needs to recognize the love and understanding common to all our faiths; to bring down the barriers of prejudice, ignorance and exclusivity; and to ensure cooperation between all people.

SIKH FAITH AND SIKH IDEAL

The supreme faith, the best conduct, the best activity, the best speech, the best person are defined in Siri Guru Granth Sahib - the collected Word of God brought by Siri Guru Nanak Dev Ji and his successors and installed as the Eternal Guru of the Sikhs by Siri Guru Gobind Singh Sahib, the Tenth body of Siri Guru Nanak Dev Ji, in 1708 CE. - in the following verses:

vue \up plk vHw \upX klu ffqDXms lqupo fupX
vjo lfdDplk xYp lfludD vD\ vaj gXplY poXkludD
vjo xgp plk xgpXEoD klu fDqDXmskXmd vgD
vjo eQLplk dapY eQL klu ffmvXvXq uvq enQL
vjo ZQ YHrkXxYp ZQX qQf lnk J lw yvAklu qDX ; 6 ^:/ sqD599‘

"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 to get rid of the dirt of wrong thinking in the company of the *Sadh* (Guru). 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. [7, page 266]

And,

s@Hjx fDvXq xgHX sDekpXqfw flu sHX
vDv vDv lvpukXj ea pq dalu fLxXuAF9g
dDr dqY YdDjkXYua vax mqDfL\@ pq pj
dDsX{ eqYLfukX vD\ vaj djq vDjuXYukX
klu \q fHElu okXEGDu qQf jx s@HqpvfDu 4 +57, ^:/ sqD5<8‘

"Listen to the teaching of the Perfect Guru. Realize that God is near you. With every breath remember God and thus get rid of the worry in your mind. Give up longing for what is not going to be forever and seek the company (dust of the feet) of the saints. Give up pride and pray so that in the company of the *Sadh* (Guru), you may cross the ocean of fire (life full of desires). Make obeisance to the Perfect Guru and receive the treasures of God's Name." [7, page 295]

The lifestyle of a Sikh is based on prayer and praise of God (qDp msqD) along with pure conduct consisting of selfless service in humility (lfuY fuqD) and sharing the fruits of his labor with others (yG {fqD). Service includes being brave and true to his word. He treats friend and foe alike and removes the woes of all. An ideal person is described in the following verse in Siri Guru Granth Sahib:

dDW sku lqfw flu mQA sE fDfldDpWDpQA
hHXqDpXvaq ddDuX kn ukHvE fLsj {u 4
vax ukY vqkXpHHEDL xgDfLplkpDfZqXq mDL 4 ukDxX
yuYQ mDfAfYo qDX dqg us fluYqXevDp
pYtvYtmDfAhH vpQA sE dsqHeqXdyuXq mQA 5
fw fw dJ fDwqkDuD gX g?u fuq md fHgDYDuD
v@elu eFq fHeoL fxgDesXLvaL{oL 6
YfDvajXeD{k vXgY dpd guvXvio mDfLvY
fu mfJ qQfXfuHdugDv p?k vax wko gmAjQYDv 7 6: ;; ^:/ sqD6<5‘

"My brother, hear the lifestyle of a Saint. His greatness is beyond description. Day and night he feels that God is close to him. He accepts as sweet whatever God does. His only pursuit is of *Naam* (reciting God's Name). He is content in joyous singing of God's praise. He treats friend and foe alike and does not honor any but God. He destroys millions of sins. He is the remover of woes of all beings and is always generous. He is brave and true to his word. The Saint has overcome the hapless *Maya* (the illusory transient world governed by lust, anger, greed, attachment and ego). Kings of gods seek his (Saint's) company. Seeing him is bliss and serving him is fruitful. Nanak prays with folded hands. My God, the Repository of all virtues, give me a chance to serve the Saint." [7, page 392]

SIKH CONCEPT OF GOD

a. One God, Creator and Doer, pervades all.

The Sikhs believe in One God, Eternal, Creator Who pervades all, Without fear and enmity, Timeless, Never born, Self-existent, (realized) through the Guru's grace. This statement of belief, in full or in an abbreviated form, appears at the head of every collection of verses in Siri Guru Granth Sahib. While stating that no man can ever describe all the attributes of God, there are numerous verses praising God as the Creator, the Doer, and All-pervading. For example:

sxMu¡ klu hf¢fuYDhfXhf¢gLeQXklu¡ klu hfvAgDkAdpuXhf¢klu IFY \lu¡
klu lYvXeqXfhLqlk GuXEpXExXg2u flu¡ klu lYvq¢vDlk lm YXXunAelklu Jlu¡
klu lmvq¢k2n ghdDoXv¢klu mls ExXenpXYlu¡ 4 ¡ ^:/ seqD;6'

"Always remember the One God who is the Creator of all and who supports all. Everything happens according to His will. There is no one besides Him so give up fear and doubt. Praise the One God who cares for you at home and away. Whoever God has mercy upon, worships God and swims across the (life's) dreadful (ocean of pain and misery caused by lust, anger, greed, attachment and ego)." [7, page 83]

And,

sxMu¡ klu hF lquaqXjDlddAvE dYklu vhL¡ fuQ flQ vpuZ sEXm¢fuHvXkhL¡
lnq pk ZDs xZDsgDlYvXeqXqkLfhL¡ nG ekpG sDYD gIs ulydDvE ohL¡
lmvXdDs eMDlHv¢eMvLlqupo mqXvhL¡ 4 ¡ ^:/ seqD:39'

"We should praise only the One God, who is beyond *Maya* and is present in all. God is the Source of the Creation and whatever He wills, happens. He creates and destroys in a moment, there is none besides Him. In all countries, islands, the entire universe, and the nether regions, in all creation he is present. Only he understands this whom God Himself so wishes. Only he is a pure person." [7, page 706]

Also,

hF¢hF¢XfkAvEXfhLkxpXAjueXlydDsA dYklu elklu hF¢Xs{ lQAhxXJuXpkoXlvPDsA
sE qHAklu g2u q mQkXhF¢lvtlw velL¡ hF¢aDuXdyuXqkLgMDqlQf hF¢XvplL¡ 8 ¡ ^:/ seqD<63'

"Many persons say there is but one God but their minds are taken over by pride and ego. Only the person who recognizes God as being within him as well as in all the universe understands God's abode. God is near (within you), do not consider Him to be far away. He alone pervades the entire universe. O Nanak, Omnipresent God pervades all. He is the only One. There is no other." [7, page 930]

b. Unity of Creation and Creator

The Sikhs believe that creation is a manifestation of God Himself. He creates it, pervades it and all finally merges into Him. It does not have an independent permanent existence. For example:

mXHhF dlj YHfqf2Df¢w dlj xWHlqdDuHlqdDuHkXhfAlH dlj pk lpolkajH
mXHhF \a YHdlqF \a s2Y kA\a fHfqf2DlH \a kLvplkajH

mXHhF qg YHYuj fw xXmY kAsDq fHYuj veAsDq kLfkDkjH
YXHevju YHd EY EY stjw kh YDkLYHkXm veAYDkLpAvpDkjH 4: ¡ ;: ¡ ^;/ seqD4<'

"Just as millions of sparks arise from a fire and, after existing separately, finally merge in it; just as innumerable dust particles arise from the dust and will again become dust; just as millions of waves arise on a large body of water but the waves on water still remain water; the same way, from the infinite state, forms arise out of the formless and arising from it will all merge in it." [8, page 19]

And,

hF us vjo fsDmD dDsHeqmXdDs lexkDuD 4 ¡
dXfljdDq leuo fhLsDhH mY mY mDdAYY lgtwDhH 4 ¡ ukDxX¡
dlqf uj lqujXq hf ujD dDsHmo dDs kLYujD 5 ¡
dDs kLpeuXdDsk vyD dDs kLsmDuLdDs kLgyD 6 ¡
dDsk mf dDs kLmXYD qDqf fHsE vg kLpXYD 7 ¡ 4 ¡ 9 ¡ ^;/ seqD;36'

"All this creation is various forms of the One God. Pervading all, He is Himself doing everything. Whichever way we turn we see Him. Only a rare person attains to this wisdom. The countless manifestations are all of the One *Nirgun* (beyond the three *gunas* of *Maya)*. He Himself is the water and the waves upon it. He is Himself the temple and the devotee. He is the Deity (in the temple) and also the worshipper. He is Himself the *Yogi* as well as the means of *Yoga*. Nanak's God is always untouched (by Maya)." [8, page 803]

And,

mo YHkWk dlqf Yuj D flqf E#q flqHekXuj D
emXemXgFhr ekXsufDuD io sDfHYHhFfaDuD 6 ¡ ^:/ seqD:69'

"Countless waves arise on water (but they essentially remain water). Many types of ornaments are made out of gold (but they still remain gold). Sowing a seed one sees many types (of growth) but when the fruit ripens, it is seeds again. (The same way all the creation arises from God but yet remains part of Him and is ultimately Him)." [7, page 736]

Also,

pAqDkLsE vEXf{XYHD hU AlqujXq xJAvujXq fH fuY leF vXDpLpHD 4 ¡ ukDxX¡
qju pk dDs eDku iXq dDsq sE pHHffvjo evHD
dDsHkLuDmq dDsHkLuDhdDfk fk WDfXXfk fk FHD 4 ¡
fDfxXgXDxXfDlvxXeo eaDmk mk sHxXYk Yk qHD
vD\pAlY jXXEFvr qDqf lpb vDju eg qkLdqkHD 5 ¡ 4 ¡ 44: ¡ ^:/ seqD;5:'

"O God, I am nothing. Everything (that I have) is Yours. On the one hand you are *Nirgun* and on the other You are *Sargun* (having all the three *gunas* of *Maya).* Between these two states my Master has set up His play. He is within every body and in the entire universe. He resides in all creation. God is Himself the ruler and the ruled. Somewhere He is the Master and at other places He is the servant. Whichever way I look, God is close by. How can anything be hidden from Him? How can one cheat anybody? O Nanak, meeting the Virtuous Guru is like the drop (individual) joining the ocean (God). It cannot again be seen as separate." [7, page 827]

And,

hF dqF ledDsf s f mY gHxXYY vhL¡ pDhdDlFYteIFYtlepkY leuo DeMAfhL¡ 4 ¡
vEXjeg XkAvEXjeg kAjeg leqXqkLfhL¡ vYXhFXpQ vY vkx mXHrlY sEY sEXvhL¡ 4 ¡ ukDxX¡
mo Yuj du ieq egXDmo YHEq q khL¡ hkXsusaEXsDmekp fLolo DleFuY dDq q khL¡ 5 ¡ ^:/ seqD7;8'

"One God, acquiring innumerable forms is present everywhere and pervades all existence. Whichever way I look I see Him. However, only a rare one understands this because people are completely bewitched by the forms of *Maya.* God is everywhere, God is everywhere, no one is without God. God is woven through everyone just as there are hundreds or thousands of beads but there is a single string going through all of them. The wave or the bubble (on the surface of water) are not separate from water (have no independent existence). In the same way, this Creation is a manifestation of God. Carefully thinking about it leads to the understanding that there is no other." [7, page 485]

Divinity of the Human Soul

The Sikhs believe that the human soul is part of God. If one understood this link with Divinity, one would be at peace; accept God's love and rejoice in His will. Siri Guru Granth Sahib tells us:

pq Y?mÆY vu?XkAd?QDp?Xs{DQXpq klu mXYHAqDb kAjXpYLujXpDQX^:/seqD774‘

"O mind, you are part of the Light (God), understand your origin. O mind, God is with you. Seeking wisdom from the Guru enjoy (this identity)." [7, page 441]

And,

dDYpuDpXvue plk sH¡ s?q s?u ukd DsE hEX
uYqXdp?XugHplk mDqX dsqLyvYXY?dDs s{DQX4 ¡ ^:/seqD;<5‘

"See the All-pervading God in all creatures. One God is completely filling all creation. Know the priceless jewel within you. Recognize your gift yourself. [7, page 892]

The human soul has the characteristics of God. Some of the divine attributes are described in the following verse:

dFum fZDpkDdq?¡ sDYpDsDekp fDu?XukDxX¡
qDhkXe?DqDhkXeD qDhvXg?XqkLmpmD qDhkXeqvHqDhkXmDh¡ dDg mXDgLukd DvpDh¡ 4 ¡
qDhvXxXqXqDhvXvlYX qDhvXgXpqXqDhvXpYXqDhvXkunXqkLhvXvfXvEXf{XhvfDhkXfuqAmfX5 ¡
qDhvXeD?XqkLhvXpDhdD hkXd su?uXkYDdDhdD s?D?XsXq fDhvXo?HXq oDjA Jw Jw dXu vgkLmDjA6 ¡
YDq jQDhf vflY xXDhdD pkDpDhdDYDfLkA{DhdD d{o d{H dEH gDhdD ¡ gDq gDhdD vgDlfusD ¡
YDfLjlY plY f{?q sDh¡ qDf YDfAeb eb mDh¡ 7 ¡ 4< ¡ 54 ¡ ^:/seqD;9;‘

"The individual soul has the attributes of God. The story (of God's praise) is wonderful and without parallel. He does not get old nor is He young. He has no suffering nor fear of death. He does not die or go away. He has been pervading all since the beginning of time. He is never hot (with desires) or cold (with worry). He does not have friends and enemies. He does not have sorrow or joy. Everything belongs to Him and He has the ability to do anything. He does not have any father or mother. He is beyond everything and has always been. He is untouched by sin and good deeds. He is present in everybody and is always alert. He has created the *Maya* of the three *gunas*. The great *Maya* is His shadow. He cannot be cheated or pierced; His secret cannot be understood; He is the Abode of Mercy. He is Abode of Mercy to the downtrodden; He is always the Abode of Grace. What He is and how great He is cannot be realized. Nanak is amazed at Him." [7, page 868]

c. God controls Creation. All act His Will

The entire universe, created by God and pervaded by Him completely, does what it is given to do by Him and in the manner He wills it. It is a play within Himself that God has caused to occur and is watching. For example:

hkXsusE nEXfkd DvEXfuYAklu fuYAvE fo \DuL¡
klu hEfvYXyuYAmX dXu vYXhaEAhEfaDuL¡ : ¡ ^:/seqD83:]

"All this Creation has been created by the Doer. God, the Creator has manifested His own existence in it. God is the One thread pervading all Creation. When He pulls this thread, (Creation comes to an end) only the One God remains." [7, page 507]"

And

eaj fHeajD LlIukaj fHIuajDYD LlgoLfHlgoyD LYHLdDjd DpAFoY kA
uk fHuKEHpDJ gM fHpJEHeLu eajvLeaEHsDs saM f?poY kA
jfDjX jDyAFq pFq fHvlv lqdDyAlYeYLl\dDh gfi gk f?goY kA
lmqAY1k l\dDhr lYqAs?q sYDs sDhr vue \q \D io i? vfioY kA6 ¡ 58 ¡ ^;/seqD69‘

"The Bengalis of Bengal, the Franks of France, the Dilwalis of Delhi, all act Your will. The Rohillas of Rohi, the brave Maghelas of the country Magh, the Bundelas of Bangas destroy the source of evil. The Gurkhas sing Your praises, the Chinese bow their heads, the Tibetans worship You to destroy the bodily ailments. Whoever worshipped You, attained perfect illumination, all the treasures, all the flowers and fruits." [8, page 36]

Also:

dIsHvyDolhgDlsdDdIsHEjY xXkD dIsHjX jYlhgDlsdDdIsHvelg vpkD dIsHoHQ dls bnDdLdIsHoHX
bnkD 4 ¡
pHHpq mls uPqPXrpkD dqlgqXdqgXkpAyGEjLoAjXu s@Aklu okD ukDxX¡
dIsHjsLfDqKkAlsdDdelq dIsHjx?FukD dIsHvYo vXguDlsdDdIsHyaXymkD fXoldDslU dls pulhgDlsdDdflu
eDf uls sFkD 5 ¡
dls dnDDslhgDlsdDdflu yHHdls FWkD flu eDf us xXlhgDlsdDdDFW@XfaXfuXpDdkD dIsHkLeoXdls kAlsdDd
eoXEqAp@n pX\kD 6 ¡
vEXdIsHmjYXxXlhgDlsdDdyiv dIsHmXY kZkD jb mYULdIsHslhgDlsdDdlmxXsEXhaAlYxXmkD m£jueAv£sFvL
lsdDdHmls qlqf EjY vpkD 7 ¡ 9 ¡ ^:/ seqD939'

"The Beloved God Himself gets people to serve Him. He Himself inspires them to worship. He Himself gets them to sing His praises. He Himself unites them with (Guru's) word. He is Himself the pen and the scribe. He Himself writes the fate of all. O my mind, be enthusiastic in remembering God's Name. Benefit from the Perfect Guru. The fortunate one who does this finds eternal joy. The Beloved is Himself the shepherd girls as well as *Krishan* and grazes cattle in the forest (reference is to the life of *Krishan*, an incarnation of *Vishnu* according to the Hindus). The Beloved God is Himself the dark handsome *Krishan* and Himself plays the flute. Appearing as a child *(Krishan)*, The Beloved God Himself destroys *Kovalyia*. The Beloved has Himself created this playground and Himself is watching His play. The Beloved creates the child form *(Krishan)* and gets *Chandoor, Kans* and *Kesi* destroyed by him. The Beloved is Himself the strength as well as the destroyer of strength of foolish and ignorant (persons). The Beloved God Himself creates the universe but keeps it under His control. He Himself puts a rope around everyone's neck and whichever way God pulls they go. O my beloved (friend), anyone who shows pride will be destroyed. O Nanak, remember God's Name, and be absorbed in His worship." [7, page 606]

PRAYER

a. Nearness of God and Guru

Prayer is not merely a recitation of prescribed words in a certain specified manner but a constant consciousness of the nearness of God and Guru and a constant reference of all our thoughts and actions to God and His wishes. This consciousness is necessary to acquire humility and development of love for all. It also provides the moral strength to avoid the traps of lust, anger, greed, attachment and ego. An example from Siri Guru Granth Sahib is:

klu hfvAqlb pAg@YLklu hfvAqlb pAujX klu hf£pHDvmQfklu hfvAqlb pAvjX
klu hfvAqlb pAj@wHpKXpADfuAq EajX mQAeuZDmld fLfgAq pHHujX
klu hf£pHDpvoYLEqQ JUq vpuZ¡klu hf£pHDgYDmXkAlvlu gDYdDmj kZX
klu hfvAgLpAwH kAm£lvlu vEqDvpuZX vlYjXu vaXpolhdDlhq YludDvjo mjYX
pq fldDh{Ds@ldDslhdD\Xu vaf¡qlqf slhdDvFXqPXvgkLE£HE£¡4 ¡ ^:/ seqD<8;'

"My friendship is with the One God and I love only Him. God alone is my friend and He is my only companion. I converse with God alone, He never has a frown on His face. He knows all that worries me and never turns His back on me. God alone, with the power to create as well as destroy, is my only adviser. He, who has His hand on the heads of all the givers in the world, is my only Giver. The One God, who has power over all, is my support. The Guru has placed his hand on my head and united me with God, the source of peace, the One who is Savior of the whole world. O Nanak, one's heart's desires are fulfilled and one finds the True Name if the union is ordained (by God) to start with." [7, page 958]

Meeting God through Love

The Sikhs believe that union with God and complete understanding of His love can only be achieved through love for Him and for His creation. Hatred for anyone has no place in a Sikh heart. The daily Sikh prayer includes the following verse describing the futility of all holy acts if they are devoid of love:

fkDE|fmfgx?oFq pag fAeW ukr ef l\dDqXojDhr¡
qDY lilur olHvDY vpgkq of jhr suofXjyDhr¡
eDr fir lehdDQ vfeW fAdXHkLdXHvfeX leYDhr¡
vDFXfkxXvXq okXvEAhq spXfir Yq kLsEXsDhr¡< ¡5< ¡^;/seqD46‘

"What has a man gained if he closed both his eyes and sat in concentration like a crane (looking for fish)? What if he bathed at all the holy spots over the seven seas? He has lost this world and the other one too. If instead he lived in sin, he wasted his life and got nothing for it. Let everybody listen to me carefully, the truth is that only he who has loved (God and His Creation) has found God." [8, page 13]

This love for God guides a person in giving up doubt, wayward pursuits of the transitory world, and following the path of ultimate union with God. For example, Siri Guru Granth Sahib decribes this in the following verse:

sfDY sfDY jXGdDpkq oDoqD;
mls pq jeg hEAdyuXqkLfofHAvX oDjXpqk{DEXgXe\DfLfXGdD;4¡ukDxX¡^:/seqD:79‘

"Of all the love in the world, the supreme love is of Beloved, Bewitching God. O my mind, remember the One Gobind; nothing else counts. Seek the Saints and give up the wrong path of indecision." [7, page 746]

Siri Guru Granth Sahib gives numerous illustrations of unconditional love within the experience of earthly creatures and seen in association of objects in nature. One of the illustrations is the love of a child for its parent. The child loves the parent and depends upon him/her for education, enlightenment, and support. For example, the following verse describes the prayer of a child, the devotee, to God the Father:

sE fmAlfsDq\Dq kp klujXj jDykjHkxXYXuLfuxXqY dDr sE pXk fe jb oDykjH4¡ukDxX
kp eDuf pX\ hdDq lsYDvpMDykjHvXXhqXhqXE?o lejDu mjYlsY EDykjH4¡
mfklu vXlDpLYX gkXvhLkp sDykjHpXk gmALqDkLWxX lmvXsk kp mDykjH5¡
mfklu EDyk EjY YqDklu EDykjHmEYLmEY lpoDh mEY ub mDykjH6¡
klu dDoHkeh lfsDoXdDs by oDykjHmqXqDqfXvuq gXlu klu om unDykjH¡7¡9¡^:/seqD4654‘

"My God, The Merciful Lord, have mercy upon us so we sing Your praises. I am always waiting in hope as to when God will hold me in His embrace. We are ignorant foolish children, our Father will teach us. The son will repeatedly err and do wrong but the Father of the Universe will still love him. O Master, we receive only what You give us; I do not know of any other place whither we can turn. Those devotees whom God likes will love God; they will merge their soul with Light (God) and become one with the Light. When God Himself has mercy, He will create His love in us. The servant Nanak has sought shelter at the Door, God Himself will protect my honor." [7, page 1321]

The intensity of this love for God is described in Siri Guru Granth Sahib in the following verse, among others:

uHpq dXALklu lvxXsfDY flu mXLmb fpofk¡okuLqDb s{DDGdAELyjvAdvqfk¡
mb pk mGd xXlDh fAeqXmo puQXYqfk¡4¡
pq uHfxX{wk leqXsdDu¡jXpXh dXlu uly ukd DenvHEjY EGDu¡4¡ukDxX¡
uHpq dXALklu lvxXsfDY flu mXLp{XLqlu¡lmxXdl\f|\ YxXvXXJQfplq Ylq vsY vulu¡
leqXmo JULq mDyhLsEXmQAdE slu¡5¡
uHplq dXALklu lvxXsfDY flu mXLFDYf pk¡vu Elu Zo kuldDyoHhf eg q syhLfk¡
fulp lpoAvfsDhGdAlfuYXshdDlvlu gk¡6¡
uHpq dXALklu lvxXsfDY flu mXLmo gX kh¡dDywQXdlsHnyAgX fxXnslQ q gfh¡

dIsHpHb ly{Xqd DvF yIGd DLgh ¡ 7 ¡
uHpq dAkLku lvxXsmY flu mALFfyLv ¡ hqXso XqIg q vyhLmQAg ku ¡
pqpXn vMLqDsyAjxupXn vgDkm ¡ 8 ¡ ^:/ seqD8<'

"O my mind, how can you be saved (from the traps of *Maya*) without love? Through following the Guru it becomes clear that God is always present inside one. The Guru gives the gift of the treasure of devotion. O my mind, love God as the lotus flower loves water. The waves on the water slap the lotus around but, because of its love, it blooms even bettter. God creates life like that of the lotus in water and, without water, they die. O my mind, love God as the fish loves water. The deeper the water the more satisfied the fish gets in body and mind. It cannot survive without water. Only God knows the feelings a fish has for water. O my mind, love God as the *Chatrik* (a bird) loves the rain. The tanks may be full of water, the earth may be green, but without the drop of rain they mean nothing to it. We get whatever God Himself, in His mercy, gives. We get what we deserve for our previous deeds. O my mind, love God as water loves milk. When boiled, water boils off first and does not let the milk suffer. God Himself unites the lost one with Him (in the same manner) and then gives us honor. O my mind, love God as the *Chakvi* (a bird) love the sun. When the sun is set, it cannot sleep for even a moment. The sun is hidden but it still remembers it as if it were with her. The person who follows the Guru understands God is always with him. Those who follow their own minds do not understand." [7, page 59]

b. See God in Everyone. Universal Brotherhood

God being the object of devotion and love, a Sikh constantly remembers that God pervades all and sees Him in everyone. A person at peace with himself would see others in the same light and will not feel hatred or enmity towards anyone. Siri Guru Granth Sahib teaches us:

vKlHf sHAvE vKld Duf LfAEQAvE uf ¡ fuQ fuDYQkD vXlDpLd sq kDZ vaf ¡ 4 ¡
pq pHHmq d sXqDEupXjyYD lvfAEQAf h q E DmQ vjo fekpXs{YD ukDX ¡
vX vaj mDDpqXvIYo XrkXmQAvjo LW TL ¡ kxpXAuf mDDpqXed sY rkXmqp puAeo oYL ¡ 5 ¡ ^:/ seqD943'

"A happy person sees everyone as happy. A sick (wicked) person sees every one as sick (wicked). The Master (God) has the power to do anything and to get His creatures to do as He wishes. He holds spiritual joy and sorrow in His hands. O my mind, to one who has overcone his doubt and has seen God in all His creation, no one is lost. One whose mind is at peace after meeting the Guru sees peace in the entire world. However, one whose mind is pervaded by the sickness of ego is miserable and is dying while alive." [7, page 610]

Also,

mYyYXpuAYDvEXf{XvMAd Xlu mQAvue gh dD
qQf YDfxXpoAyGDLd sXs{QAvue mld D 57 ¡ ^:/ seqD<73'

"The person who gives up ego in his life understands everything and he is firm in being kind to all beings. O Nanak, he who sees himself in all beings will be honored." [7, page 940]

Siri Guru Granth Sahib describes the state of mind of one who has met the Guru and has been united with God, i.e., has been able to see God in all. As illustrations, we quote the following verses:

flu lfusDgIr pk qpDe\aqXYH{XfDH pq YHevlur vjo f\aDjX fLFuQLo DH 4 ¡
vD\ vaj FX leuQL{DL ¡ dkeX pk pqeDvq gHflu jGkDjDL ¡ 4 ¡ ukDX ¡
qDf phHDgXpq ulkd DqDkp lfvfHeADL ¡ ekpXsvDuXsvDlur EYlu vlYjX YHvMLsDL ¡ 5 ¡
vEXf pIYXkp d sq fQDkp vEqDfHvmq ¡ g u sulhr pq fDleukDYDpHXfIr pHAumq ¡ 6 ¡
leqlvr TWDd apXYWDvegXo j£jX pWD mb Zb pkId b vue hyYvLqQf uphId DGWD 7 ¡ 6 ¡ ^:/ seqD9:4'

"Through meeting the Guru, I have given up dependence on others. I have dug a deep pit and in it buried pride, love of *Maya,* and desires of my mind. the Guru gave me (God's) Name which liberates me from bondage (to *Maya).* I have come to the Guru's feet and all worries have been forgotten from my mind. I have no enemies left (I do not see anyone as an enemy) and I am not anyone's enemy. I have understood that all the creation is God Himself, that He pervades all. I got this understanding from the True Guru. I have befriended everyone and I am friend to all. When the feeling of separation (from God) went away from my mind, my King united me with Himself. My stubbornness is destroyed, I find Guru's Word to be sweet. It gives eternal life and has come to abide in me. O Nanak, on land, on sea, and in the air, I have seen the All-pervading God." [7, page 671]

And,

mÁmffIqfkp lYv fHgDv¡ sE pHHf£vjo lqyDv¡ qDf£gY qkLeADL¡ jb ¡pb FDoHhHAEDL¡ 6 ¡ ^:/ seqD;;:'

"I am a servant of all God has created. My God resides everywhere. There is no enemy or opponent. I walk hand in hand with all. We are all brothers." [7, page 887]

c. Realization comes only through Divine mercy

Siri Guru Granth Sahib teaches us that the realization that God is near and pervades all can come only through God's mercy and Guru's advice. For example:

vE pk yuYAhHf£vÁh¡ lmvqf£fusDfuHlYvXsujw kÁh¡ 47 ¡ ^:/ seqD<64' ¡

"The Same One pervades all. Upon whomsoever He has mercy understands this." [7, page 931]

And,

mÁgIvAv£YHDuÁX jQlq\Dq jÁvg dqÁ¡
lvplu lvplu lvplu mq vÁh¡ qDf fu¡p suÁlY kÁh¡ 6 ¡ ^:/ seqD:57'

"The Repository of all Virtues, Incomparable Preserver of the World, all that I see is Your form. O man, keep remembering him always. O Nanak, (this remembrance) is received only through His mercy." [7, page 724]

Also,

lmYXf£olhd DlYY kLojDqD qDf£pUXqkLf£vdDqD flu lfusDlmvXgÁYAqDX qDqf YDfAeb eb mDX; ¡ 6 ¡ ^:/ seqD <47'

"There are no wise or foolish people. Everyone is doing what God has given him to do. If, in His mercy, He gives some one His Name, Nanak would give his life for that person. [7, page 914]

SIKH LIFESTYLE

The conduct of a Sikh is governed by the requirement that it be acceptable to God who loves all and is the object of our love. This requires that one serve God and His people in honesty and humility and be ready to sacrifice all other interests in this pursuit.

a. Honest Living

The Sikh concept of honest living has resulted in a strong work ethic. A Sikh is self-reliant and it is extremely unusual to see a Sikh beggar. At the time of India's freedom from British rule in 1947, nearly half the total population of Sikhs became refugees when the new state of Pakistan decided to drive them out. They were economically devastated, having had to flee their homes and businesses to save themselves from slaughter. The new Government in Pakistan severely restricted what they could take with them. In India, they found refuge with relatives and in Gurdwaras (Sikh places of worship). Despite all the hardship there were no Sikh beggars and in a few years they had struggled back to becoming one of the most affluent communities in India. To maintain their economic independence, Sikhs have shown great enterprise and have not hesitated in going to other countries to seek their fortunes even though they had to face numerous hardships in practising their faith. In India, they have moved to all the states and done well for themselves as well as for the local communities they joined. Wherever they have settled, they have built Gurdwaras which, among other services, run free kitchens open to all.

b. Humility

One of the major human afflictions is pride. Regardless of what good deeds one does, if these lead to pride, they are without merit. Service should be in humility and without hurting anyone. Siri Guru Granth Sahib instructs the Sikhs in this. The following verses are given as illustrations of this advice.

YLuZ euY duXgQ flu pq plk \uAjXQqQf hkio mDY lYk lmxXfXu lhvqQqX 79 ¡ ^:/ seqD475;'

"If one does pilgrimage, fasts and practices charity but is proud of it, O Nanak, it is all worthless just as bathing an elephant is." [7, page 1428]

Siri Guru Granth Sahib gives us the following views by Bhagat Kabir Ji:

feLu uEDkh ukXeDw fDYlm pq fDdlEpQqX dXDfhLgDvXkh YDk lpoAEjyQqX¡ 479 ¡
feLu uEDkdDY lfd DElhd DsZLfxXgXXgh¡ dXDYHDgDvXkAlmxX\uqLplk nk¡ 47: ¡
feLu nk kh LYxXfd DElhd DmRxXG oDjAdj¡ klumqXdXDFkdAlmxXsQqLvuej¡ 47; ¡
feLu sQqLkdDY lfd DElhd DvLuDYDYDkh¡ klumqXdXDFkdAmXDklu kLkh¡ 47< ¡ ^:/ seqD46:5'

"Kabir, give up all pride from your mind; be a pebble on the road (to touch the feet of every traveller). If there is such a (humble) servant, God would meet him. O Kabir, so what if one is a pebble; it hurts the traveller('s feet). O God, Your servant should be like the fine dust on the ground. O Kabir, so what if one is the fine dust, it blows up and soils the traveller's limbs; God's man should be such as water which adjusts its shape to every vessel. O Kabir, so what if one is water, it gets warm and cold (and thereby inconveniences the traveller). God's servant should be like God Himself. (in dealing with people)." [7, page 1372]

c. The Saint-soldier

A Sikh leads a life of prayer, unselfish honest labor and sharing the fruits of labor and is a man of peace. However, he also has to be brave, true to his word, generous, and remover of woes of all people treating friend and foe alike. This ideal, an essential feature of the teachings of the Gurus, is the lifestyle of a saint-soldier who is saintly in his personal attitudes but also is always ready to fight for the protection of the weak and the oppressed. In line with this, Sikhs have always stood for and fought for freedom for all. They are dedicated to freedom of worship, right to life and property, and the right to live peacefully in any occupation or lifestyle, for people of all races, religions, castes and color. They have to be peaceful and use persuasion to ensure freedom but, as a last resort, when nothing else avails and the oppressor is out to exterminate the victim, the Gurus required the Sikh to be able to take the field and fight in defense of the weak and the helpless. Siri Guru Gobind Singh Sahib created the Khalsa (Guru's own) and required them to keep weapons. He is said to have declared: "Without weapons a man is but a sheep. He can be held by the ear and taken anywhere. My dear, listen to my instruction. Do not come to my presence without weapons and uncut hair." Keeping weapons and being able to use them effectively created a tradition of Sikhs being soldiers by faith. The following verse by Siri Guru Gobind Singh Sahib summarizes the concept of the saint-soldier ideal and is referred to by some Sikhs as their national anthem:

gkh lVyDeu pk hkAVX fupq YHfek?q wu&
q Gu&dlu vfme mDh ou&lqvFAfu dsqLmDY fu&
duXlvn k&dlsqHkLpq fRhk olD F kxXjXq YxXxXu&
me dDy fLdxX lqgQ eqHdlY kLuq pAYe mM puR 564 ¡ ^;/ seqD<<'

"My God, give me this boon that I may never desist from good acts. May I not be afraid of the enemy when I go to battle. May I resolutely effect my victory. May I instruct my mind so that it would always desire to sing Your praise. When the time comes for my life to end, may I die fighting in the thick of battle." [8, page 99]

Sikh readiness to oppose injustice and cruelty and to fight for freedom for all people has been a constant source of worry to oppressive regimes and unjust rulers. Successive governments in India have sought to channelize or neutralize this tradition. In the eighteenth century, the rulers of the time tried to exterminate all Sikhs. However, in spite of several massacres and long periods of oppression, the Sikhs survived. After British takeover of Punjab, the Sikhs were totally disarmed [9, page 175; 10, page 277]. Lord Dalhousie had declared [10, page 190]: "If the Sikhs, after this is over, rise again, they shall intrench themselves behind a dunghill, and fight with their fingernails, for if I live 12 months, they shall have nothing else left to fight with." Regarding Sikh leadership, Lord Dalhousie's instructions were [11, page 99]: "Let them be placed somewhere under surveillance; but attach their property till their destination is decided." The Government tried to undermine their religion through taking over control of their places of worship and outright oppression. As Kapur describes it [12, page 8]: "Uncertain of the British attitude towards their recent foes, those who had earlier adopted the garb of the Khalsa in their thousands, now deserted it with the same vigor." However, later, the British saw wisdom in capitalizing on the Sikh military tradition. Sikhs were preferentially recruited not only into the army and the police in India but also taken to serve in other countries in British possession. During the First World War, a population of 2 million Sikhs is said to have provided 90000 men to the army. The Sikhs continued to be regarded as outstanding soldiers and were heavily represented in the armed forces till 1947.

Sikhs were foremost in the struggle for India's independence from the British. According to statistics published by the Sikh Missionary College [13, page 19], of the 121 persons hanged for treason by the British, 93 were Sikhs; of 2646 sentenced to life imprisonment, 2147 were Sikhs; and of the 2004 killed in police and army firings on demonstrations, 1457 were Sikhs. This was totally out of proportion for a group that made up only two percent of the total population. When Indira Gandhi declared a state of emergency in India in 1975, Sikhs were the only group that continued to vigorously protest this denial of civil rights to people after Mrs. Gandhi had been successful in putting down all other opposition. This perhaps was the factor that led to her strong interference in Punjab 1980 onwards to neutralize the Sikhs.

After British withdrawal from South Asia, successive administrations in India have sought to neutralize this tradition as a "myth of the martial race" created by the British. It started with removal of the requirement that Sikhs in the army must take *Pahul* (initiation ceremony for becoming a Sikh) and maintain the external symbols of their faith. Later on, under the pretext of making the Indian army national in its composition, recruitment of Sikhs was drastically reduced. Recently, under the garb of secularization, Sikh regiments in the Indian Army have been abolished and the troops distributed over other units. Thus, freedom for India has spelled rejection of the Sikh religion, in its original form, by the majority of Indians which is Hindu. They have effectively banned the Sikh from pursuing his cherished ideal of a saint-soldier. The view propagated by Hindu intellectuals and, apparently, accepted by the Indian Government is that Sikhs are essentially Hindus and not a separate religion at all. Manju Subhash regards the Sikh ideal of a saint-soldier to be merely a political device used at a certain time in history. She states [14, page 210]: "To fulfil a certain need of the hour, Guru Gobind Singh preached the gospel of the Khalsa, the pure or the elect." She regards the preservation of Sikh identity as a part of the British policy of "divide and rule." According to her [14, page 212] the task before the British was "to create the Sikhs into a separate and distinct community, even when they were Hindus insofar as their religion was concerned." This is a direct and cruel attack on what the Sikhs hold to be a sacred mandate for a certain lifestyle from their beloved Guru. Indian

Government's desire to introduce fundamental changes in Sikh beliefs and practices, and the state terrorism used to enforce these, is at the root of the present conflict in Punjab. Government interference in their faith has led the Sikhs to seek freedom for their homeland they call Khalistan.

DIFFERENT FAITHS

a. All claim to have realized God.

People have tried many different ways to realize God or to achieve perfection. Each one of them claims success. According to Sikh belief, none of these various ways leads to God unless one gives up pride and seeks God's love through the Guru's grace. For example,

mQqxXqkLEDyAfyq eDYD; pq nhn pDujX ukDxX¡
l\dDqL l\dDqXo Dyk¡ ljdDqLljdDqXfpDyk¡ sE lfqkLmDYD; 4 ¡
EjxXLukY mXYD; mfLfkY pXYD; YsvLYsk uDYD; 5 ¡
pqLpq\DuL¡ vlqdDvLekpFDuL¡ xgDvLxgDv uDYD; 6 ¡
EjlY qyAsufDuD; sahYXyHXsXDuD; ljuvYLljuvlY \upDYD; 7 ¡
hfvegLekXhs dy\YD; fBsULfxXHmjYD; hlf YuZ qDYD; 8 ¡
hqukDu yuYLdBsuvD; hlf o lf q gyHk guvD; hlf pqkLljdDYD; 9 ¡
JDw q lfqkLfkDl hdD; vE fkYHkAsDl hdD; hv pHHvfEjYD; : ¡
vjo xXlY xXDyD; lYdDjLvuhq sDyD; qDqfXjXFuQ suDYD; ; ¡5 ¡5: ¡ ^:/ sqD:4‘

"I do not know what would please God. O my mind, search for the Way. The meditators meditate, the scholars study but no one has found God. *Vaishnav* seekers stay busy in holy acts, *yogis* say they have been delivered, the ascetics are absorbed in their pursuits, the silent ones stay silent, the *Sanyasis* (those who have given up worldly attachments), the *Brahmacharis* (those who have controlled sexual urges), the *Udasis* (who have no home and wander) are all busy in their ways. Some say there are nine types of devotees, the pundits recite the Vedas, the householder is following his *Dharam*. There are those who just say one word, those who take on many forms, those who go about naked, those who wear special types of clothing, those who are poets, those who stay awake all the time, and some who bathe at holy places. Some stay without food, some do not let anyone touch them, some hide in caves and do not let anyone see them, and some think in their own minds that they have divine knowledge. No one says he is less than any other. All claim they have found God but the real devotee is he whom God unites with Himself. I have given up all the various ways and means and have sought shelter with God. Nanak has fallen at the Guru's feet." [7, page 71]

b. No False Faiths

All the creation is proof of God's greatness. No faith that believes in prayer to God can be false. They are all essentially the same. Siri Guru Granth Sahib tells us:

vFDvlke vFXY?pHHvlkDYHDfld DvFXvEXkh¡
MWDlfv fxXdDuld AvlkDgmDqlkLfh¡ 4 ¡
vEqDlyF Y?yuYgDvlkDvE YMlk l\dDyk lgqXuDY¡
vE YMkLZDykXpaigHpHHvlkDY?vEqDfuk hf gDY¡ 5 ¡
vEXfyMkLlyF kApHHvlkDYMYHelku fhLqlk¡
vE mld YHHY?vEvgDpHHvlkDvE YMkLplk vplk¡ 6 ¡
vEqDfLY?dDv kApHHsdDuHvE YMlk l\dDyk pHHvlk¡
hmxXEDyAMXXunXY?pHHsdDuHvFXqlqf fHsDYvlk¡ 7 ¡ : ¡46 ¡ ^:/ sqD9:3‘

"My King, You are the Eternal Master, forever. All that You create is true. O King, who can we call false when there is no other? You pervade all beings. All pray to You day and night. They all ask you for things, You are the one providing for all. Everything is under Your command, my King, nothing is outside it. All the beings are Yours and You belong to all; they all merge into You. You fulfil the hopes of all, all pray to You. O Nanak's King, O my Beloved, You are the Eternal One; keep me (in Your service) in whatever manner might please You. [7, page 670]

Emphasizing the essential unity of faiths, Siri Guru Granth Sahib's words are:

eqw fYH fkkXpY MWHMWDm£q eIFDuH ^:/ sqD4683 '

"Don't say the Vedas and the Books (Torah, Bible, Qura'an) are false. False is the one who does not study them." [7, page 1350]

And,

dokXjaAXvjo Jw EIYu kugAokHXeFDuL; kg?YXf gX?pk hHAfkAfeIu sXDuL; 6 ¡ : ¡ 5< ¡ ^:/ sqD7;6 '

"Kabir says this loud and clear, and you should think over it in your own mind. God pervades all persons unseen. He is the same in the Hindu as well as the Muslim." [7, page 483]

c. God created various forms of worship

The Sikhs believe that God created all people and all faiths. There are no limits on God and divine revelation has come to various people at different times in language, idiom, and metaphor appropriate for them. God's people who bring God's Word are not ordinary beings in the cycle of birth and death but special messengers who are one with God and come for the benefit of mankind. Siri Guru Granth Sahib tells us:

mqp puq gXk?pk qDkLmq suxXfDuLdDuH mkd gQXgHEjYLoDuhq klu lvxXoAq lpoDuH 5 ¡ ^:/ sqD:7< '

"God's saints are not subject to birth and death; they have come for the benefit of others. They give people the gift of God's love and unite them with God." [7, page 749]

All faiths worship the same God using different names for Him and praising some special divine attributes. All mankind is one. The apparent differences in form are indicative of God's glory in revealing Himself to various people. For example,

sxXL; YXX\dDuhq eqw fYHDvQXnUH jQYLjQLq mDuh YHAglu sUH
ekpHYXX\dDuhqKhgthgDvQD vfu levq dyYDu klu mv pXh EQD
slu lsfDpeu vH pvDuhf dxXDuH rlY sfY lquflDu J lw J lw pxXDuH
fUkXfuAlyqDvX\upHYjkdA lmYXmYXoDuhk dDus lYYXDYYXojkdA 5 ¡ ^:/ sqD84;'

"The Vedas and the Books (Torah, Bible, Qura'an) all stand and worship You. So many people are lying at Your door that they cannot be counted. Numerous *Brahmas* and *Indras* with their thrones, *Shivas* and incarnations of *Vishnu* sing God's glory and so do many *Pirs*, Prophets, *Sheikhs,* and holy men. You pervade all completely and are fulfilling Yourself in all. Falsehood destroys and people can reach You only if they follow the correct way but we all do what You Yourself get us to." [7, page 518]

And,

fhLeoAupo upo fhLnXDuh¡ fhLvyHAjXhkdDfhLdoDuk¡ 4 ¡
fDuQ fuQ fupo¡ lfusD\Du ukpo¡ 4 ¡ ukDXX¡
fhLqDYAYluZ fhLkm mDuh¡ fhLfuAsmDfhLlvuXbqyDuh¡ 5 ¡
fhLsUAeqw fhLfYH¡ fhLrTAqko fhLvXqw¡ 6 ¡
fhLfkAYXfXfhLfkAkeg?¡ fhLe{AEvYXfhLvXljeg?¡ 7 ¡
fkXqQf lhq kXpXs{DY; sE vDuke fDlYq EqXmYD; 8 ¡ < ¡ ^:/ ;;8 '

"Some people call you *Ram*, 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 (Torah, Bible, Qura'an etc.). Some wear blue, others white. Some call themselves Muslims, others Hindus. Some seek *bahisht* (persian for heaven), some *suarg* (sanskrit for heaven). O Nanak, say; whosoever has understood the *Hukam* (Divine order), has learnt the secret of God, the Master." [7, page 885]

And,

fDuq fuq fuLp¡vue sMYsD ukLp¡dok don dsD¡nXg nXDh yG eWpXDu¡4 ¡
rXpf£Ejy¥ jXDhL¡nD f uly ukd Dvue WDhL¡4 ¡ukDxX¡
mjeqDZ mjmLyq pD\f£ExXaq lug pDk duD\f£ lunIfW jsD jXyg¡su?q vueYtpXg¡5 ¡
lpkuyDq pxX DYKLhF¡sLu sA¥eu vH¡lgo DfDpD fXfuHkDfX fXDq fYH YHsDfX6 ¡
qDuDhQ quku ghdD ¡upY uLp Jw Jw dD\Du¡eDXgW evY vE WDh¡oIo DIf{ onLq mDh¡7 ¡
lpku ghd Dflu fuqkDu¡EjlY egjLgk lvumQkDu¡fkXqDqf jXu nfHEup¡hF£dokXsDuekpX8 ¡67 ¡78 ¡^:/sqD
;<9'

"The Source of creation, Merciful, Provider of all, *Allah*, Unseen, Boundless, Yourself the Master of all, You are beyond all count. God, the Master of creation, the Creator of all people, All-pervading God, 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 deliverance, the All-pervading, Merciful God, You are the only one to deliver *pirs*, prophets and *sheikhs*. The Master of all hearts is just. He is beyond the Qura'an 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. O Doer, have mercy (on me), show me kindness. O Creator, give me the gift of devotion and submission to You. Say, O Nanak, when the Guru rids one of his doubts, *Allah* and *Parbrahm* are seen as one." [7, page 896]

Also,

f£?Elhr pXkd DvaqdDYLf£?mfLElhr f£?ekpFDuLf£?mYLdqpDqef£
kg?YXf f£?uDivLhpDp vDiLpDqv fLmDY vEAhFAskFDqef£
fuYDfuLp vhLuDmf ukLp rhLg?ufq EXg fhLE? Ep pDqef£
hFkLfLvy¥ vEkLf£jXgy¥ hF hF kLvu? veAhFAmY mDqef£48 ¡;8 ¡
gkXDpvLY vhL/smDd RhyDm rhL/pDqv veAhF sAdqF ff£EpDxXkA
gy¥YDdgy¥ m{ j\e YXf kg?hdDuHqdDuHgW fHEW f£sEDxXkA
hFAqA/hFAfDq/hFAgk/hFAeDq/nDf eDg dDYv dRde f£uoDxXkA
dok dEH vhL/sXDq dRfXDq rhL/hF kLvu? veAhF kLeqDxXkA49 ¡;9 ¡^;/sqD4<'

"Some shave their heads and become *Sanyasis*, some become *Yogis*, some are celibate and some are known for continence. Some are Hindus and others Muslims, Sunni or Shia. Recognize all mankind as one. The Creator and the Merciful, the Provider and the Gracious are the same God. Do not, in error or doubt, accept any other. All serve the One, He is the One Divine Teacher of all, there is but One Form, let all understand Him to be the same Light.

"The temple and the mosque are the same, *pooja* (Hindu worship) and *namaaz* (Muslim prayer) are the same. All mankind is one but appears to be several (groups). (The existence as different entities) of gods, the anti-gods, the *yakshas* and *gandharvs* (characters in Hindu religion); of the Muslims and the Hindus; is merely the difference in dress (outer appearance) of (people from) different countries. All have the same eyes, the same ears, the same body and the same form. They are all made of earth, air, fire and water. *Allah* and the Formless God are the same; the *Purans* and the Qura'an are the same; all are the same appearance, the same form." [8, page 19]

d. No bad people. All are God's children

For a Sikh, there are no bad people. All are created by God. They may appear to be different but all are God's creation and part of God Himself. Siri Guru Granth Sahib tells us:

vEqDfDsEXhFEXkAgmDd yuXq f¥h¡jXi suvDgLplq yvAlYYXJlw sujwXk¥h¡8 ¡
vEXdYumDpLekpXkAekpXyvAvE ZDh¡pgDlfvqfdDIdAvelg yHkXb yoDh¡9 ¡
eXDEo DlYFuXdDngDlnFuXkAgKXpDk¡jXkpX h Hf£eXMd DhFvXpDk vpDh¡: ¡^:/sqD:8:'

"One God is the Master of all, there is no other. When, through the Guru's grace, He resides in someone's mind, He manifests Himself in that person. This entire creation is a manifestation of the Omniscient God and He is everywhere. If one carefully studies the (Guru's) Word, how can one call anyone bad. A person talks about good and bad people only so long as he is caught up in Duality (that the creation is separate from God). One who has followed the way shown by the Guru has understood the Unity and is absorbed in God." [7, page 757]

And,

eXDEo DfkXlfvqf£fkIdAvjoHmId YpXDuH4 ¡ukDxX¡^:/sqD6;6'

"Who can we call bad or good when all are Your creatures?" [7, page 383]

Also,

dlbs xsDHqQfDdBsHunAyHi¡ pegDlfvqfdDlMdAm>vEqDvlkeXhHX ^:/seqD456:'

O Nanak, He Himself creates them and makes them different. Who shall we say is bad for all have the same Master." [7, page 1237]

And,

iuLgDnlDofXnof plk nof yvAue plk¡ pegDlfvqfdDlMdAm>lYvXleqXfhLqlk¡ :8 ¡ ^:/seqD46;4'

"O Farid, the Creator pervades all Creation and the Creation is in God. How can we call any one bad when there is none besides Him?" [7, page 1381]

And,

dylb dok q[aXxsDlndDfsuY fHvE egeH hHf q[a YHvEXmjXxsDlndDfxs Eo Hf fpegH 4 ¡
ofjDEulp q E[kXEDlL¡ nlbofXnof nof plk nlbofXs?u ukr ve WDlL= 4 ¡ ukDxX¡ ^:/seqD467<'

"At first there was God's Light from which the universe was created. All the creation is created by God's power. From one Light the entire universe was created, who is bad and who is good? O people, O brothers, do not get lost in doubt. The Creator is the Creation, the Creator is in the Creation, He pervades all completely." [7, page 1349]

All the creatures are God's children. He created them and cares for them. He loves them. He nourishes them and supports all of them like a parent. Siri Guru Granth Sahib also describes the world as a garden planted by God who cares for it and makes it beautiful. There is an essential unity between all people as belonging to the same God. For example:

dlBsHvjYDolndqXdlBsHenv fuHh¡ vEqDfDpDlsxXdlbs kAdlBsHvDu fuHh¡ ^:/seqD986'

"God has Himself engaged people in His service and He Himself blesses them. He Himself is father and mother to all and takes care of all." [7, page 653]

And,

Y?v>MDvlke elBs kpDlD;qRqlI\ YHHdnW EGDlD; ^:/seqD<:'

"You are our common Father. Your treasuries contain, and are never short of, all the nine treasures." [7, page 97]

Also,

hHf fvFXyuYAvE dYXlu vEqDfuHsIYsloD;
qlQqf lhfvXleqXpAdyuXq mQDvEqDgLyDqXghdlDoD;8 ¡ 8 ¡ ^:/seqD88<'

"The One Eternal God pervades all and provides for all creatures. O Nanak, I do not recognize anyone besides the One God, the Abode of Mercy, who is the support of all." [7, page 559]

And,

lhkXmjXyDlLpHDsEXplo L¡ vgDvplo Hf fqkLnlo L¡
mHLyDvqDslDlHYHLyuYHyDv?yDvXmQDyIQdD;8 ¡ ^:/seqD44;'

"This world is like a flower-garden and God is the gardener. He cares for all and does not ignore any one. Each flower has the fragrance that the gardener has put in it. It is known by the fragrance the gardener has put in it." [7, page 1187]

Also,

plvLhHf vjo vaDlD;ekXel\ EGaHUUAfpXKlD;6 ¡
saF YYXplb gHLfDdIflD;Jlwyl\ ff fuAeIFlD;7 ¡ ^:/seqD445;'

"Just as a potter makes many types of vessels out of the same clay, the entire universe has been made out of the same materials. Five ingredients have been combined to make this body; some may have more or less of some ingredients." [7, page 1128]

And,

vEAJw uDpXeHAuDpDe6A uDp leqDf£e6AuH 4 ¡ ukDxX¡
hHo pDWLfæu FlwLEDmq kAekXqDqKuH dvZDyu mjp flw sYjp Jlw Jlw uDp vpDqDuH 4 ¡
hHo lFæDuDmXd qYDd xæ Ym£vE dDrDuH sQyAqDpDEhHDqkfDpDf£WDfæ f£gDrDuH 5 ¡ 6 ¡ ^:/ seqD<;;'

"God speaks in every body, God does. Who else but God speaks? Out of the same earth, a variety of vessels has been made, from the ant to the elephant. In animate as well as inanimate objects, in insects too, the same God pervades. Giving up all other hopes, concentrate on the One who is Infinite. Nama humbly says that when one has got rid of desires, there is no difference between the Master and the servant." [7, page 988]

e. The Critics are Lost and Ignorant

Many persons do not worship God. Instead they think that their minds are capable of understanding creation and of solving all problems. Often, making good of all or good of a large majority the fundamental principle, they argue that religion is not only not necessary but even a hindrance to human progress. This criticism of religion is based on lack of understanding of religion. These persons assume that religion is essentially superstition and belief in supernatural beings and happenings. The human mind cannot comprehend the infinite. With its limited capability, and without devotion and love as the guiding principles, it can only argue on the basis of material benefits of individuals or groups. Human activity is then governed by greed or ego. This is bound to lead to conflict of interests and eventual misery. We give below a few of the verses in Siri Guru Granth Sahib that address this topic:

pqpæ gæ\DgæpY ledDsHmq dæu pk jæDuL¡ væ mqDfLfZDqDEDyArh GæHvQXsuyDuL¡ 8 ¡
hgfXhgDfu poX\æArkXpo En pDdD\DuL¡ væmqDfLhgDyDsHqDxæyDu q sDuL¡ 9 ¡ ^:/ seqD83:'

"Those who follows their own minds (and not God) are caught up in Duality (that there is some other than God) and in folly. They have the darkness of attachment in them (and cannot see the Reality). They do not like the talk of the saints and are lost along with their families (followers). By engaging in criticism, the critic washes off the dirt (of bad deeds) of the victim. He is an eater of dirt (acquires the dirt of ego) and a follower of *Maya*. Those who engage in criticism of saints (servants of God) can neither get to this side or the other (of the ocean of criticism)." [7, page 507]

And,

klu klu oLqHvæ xæDu¡ klu fHgDr fLlFYyAeæd DLYvkLfxXilu pDu¡ 4 ¡ ukDxX¡
mq fDdDs vkDLkd Dhgf EDjHkDu¡ EpY EpY xkDkLphHeDæU ljkq pæDu¡ 4 ¡
qDqf vuQ slur gæ Eaq jæ jDYAvgDd sDu¡ hgf fDpæXfDo Dkd DgIq gæd DfAgueDu¡ 5 ¡ 48 ¡ ^:/ seqD9:7'

"God Himself protects His saints. He destroys (spiritually) anyone who thinks of harming them. He Himself becomes the supporter of His servant and the critics are frustrated. Going around and around, they die a spiritual death and again fall into the cycle of birth and death. O Nanak, whoever comes to the protection of the Deliverer from Sorrow, is absorbed in Him and sings His praises. The critic earns infamy in the courts of this world and of God." [7, page 674]

Also,

mq fLhgDfuAq f£n¡ m£fuAv£gæd Dk£n¡ dDW sku mqXnHæX\d DhHmpd DYDfAlqflw q mDhH 8 ¡
mq huyA hgf dkfDuL¡ mq Eo pDqk hgf yHDuL¡ jæ fAlvh vlYjæ?\d Dhd D¡ mq xæuHhgf qulf sDhd D¡ 9 ¡
væQ vDmq pHHpY lsd DuH vlY eFq yuYk klu gæDuH mæDfuHvXYæDsDhH d EpDqLfLmU vusu mDhH : ¡ ^:/ seqD;9<'

"No one should criticize God's servant. Whoever does so will be unhappy. God's man worships God at all hours. Death cannot come near him. God's men are without enmity for any one, their critic is egoistic. God's men wish all well, the critic is busy in unproductive activity. The Guru's Sikhs always think of the True Guru. God's men

are saved but the critic is stuck in this hell. My dear friend, listen to me. I tell you of the infallible principles that hold at God's door. There, one is rewarded according to what one does, (therefore) the proud man loses his all." [7, page 869]

f. The Hypocrites ignore Essence, emphasize Ritual

In every faith there are persons who do not follow the essentials of their professed faith and merely flaunt their dedication to rite and ritual. These may be so-called religious leaders or politicians who, under the garb of religion, exploit innocent people for their personal benefit or aggrandizement. The Gurus, during their earthly sojourn, while stressing that all faiths were divinely revealed, noted the presence of many such persons among both the Hindu and the Muslim communities in India, who impressed the public by following the form of their faith and obtained position of leadership in society but were not living their lives according to the principles laid down by their respective religions. Their activities are often motivated by greed, anger or ego. Siri Guru Granth Sahib denounces such hypocrites as lost souls. For example:

jm vDTHYAYA\ YdDlYkuHsDhq Yj ¡ jo LhqKmspDo IdDo@HkZ hej ¡
rh klu fHvY q ddDdk eDqDlv fHWj ¡ 4 ¡
dXHvY q p£fxXEDyk ¡ GDDlvxXsHDjwfDyk ¡ 4 ¡ ukDxX ¡
eDvq p>m FuDyk x>lu fDWL\ h moDyk ¡ evXDn~g fuk gXh F@kvDuHpDqv nDyk ¡ ¡ 5 ¡
rh sD>LvgDliuk d suD\LpXkXd suv fkDyk ¡ vgDvgDliuk d lEpDqLvjo fWe GXDyk ¡ 6 ¡
hmYXf oDhd DlYY kLoDj DYXHfup fpDyA fkXfeLu hvXvlYjXXEWAsXuls mqlp q dDyA ¡ 7 ¡ 5 ¡ ^:/ seqD7:9¢

"Those who wear three-and-a-half yard long loincloths and triple sacred threads, have rosaries around their necks and polished vessels in their hands, should not be called saints of God. (In reality) they are thugs of Banaras. I do not like such saints. They will eat the trunk along with the branch (for personal benefit they will not hesitate to kill those they profit from). They scrub the utensils before putting them on the fire; they wash the wood they burn; they dig the earth to make two places for fire; but (their actions are such that) they will eat whole humans. They are sinners who always go around committing crimes but claim they never go near *Maya*. They are always going about in their pride. They (ruin themselves) and their entire families (followers). However, everyone does what God has engaged him in and does such things. O Kabir, one who has met the True Guru is not born again (is liberated)." [7, page 476]

And,

qDyQ FoHYLuZLplqKnwAYlq Fu ¡ lhfXEDxXo ZLqDYd Dg~h EDFUd vXku ¡
eDklu \YLY@ULdgu lyv lqfu ¡ vD\ EoHd QqDYd DFu lv FuDFu ¡ 5 ¡ ^:/ seqD:;<‘

"If one goes to bathe at holy places with falsehood in one's mind and while thieves (lust, greed, anger, attachment, and ego) beset the body, one part (dirt of the body) will be removed but twice that will be acquired (as increase in ego). A bitter gourd can be washed from the outside but inside the bitterness stays. The saints are all right without bathing (at holy places) and thieves will remain thieves (even after such baths)." [7, page 789]

And,

eHXsXDuHpX YHseY fDpDpq fDpDWD pqLkh eWDlhf>YLkugAfo sq jDWD
kh xgDvLljkXYm Fbr {WfAqDkLqDWD ¡ 4 ¡
mkd fLfAsk eDY fkD dDs pXYXpfxXsEXpHHdAfkDokD ¡ 4 ¡ ukDxX ¡
YsvLflu fAgkLvD\LpqdDgk lgv \lqD ekpFDlu ekpFumXflqDlkugAEhd DjXlqD
vaqdDvLkh fAYluZ Elpr xXXpk fkXejlqD ¡ 5 ¡
JaDu eD\ EhHulpgDvDuWdq fHrsDyD euY qH fup nw flqHeDklu EH lgnDyD
jlY qlg pXh uDj doDsHplq qkLklu klu jDyD ¡ 6 ¡
kun vf oE pk ukY kk lqupo klu fHvaD lYq fL\U sDHpqXpHDmDglhd DfuHEjyaD
fkXqlqf jWXs@DlplbdDY>xXuLpq fLFaD ¡ 7 ¡
pHDdaumDpLklu uDhdD vEXf{XmQApHHmkd fDsDYpXevlu jhHefeDhdD ¡ 4 ¡ ukDxXgh@D ¡ 9 ¡ 48 ¡ ^:/ seqD4336‘

"Who shall I talk to regarding what is in my mind? Where shall I find the one who is himself liberated and would unite me with God? The Pundit reads with his mouth but is lax in his spirituality. Another has given up

speech and is sitting in solitude but physical desires are making knots in his mind. Another has left his home and family but the wandering of his mind have not ceased. Another has become an ascetic and is putting his body through suffering but his mind is running in all ten directions. Another has become celibate and controlled his sexual desires but he has got pride in his mind. Another has become a *Sanyasi* and has travelled to holy places but the anger in him is enough to destroy all wisdom. Another has tied bells (around his feet) and has become an actor (of religious plays) but this is only a way of earning his bread. Another fasts and performs the six good acts but this is only for impressing others. Another sings (God's praises) with his mouth but in his mind he has never praised God. Only God's saints are pure, above grief and joy, greed and attachment. If God has mercy upon me, my mind shall find the dust of (the feet) of these saints. Say, O Nanak, I met the Perfect Guru and my mind's worry ended. My God is Omniscient. My Beloved knows all that is in my mind. One who meets Him forgets the superficial talk." [7, page 1003]

And,

umD\uApqDyAd o kXvXdIgY mkd vaIDuA dDsDgfh d yu qkLgHAfDkHfxXMn pDuA 4 ¡
fDmLvDke hfEXYkLpk YHDvF leFDu q gHA nelu q fuk gkq fHexXHYDYHmqpXd oHA 4 ¡ukDxX¡
vDFXfYH enDqAd o kXqDu sXnXqkLfhL¡ sTHjXHqDkLn{XexXHmxXgo pk nelu q khL¡ 5 ¡ ^:/ seqD7;6‘

"The *Qazi* observes fasts and (ostensibly) propitiates *Allah* (by sacrificing an animal at the end of *Ramadan)* but (in fact) he is killing the animal for enjoying the taste of food. Keeping his own benefit in mind, he is unmindful of others. All his effort is useless. O *Qazi,* there is only One Master of all, yours too. He is within you as well.You do not think about it. Crazy about *Deen* (ritual), you do not understand this and that is why your life is wasted. The Books (Qura'an) also say that *Allah* is Eternal and that no man or woman has permanent existence. Crazy man, if you have not learnt this, there is no use of reading and studying." [7, page 483]

And,

fDqLfUXeb po XnDh¡ ebkpQ qDyAmkd DJDh¡ mfLmXlY q mQAd\aX YkqHrmDHfDe\aX 5 ¡
vfmfLmfmXlY s{DQA jXsuvDqLhHfmDQA fDmLvfmfxXwLfuA jXsuvDqLmLyYXpuA vfebkpQXmfekpXeIFDuA dDs YuAvjoH
fX YDuA 6 ¡
gDqvegXvhLlgb \yA pXopDQXvhLpoXnyA slUd DeMAvfsuyDQX hmvXlvlu gujk fDqIvDQX 7 ¡ 8 ¡ : ¡ ^:/ seqD995‘

"The *Qazi* (who is a religious leader as well as a civil authority) lies and takes bribes. The Brahmin bathes at holy places but hurts people (of low castes). The *Yogi* too is blind and does not know the correct lifestyle. All the three are in spiritual wilderness. The (real) *Yogi* is one who know the 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 become unattached to the world while living in it. The (real) Brahmin is one who contemplates on God and swims 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 sin. The learned one is he who understands true lifestyle. He is received with honor at (God's) Door." [7, page 662]

Also,

eX sh sh kg?phHYXf phHvuXqDL¡ rh o HmDHrh o HjDCHYHLjlY gKXq sDL¡ ^:/ seqD987‘

"Hindus have destroyed themselves (spiritually) worshipping idols; the Muslims have destroyed themselve bowing their heads. They cremate the dead and they bury them. Neither has found Your Way." [7, page 654]

And,

pX YHsUYDwIfDvkY¡ kugAuDpXqkLs?q ukYX xXgWXfuHflu of lgUDyA dsqDfkdDdDs q fpDyA 4 ¡
sJEY eJ eIFDu sJEY¡ pq fDfkXhqyDu sJEY¡ 4 ¡ukDxX¡
dDjHuDhr vDb juDpX pq flqfgkhgv levDpX lYo f FuDyAsDhLsDh¡ ofXsFDuDdà fpDh¡ 5 |
nwXfupDdu dDvqX\YL¡ EDjW ljk sUAhqY sZL¡ pD DiHHpjAbeEY¡ hk le\ fh q Ylur pIY¡ 6 ¡
vfsJEY jXvegXfpDh¡ YAQ fLxXXxXuLpDh¡ FYX eJ s?q ku qDh¡ qDqf lYvfLvuQLsDh¡ 7 ¡ 9 ¡ 4: ¡ ^:/ seqD;;:‘

"With your tongue you read (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 you 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* (while engaged in

prayer); going to a rich man's home and reading the book (for him); counting the beads on the rosary and then asking (the rich man) for money; my friend, no one has reached his destination in this manner. He is the (true) Pundit who follows the Guru's word. The *Maya* of three *gunas* cannot influence that man. All the four Vedas are contained in God's Name. O Nanak, (only a fortunate one) comes to the service of such a one." [7, page 887]

Many of the observations made by the Gurus regarding the hypocritical religious leaders of their times apply equally well today, to Sikhs as well as to members of other faiths. We do not read our scriptures and act upon their advice. We pay others to pray for us and so seek to buy the benefits of prayer. We are caught up in rite and ceremony, fascinated by worldly success and financial benefits, desirous of expanding our respective clienteles, and are contemptuous of those who do not agree with our particular viewpoint or interest. This necessarily leads to conflict, gets all religions blamed as being intolerant and factious and turns many people away from faith.

INTERFAITH UNDERSTANDING IN SIKH HISTORY AND PRACTICES

Throughout history, Sikhs have been committed to religious harmony and interfaith cooperation. Siri Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the founder of the faith, was loved by Hindus as well as Muslims. He was referred to as the Pir of the Mussalmans and Guru of the Hindus. While ordering the execution of the Fifth Nanak, Siri Guru Arjan Dev Ji, Jehangir the Mughal emperor in Delhi noted that not only Hindus but many Muslims had started to gather around him. The Ninth Nanak, Siri Guru Tegh Bahadar Sahib, sacrificed his life for the right of the Hindus to wear the sacred thread and the saffron mark on their forehead even though he did not believe in those rituals himself. Siri Guru Gobind Singh Sahib writes about it as follows:

Xo f mB?uDsE YfD fIqfeGffo ?pk vfD
v\q kM hYLnq fuL¡ vvXgd DsuXvLq xKuL¡ 46 ¡
\up kM vfDnq fd vvXgd Dsu vuuXq gd ^;/seD87'

"He protected their (right to wear) the sacred thread and the saffron mark. He did this great act in *Kalyug.* He did this for the sake of the sadhus; he gave his life and did not express pain. He did this for *Dharam.* He gave up his head but not his determination." [8, page 54]

The story of Bhai Ghanaiya Ji, a Sikh, providing water to the wounded enemy soldiers after a battle is well-known. When some Sikhs complained about this, upon questioning by Siri Guru Gobind Singh Sahib, Ghanaiya Ji is said to have replied:

mk>fk>hf us YXDD qk g9u pAfx?hkDD 66 ¡
vE pk uk eun vpQD vYtpYtfmn q mQD
vE Zo YXufus hkDM EH EqfqeFDM 67 ¡ ^48/seD48;'

"Everywhere I see Your form, I see no other. You pervade all equally, I cannot tell friend from foe. In all places I see Your form, I do not see any difference among people." [15, page 158]

During the period of Sikh rule in Punjab, the people of all religions felt free to practice their faiths and to participate in administrative and political affairs of the state at all levels of responsibility. There was no pressure on any one to embrace the Sikh religion.

Sikh Gurdwaras have always been open to everybody regardless of religion, race, color or caste. Gurdwaras have free kitchens that are open to all and everyone is treated as equal. Harmandar Sahib (The Golden Temple) has doors on all four sides signifying acceptance of visitors from all the four corners of the world. The Gurus spoke against hypocrisy and false emphasis on outer formalisms and practices of every religion but respected the right of all to profess their faith and serve mankind in their own ways. During many ups and downs in their

history, the Sikhs have always respected the scriptures and places of worship of others. Many Hindus, to this day, routinely attend Sikh worship in preference to that of their own faith.

Sikhs won admiration of all for their non-violent struggle in the 1920's to retrieve control of their places of worship that had been denied them since the British take-over of Punjab. C.F. Andrews, a Christian missionary was present at one of the scenes of police brutality against non-violent Sikhs. Andrews wrote [16, pages 57, 225]: "The brutality and inhumanity of the whole scene was indescribably increased by the fact that the men who were hit were praying to God and had already taken a vow that they would remain silent and peaceful in word and deed. The Akali Sikhs who had taken this vow, both at the Golden Temple before starting and also at the shrine of Guru-ka-Bagh, were as I have already stated, largely from the army. ...It was a strangely new experience to these men, to receive blows dealt against them with such of the force as to fell them to the ground, and yet never to utter a word or strike a blow in return.... I saw no act, no look, of defiance. It was a true martyrdom for them as they went forward, a true act of faith, a true deed of devotion to God. They remembered their Gurus how they had suffered, and they rejoiced to add their own sufferings to the treasure of their wonderful faith." Andrews was so moved that he argued with the Governor of Punjab and told him that he had seen "with his own eyes hundreds of Christs being crucified at Guru-ka-Bagh." This intercession by a man of God, in behalf of people of a different faith, was instrumental in a change in British policy. It is worth noting that British Government's brutality was carried out in public to terrorize the public into submission but the policy backfired because the sight moved the conscience of God-fearing men in position to influence government policy. However, since Indira Gandhi's government chose to put down the peaceful Sikh agitation in 1982, the beatings have not been public but at police stations and in underground torture chambers of Punjab so that no one knows what is going on and the Government can cover up its misdeeds by lying and false propaganda. With correct information hard to come by, few consciences have been moved this time around to intercede on behalf of the victims of a planned genocide.

Recently, there has been a recognition among members of various traditions of the need for interfaith dialogue and cooperation. Everywhere this has happened, Sikhs, dedicated by faith to interreligious respect, understanding and cooperation, have joined in enthusiastically. Sikhs are participating actively in interfaith groups in several countries. In the United States, such groups are active in Washington, D.C. area, in Kansas, Chicago and Columbus, Ohio, among others. These groups have organized interfaith dinners, luncheons and musical celebrations with joint worship. People from diverse religious beliefs have joined together not only in interfaith celebrations but also in noting inter-religious strife around the world and raising their combined voices against violence and injustice. Sikh participatioon in these local efforts reflects this religious community's appreciation of the problems we face and the desire to resolve them jointly with members of other religions.

SOME CHALLENGES AND CONCERNS

There are numerous problems and challenges that confront people of all religions. There are religious groups that claim their belief and way of worship to be the only one that is correct and declare all others to be false. This franchise on God leads to efforts to "spread" the message and drive out the "falsehood." This fanaticism is total negation of interfaith understanding and cooperation and must be curbed. At the same time, persons devoted to their respective faiths are being labelled as fundamentalists by the so-called modernists and rationalists and by

governments trying to suppress religious minorities. Equating fundamentalism with narrow-minded parochialism, isolationism, and intolerance, they are blamed for many of the conflicts we see in the world today. In the case of the Sikhs, they have been labelled as terrorists and efforts made to exterminate them. These are serious matters for all of us at the Parliament of World's Religions to consider.

a. The Religious Utopians

Many persons, having learnt about God through one faith, get dazzled by the glimpse of divine light they have received and become so admirous of what they see that they claim exclusivity for that particular way of worship as the only one which God wished people to follow. Claiming to have had a spiritual experience, they declare that their experience was unique and that there can be no other except in their own faith or through them. Caught up in their own brand of worship they wish to convert everyone to their faith and "save" them. Their view of the ideal world is of a utopian homogeneous society following what they believe in. In their blind zeal they foresee mass conversion to their faith, and eventual abandonment of all other manners of worship by people. This attitude leads, at best, to pride and smugness and to unthinking criticism of other faiths and people not specifically belonging to their group and, at the worst, to religious intolerance involving government support of a particular religion and prohibition against practice of other faiths. In many cases, it has even involved genocide against minority religions. They often declare, without proper study, that other religions are false and their founders charlatans. They even view efforts at interfaith dialogue and understanding with suspicion. Some join interfaith groups not to understand and cooperate but to convert others to their own faith. With several such groups aggressively claiming exclusive routes to God, there is bound to be friction and bitterness. In fact, their own pride leads them towards spiritual impoverishment and away from God. Interfaith understanding and cooperation cannot come about or stay long unless we give up claims of exclusive access to God and accept faiths other than our own as legitimate messages of God to certain people and accept their right to freedom of worship even in countries that have an officially approved religion.

b. The Modernists

In a recent study, Marty and Appleby [17] have described religious fundamentalists as people who fight back reactively to protect their core identity; who fight for a changed civil polity or, as a last resort, for territory; who fight with a selection of those features, out of actual or imagined ideal original conditions and concepts, that will best reinforce their identity, keep their movement together, and keep others at some distance; who fight against internal or external enemies, the insider being someone who would negotiate with modernity and adapt the movement; and who fight under God or some transcendent reference. They list three dimensions of modern culture considered uncongenial to fundamentalists, namely, a preference for secular rationality; the adoption of religious tolerance with accompanying tendencies toward relativism; and individualism. Fundamentalists are said to begin as traditionalists who perceive modern attitudes as challenge or threat to their core identity. They also propound that religion "leads adherents to prefer myth and symbol, along with rite and ceremony, over other forms of expression." Fundamentalists are seen as members of movements which "no longer perceive themselves as reeling under the corrosive effects of secular life. On the contrary, they perceive themselves as fighting back, and doing so rather successfully." This statement completely

ignores the plight of religious minorities fighting for survival against oppressive socialist regimes or aggressive religious majorities determined to "neutralize" their religious identities.

These scholars evidently consider themselves to be rational and secular modernists as opposed to those they define as fundamentalists. Their definition assumes that religion is inherently incompatible with rationality and tolerance; that religion assigns overwhelming importance to rite and ceremony; and that all religions are movements which deliberately separate people and keep them apart; and that religion does not permit adaptation. They and other contributors to the volume consider religion to be outdated, rigid, and irrational, assume that preservation of religious identity is necessarily a source of conflict, and equate modernity with homogenization of society. The fifteen chapters in the book [17] reflect a fundamentalist (according to the definitions used by the investigators themselves) secularist effort directed against all religions in the world.

Some modernists would replace devotion to God by devotion to country, class or other groups deriving their identity from certain shared mundane aspirations. Not based on belief of unity of God and Creation, of God's omnipresence and love, a secular society is driven by greed and self-interest and not by love and understanding. Given that there would still be numerous identifiable groups with different interests each pulling its own way, the secularists believe that they would be able to work towards collective secular well-being of all. using their collective minds. They replace reference to the scripture with debate among equal citizens. Theoretically this is laudable and the objectives are quite consistent with what most religions advocate. However, the secularists, in their enthusiasm, claim exclusivity for their approach. They claim that rationality, tolerance, and individualism can only flourish in the set-up they advocate. Insisting that all religions emphasize rite and ceremony, are inconsistent with rationalism, resist adaptation, and are intolerant of other faiths, they are contemptuous of religion and believe religion to be the cause of most socio-economic problems facing the world. This view, clearly based on a lack of understanding of the essential features of most traditions and possibly on experience with the religious utopians discussed above, makes them also utopians though of another type. Among other fallacies, they mistakenly believe that religious identity is incompatible with national identity. This attitude leads the secularists to adopt civic and national policies that deliberately seek to undermine and denounce religion, to ridicule the devout, and to blame religion and religious leadership for every ill that might befall the nation.

We ought to question these views of religious fundamentalism. Fundamentalism implies adherence to the fundamental articles of faith of any particular religion. Fundamental religious beliefs, described in this paper with reference to the Sikh religion, advocate love for all and hatred for none and do not encourage socio-political conflict. It is not necessary, not even desirable, to obliterate religious identities or to make them subordinate to economic and national identities. Civic interest is not contrary to or inconsistent with religion and there is no need to suppress religion in order to promote civic well-being.

Religious Minorities: The Sikhs in India

Persecution of religious minorities and denial of freedom of worship is a serious problem around the world. In a few cases, where the minority holds political power, even the majority has been the victim. There have been instances of war between neighboring states for liberation of people of minority faiths and, in some cases, simply to wrest territory from a state professing a different religion. India, a country consisting of over a score of states and territories, is predominantly Hindu. However, in the states of Kashmir and Punjab, which respectively have Muslim and Sikh majorities, the people feel stifled and have been seeking freedom from India. Here we summarize the case of the Sikhs seeking freedom for their homeland they call Khalistan, while maintaining their commitment to interfaith understanding and cooperation. They would like to cooperate with the neighboring states and faiths as free equals. They do not accept that "understanding and accommodation" and India's "national interest" require the liquidation of the devout members of their faith.

During the struggle for freedom and negotiations with the British Government, the Indian national leaders were willing to make promises of all kinds to placate the Muslims so that they could get the British to leave. In an interview with Eve Curie, daughter of the famous Nobel Prize winning scientist, when questioned about his solution of the Hindu-Muslim conflict, Jawaharlal Nehru had said [18, page 429]: "Complicated questions are solved in history only when their solution becomes indispensable. As long as Britain is present as a third party in power, the Hindus and the Moslems will find it difficult to get together. Left alone, they will be obliged to find a compromise, for the simple reason that India must survive. Each historical transformation involves a certain amount of risk." Eve Curie states that by "a certain amount of risk" he meant, very precisely, that the Indians might have to fight a civil war among themselves, just as the Chinese had done, before finding their unity. This was clear to the Muslims too and they were not willing to wait for a civil war to resolve the issue. They were not satisfied with promises that may or may not have been kept later. They prepared for the possibility of a civil war but also insisted that a Muslim area be demarcated as a separate nation before the British handed over power. This was finally agreed to. The preparation for a civil war was diverted to massacre Sikhs in Pakistan and to drive them out. Creation of Pakistan was accompanied by a lot of bitterness.

When Britain finally relinquished power in India, the principle decided upon for demarcation of independent state boundaries was numerical count of population densities. The Sikhs were spread all over Punjab but they were not in a majority anywhere. They did not matter to either the proponents of Pakistan or to the rest of India except as possible nuisance. The Sikhs and the Muslims had lived side-by-side for generations but some radical leaders among the Muslims had indicated what things would be like in Pakistan through massacres in March 1947 when nearly three thousand Sikhs were killed over a period of one week and no one was punished for the crimes. Regarding their fate, Sir Evan Jenkins, the then Governor of Punjab, told [19, page 206] Sikh leaders in July 1947: "When independence came to any country some classes, who had formerly regarded themselves as protected, inevitably suffered." The Sikhs were expected to suffer for India's independence. They did. They were driven out of Pakistan. Nearly half the total Sikh population became dispossessed destitute refugees.

After India's freedom, the Sikhs were concentrated in the Punjab and hoped that in free India they would be free to follow their faith. They were to be disillusioned.

Jawaharlal Nehru [20, page 544] wrote in 1945: "It is not difficult, if passions and unreasoning emotions are set aside, to devise such freedom with the largest autonomy for provinces and states and yet a strong central bond... In addition to this, every conceivable protection and safeguard for minority rights could be inserted into the constitution." The Indian constitution apparently does this. However, Nehru could not predict the manner of its implementation.

Madan [17], writing about Sikh fundamentalism, describes the fundamental rights under the Indian Constitution that guarantee "freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion; freedom to manage religious affairs; freedom as to payment of taxes for promotion of any particular religion; freedom as to attendance at religious instruction or religious worship in certain educational institutions." He also describes how the constitutional provisions are effectively negated. He states: "religious identities are sought to be neutralized at the national or federal level" and that "the main means to this end have been identified as the promotion of civic ties and class interests to take the place of primordial bonds of race, language and religion."

The problem Sikhs face is that the Government of India desires to neutralize their religious identity. It is unwilling to allow the Sikhs to live by their ideal of saint-soldier described earlier. The constitutional safeguards are meaningless because, as India's Attorney General G. Ramaswamy stated [21, page 8] in response to questions by the United Nations Human Rights Commission in 1991: "The majority of members of Parliament belonged to the majority religion, making it difficult to enact laws affecting religious minorities." Thus, a minority religion, like the Sikhs, is allowed only such freedom of worship as the majority considers consistent with its own beliefs. This essentially is denial of freedom of worship.

During his lifetime, Nehru initiated large-scale irrigation and power development schemes in Punjab and the displaced dispossessed Sikhs, working hard to rehabilitate themselves, became quite prosperous. However, he adamantly refused to accept the creation of a Punjabi-speaking state even though all of the rest of India had been reorganized on linguistic basis. The memory of the creation of Pakistan was too painful for him and he felt that the creation of a Punjabi-speaking state would eventually lead to a Sikh demand for separation from India. Nehru's intransigence on the linguistic state issue coupled with the Punjabi Hindus disowning their mother tongue resulted in enhancing the Sikh feeling that the Indian leaders did not trust them and were working for destruction of their religious identity and for their eventual assimilation into Hinduism. The Sikhs also noted that the economic resources of the state of Punjab were being diverted for investment elsewhere in India and that the Government showed little interest in Punjab's industrial development.

The Sikhs sought some measure of autonomy for their homeland, the state of Punjab, so that the state could prosper economically and also ensure greater freedom for the practice of the Sikh religion. The peaceful agitation launched for this purpose resulted in over a hundred thousand Sikh demonstrators being arrested. Any civilized government would have reacted to this show of determination by talks with the Sikh leaders. However, Indira Gandhi adopted the path of suppression. Continuing torture and murder at police stations, combined with government apathy towards complaints, resulted in provoking some Sikhs to seek revenge against the police officials guilty of human rights violations. This started a cycle of killings and reprisals which climaxed in the Indian invasion of Harmandar Sahib (The Golden Temple), and

numerous other Gurdwaras, in June 1984 when thousands of innocent people were massacred by government forces. This attack was followed up by "mopping up" operations in the entire state involving liquidation of thousands of young Sikhs by the army. Indira Gandhi's assassination later that year was followed by state-supported massacres of Sikhs all over India.

Since 1984, the brutal suppression of Sikhs in India, especially of the devout among them who have been labelled as militants, extremists, terrorists as it has suited the government, has continued unabated. An appeal in the Army Gazette released from the Army Headquarters was published in *Baat Cheet Special* No. 153. The Appeal said [22, page 29]: "Any knowledge of the *Amritdharis* who are dangerous people and pledged to commit murders, arson and acts of terrorism should immediately be brought to the notice of the authorities. these people might appear harmless from outside but they are basically committed to terrorism. In the interest of all of us their identity and whereabouts must always be disclosed." An *Amritdhari* Sikh is one who has been formally initiated into the Sikh faith much like baptism in Christianity. All violent crime in Punjab and even in some other states is attributed to the ubiquitous "Sikh terrorists." No Sikh organization has condoned any of these crimes. Very few, if any, persons have been formally charged with the crimes and prosecuted and convicted in a court of law. Indeed, most of these are committed by the police themselves or by criminal gangs in cohoots with the police. There have been several cases of the villagers overpowering the robbers and killers who turned out to be off-duty policemen. However, thousands of Sikhs have simply been rounded up, tortured and killed. Mass propaganda by the government-owned and government-supported media and by the Hindu press has resulted in the current image of Sikhs as terrorists by faith. This has led people to become tolerant of government suppression of Sikhs that has included large-scale torture, rape, and murder of Sikhs suspected of being activists, or relatives and friends of activists, desiring freedom for their homeland and of promoting the Sikh ideal of a saint-soldier. Peaceful protest and even an expression of opinion has been equated with sedition and laws have been enacted under which anyone can be put in jail without trial for indefinite periods of time. Thousands languish in jails without being brought to trial and, in many cases, without being formally arrested or even being told of the charges against them. People are held to be guilty till they prove their innocence, often by bribing the police. Reportedly, over a hundred thousand have been eliminated. The Government has admitted to a figure of nearly 25000. This conflict, originating in an attempt to secularize people deeply committed to prayer, peace and equality and to "neutralize" their religious identity is sheer brutality against innocent people. Sikhs have called for independence from India as the only way out of the present situation. Indian government regards this as treason and people suspected of supporting freedom for Sikhs are picked up and summarily executed in the name of national integrity. To crown it all, the Indian Government has launched an all-out propaganda offensive against this peaceful community. It is said that during the year 1992, the word "Sikh" appeared in the Chicago Tribune on 31 occasions. Twenty-nine times it was followed by the word "terrorist." Even during the plenary session of this Parliament on August 30, 1993 devoted to "Voices of the Dispossessed", when the Sikh leader Dr. Gurmit Singh Aulakh started to read a letter a Sikh in the United States of America had received from his wife, a victim of torture whose 7 month old baby was killed by the police in a most brutal manner before her very eyes, a large number of persons from India, who had seated themselves in the front row, rushed the stage and prevented him from continuing with his speech. Most likely, these people were ignorant of the realities of life for a Sikh in Punjab and were carried away by their patriotic fervor fed by false propaganda.

SUMMING UP

The Sikh view of interfaith understanding and cooperation emphasizes that God is the fountainhead of love and understanding; that He pervades all creation and all act His will; that all faiths are God's creation; and that conflict is caused by ignorance and hypocrisy. The Sikh religion lays down tolerance and love of humanity as fundamental principles. Rite and ceremony are only incidental and open to adaptation. Contrary to the views expressed by some secularists [17], fundamentalist belief in Sikh religion cannot and does not lead to fight back, for, with or against people of other faiths. The Sikh is always fighting the five *thieves,* namely, lust, anger, greed, attachment and ego that wish to rob him of his love for God and of understanding of the purpose of his own existence. The Sikh is always ready to fight for protection of the rights, property and persons of the weak and the downtrodden against oppression by unjust rulers. Hurting anyone for personal gain is against the fundamentalist Sikh attitude. Historically, the Sikhs have consistently lived up to this principle. Their struggle against injustice has been peaceful and Sikhs are proud of the long list of martyrs for this cause. Being a soldier of faith is part of Sikh belief but rarely, and only in desperation, has the Sikh taken to armed resistance. A Sikh is a fighter on the side of justice and equality. A Sikh cannot and will not terrorize any one and is committed, as part of his faith, to serve mankind with humility and devotion.

CLOSING REMARKS

Let us reflect on the Promise of this Parliament. It states: "Religious intolerance and hatred continue to feed the flames of conflict and war." It appears to me that we have got things the wrong way around. The starvation of 55000 Muslims in Mostar region of Bosnia is not sanctioned by Christianity nor is the massacre of Africans in Sudan by Arab Muslims approved by Islam. Discrimination against and oppression of Baha'is in Iran is not condoned by Islam nor does Hinduism permit wanton murder of Muslims and Sikhs in India. These conflicts are not the fault of religion. Greed, anger, and revenge have made religion their cloak, their instrument. We must change that. Let us not use conflict to abuse religion. Rather, let us use religion to resolve conflict.

The people of faith gathered here in Chicago need to and should proclaim that all religions have love as their fundamental principle; that hatred has no place in the hearts of God's people; that God's love embraces all humanity, including the secularists and the non believers; that the fundamentalists of various faiths can understand each other and even be appreciative of the variety of ways God has revealed Himself to Man. If we wish to follow God's message of love, if we wish to avoid religious conflict and the consequent misery, we must not regard God as a parochial possession and must learn to respect faiths other than our own. God created us all and fulfills Himself through our actions. Let us act so we are worthy of His love. Let us open our hearts; let us learn about each other; let us work to open the closed one-religion societies to free worship by others; let us work to resolve religious conflicts, wherever they might exist, in an amicable manner and not let greed make religion its instrument. God gave us the various faiths. Let us, of different faiths, join hands and together glorify Him and His creation. Let us, together, learn to appreciate the mosaic of beliefs God has given us and rejoice in His Will. Let us, as Siri Guru Granth Sahib has taught us, walk together in close embrace as brothers.

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