

Guru Nanak's Teachings on Building Good Indo-Pak Relations

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Currently, India-Pakistan relations have often been afflicted by cross-border terrorism, ceasefire violations, territorial disputes, etc. Improving bilateral ties is crucial for both countries, as it would mean stabilizing South Asia and improving the economies of both nations. A strong political will to mend the relationship at the current juncture is direly needed. A constructive approach and confidence-building measures between India and Pakistan can be crucial to improving their ties.

About 550 years ago, Guru Nanak preached a special universal message of truthful living, faith, and love [1]. His message was not addressed to a specific ethnic or religious group. It was meant for all humanity. Let us look at Guru Nanak's teachings in building good neighbourly ties between India and Pakistan and see what kind of prescriptions and insights he offers us to face the challenges of contemporary times.



When India's environment was full of conflict between Hinduism and Islam, Guru Nanak proclaimed a beautiful universal message for all people, highlighting equality for all, without any consideration of caste, colour, creed, gender, or race [2]. He asserted that the same One God creates all, whether we call him Ram, Allah, or any other name. Moreover, he emphasized that "See the Divine Light in all." Therefore, people of faith should recognize the Divine Light in everyone.

ਸਸੈ ਸੋਇ ਸ੍ਰਿਸਟਿ ਜਿਨਿ ਸਾਜੀ ਸਭਨਾ ਸਾਹਿਬੁ ਏਕੁ ਭਇਆ ॥

Sasai so^oe sarisat jin sājī sabhⁿā sāhib ek bhāⁱā.

Sassa: He (Divine) who created the world, is the One Lord and Master of all. (M.1, SGGS, p. 432)

ਇਕਨੈ ਭਾਂਡੇ ਸਾਜਿਐ ਇਕੁ ਚਾਨਣੁ ਤਿਹੁ ਲੋਇ ॥

Ikṅai bhāṅde sājiṅai ik ḅhāṅaṅ ṅihu loṅe.

The One God has fashioned all beings (the vessels), and His essence pervades everywhere (the three worlds). (M.1, SGGS, p. 62)

So long as a person holds feelings of hatred or contempt in his heart and fails to see the Divine in others, he will never be able to experience the Divine Presence within himself fully. Therefore, Guru Nanak proclaimed that social ranks based on class, creed, caste, gender, race and religion were meaningless and discrimination, ill-treatment or hatred based on such labels was immoral.



ਜਾਣਹੁ ਜੋਤਿ ਨ ਪੁਛਹੁ ਜਾਤੀ....॥

Jāṅhu joṅ na pūḅḅahu jāṅī āgai jāṅ na he.

Recognize the divine essence within all, and do not consider social class or status;...(M. 1, SGGS, p. 349)

Though the primary focus of Guru Nanak's teachings is spiritual, the path preached by him is a balanced and integrated one that combines spiritual enlightenment with an active, engaged life. Divinely inspired humans can and should be a force for good in society. The God-conscious person overcomes his ego and is not driven by anger or a desire for revenge. He can be a force for the peaceful resolution of conflicts through amity and discussion rather than violence. On the path shown by Guru Nanak, enlightened God-conscious beings would address many of today's global challenges (including Indo- Pak conflicts) by working for global fairness and justice, equality, and freedom for all, and tolerance and peace coexistence [3]. The best way to conflict resolution is through dialogue and debate instead of force.

Of course, this doesn't always work, as there is evil in the world too. Several negative factors drive many people who are in positions of power. Guru Nanak also exemplified that we must be willing to stand up to evil and injustice. A peaceful protest based on principle and a willingness to make personal sacrifices can be a powerful means of political transformation. However, there may be times when all peaceful attempts may not succeed, and force is the only

solution against evil and injustice. Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Nanak, declared that when all other means have failed, it is righteous to draw the sword. It would be cowardly and immoral to submit without a fight in such a situation. Guru Nanak expresses such a view as;

ਜਉ ਤਉ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਖੇਲਣ ਕਾ ਚਾਉ ॥ਸਿਰੁ ਧਰਿ ਤਲੀ ਗਲੀ ਮੇਰੀ ਆਉ ॥ਇਤੁ ਮਾਰਗਿ ਪੈਰੁ ਧਰੀਜੈ ॥ਸਿਰੁ ਦੀਜੈ
ਕਾਣਿ ਨ ਕੀਜੈ ॥

Jaṁo t̄aṁo p̄arem khelaṇ kā chāṁo. Sir d̄har t̄alī galī merī āṁo. It̄ mārag pair d̄harījai. Sir d̄ījai
kāṇ na kījai.

If you want to play this game of love (for God and His creation), you must be ready to make sacrifices while stepping onto this path. Therefore, if you need to sacrifice your life for this cause, do so unhesitatingly. (M.1, SGGS, p. 1412).

It is important to emphasize that Sikh doctrines did not condone violence. The armed struggle is to be used only as a last resort after all attempts at peaceful resolutions have failed. Guru Gobind Singh made this very clear in his composition Zafarnama.

Multicultural societies appear to be the future of humanity. However, we are yet to learn a lot about resolving the differences and conflicts between the different sections of society and nations. Guru Nanak's approach to dealing with conflict, discord, and injustice is three-pronged:

1. Resolve conflict through discussion and debate based on mutual respect and goodwill. God-conscious beings that see the divine light in all can play a significant role in bringing about this kind of resolution.

2. When those in positions of power and authority are driven by their ego and are not amenable to solutions based on mutual respect, peaceful, nonviolent protest is called for. It demands dedication and personal sacrifice.

3. When all attempts for peaceful resolution fail, armed struggle against injustice and tyranny and in defence of liberty is called for.



When everything fails to convert bitter, hostile diplomatic relations between the two archrivals, art, and culture (sharing of virtues) perhaps is the only genre that can do wonders for converting antagonistic relations into friendly and cordial relations. Therefore, to build good neighbourly ties between communities and nations (including India and Pakistan), Guru Nanak encourages us to share our virtues with others for the benefit of others and society.

ਜੇ ਗੁਣ ਹੋਵਨ੍ਹਿ ਸਾਜਨਾ ਮਿਲਿ ਸਾਝ ਕਰੀਜੈ ॥

Je guṇ hovniḥ sājnā mil sājh karījai.

O My friends! If you have virtues, we must share them. (M. 1, SGGS, p. 765)

ਸਾਝ ਕਰੀਜੈ ਗੁਣਹ ਕੇਰੀ ਛੋਡਿ ਅਵਗਣ ਚਲੀਐ ॥

Sājh karījai guṇah kerī chḥod avgaṇ chālīai.

Let us share our virtues; and abandon our faults, to walk on the path (of love of God and His Creation). (M. 1, SGGS, p. 766)

He encourages us to shun wrongdoings and to make wise decisions for a better and prosperous future.

ਮੰਦਾ ਮੁਲਿ ਨ ਕੀਚਈ ਦੇ ਲੰਮੀ ਨਦਰਿ ਨਿਹਾਲੀਐ ॥

Mandā mūl na kīchēi de lammī naḍar nihālīai.

Do not do evil; look ahead to the future with foresight. (M. 1, SGGS, p. 474)

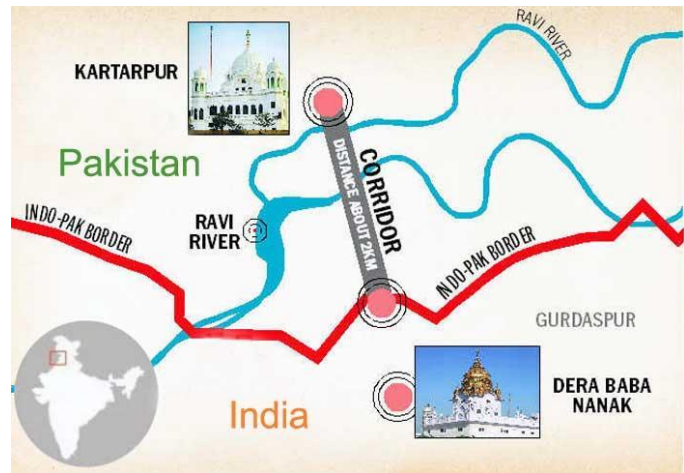
Bhagat Kabir, a saint-poet of Sri Guru Granth Sahib, explicitly articulates that one must never think wrong of one's neighbour (other people) as whatever happens to one's neighbours can happen to oneself too. He states:

ਪਾਰੋਸੀ ਕੇ ਜੇ ਹੁਆ ਤੂ ਅਪਨੇ ਭੀ ਜਾਨੁ ॥

Pārosī ke jo hūā tū apne bhī jān.

Remember that whatever happens to one's neighbours can also happen to oneself. (Bhagat Kabir, SGGS, p. 1373)

Guru Nanak preached that the goal of human life is to grow and attain a state of harmony with God and His creation [4]. 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. It is encouraging to note that the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak has been a pivotal event in the history of Indo-Pakistan ties. The decision to open the Kartarpur Corridor and the visa-free access to followers of Guru Nanak's philosophy to the shrine at Kartarpur in Pakistan's Narowal district, less than 4 km from Dera Baba Nanak, another revered place of Sikhs in Indian Punjab, is a testimony to Baba Nanak's teachings of love, fellowship, and universalism. This development has opened a new era of mutual trust between the two countries and laid a strong foundation for people-to-people dialogue. Guru Nanak always practiced dialogue to remove ignorance, sectarian practices, and irrational divisions in the social structure.



Concluding, I would like to say that improved India-Pakistan relations can ensure addressing any threat the subcontinent may face in the future. Moreover, cooperation and coexistence through trust can establish a peaceful and prosperous South Asia.

References

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