

Guru Nanak's Message for today's Flat, Interconnected World

Inder M. Singh
Chairman, Chardi Kalaa Foundation

Introduction

Five hundred years ago in Northern India, Guru Nanak preached a beautiful universal message of faith, love and truthful living. His message was not meant for a particular religious or ethnic group. He addressed all humanity.

In this talk, I would like to look at his teachings and life in the context of the current global environment and the challenges that face us, and see what kind of insights and prescriptions he offers to us in today's flat, interconnected world.

Long before jet travel and the World Wide Web, Guru Nanak set out to do the next best thing – he physically traveled much of the world on foot and by boat, for many years, making four epic journeys known as “Udasis”. He journeyed west through Mecca and Baghdad, north to Afghanistan and Tibet, East as far as Assam and South all the way to Sri Lanka. There have been no more than a handful of people besides Guru Nanak and Marco Polo who are known to have traveled through so much of the pre-Industrial Revolution world. Everywhere he went he “networked”, in current parlance, with a wide range of spiritual seekers, scholars and leaders of many different faiths and sects.

We will see how Guru Nanak's message and values, formulated hundreds of years ago, are truly in tune with the modern notions of an egalitarian, democratic society which values individual freedom and dignity, coupled with personal responsibility and social awareness. His revolutionary universal approach to the conflicting religious movements of his time provide a compelling roadmap for the promotion of interfaith engagement and mutual respect, and for overcoming the barriers that divide humanity in today's global environment.

Guru Nanak's message focused on the core principles of spirituality, which are at the heart of most faiths. He proclaimed faith in one loving and just God who creates and

nurtures all living beings. God as described by Guru Nanak is a formless, all-pervading spiritual force shared by all religions, who is beyond our human limitations of fear, hatred or greed. We should focus on the shared essential elements of all faiths rather than the more superficial differences that separate them:

ਸਰਬ ਧਰਮ ਮਹਿ ਸ਼੍ਰੇਸਟ ਧਰਮੁ ॥
ਹਰਿ ਕੇ ਨਾਮੁ ਜਪਿ ਨਿਰਮਲ ਕਰਮੁ ॥

*Of all religions, the most exalted
is to worship the Lord and do good deeds.*

People of faith can emphasize the shared values of different religions, and work together towards a better world.

The main goal of human life, according to the Guru, is spiritual growth that leads to awakening the Divine within ourselves and ultimately, to achieve a Unitive consciousness, a state of being in tune with naam, the Universal Spirit of God. Such a naam-conscious being sees the Real-self, which is the common divine spark within all, and is one with God and His creation.

Guru Nanak taught that we are all are children of the One Divine Creator. People of faith should recognize the Divine Light in every one. So long as someone fails to see the Divine in others, and holds feelings of hatred or contempt in his heart, he will never be able to fully experience the Divine Presence within himself.

He declared that social ranks based on religion, race, gender, class or caste, were meaningless and hatred, discrimination or ill-treatment based on such labels was immoral.

Although the primary focus of Guru Nanak's teachings is spiritual, the path he preached is a balanced, integrated one that combines internal, spiritual enlightenment with an active, engaged life.

Divinely inspired beings can and should be a force for good in society, according to Guru Nanak:

“Brahma gyani parupkar umaha”

The Enlightened God-conscious person takes delight in doing good deeds for others.

Guru Nanak’s message was carried on through nine Gurus who followed him. They led the evolving Sikh community through the next two tumultuous centuries, and in the process they have provided powerful real-life examples of living by the principles taught by Guru Nanak as well as how to apply them to a range of different challenging situations.

Sikhs believe that all ten Gurus represented the spirit of Nanak and spoke with his authority. The quotations I am using here are by Guru Nanak himself, or in some cases by one of the Gurus who followed him, and whose words are enshrined in the Sikh scripture – the Guru Granth Sahib.

Today’s Flat, Interconnected World – Challenges and Opportunities

Our world has been shrinking since the industrial revolution with improvements in transportation and communications. But more recently, the world has become dramatically flatter and much more interconnected with the end of the cold war, economic globalization and the widespread adoption of the Internet and web technologies, including social networking tools like Facebook and Twitter. We are at a major transformational period, which is full of both opportunities and challenges for humanity.

Freer global trade, more efficient use of capital and labor across national boundaries, widespread access to knowledge and greater opportunities for innovation have all led to a global economic boom, which may be easy to forget in the midst of the current economic crisis.

This has provided a great opportunity for the parts of the world that had been left behind in the industrial revolution to start to start catching up with the industrialized West. Millions of people in the emerging nations like China and India are being raised

out of poverty and joining the middle class. At the same time the advanced nations are facing a crisis as their workers have to compete in a global labor market.

People in even the poorest and most remote parts of the world have much greater access to knowledge, and to information about the rest of the world. This is leading not only to greater economic opportunity and empowerment, but also greater social and political awareness.

We see this in the growing protest movements against totalitarian and corrupt governments, such as the Arab Spring in the Middle East.

Increased mobility and immigration is leading to societies becoming more heterogeneous than ever before. Demographic trends in developed countries leading to lower birth rates and aging populations are leading to increased immigration into many of these countries. In the past, most people lived in societies that were fairly homogeneous. With the rise of pluralistic societies around the world, religions and cultures have come into conflict in many ways. We see a rise in fundamentalism and religious bigotry, as well as a backlash against immigration and the inroads by foreign cultures. The rise of global Islamic terrorism, and the post 9/11 responses to it confront the world with one of the biggest challenges of our time.

In addition to religion, differences based on race, culture and language continue to cause conflict around the world. Pluralistic societies appear to be the future of mankind, but we still have a lot to learn about resolving the differences and conflicts between the different sections of society. Women, not exactly a minority, representing as they do half of all humanity, continue to face severe discrimination and mistreatment in large parts of the world in spite of recent advances in the western world.

Economic disparities and the potential shortages of critical natural resources such as oil and water loom as additional areas of potential global conflict.

The rapid pace of economic growth in China, India and other emerging nations is putting more pressure on our planetary environment, and exacerbating the threat of climate change.

Now let look at how Guru Nanak's message addresses many of these issues.

Interfaith Dialog and Understanding

With the rise of pluralistic societies around the world, religions and cultures have come into conflict in many ways. Different faiths have to learn how to get along through greater interfaith dialog and understanding. Instead of exacerbating the divisions by taking narrow-minded, divisive approaches to each other's faiths, people of faith should be able to join hands in promoting fairness and justice around the world and be a force for world peace,

Interfaith dialogue and cooperation have been a key part of Sikhi since the time of Guru Nanak, long before the birth of what is now called the interfaith movement.

At a time when the environment in India was full of conflict between Hinduism and Islam, he laid the foundation for the Sikh faith with a universal message for all humanity, emphasizing equality for all, independent of race, creed, caste or gender.

He taught that all are created by the same one God, whether we call him Raam, Allah or by any other name. "See the Divine Light in all," was his message. "There are no strangers or enemies."

It is said that he started his mission with the message that "there is no Hindu, there is no Mussalman". A popular couplet from the time of Guru Nanak illustrates the love and high regard of both Hindus and Muslims for him:

Baba Nanak shah fakir Hindu ka guru Musalmaan ka peer
Nanak the holy man Is the guru of the Hindus and the pir (or spiritual teacher) of the Muslims.

The Sri Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh Holy Scripture is a unique example of this universalist attitude. It includes hymns written not only by Guru Nanak and the succeeding Gurus, but also compositions by both Hindu and Muslim religious thinkers, as well as writings by inspired beings from different social backgrounds including those considered

by Hindus to be untouchables. It is the only scripture, which includes and sanctifies texts of people belonging to other faiths, whose spirit conformed to the spirit of Sikhism.

The holiest of Sikh shrines, the Golden Temple at Amritsar has four doors, each facing a cardinal direction, to indicate that all are welcome. The cornerstone of the Golden Temple was laid by Mian Mir, a celebrated Muslim Sufi saint.

An example of religious tolerance unparalleled in history was the personal sacrifice of Guru Teg Bahadur, the ninth Guru after Nanak, who gave his life to protect the right of freedom of religion for the followers of a religion other than his own. Aurangzeb, the Muslim ruler at the time went on a crusade to convert all his subjects to Islam by force, starting with Kashmir. Threatened with forced conversion to Islam or facing death, a delegation of Kashmiri Hindu religious leaders approached Guru Teg Bahadur. The Guru took up their case before the Muslim emperor, and accepted martyrdom, refusing to convert to Islam. The event was the seed of the process that led to the downfall of the Mughal empire, and made possible the survival of Hinduism in India.

The Guru Granth Sahib condemns vilifying of the religions of others
bed kateb kaho mat jhutha, jhootha jo na beechaaray

“Do not say that the Vedas, the Bible and the Quran are false. Those who do not contemplate their scriptures are the ones who are false.”

Addressing Conflict and Discord

The world at the time of Guru Nanak was very different from today, but there was no shortage of conflict between different religions as well as between ethnic and social classes.

As we will see, his response to these conflicts as well as to injustice, social inequities other issues has much to teach us today.

He advocated a principled life, one that is directed not only to personal spiritual growth and salvation, but also to being an active, contributing member of society and a positive force for the welfare of the community. A Naam-conscious person, one who

follows the path shown by Guru Nanak, sees the universal Divine light in all. Such a person is incapable of hatred, discrimination, or being judgmental of any individual or group based on race, caste, gender, religion, nationality, wealth or social status.

ਨਾ ਕੋ ਬੈਰੀ ਨਹੀ ਬਿਗਾਨਾ ਸਗਲ ਸਿੰਗਿ ਹਮ ਕਉ ਬਨਿ ਆਈ ॥੧॥

ਜੋ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਕੀਨੋ ਸੋ ਭਲ ਮਾਨਿਓ ਏਹ ਸੁਮਤਿ ਸਾਧੂ ਤੇ ਪਾਈ ॥੨॥

ਸਭ ਮਹਿ ਰਵਿ ਰਹਿਆ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਏਕੈ ਪੇਖਿ ਪੇਖਿ ਨਾਨਕ ਬਿਗਸਾਈ ॥੩॥੮॥

I see no stranger, I see no enemy - I get along with everyone. || 1 ||

Whoever God has created, I accept as good. This is the sublime wisdom I have obtained from the Holy and Wise. || 2 ||

The Divine Light of God is pervading in all. Beholding Him, Nanak blossoms forth in joy. || 3 || 8 || (SGGS p. 1099)

The Naam-conscious person overcomes his own haumai or ego and is not driven by anger or a desire for revenge. He can be a force for peaceful resolution of conflicts through amity and discussion rather than violence:

ਫਰੀਦਾ ਬੁਰੇ ਦਾ ਭਲਾ ਕਰਿ ਗੁਸਾ ਮਨਿ ਨ ਹਵਾਇ ॥

ਦੇਹੀ ਰੋਗੁ ਨ ਲਗਈ ਪਲੈ ਸਭੁ ਕਿਛੁ ਪਾਇ ॥੭੮॥

Fareed, answer evil with goodness; do not fill your mind with anger.

Your body shall not suffer from any disease, and you shall obtain everything. (SGGS p. 1381)

He is motivated towards acting for the welfare of others, in other words, for social causes.

ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਗਿਆਨੀ ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰ ਉਮਾਰਾ ॥

...

ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਗਿਆਨੀ ਕੈ ਹੋਇ ਸੁ ਭਲਾ ॥

The God-conscious being delights in doing good deeds for others.

....

The God-conscious being acts in the common good. (SGGS pg 273)

Following the path shown by Guru Nanak, enlightened Naam-conscious beings would address many of today's global challenges by working for global fairness and

justice, equality and freedom for all, and for tolerance and peaceful coexistence. The best approach to resolving conflicts would be through dialog and debate instead of the use of force.

Of course this doesn't always work. There is evil in the world. Many people in positions of power are driven by other negative drives. Guru Nanak also showed us that we must be willing to stand up to evil and injustice.

Social activism and combating social and political injustice has historically been an essential part of Sikhi. Guru Nanak did not turn a blind eye to political repression or consider it outside the realm of religion, but undertook political protest through his writings, speaking out against the cruelty of rulers. He wrote a number of passages about the Mughal invasion of India by Babar, who became the first emperor of the Mughal dynasty which ruled much of India for over two centuries, and he described the brutalities that he personally witnessed. He condemned exploitation of the poor by the rich and powerful and spoke up for fairness and justice for all. Individual freedom, including freedom of religion, was an important right for which Guru Nanak and Gurus after him carried on a major struggle.

The fearless and outspoken criticism of injustice and tyranny by Guru Nanak and the Gurus who followed him was seen by the rulers as a threat. Guru Nanak and Guru Hargobind, the sixth Guru, underwent imprisonment at the hands of the Mughal emperors, while Guru Arjan and Guru Teg Bahadur, the sixth and ninth Gurus, were executed at the orders of the rulers. They demonstrated, through these magnificent examples of personal sacrifice, the application of nonviolent protest to address social and political injustice.

Peaceful protest based on principle, and a willingness to make personal sacrifices can be a powerful means of political transformation. This has been successfully demonstrated in recent history by Mahatma Gandhi in India, Martin Luther King in the US and Nelson Mandela in South Africa.

However, there are times when all peaceful attempts fail and force is the only solution against evil and injustice. Few would argue that evil wrought by Hitler should

have been opposed only through peaceful protest. The actions in Bosnia and more recently in Libya provide additional contemporary examples of necessary use of force by the international community.

After the martyrdom of Guru Teg Bahadur, Guru Gobind Singh decided that the time had come for the use of force to oppose injustice and tyranny. He declared that when all other means have failed, it is righteous to draw the sword. In fact, it would be immoral and cowardly to submit without a fight.

Guru Gobind Singh transformed the Sikhs, who were a relatively passive peasant community into a brave freedom loving people who shook the powerful Mughal empire, and were able to put a stop to the recurring invasions of India by Muslim invaders from the west. They also played a major role in India's struggle for freedom against the British.

It is important to emphasize that Guru Gobind Singh did not condone violence - armed struggle was used only as a last resort after all attempts at peaceful resolutions failed. He makes this very clear in his composition Zafarnama – when injustice goes too far and all other means have been exhausted then, he says, it is righteous to use the sword. In fact at that point it is one's duty to act. Under Guru Gobind Singh, Sikhs never initiated a conflict, only responded to attack. He never tried to conquer any territory or create a state.

We have seen that the Sikhi answer to dealing with conflict, discord and injustice provides three approaches:

1. Resolve conflict through discussion and debate, based on mutual respect and goodwill. Naam-conscious beings who see the divine light in all can play a major role in bringing this about this kind of resolution.
2. Peaceful nonviolent protest is called for when those in positions of power and authority are driven by their haumai, and are not amenable to solutions based mutual respect. This requires commitment and personal

sacrifice.

3. When all else fails, armed struggle against injustice and tyranny, and in defense of liberty is called for.

Inequity and Discrimination

Recognize the Divine light of God in each individual, and treat all equally without discriminating against anyone based on race, caste, religion, gender or social position. This is one of the most basic teachings of Guru Nanak. This revolutionary concept hit at the very foundations of caste bound Indian society.

Where Hindus justified the caste system based on religious texts, Guru Nanak emphasized that there are no such distinctions in the eyes of God.

ਜਾਣਹੁ ਜੋਤਿ ਨ ਪੂਛਹੁ ਜਾਤੀ ਆਗੈ ਜਾਤਿ ਨ ਹੇ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥

Recognize the Lord's Light within all, and do not consider social class or status; there are no classes or castes in the world hereafter. || 1 || (SGGS p. 349)

The Sikh scriptures declare that all men, and women for that matter, are created equal – like pots of different sizes, shapes and colors fashioned from the same clay by God, the Cosmic Potter:

ਅਵਲਿ ਅਲਹ ਨੂਰੁ ਉਪਾਇਆ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਕੇ ਸਭ ਬੰਦੇ ॥
ਏਕ ਨੂਰ ਤੇ ਸਭੁ ਜਗੁ ਉਪਜਿਆ ਕਉਨ ਭਲੇ ਕੋ ਮੰਦੇ ॥੧॥
...
ਮਾਟੀ ਏਕ ਅਨੇਕ ਭਾਤਿ ਕਰਿ ਸਾਜੀ ਸਾਜਨਹਾਰੈ ॥
ਨਾ ਕਛੁ ਪੋਚ ਮਾਟੀ ਕੇ ਭਾਡੇ ਨਾ ਕਛੁ ਪੋਚ ਕੁੰਭਾਰੈ ॥੨॥
ਸਭ ਮਹਿ ਸਚਾ ਏਕੋ ਸੋਈ ਤਿਸ ਕਾ ਕੀਆ ਸਭੁ ਕਛੁ ਹੋਈ ॥

In the beginning, Allah created the Light; from that light, He has created all mortal beings.

From the One Light, the entire universe welled up. So who is good, and who is bad?

....
The clay is the same, but the Cosmic Potter has fashioned vessels of many kinds.

There is nothing wrong with the pot of clay - there can be no error by the Potter.

The One True Lord abides in all; by His power, every thing is fashioned. (SGGS p. 1349)

Alleviation of poverty in the world

One of the most welcome results of Globalization and the flattening of the world has been the rise of the emerging nations like China, India, Brazil and others, and the reduction of the income disparity between the advanced nations of the West and the rest of the world. Millions of people are being raised out of poverty and there is a growing middle class. At the same time the advanced nations are facing a crisis as their workers have to compete in a global labor market.

However in both the advanced and the emerging nations, the gap between the rich and poor has been increasing over the last several decades. Worldwide, the bulk of the wealth is increasingly concentrated in the top few percent of the people, while large numbers struggle for economic survival. The Occupy Wall Street movement, which has found echoes in many countries around the globe, is a reaction to this.

Guru Nanak taught that simply amassing money is foolish and, if obtained by exploiting the weak, positively criminal. The true use of wealth is to help create a fairer and more contented society. It is a message for all of us in today's turbulent economic times.

Compassion and charity are important values promoted in Guru Nanak's compositions.

ਘਾਲਿ ਖਾਇ ਕਿਛੁ ਹਥਹੁ ਦੇਇ ॥

ਨਾਨਕ ਰਾਹੁ ਪਛਾਣਹਿ ਸੇਇ ॥੧॥

*One who works for what he eats, and gives some of what he has in charity
- O Nanak, he knows the Path. (SGGS p. 1245)*

In his travels, he preferred to visit with the poor and humble rather than the wealthy who came proudly with offerings for the Guru. In his own words:

ਨੀਚਾ ਐਦਰਿ ਨੀਚ ਜਾਤਿ ਨੀਚੀ ਹੁ ਅਤਿ ਨੀਚੁ ॥ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਤਿਨ ਕੈ ਸੰਗਿ ਸਾਥਿ ਵਡਿਆ ਸਿਉ ਕਿਆ ਰੀਸ ॥

ਜਿਥੇ ਨੀਚ ਸਮਾਲੀਅਨਿ ਤਿਥੇ ਨਦਰਿ ਤੇਰੀ ਬਖਸੀਸ ॥੩॥੩॥

Nanak seeks the company of the lowest of the low class, the very meekest of the meek. Why should he try to compete with the great?

In that place where the lowly are cared for- there, the Blessings of Your Glance of Grace rain down. (SGGS p. 15)

Gender Inequality

Women, representing fully half of all humanity, continue to face discrimination in many parts of the world. The feminist movement has done much to address gender discrimination in western societies, but women in much of the rest of the world still face very serious problems including violence, illiteracy and many kinds of economic and social deprivation.

It is being increasingly recognized that better education and economic empowerment of women can play a major role in raising the economic level of impoverished areas of the world, as well as lowering birth rates, which is an important factor for addressing climate change.

Several centuries ahead of the feminist movement, Guru Nanak spoke out against gender discrimination in the highly male dominated environment of India. He confronted established orthodoxy with the radical assertion that women were worthy of praise and equal to men.

Guru Nanak taught that God is beyond gender and can be worshiped as both Father and Mother.

ਤੁਮ ਮਾਤ ਪਿਤਾ ਹਮ ਬਾਰਿਕ ਤੇਰੇ ॥

ਤੁਮਰੀ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਮਹਿ ਸੂਖ ਘਨੇਰੇ ॥

You are our mother and father; we are Your children.

In Your Grace, there is so much joy! (SGGS p. 268)

Both men and women are infused with the same Divine light. Instead of being denigrated and mistreated, woman should be cherished and respected:

ਭੰਡਿ ਜਮੀਐ ਭੰਡਿ ਨਿਮੀਐ ਭੰਡਿ ਮੰਗਣੁ ਵੀਆਹੁ ॥

ਭੰਡਹੁ ਹੋਵੈ ਦੋਸਤੀ ਭੰਡਹੁ ਚਲੈ ਰਾਹੁ ॥

ਭੰਡੁ ਮੁਆ ਭੰਡੁ ਭਾਲੀਐ ਭੰਡਿ ਹੋਵੈ ਬੰਧਾਨੁ ॥
ਸੋ ਕਿਉ ਮੰਦਾ ਆਖੀਐ ਜਿਤੁ ਜੰਮਹਿ ਰਾਜਾਨ ॥
ਭੰਡਹੁ ਹੀ ਭੰਡੁ ਉਪਜੈ ਭੰਡੈ ਬਾਝੁ ਨ ਕੋਇ ॥
ਨਾਨਕ ਭੰਡੈ ਬਾਹਰਾ ਏਕੋ ਸਚਾ ਸੋਇ ॥

*We are born of woman, we are conceived in the womb of woman.
We make friendship with woman; through woman, future generations are born.
When one woman dies, we take another one, we are bound with the world
through woman.
Why should we talk ill of her? From her, kings are born.
From woman, woman is born; without woman, there would be no one at all.
O Nanak, God alone can exist without a woman.
(Guru Nanak in Asa Di Vaar, pg. 473)*

Guru Nanak and the Gurus who succeeded him actively encouraged the participation of women as equals in worship, in society, and on the battlefield. They encouraged freedom of speech and women were encouraged to participate in any and all religious activities including reading of the Guru Granth Sahib. The practice of sati or widow burning and female infanticide were forbidden and remarriage of widows was encouraged. Remember all of this was going on in the midst of the male dominated Muslim and Hindu societies in India hundreds of years before the feminist movement in the West!

Sadly, Sikh society has not been able to fully overcome old cultural traditions and live up to the ideals of gender equality taught by Guru Nanak. Sex selective abortions driven by a desire for male children are driving down the sex ratio in Punjab. It is encouraging to note that all Sikh religious organizations including the Akal Takhat have spoken up against this practice.

Environmental issues & Global Warming.

Rapid economic growth in the emerging nations and rising standards of living are increasing the deterioration of the environment, and adding to the threat of climate change. While these issues were not of significant concern for society at the time of Guru Nanak and thus were not explicitly addressed by him, it is clear when we look at his life

and teachings that the Sikhi position supports active participation in the environment movement.

Guru Nanak himself was a great lover of nature. In his poetry he loves to talk about the beauty of nature, often seeing in it the reflection of God as the wondrous artist who has painted the marvelous natural scenes on a cosmic canvas.

In Kirtan Sohila, the Sikh bedtime prayer, there is a beautiful verse by Guru Nanak describing his vision of how the whole universe is constantly worshipping the Creator in a majestic colorful ritual with lights and music, using the imagery of the famous Hindu Artee ritual performed during the worship of idols in the temple of Jagannath Puri.

ਗਗਨ ਮੈ ਥਾਲੁ ਰਵਿ ਚੰਦੁ ਦੀਪਕ ਬਨੇ ਤਾਰਿਕਾ ਮੰਡਲ ਜਨਕ ਮੋਤੀ ॥
ਧੂਪੁ ਮਲਆਨਲੋ ਪਵਣੁ ਚਵਰੇ ਕਰੇ ਸਗਲ ਬਨਰਾਇ ਫੁਲੀਤ ਜੋਤੀ ॥੧॥
ਕੈਸੀ ਆਰਤੀ ਹੋਇ ॥ ਭਵ ਖੰਡਨਾ ਤੇਰੀ ਆਰਤੀ ॥

*Upon that cosmic platter of the sky, the sun and the moon are the lamps. The stars and their orbs are the studded pearls. The fragrance of sandalwood in the air is the temple incense, and the wind is the fan. All the plants of the world are the altar flowers in offering to You, O Luminous Lord. || 1 ||
What a beautiful Aartee, lamp-lit worship service this is! O Destroyer of Fear, this is Your Ceremony of Light.
|| (SGGS p. 13)*

Guru Nanak taught that the purpose of human life is to grow achieve a state of union and harmony with God and His creation. An essential component of spiritual growth is learning to live in tune with the divine Hukam. Hukam is a complex term that covers the will of God, as well as His order or laws that govern all of creation. The goal is to live in a state of carefree bliss, in harmony with the earth and all creation.

Guru Nanak's vision is a World Society comprising God-conscious human beings. To these spiritual beings the earth and the universe are sacred; all life is part of a Universal Unity. We are all connected. According to Guru Nanak the reality humans create around themselves is a reflection of their inner state. The current instability of the natural system of the earth - the external environment of human beings - is only a

reflection of the instability and pain within humans. The increasing barrenness of the earth's terrain is a reflection of the emptiness within humans..

Guru Nanak advocated a highly disciplined life with a focus on spiritual progress, while remaining engaged fully in the world around one and upholding one's responsibilities. Inherent in this personal discipline is a simple life style, free of greed, selfishness and possessiveness. The emphasis is on mastery over the self and the discovery of the self, not mastery over nature, external forms, and beings. Sikhism clearly teaches against a life of conspicuous, wasteful consumption. The Guru recommends a judicious utilization of material and cultural resources available to humans.

Sikhism opposes the idea that the struggle of the human race is against nature and that human supremacy lies in the notion of "harnessing" nature. The objective is harmony with the Eternal - God - which implies a life of harmony with all existence.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to share the words that end the Sikh ardaas or community prayer.

Nanak naam chardi kalaa, tayray bhanai sarbat ka bhalaa

These words invoke four principles that will stand us well in today's flat, interconnected world:

1. naam – get in touch with the Universal Divine Spirit in all of us.
2. Chardi kalaa – an attitude of hope and optimism, and a can-do spirit, free from anger or hatred.
3. Tere bhaane – live in harmony with the Divine Order, with nature and with each other

Sarbat ka bhalaa – pray for, and work towards, the common good of all.