

Ethical Elements in Shri Guru Granth Sahib

Rajinder Kaur

Mata Sahib Kaur Girls College, Talwandi Sabo-151302, Punjab, India

***Corresponding Author:**

Dr. Rajinder Kaur

Email: rajchahal4@gmail.com

Abstract: The paper includes the teachings of Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji regarding the social and ethical values of life, well suited quotations from the holy book. The spiritual beliefs and the preaching of the Guru Sahibs emphasizing on interpretation of Karma as Kirat, which means honest and productive work advocacy naam japo (spiritual awakening) for everybody.

Keywords: Shri Guru Granth Sahib, Karma, Interpretation, Kirat

INTRODUCTION:

In modern era, people are suffering from the loss of ethical and cultural values. We have lost feelings of stability and contentment. Many people are living with growing feelings of fear, anxiety and insecurity. Many people are also living with a feeling of alienations and emptiness in their lives. This phenomena is the result of an unbalance created by the materialistic thinking which emphasized on the material aspect of life, but ignored the spiritual aspect of life. Guru Granth Sahib Ji is the finest measure to deal with such complexities of life, leading us towards a well built moral and ethical social being. In this paper, the moral and ethical values quoted in holy book-Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji have been discussed and correlated with our modern living style.

DISCUSSIONS

Rectitude or ethics are most important and two inseparable words of religion. If religion is the means to achieve eternal truth then ethical traits cannot be subtracted from it. Ethical traits are the good habits of a true and honest person. It is supposed that the identity of religion is meaningless without good habits or etiquettes.

Ethics has been derived from the word "Ethos" which means vogue. Ethical has originated from the basic word policy. According to Hindi lexicon, ethical traits are those principles on the basis of which any application/ work are conducted.

In the views of Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha, "The vogue according to which a person can go/walk/lead on true paths [1]."

There are two aspects of ethics: - individual and social. Under the individual ethics, by adopting the way of spirituality, man refines his next world. Social ethics are the outcome of man's mutual understanding in society whose ambition is to serve others by avoiding self-interests. At an individual level also people are suffering because of the loss of ethical and cultural values.

The subject of this article is to appreciate critically the ethical elements based on Shri Guru Granth Sahib. The ethical values have prominent place in Sikh Religion. Sikhism sets very high moral standards for its adherents to follow and gives us a most ethical system. Pre-Sikh Religion had become deteriorate among devotees. To refine the deteriorating condition of society, Gurus sermonized to be the follower of human ethical values and clarifies for the uplift of the society, it is compulsory for a man to be an ethical person on the basis of ethical values. Gurbani is the poetic representation/emergence of spiritualism that aims at human benediction. The ethical elements of Gurbani are ancillary to raise spiritual, ethical and social levels. There is a prominent place for ethical contemplation in Gurbani. To achieve the spiritual aim, the way has been represented whose aim is to prosper the human beings from ethical aspect. According to Gurbani, the significant aspects of moral/ethical education are neatness, courtesy, condonation, endurance, mercy and politeness. According to Gurbani, the ethical person's mind becomes so lucid that he procures the upper level of spiritualism easily. The general ideology of Gurbani makes the human being celestial.

According to Gurbani whereas the ethical traits as mercy, contentedness, fortitude, patience, and endurance etc are ancillary to interlace the man to God, there a man by strolling about in the world, becomes a cause to produce an ideal society. The message of Guru Granth Sahib is of love, tolerance, peaceful coexistence, universal concern, universal well-being and universal brotherhood. Guru Granth Sahib is the truly multicultural holy book that promotes pluralism and gives message of unity in diversity. Guru Granth Sahib is a practical philosophy that deals with human and social evolution. The modern man is alienated from his true self. This leads to fear, anxiety and insecurity. Guru Granth Sahib unites him with his true self and helps him to overcome these feelings. As there is concept of ethical principle in Guru Granth Sahib, in Guru Nanak Dev Ji's bani, we cannot imagine separating man from religion. Guru Nanak Dev Ji has said by emphasizing on the ethical values that without ethical traits devotion is not possible:

ਸਭਿ ਗੁਣ ਤੇਰੇ ਮੈ ਨਾਹੀ ਕੋਇ, ਵਿਣ ਗੁਣ ਕੀਤੈ ਭਗਤਿ ਨਾ ਹੋਇ ॥ [2]

It is instructed in Gurbani to speak politely and not to use discourtesy. Speaking with courtesy and sweetness strengthen the social relations whereas discourtesy weakens the mental health as well as lead social respect to deterioration. As Gurbani edict:

ਬਾਦੁ ਬਿਬਾਦ ਕਾਹੁ ਸਿਉ ਨਾ ਕੀਜੈ ॥ [3]

According to Gurbani, the person who speaks with discourtesy, his mind and body also become discourteous and such person are unable to acquire a place in God's shrine:

ਨਾਨਕ ਫਿਕੈ ਬੋਲਿਐ ਤਨੁ ਮਨੁ ਫਿਕਾ ਹੋਇ ॥
ਫਿਕੋ ਫਿਕਾ ਮਦੀਐ ਫਿਕੋ ਫਿਕੀ ਸੋਇ ॥
ਫਿਕਾ ਦਰਗਹੁ ਸੁਟੀਐ ਮਹਿ ਥਕਾ ਫਿਕੋ ਪਾਇ ॥
ਫਿਕਾ ਮੁਰਖੁ ਆਖੀਐ ਪਾਣਾ ਲਹੈ ਸਜਾਇ ॥ [4]

Courtesy is the part of ideal human life by adopting which a man accomplishes respect in the spiritual world. Courtesy is the first step on the path to procure God. Courteous behavior makes a person far more strong and mighty. The person, who learns to be courteous, becomes able to identify the real fact of life. As Gurbani Edict:

ਆਪਸ ਕਉ ਜੋ ਜਾਣੈ ਨੀਚਾ ॥
ਸੋਉ ਗਨੀਐ ਸਭ ਤੋ ਉਚਾ ॥ [5]

The person with courteous behavior follows the spirit of not me but you. According to Gurbani, we cannot be a follower of courtesy until we inculcate the traits of politeness and bountiness in our mind. There are so many stanzas (Shaloks) in Farid Bani urging man

to refine himself and inculcate courtesy as a part of ideal life.

ਇਕ ਫਿਕਾ ਨ ਗਾਲਾਇ ਸਭਨਾ ਮੈ ਸੱਚਾ ਪਈ ॥
ਹਿਆਉ ਨ ਕੈਹੀ ਠਾਹਿ ਮਾਣਿਕ ਸਭ ਅਮੋਲਵੈ ॥ [6]

To be courteous and to be humble doesn't mean to be lower, actually such a person is respected everywhere by everyone. Guru Granth Sahib is an open dialogue. It does not advocate only one path to reach ultimate reality or eternal truth. Guru Granth Sahib is a true representation of diversity and pluralism.

A person who accepts bounty as a part of his life becomes an essential part of God's shrine. According to Gurbani, it is also an ethical trait to be bounteous towards human beings as well as animals. Sikh Scriptures – Guru Granth Sahib is the character building ground of a Sikh in which are firmly rooted his/her ethical values to run the daily affairs. A man should be ready to help others by avoiding malicious notions.

One cannot accept the importance of others in his life until he becomes bounteous. The spiritual assembly is ancillary to inculcate the moral values among human beings. To emphasize the importance of spiritual assembly, it has been registered in Gurbani that spiritual assembly is the life style from where we get the guidance to do honest labor. Without spiritual assembly, traits like love and faith cannot be inculcated.

ਸਤਸੰਗਤਿ ਕੈਸੀ ਜਾਣੀਐ ॥ ਜਿਥੈ ਏਕੋ ਨਾਮ ਵਖਾਣੀਐ ॥ [7]

By bearing the name of God in mind, an ethical person can procure the spiritual destination. A person who bears God's name in his mind should abolish his ego because the name of God cannot be bore in the presence of ego. The Mankind needs an ideology that can impart an ethical aspect and a global perspective to the present 'economic only globalization'. The ethical vision of Guru Granth Sahib can provide the global perspective and help to change the present "Economic Only Globalization" to an "Ethical Globalization" that can help to face and solve the problems and challenges faced by mankind. As Gurbani edict:-

ਹਉਮੈ ਨਾਵੈ ਨਾਲਿ ਵਿਰੋਧੁ ਹੈ ਦੁਇ ਨ ਵਸੈ ਇੱਕ ਠਾਇ ॥ [8]

Guru Sahibs were actually humanists who sermonized the message of mutual love and equality among human beings through Gurbani. According to Gurbani all human beings are equal because God is present in each of its creations. Gurbani sermonized about equality as:

ਅਵਲਿ ਅਲਹੁ ਨੂਰੁ ਉਪਾਇਆ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਕੇ ਸਭ ਬੰਦੇ ॥
ਏਕ ਨੂਰ ਤੇ ਸਭੁ ਜਗੁ ਉਪਜਿਆ ਕਉਨ ਭਲੇ ਕੇ ਮੰਦੇ ॥ [9]

Gurmat Philosophy preaches about equality and brotherhood among human beings. Gurbani affirms the notion of equality. The notion of equality abolishes the notion of caste and creed as well as ego. Ego abolish, there comes name of the God in mind.

Patience is the weapon whose target never becomes useless. A person who follows patience becomes able to rule over everyone's heart. Patience makes a person hermit by inculcating the values of capacious and endurance.

ਫਰੀਦਾ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਦੀ ਕਰਿ ਚਾਕਰੀ ਦਿਲ ਦੀ ਲਾਹਿ ਭਰਾਂਦਿ
ਦਰਵਸ਼ਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਲੋੜੀਐ ਰੁਖਾਂ ਦੀ ਜੀਗਾਂਦ ॥ [10]

Contentedness has been considered as a precious wealth; with the presence of it the entire materialism become useless. Guru Granth Sahib deals with all four aspects of life, Dharma, Arth, Kam and Moksh. Dharmn deals with the ethnical aspect of life. Arth deals with economics and Kam means passions. Kamravas, meaning desires arise from Kam and Mokash, means salvation. These four aspects are not addressed in a fragmented manner, but are addressed in totality. The concept of Mokash is not by renouncing one's family and social obligations, but is achieved while fulfilling these obligations. On the one hand, human development is associated with natural law and harmony with nature, while on the other hand, it also deals with social issues of fairness, equality, human rights and respect for women. Guru Granth Sahib is the comprehensive philosophy of life. Contentedness lies in, sacrificing things rather than getting those things.

ਸਤੁ ਸੰਤੋਖ ਦਇਆ ਧਰਮੁ ਸਚੁ ਇਹ ਅਪਨੈ ਗ੍ਰਿਹ ਭੀਤਰਿ ਵਾਰੇ ॥ [11]

Mercy is not just theoretical principle in Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, The five messengers of wickedness are associated with the lower centres. These are Kam, Karodh, Lobh, Moh and Ahankar meaning Passions, Anger, Greed, Attachment and Arrogance. These five messengers of wickedness are always within a person and constantly try to distract one from the righteous path. Those who can control these five will attain self-realization and the spiritual elevation can lead to a state of eternal bliss and emancipation from worldly suffering. Actually it emerges practically in "Aassa Di Waar." Guru Nanak Dev Ji says to put on the sacred thread of mercy cotton, like this:

ਦਇਆ ਕਪਾਹ ਸੰਤੋਖ ਸੁਤੁ ਜਤੁ ਗੰਢੀ ਸੁਤੁ ਵਟੁ ॥
ਏਹੁ ਜਨੇਉ ਜੀਅ ਕਾ ਹਈ ਤਾ ਪਾਂਡੇ ਘਤੁ ॥ [12]

Guru Sahibs have given prominence to hard-working. Gurbani lay emphasis on working one's own hands and honest labor. Gurbani's concept of honest labor and its respect has enriched the Punjabi Culture:

ਘਾਲਿ ਖਾਇ ਕਿਛੁ ਹਥੁ ਦੇਇ ॥
ਨਾਨਕ ਰਾਹੁ ਪਛਾਣਹਿ ਸੇਇ ॥ [13]

Gurbani differentiate good and bad works by imparting concept of honest labor. Ethics are more important than other things. Cheating, lying, black-marketing, profiteering, bribing are not approved by the Father of the Universe – God. God's displeasure cannot bring peace and happiness in our hearts though such unethical actions may bring more money, and give temporary satisfaction Gurbani leads us to the path of goodness and protect us from the evils prevailing around us:

ਐਸਾ ਕੰਮ ਮੂਲੇ ਨਾ ਕੀਜੈ ਅੰਤਿ ਪਛੋਤਾਈਐ ॥ [14]

The notion of serving and worshipping the Guru has been accepted as a touchstone. To obey the Guru, by dedicating mind body and wealth(i.e. Self-dedication), is an ideal serving. In Guru's View:

ਸੋ ਸੇਵਕ ਹਰਿ ਆਖੀਐ ਜੋ ਹਰਿ ਰਾਖੈ ਉਰਧਾਰਿ,
ਮਨ ਤਨ, ਸਉਪੈ ਆਗੈ ਧਰੇ ਹਉਮੈ ਵਿਚਹੁ ਮਾਰਿ ॥ [15]

In Gurbani, serving has been considered as a foremost etiquette. The notion of serving inculcates the value of social ethics/ morality. According to Gurmat only that serving is successful which is self-desirous.

ਬਧਾ ਚਟੀ ਜੋ ਭਰੈ ਨ ਗੁਣੁ ਨ ਉਪਕਾਰੁ ॥ [16]

From the above discussion, we conclude that Gurbani includes the importance of ethical values, in human life, by saying:

ਸਚੁ ਉਰੈ ਸਭੁ ਕੋ ਉਪਰਿ ਸਚੁ ਆਚਾਰੁ ॥

CONCLUSIONS

From the above survey, it is clarified that Guru Sahibs, Bhagats and Bhattas have tried to refine the man and society through ethical values. According to Gurbani a depraved person cannot achieve riddance. A depraved person remains deprived of respect in both the physical and spiritual world. As a virtuous person refines his own life and procures happiness, he also becomes a guide to others. The mission of a person should be to do the deed sincerely with an objective to serve the humanity and not to earn money to become rich and then claim superiority over others. Hence the ethical elements play an essential role to accomplish man's overall personality leading him towards his final

destination i.e. God. Knowledge or wisdom or self examination is possible only when one has killed even the hidden ego within oneself.”

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