

Reflections of Knowledge Society in the Philosophy of Guru Nanak Dev

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ABSTRACT

Presently, we live in a Knowledge Society based on the information and knowledge dissemination to all the sections of society so that human condition at large can be improved. The primacy of human creativity is paramount in such a society wherein knowledge is used to propel innovations to improve the living conditions and the way of life of the people. In modern technology, the importance of human relations is declining, and humans live a fragmented life. Only traditional knowledge and perennial values can be the elixir to understand the purpose and ultimate goal of one's life. The essential features of the Knowledge Society enable one to experience the depth of knowledge through the mystic consciousness of oneself by dispelling malice, hatred and irrationality, which is inherent in the life of the Guru Nanak and the principles outlined by Him. His Bani reflects profound principles of those values that are imperative in the present times, and if we delve into the teachings of the great Guru, actual definition and connotation of knowledge can be comprehended, assisting one to live a happy and contented life.

Keywords: Guru Nanak Dev, Knowledge society, One God, Nam, Shabad (Word) Guru, Brahm Gian, emancipation, Gurmukh, Manmukh.

Introduction and Significance of Knowledge Society

In a Knowledge society, as is visible from its very nomenclature, knowledge is the propelling factor. Humans have an incessant quest for knowledge, and all through human history, there are traces that they have focused on gathering and analyzing available information and channelizing it for various purposes imperative for their growth. This has made them focus on collecting information and knowledge and enabling them to do critical analysis all through different epochs, but Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has set in a revolution speeding this process. UNESCO elaborates, 'New technologies have created new opportunities for the creation, preservation, dissemination, and use of information, but human activity enables information to be transformed into knowledge that can add value to human experience and development' (UNESCO, 2015). Today, society is a

space in which people belonging to diverse backgrounds reside together amicably but are subservient to knowledge as a driving force in all human endeavors. So, there is a need to establish a system of knowledge relations amongst people for the **well-being of individuals, communities, society, and the nation**. For UNESCO (2005), "the construction of knowledge opens the way to the humanization of the process of globalization."

Religion and philosophy as a medium of human creativity are instrumental in creating a progressive Knowledge Society. The philosophical insights can be taken as 'head,' i.e., one's mental or rational undertakings, but religion is all about one's 'heart' stimulating our faith and emotions either towards fanaticism or tolerance and empathy. 'Large portions of knowledge- tacit knowledge- reside in people's mind' (Knowledge Society, 2021). So, it is vital to understand the philosophical insights of a society provided by

religions and how knowledge contained in it can be a storehouse of richness, vibrancy, and progress of any culture and also, how immoralities, divisions, and malevolence in the society can be eliminated through the prescriptions contained in it. Peter Drucker's 'The Age of Discontinuity' (1969) considers "knowledge facilitating an 'epoch-making changeover' which signifies a historical discontinuity with the past saying that 'as long as it is in the book, it is only information...when a man applies the information to do something (only then), it does become knowledge'".

This manuscript's main objective is to elaborate on the Bani quotations found in the Sri Guru Granth Sahib and other religious books, highlighting how the religious scriptures contain the seeds of a knowledge society that must be re-emphasized. Reading and comprehending Guru Nanak's Bani in the Holy Scripture, Sri Guru Granth Sahib, may reveal the essence of genuine wisdom. Guru Nanak's views on knowledgeable wise persons and importance of Guru and Guru's word (Shabad) for leading one towards light of knowledge is discussed.

Religion and Knowledge

"Knowledge is not gained through one means alone.
Whether that is talked of as Science or Religion.
Or the Intuition that integrates all.
Or Imagination, Emotion, or Greater Reason."
(Cloudsley, T. (2002)

In **Adi-Sankaracharya's** view, proper knowledge is the only effective means to remove the 'veil of Savidya (Learning).' Moksha (emancipation) can be attained through Bhakti (Loving Devotion to God) or Karma (Deeds). This liberates one from the cycle of rebirth, and proper knowledge is a potent force to erase the effects of past karma. In **Vishnu Puran**, it is written, 'Sa Vidya Ya Vimuktaye,' i.e., 'Knowledge liberates.'

In **Aristotle's** opinion, education has a vital role in curbing the revolutionary instinct among people and preserving social order. **Mahatma Gandhi** elaborates the essence of knowledge and education when he writes in Harijan, "Man is neither mere intellect, the gross animal body, nor the heart or soul alone. A proper and harmonious combination of all three is required to make the whole man and constitutes the true economics of education" (https://www.mkgandhi.org/articles/g_edu.htm). **Rabindranath Tagore**, in his poetic composition (Gitanjali, Poem, 35), elaborates an ideal society propelled by knowledge very beautifully: "Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high; Where knowledge is free..."

In the holy words (Bani) uttered by **Guru Nanak** compiled in Sri Guru Granth Sahib, the Guru's progressive and futuristic views on knowledge attainment for individual growth, 'Sarbat da Bhalla' (Blessings for Everyone), and the other-worldly concerns of man is eloquently delineated.

There is an immense ocean of knowledge in ancient scriptures, and these valuable texts need to be highlighted. Several religious thinkers and philosophers have pronounced their teachings resulting in an immense treasure of knowledge underpinning the Knowledge Society.

Method

The paper profusely explains the quotes from Bani enshrined in Sri Guru Granth Sahib and other religious texts to reiterate that the seeds of knowledge society are ingrained in the religious scriptures, and the need of the hour is to reiterate it in a new light. Reading and understanding the Bani pronounced by Guru Nanak in the Holy Scripture, Sri Guru Granth Sahib, a person can realize the quintessence of actual knowledge. Analyzing the teachings of Guru Nanak in the light of underlying features of the knowledge society is the paper's objective. With this objective, the paper attempts document analysis of Guru Nanak Bani contained in the Holy Scripture. The idea and importance of knowledge and erudition are not entirely new, it has blossomed even during the past, and it converges eloquently in the very life purpose and teachings of Guru Nanak. The relevant passages from the qualitative content of Sri Guru Granth Sahib have been profusely quoted to create an understanding of the essential features of modern knowledge-based societies, and thematic analysis is done of how the principles enunciated by the Guru can be translated into action to create an ideal society. So, Bani 'related to central questions of the research' (Bowen, 2009) is elaborated in the paper to disseminate principles that add value to human experience in knowledge-driven world.

The essence of Knowledge Society in Guru Nanak Dev's Philosophy

The quintessence of the teachings of Guru Nanak Dev Ji is cosmic and all-embracing. The Guru criticized untruth and half-truths, and a new epoch in the spiritual realm was elucidated thoroughly and numerous devotees embraced it. The divine vision of Guru Nanak Dev enunciates that human's final attainment is the ultimate bliss through the union with God. A man can qualitatively transform himself, become like God, be truly emancipated, and enlighten the world around him.

The central premise of Guru Nanak's thought was to open the doors and windows of the minds so that knowledge accumulation could be from all quarters. Education trains one to employ his 'critical faculty as the anvil and the accumulated wisdom of mankind as the fashioning tool,' which is endorsed in Bani, Ahrani mati vedu hathiaru (SGGS: Pg. 8)- Let understanding be the anvil, and spiritual wisdom the tools.

Guru Nanak mentions, 'Intellectual curiosity and scientific knowledge are necessary for removing doubts that beset human understanding' that is endorsed through the Bani of Bhagat Kabir, Man Samjhavan karane kachhuak pariai gian (Sri Guru Granth Sahib: Kabir, Pg. 340) i.e., To instruct their minds, people ought to study some sort of spiritual wisdom.

"From this position of Guru Nanak, three propositions follow: 1) intellectual activity is not identical with or directly relevant to religious activity; 2) that, for a properly developed and integrated person, intellectual and scientific studies are imperative; and 3) that, although, religion is philosophy indeterminate, philosophical enquiries are necessary for preparing the mind suitably towards the acceptance of religious discipline" (Singh, Kapur, 1975).

A man of religion attempts to study humanities or sciences and cultivates the culture of mind but all this is subservient to the way of religion. The Sikh doctrine endorses that the ultimate purpose of the religious philosophy is to deliver one from the bondages and cycle of transmigration and the pursuit of objective knowledge and science has its own importance as well. The notion of adopting science has the propensity to entangle one into a quagmire of numerous inferences, semblances and even misconceptions, which can be an obstacle in the path of emancipation of mankind. Likhi likhi parhia teta karia (SGGS Pg. 467)-'Science purporting to be an end in itself is weariness of flesh and waste of soul'. So, scientific knowledge should be largely guided by the heart imbued with spiritual knowledge.

An enlightened society based on enlightened individuals with an open mind was crafted by the Guru. The Divine Light has to be within oneself that will guide throughout life and lead to the path to liberation. The praxis of a person is firmly rooted in the acquired human knowledge and a knowledgeable person is one who imbibes values in one's life.

The intuitive consciousness, intellect and understanding of the mind are shaped through the Guru's Shabad.

Vin gur sabdai janam ke lekheh. (SGGS: Pg. 416)

Without the Word of the Guru's Shabad, what use is human life?

Remembering Divine constantly would redeem a person. The Guru stated that meditating on God's Name dispels ignorance and illuminates the world.

Bolhu Ram Kare Nistara.

Gur Parsad Ratan Har Labhai Mitai Agian Hoe Ujiara. (SGGS: PG. 353)

So speak the Lord's Name, which shall emancipate you.

By Guru's Grace, the jewel of the Lord is found; ignorance is dispelled, and the Divine Light shines forth.

The words contained in the **Scripture** are true and lead to emancipation.

Sachi kirat sachi bani.

True is the Kirtan of His Praise, and True is the Word of His Bani.

(SGGS: Pg. 1022)

The way to light a lamp of knowledge is elaborated by Guru Nanak.

Bin tel diva kio jalai.

Pothi puran kamaiai.

Bhao vati it tan paiai.

Sach bujhan an jalaiai. (SGGS: Pg. 25)

Without the oil, how can the lamp be lit?

Let the reading of your prayer book

be the oil and the Fear of God be the wick for the lamp of this body.

Light this lamp with the understanding of Truth.

The pursuit of knowledge is an incessant aim of all and **realizing oneself** is the very first step towards knowledge gathering. A deer looks for musk in the woods but the odour is from within. This self-realization is the purpose of one's life that is found through introspection.

Ap bichar mar man dekhia tum sa mit na avar koi. (SGGS: Pg.355)

Reflecting upon myself, and conquering my mind, I have seen that there is no other friend like You.

And

Ap na bujha lok bujhai aisa agu hovan. (SGGS: Pg.140)

I do not understand myself, and yet I try to teach others.

Such is the guide I am!

Guru Nanak Bani differentiates between knowledgeable persons and those people who act foolishly. A **foolish person** is one who has not realized oneself. The Realized Beings and the scriptures tell us that our physical body is

not the True Self. The company of unholy and immoral would waste the energies of the people and mislead the people placing them on incorrect track. Gurbani guides that one should not indulge in fruitless arguments.

Manda kisai na akhai par akhar eho bujhiai.
Murkhai nal na lujiai. (SGGS: Pg. 473)

Do not call anyone bad; read these words, and understand.
Don't argue with fools.

And

Nal iane dosti kade na avai ras. (SGGS: Pg. 474)
Friendship with a fool never works out right.

And

Akal eh na akhai akal gavaiai bad.
Akli sahib sevi ai akli paiai man.
Akli parh kai bujhiai akli kichai dan. (SGGS: Pg. 1245)

Wisdom which leads to arguments is not called wisdom.
Wisdom leads us to serve our Lord and Master; through wisdom, honor is obtained.
Wisdom does not come from reading textbooks; wisdom inspires us to give in charity.

A knowledge society strikes a harmonious blend of individual virtues and societal values. Guru's Bani explains that **Brahm Giani** shapes the society, reveres Guru as the liberator, differentiates between Gurmukh i.e., a person inclined towards God and Munmukh i.e., a person detached from God to propel one to lead a virtuous life, all of which facilitates individual growth and creates a harmonious society.

Precepts of Knowledge Society in Guru Nanak Dev's Philosophy

Brahm Gian and Brahm Giani

The futuristic approach of the Guru reflects Knowledge Society. Individuals should compose an ideal society through **Brahm Gian (Divine Knowledge)**. Following the light within and treading on the path illuminated so would make a person achieve Brahm Gian.

Spiritual wisdom is the crux of salvation.

Gian padarath paiai taribhavan sojhi hoe. (SGGS: Pg. 60)
Obtaining the wealth of spiritual wisdom, the understanding of the three worlds is acquired.

Sanskrit word, Brahm Giani means a highly learned person who is an enlightened individual and embodiment of infinite values like compassion, righteousness, piety, and purity. Unaffected by all entanglements and vices of life, such a person is in eternal bliss with the blessing of Waheguru. "Brahmgiani is the Creator of all, immortal, dying never. Brahmgiani is the conferrer of the way of liberation, the perfect being, rewarder of deeds. Brahmgiani is the succourer of the helpless; Brahmgiani affords protection to all" (Brahmgiani, The Sikh Encyclopedia). Brahm Giani, a truly knowledgeable person, combines learning (Vidya) & altruism (Purupkar), making a single individual a benefactor of all. "Practicing altruism is the real source of compromise and cooperation. A mind committed to compassion is like an overflowing reservoir – a constant energy source, determination, and kindness. This is like a seed; when cultivated, it gives rise to many other good qualities, such as forgiveness, tolerance, inner strength and the confidence to overcome fear and insecurity" (TOI, November 19, 2019). So, compassion is an effective way through which the interests of a single individual as well as of a nation, can be achieved. Well-being of all can be attained if we depend more on others as an individual, group or nation. This is reflected in Guru Nanak Bani.

Real definition of a knowledgeable person or Giani is discoursed in the slok:

Sun sun gandhan gandhai likh par bujeh bhar.
Tarisna ahinis agli haumai rog vikar.
Oh veparvahu atolva gurnat kimat sar.
Paranvat Nanak giani kaisa hoe. (SGGS: Pg. 20)

Again and again, we hear and tell stories; we read and write and understand loads of knowledge,
But still, desires increase day and night and the disease of egotism fills us with corruption.
That Carefree Lord cannot be appraised; His Real Value is known only through the Wisdom of the Guru's Teachings.
Prays Nanak, what is the nature of the spiritual people?

Guru Nanak has outlined the qualities of knowledgeable wise persons who **understand themselves as well as the innumerable qualities of God**.

Ap pachhanai bujhai soe.
Gur parsad kare bichar.
So giani dargeh parvan. (SGGS: Pg. 25)

They are self-realized; they understand God.
By Guru's Grace, they contemplate Him;
Such spiritual people are honoured in His Court.

Truly knowledgeable person imbibes values in one's life. One cannot be wise by merely reading a few books and transmitting the knowledge contained in it to others.

Pandit vachen pothia na bujheh vichar.
Kete pandit jotki beda karahi bichar. (SGGS: Pg. 56)

The Pandits, the religious scholars, read their books, but they do not understand the real meaning.

Without shedding impurities or treasuring values, true knowledge cannot be attained. Inner consciousness trained through Santokh (contentment), Sewa (Service) and Gurbani (Guru's Word) reaches the realm of enlightenment. The Treasure of Excellence in **worldly affairs** is also attained through Divine Word.

Amal kar dharti bij sabdo kar sach ki ab nit deh pani.
Hoe kirsan iman jammae lai bhisat dojak mure ev jani.
(SGGS: Pg. 24)

Make good deeds the soil, and let the Word of the Shabad be the seed, irrigate it continually with the water of Truth. Become such a farmer, and faith will sprout. This brings knowledge of heaven and hell, you fool!

Belief in One God

The idea of formless, supreme and absolute power is the central idea in Mool Mantra and Japji Sahib, Asa-di-Var, Sohle and other compositions of Guru Nanak. All virtues flow from the divine and hence, God is source of all knowledge and guides humans in all celestial as well as mundane activities.

In the opening phase of Mool Mantra, the Divine being is symbolized as a Karta Purkh (Doer or Creator), the Creator who sustains the world. Guru Nanak advocated to have faith in **One God** and considered the entire world as manifestation of his creation and his single command created creation (Kita pasao eko kavao, SGGS: Pg. 169). God is manifested in all his creation, "Aks te sab upat hoe" (SGGS: Pg. 223) - 'From the One, all have arisen' and "Ghat ghat jot sabai" (SGGS: Pg. 597) - His light is in every heart and He lives in every heart. "The all-pervading spirit of God is present in the entire universe but it becomes manifest and is realizable through the medium of God's Name. His Name is accessible to man. The medium of Name takes man to the Being whom it represents. God and Name are one" (Singh, Isher, 1985).

Sach sabad bin kabahu na chhutas birtha janam bhaio.
(SGGS: Pg. 1126)

Without the True Word of the Shabad, you shall never be released, and your life shall be totally useless.

Pure effulgence emerges when the inner space of mind is illuminated through bearing True Name and at this stage a man merges with God.

Emphasis on Guru

The ways to attain knowledge are Guru (mentor), Scripture, dialogue and oneself. The Sikh tradition has a rich legacy of **Guru parampara (tradition)**. Guru Nanak's close disciples were Bhai Mardana and Bhai Lehna. Bhai Mardana was a close companion of Guru Nanak during the travels. Guru's direction to guide the community is an imperative need and unique tradition manifesting qualitative democracy through practical example of 'Ape Gur Chela (He is the Guru and the disciple)' was when 2 September 1539, Angad Dev Ji was anointed as Guru. Guru Nanak laid the foundation of the **institution of Guruship**.

For Guru Nanak total submission to the Guru is essential for attaining knowledge and the Guru tested sons, before anointing Lehna as Guru.

Sikhan putran ghokh kai sabh umat vekhhu je kion.

Guru Nanak tested His Sikhs and His sons, and everyone saw what happened. (SGGS: Pg. 967)

Guru Nanak Dev accorded an **exalted status to the Guru** as dispenser of God's grace on the earth for leading people towards emancipation and light moving away from darkness. The Guru is the medium through which knowledge (gian) is acquired (Gian ka badha man rahai, gur bin gian na hoi (SGGS: Pg. 469) and without a Guru, knowledge cannot be attained. Just so, the mind is restrained by spiritual wisdom, but without the Guru, there is no spiritual wisdom. Gur te muhu fere tin jon bhavaiai, Bhandan bhandia aiai jaiai (SGGS: Pg. 832) or Without Guru man is entangled in the cycle of birth and rebirth and bound in bondage, he comes and goes.

The Guru is a true person and has attained divine perfection. Guru Nanak says, "Everyone else is subject to error; only the Guru and God are without error" (Singh, 1951). Teja Singh further elucidates, "His humanity must be real and not feigned. He should have a nature subject to the same as operate in ordinary human nature and should have attained his perfection through the same Grace as is available to all men and through perfect obedience to God's Will".

True Guru has competency to distinguish fake and genuine and enlightenment is possible through Shabad.

Satgur khotiahu khare kare sabad savaranhar.
Sachi dargeh mannian gur kai parem piar. (SGGS: Pg.143)

The True Guru converts the counterfeit into genuine; through the Word of the Shabad, He embellishes and exalts us. Those who have enshrined love and affection for the Guru are honored in the True Court.

The form through which God reveals Himself is **Creation, Word and Guru**. An individual through loving devotion has eternal communion with God through the medium of Guru. The pupil in fact, reaches the stage of the master and becomes one with the Creator.

Gur gur eko ves anak.
Nanak karte ke kete ves. (SGGS: Pg.12)

But the Teacher of teachers is the One, who appears in so many forms.
O Nanak, in just the same way, the many forms originate from the Creator.

A true Guru is the communicator of Truth, a guide and an exemplar who imparts spiritual knowledge. "Man is released from the shackles of maya when he knows and experiences the Truth as the nature of the Ultimate Reality and it is God who reveals His own nature through a guru, and the Guru, in turn, initiates the disciples and converts him into a new living being. To Nanak, the Guru himself is God and the Sabda or his word is the Divine Word" (Chaudhuri, 1975).

Eternal Value of Shabad Guru

Shabad (sabda) or Guru's Words is the vehicle of emancipation and Divine Word is transmitted through the mouth of the Guru as revealed by God. The word sabda was used by Siddhas especially Natha Sampradaya referring to the eternal mystical soundless sound or anahad sabda. This unstruck sound is a source of spiritual energy and when mind and heart gets absorbed into it, the stage of perfect self-knowledge is achieved in this world itself where the immense power of the God can be seen.

Sabad anahad so saho rata Nanak kahai vichara. (SGGS: Pg. 351)

He, the Lord, is immersed in the Unstruck Shabad of the Word, says Nanak, the humble and meek.

Bhai Gurdas says the word that emanates from the real Guru is sacred and the real Guru derives the authority

from realization of the Absolute Word. Shabad is the true revelation of God.

Salvation is possible by taking God's Name through Shabad and the Real jog is to be immersed in Guru's Shabad and bodily solace can be found in it.

Gur kai sabad suksant sarir. (SGGS: Pg. 361)

Through the Word of the Guru's Shabad, the body finds peace and tranquility.

And

Nanak sabad vichariai paiai guni nidhan. (SGGS: Pg. 59)

O Nanak, contemplating the Shabad, the Treasure of Excellence is obtained.

So, Gurbani is sanctified and has a central place in Sikhism. The sacred words of Absolute are beyond time and space and ultimately, Shabad is the Supreme Reality itself and the words of Guru is the only medium to achieve it. If the True Name is repeated then even a devotee reaches to the same stage that his Guru had reached.

Before Guru Nanak, there was a lineage of the mortal Gurus who were equated to God but with him the tradition of bowing and revering Word commenced. The fake category of middlemen was removed. "Guru Nanak Dev, for the first time in the world, taught the people to follow "Shabad Guru" (Singh, Jaspal, 2006).

Knowledge Acquisition is through Self-discipline based on Values

With entanglements and engrossments in Maya (illusion) and pursuits of life, one cannot reach the stage of learning or wisdom. Learning without detachment, would not fetch true knowledge for imbibing values in life is of utmost importance.

Merely following the austerities would not enlighten one.

Pandit vakaneh pothia sidhs baheh dev sthan. (SGGS: Pg. 64)

The Hindu Pandits recite from their books, and the Siddhas sit in the temples of their gods.

And

Pandit par na pahuchai baho al janjala. (SGGS: Pg. 1012)

The Pandit, the religious scholar, reads, but does not reach the Lord; he is totally entangled in worldly affairs.

True knowledge is attained through a rigorous regime of self-discipline and repeating True Name.

Jal moh ghas mas kar mat kagad kar sar.
Bhao kalam kar chit lekharī gur puchh likh bichar.
Likh nam salah likh likh ant na paravar.
Baba ehu lekha likh jan.
Jithai lekha mangiai tithai hoe sachā nisan. (SGGS: Pg. 16)

Burn emotional attachment, and grind it into ink.
Transform your intelligence into the purest of paper.
Make the love of the Lord your pen, and let your consciousness be the scribe. Then, seek the Guru's Instructions, and record these deliberations.
Write the Praises of the Nam, the Name of the Lord; write over and over again that He has no end or limitation.
O Baba, write such an account, that when it is asked for, it will bring the Mark of Truth.

The quest of virtues is akin to all sorts of weapons that help a person to win in life for which the blessing of God is essential.

Tarkas tir kaman sang tegband gun dhat.
Vaja neja pat sio pargat karam tera meri jat. (SGGS: Pg. 16)

The pursuit of virtue is my bow and arrow, my quiver, sword and scabbard.
To be distinguished with honor is my drum and banner.
Your Mercy is my social status.

A complete surrender of ego is important for emancipation:

Nanak haumai met samae. (SGGS: Pg. 939)

O Nanak, eradicating egotism, one merges in the Lord.

Without shedding all impurities and evils and treasuring values, true knowledge cannot be attained. The practice of the inner consciousness through Santokh, Sewa and Gurbani one reaches a new realm of enlightenment. In Japji, Guru Nanak has written, 'Tethe garye surat mat man budh, Tethe garye sura siddha ki sudh (36)' i.e., 'The intuitive consciousness, intellect and understanding of the mind are shaped there. The consciousness of the spiritual warriors and the Siddhas, the beings of spiritual perfection, are shaped there'. In such an elated state of mind when one is engrossed in worship, one is attuned to acquire more and more knowledge and attains spiritual perfection.

Path of Individual Realization and Enlightenment

The basic premise of any enlightened society is rational and enlightened individuals. "The Guru was fully alive to the problem of well-coordinated composition of the

society. He regarded co-operative and participatory society as the only truly religious society, with enlightened individuals as a prerequisite. A good society cannot be conceived without good individuals who are essential constituent elements of composing an ideal society" (Kaur, 2014). Guru Nanak taught the prescription for individuals for attaining fulfilment in life and also, for emancipation. The principles of moral and rational action were akin to religious and social revolution, the relevance of which is visible in the contemporary world dominated by ever growing materialistic ethos and politics of fragmentation. Integral to him was the awareness of the ills and errors in the society and an ardent concern to remedy these.

Guru Nanak Dev, to realize God in one's life and during one's lifetime, sanction the path of Truth. (Aad sach jugaad sach hai bhee sach. Hai bhi sach Nanak hosi bhi sach- SGGS: Pg. 1) i.e., True In The Primal Beginning. True Throughout The Ages. True Here and Now. O Nanak, Forever and Ever True.

Salvation of an individual is possible by living ethically in this world. "The world was established as the home for righteous actions in the midst of nights, seasons, weeks, days, air, water, fire and netherworld".

Rati ruti thiti var.
Pavan pani agni patal.
Tis vich dharti thap rakhi dharam sal. (SGGS: Pg. 7)

Nights, days, weeks and seasons;
wind, water, fire and the nether regions
In the midst of these, He established the earth as a home for Dharma.

Moreover, the realization of an individual is possible if one introspects and realizes oneself.

Ap bichare so giani hoi. (SGGS: Pg. 152)
One who contemplates his own self is truly wise.

The supreme spiritual wisdom can be attained when one is poised and away from all allurements in life that will satiate all yearnings of a person. This will enable one to reach sagacity and erudition.

Man bairagi ghar vasai sach bhai rata hoe.
Gian maharas bhogvai bahur bhukh na hoe. (SGGS: Pg. 21)

If the mind becomes balanced and detached, and comes to dwell in its own true home, imbued with the Fear of God, Then it enjoys the essence of supreme spiritual wisdom; it shall never feel hunger again.

The transcendental God resides in all persons and the entire creation and everything around us is manifestation of the Ultimate. When the inner space of the mind and heart is filled with light, pure effulgence emerges with this illumination and glorification of the minds. At this stage man merges with God.

Guru Nanak envisioned a process of Khand in Japji Sahib for the ethical and spiritual progress of man. In Japji Sahib five Khand or realms have been stated. An individual has to gradually ascend through five spiritual realms, Panj Khand (SGGS: Pgs. 7-8) namely, Dharam Khand, Gian Khand, Saram Khand, Karam Khand and Sach Khand to attain self-realization. The field of renunciation is his faithful practice of Nam Simran and Sach Khand, the field of Divine Truth is the Realm of Truth where Divine Order (Hukam) or the Formless One pervades.

Difference Between Gurmukh and Manmukh

Guru Nanak distinguished Gurmukh who is inclined towards God and a Manmukh who has detached himself from God and 'means a person who follows his own uncontrolled mind or wild desires' (<https://www.sikhi-wiki.org/index.php/Gurmukh>).

Guru Nanak says that manmukh are separated from God, wander aimlessly and have to bear sufferings:

Manmukh sojhi na pavai gurmukh sada hajur. (SGGS: Pg. 60)

Understanding does not come to the self-willed manmukh. But to the Gurmukh, the Lord is always close.

The stage when a person moves from being Manmukhs to Gurmukh is the final goal for emancipation.

Gurmukh antar rav rahia bakhse bhagat bhandar. (SGGS: Pg. 60)

God permeates the inner beings of the Gurmukhs. They are blessed with the treasure of devotion.

For Gurmukh, the society of the saints is like a pilgrimage to a sacred shrine.

Tirath navan jao, tirath Naam hai.

Tirath Sabadh Beechaar Anthar Gian Hai. (SGGS: Pg. 687)

My sacred shrine of pilgrimage is spiritual wisdom within, and contemplation on the Word of the Shabad.

Why should I bathe at sacred shrines of pilgrimage?
The Naam, the Name of the Lord, is the sacred shrine of pilgrimage.

The pure company of Gurmukh, complete surrender to Guru and meditation of the True Name can end all dualities and contradictions in the life of a person. Towards the end of Sidh Gosht Bani, the Guru emphatically asserts that True Shabad is the way of emancipation. The egoistic and power-drunk Siddhas sat down humbly with folded hands before the Guru bowing down their head in reverence. The yogis uttered, "Nanak, your achievement is Great. A great man has appeared in Kaliyug, having diffused the Light of Knowledge all around" (Sidh bolan subh bachan, dhan Nanak teri vadi kamaei).

Knowledge Society based on Human Values

The concept of unity of God leads to brotherhood of mankind and hence, the belief in the ideals of human life emerges from it. The values of magnanimous God are transmitted to men through self-control and discipline leading them to enlightenment. Dr. Radhakrishnan remarks, "Values acquire a cosmic importance and ethical life becomes meaningful". Guru Nanak made ethical conduct based on Sat, Santokh and Vichar as the basic premise of human life. **Sat (truthfulness)** and the pursuit of truth as one's goal of life are accorded a status even higher than truth itself. **Santokh (contentment)** is a variation of and an improvement upon temperance, one of Plato's cardinal values. It limits individual passion, frenzy, hate and rage. The virtue implies control over egoism and self-centeredness. The third virtue, **Vichar (wisdom)** i.e., acquisition of spiritual knowledge, corresponds to Plato's first cardinal of the same name.

In the first four stanzas of Japji Sahib, seven ethical norms applicable both for an individual and the society are elaborated. These are, Contentment (Santokh), Life of Reflection (Saram), Right Orientation (Dhian), Self-discipline (Jugat), Unidirectionality (Partit), Catholicity (Aai panthi Sagal Jamati) and Service (Man jite jag jit).

In the society, when running away in the jungles was a prevalent practice, the Guru discarded asceticism and endorsed family life (grihist) as the way through which salvation or union with the Divine was achievable. Guru Nanak preached that one has to be poised to ferry across the marshy pond and in Sidh Gosht, the Guru says, 'One must live in this world just as a lotus lives in a marshy

pond, retaining its beauty and fragrance, and just as a swan crosses the sea disregarding the rough waves and the tide”.

Altruism was preached and practiced by the Guru through his entire life beginning from the episode of True Bargain and later, at Kartarpur when it was consolidated as a firm practice in the form of Guru Ka Langar. This promoted equality in the society that had been fragmented by inequalities based on caste and religions. This sharing and caring with the fellow beings especially with the needy and downtrodden have underpinnings for the modern materialistic world wherein equality and magnanimity is still elusive.

Another ideal imperative in the ideal society is true praxis and honest vocation in life and Guru Nanak himself earned the bread honestly and from his own share, gave to the needy reflecting love for them. Three-pronged approach through adherence of socio-economic formula elucidated by Guru Nanak of Kirat or being true to one's vocation recognises efforts even of a single individual, Wand Chhako or sharing the meals promotes participatory action in any democratic society emphasizing on equality and taking care of the needy and Nam Japo or meditating is instrumental in spiritually elevating individuals and community together. A potent means to cultivate balanced personality of an individual and creation of all-inclusive human society can be elixir in multi-cultural societies. In the modern society that is driven by materialism and decline in human values, the need of ethical business is a prerequisite. In the era of globalization, when commercial dealings and institutions are the leading factors, it is imperative to endorse the pronouncements made by the First Guru to make the world a better place to live in.

Conclusion

Realization of Oneself and the Ultimate Reality through Quintessence of Knowledge

Knowledge has the power to dispel darkness permeating in minds that is visible in Guru Nanak Bani and that is asserted in knowledge scenario as well.

Diva balai andhera jae.
Bed path mat papa khae.
Ugvai sur na japai chand.
Jah gian pargas agian mitant.
(SGGS: Pg.791)

When the lamp is lit, the darkness is dispelled;
reading the Vedas, sinful intellect is destroyed.

When the sun rises, the moon is not visible.

Wherever spiritual wisdom appears, ignorance is dispelled.

The importance of human activity that 'enables information to be transformed into knowledge' (UNESCO) provides an essential direction for individual and societal growth. Similarly, Guru Nanak Dev asserts upon channelising the faculties of mind through strength deriving from Almighty, trained through self-discipline and teacher and leading a virtuous life. A knowledgeable person imbibes life values in praxis and ethical norms elucidated in Japji Sahib by Guru Nanak including contentment, life of reflection, right orientation, self-discipline, unidirectionality, Catholicity and service has underpinnings for such virtuous conduct. Guru Nanak upheld principles that the present knowledge society deems as imperative and the entire journey of converting Manmukh into Gurmukh is a path of creating a cosmopolitan citizen upholding universal values. Guru Nanak created a blend of science and spirituality and developed a structured sense of ethics to make, individually and collectively, responsible choices in all matters. The society was based on human values like, truthfulness, honest relations, virtuous deeds, tolerance, empathy and enlightenment.

Eternal quest of a person would be quenched through contemplating upon the true essence of learning, wisdom and knowledge making one single individual benefactor of the entire society through altruistic concerns. A compassionate mind serves as an elixir that has the capability to transform the negative situations to beneficial ones. The conflicts in the fields of politics, religion or business can be solved, human happiness can be realized and well-being of all (Sarbat da Bhalla) can be ensured if minds of the people are illuminated with knowledge and life is regulated by adhering to values. Guru Nanak Bani teaches one to tread on the path of magnanimity and modern materialistic world can learn to share and care.

Vidia vichari tan parupkari. (SGGS: Pg. 356)

Contemplate and reflect upon knowledge, and you will become a benefactor to others.

Taming inner intuitive consciousness and sharpening of intellect is possible by acquiring knowledge, enlightening one and the role of preceptor or Guru is vital in the process of knowledge acquisition. The reservoir of knowledge is vast and if celestial gems of Guru Nanak Bani contained in Sri Guru Granth Sahib is read, imbibed and disseminated in modern knowledge society, much-needed humanist direction will be provided to it. Peter Drucker's contention of bringing information out of the

books and applying it to create a rich reservoir of knowledge for practical purposes stands true and the meaningful content of Bani in Sri Guru Granth Sahib should be made a part of practical lives, which would enable realization in this life and attainment of Ultimate Reality is also through the quintessence of True Universal Knowledge. Guru Nanak had spread light in the age of darkness and ignorance and preached that even an iota of merit or erudition in this life is not possible without understanding One God and leading virtuous life. Guru Nanak lived in the 15th century but the knowledge imparted by Him befits appropriately in present modern and scientific world termed as a Knowledge society.

Competing Interest Statement

Author has read and approved the manuscript and takes full responsibility for its contents. No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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