

Psychological Perspective of Guru Nanak's Teachings

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Abstract

Satguru Nanak pargateya, mitti dund jag chanan hoye

With the emergence of the Guru Nanak, the mist cleared and all the four directions and nine divisions of earth were liberated. Nanak was not only a person but the Divine Preceptor with mission who founded Sikhism for which he has the divine sanction which is unique and revolutionary in character. His teachings are universally relevant and hold the promise of salvation to everyone. His knowledge determines the spiritual as well as temporal contours of Sikhism. Guru Nanak's 974 poetic hymns in the Guru Granth Sahib, with some of the major prayers being the Japji Sahib, the Asa di Var and the Sidh-Ghost. Guru Nanak's sanctity, divinity and religious authority descended upon each of the nine subsequent Gurus when the Guruship was devolved on to them. This paper tries to understand the teachings of Guru Nanak Dev from psychological perspective and the relevance of his teachings in present time.

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INTRODUCTION

The Persona, who epitomises the Sikh self, Guru Nanak not only started a new way of thinking but began a way of life where everyone has a desire to be good and in turn a desire to find God in all that is done. He was neither a disciple of any earthly guru nor was inspired by any god or goddess but believed that God is everywhere and beyond the Vedas. Nanak's God is actually visible in His creation.

Nanak taught Spiritual fulfilment through Nam Simran on the word of One creator, preached a belief in one God. He wanted all who practised their religion to realise and understand the fact that all they needed to do was keep God central in their thoughts and there is no Hindu or Muslim and God can be remembered as Allah, or Ram.

The Mool Mantra (the basic creed)

Ik Onkar,

Sat Naam, Karta-Purkh

Nir-bhau, Nir-Vair,

Akal Moorat, Ajooni Sai-Bhang.

Gur-Prasaad

(God is one, Truth He is the doer who is fearless, without enmity. The immortal, self illuminated and is obtainable by the grace of GURU. (JAPJI)

Guru Nanak's teaching of unity of God and brotherhood stress on the humanistic perspective which states that human nature is basically good, with an inherent potential to maintain healthy, meaningful relationships and to make choices that are in the interest of oneself and others.

There were three main tenets he left his followers with – *Naam japna, Kirat karna and Wand ke chhakna.*

Remembrance of "The Name", we are meant to meditate on God when we can, repeat His name, and keep Him at the forefront of all our thoughts through the daily prayers. The daily prayer "*Tere bhanne sarbat da bhala.*" (Ardas), the Sikh seeks the welfare for all.

Nanak asks for "Naam" (name of God) with which comes wellbeing, happiness and positive spirit and with the blessings of Lord, everyone in the world prosper and be in peace.

The power of prayer! Belief in GOD improves the treatment for those suffering from anxiety and depression. Several studies have claimed that the patients who believe in GOD significantly improve the outcome of receiving short-term treatment for psychiatric illness. Prayer can be applied as psychotherapy.

Existentialists help the clients find philosophical meaning in the face of anxiety by choosing to think and act authentically and responsibly. Everyone suffers losses and these losses cause anxiety because they are reminders of human limitations and inevitable death. Existential and Humanistic therapists believe the significance stressed by the "serenity prayer" to *accept* the things that cannot be changed, the *courage* to change what can be changed, and the *wisdom* to know the difference

Kirat karna means to live an honourable life. To be a householder, performing honest labour for a living and maintaining a balance being a householder and while doing the seva i.e performing community service and duties towards the society.

Guru Nanak says that no one can save anybody else. It is only Guru who guides us to safety, and to be saved, one has to follow the right path of sewa and simran. Further, the Guru is not to be found in big palaces alone, he lives with the humble. About sewa Gurbani explains: (In the midst of this world, do sewa and you shall be given a place of honour in the Court of the Lord). Positive Psychology has emphasised on happiness and wellbeing. Sewa and simran bring eudaimonia, the good life that holds the greatest value in life.

Wand ke chhakna means to share with others what you have. This is where the concept of community and honestly sharing one's earnings with others was conceptualised. Sharing helps in improving resilience and provides a sense of rhythm and regularity in life. Evidence has shown that helping others actually benefits ones own mental and physical wellbeing.

Sadh Sangat – the community of the holy. In the community we can find counsel, help, blessings and support. Guruji founded the institutions of sangat and pangat. Everybody participates as equals, without any kind of discrimination on the basis of one's faith, caste, creed, colour or nation. It is actually a combination of social, economic and cultural equality which is essential to flourish.

Guru Nanak gave the message of "*Hukam Rajayee Chalna Nanak Likheya Naal*" meaning everything happens by God's Grace, so rest assured that God knows better what is right or wrong for us. We should, therefore, accept His decisions without any grudge or question.

There are three aspects of human being: Atma, Budhi and Manas (intelligence). These three elements constitute individuality or ego in man. Psychologist have emphasised on different aspects of intelligence which is a global capacity of the individual to act purposefully, to think rationally, to deal effectively with his environment. Following the tenets given by the Guru one can be high on spiritual intelligence.

Eh maan panch tat te janma (this mind is born of the five elements)-(Mahla 1,p. 415)

This mind is the life of the five elements. The mind comes into being when the body is inhabited by the soul. The virtues of truth, contentment, self-control, patience and goodwill are important for the development of positive self.

SACH SUNAISI SACH KEE BELA – (to speak the truth)

Truth has the first place among virtues, because it is the basis of spiritual evolution. Guru Nanak says that Truth is the remedy of all ills and washes away all sins. He humbly bows to those who possess the Truth.

Guru Nanak told King Babar that he is not Babar but Jabar. We should always speak the truth without any fear. According to him the victory of truth is not dependent on ending or suppressing falsehood but in standing firmly by truth. That is why he exhorts that always stick to truth and to remain on the side of truth .

SHUN FIVE EVILS

Guru Nanak asked his followers to shun five evils which leads to illusion (maya) which eventually acts as roadblock towards attainment of salvation. The five evils are-Ego, Anger, Greed, Attachment and Lust.

- Running away to a forest won't give enlightenment. -The essence of religion is meekness and sympathy. But a life of goodness and purity amid the world's temptations.(Guru Nanak). He believed that living as a householder was better than going away for a divine truth. Nanak himself was a farmer even after achieving enlightenment.
- Fight superstition of any kind. - Nanak devoted his life to attacking formal rituals, caste, and practices. The simplest way to find meaning and purpose in life is cutting out the clutter of what society dictates. He spoke out against Sati. Guruji actively condemned it and sought equality for women. We are born of woman, conceived in the womb of woman, engaged and married to woman. We make friendship with woman and the lineage continued because of woman. When one woman dies, we take another one, we are bound with the world through woman. Why should we talk ill of her, who gives birth to kings? The woman is born from woman; there is none without her. Only the One True Lord is without woman" (Guru Nanak, Var Asa, pg. 473). As God is genderless, Sikhs actively fight against patriarchal social structures and seek social reforms that advocate women's rights.

- Simplicity is beautiful and can enhance humanity. For humanity, everybody should be free from artificial beauty and greed. Contentment lies in the feeling of satisfaction with what one has. A contented man is free from envy, greed and jealousy. Nanak says: Misery is a medicine and happiness is a disease.

The message of Guru Nanak is as relevant to the world now, as it was in the fifteenth century when it was delivered. The world today is *kalyug* as it continues to be divided in class and caste wars, and not only people but even the countries are divided between rich and poor. There is widespread hunger, poverty, and deprivation on the planet. The discrimination between races and gender is equally strong. The progress of science has established that the role of knowledge is important for human growth and development. In the pursuit of growth and development, exploitation of resources has become the new norm. To control this aggression and greed leading to conflict, and war on our planet, Guru Nanak's message of compassion and contentment, are relevant for sustainable growth which must be imbibed in our daily life.

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