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Ethics and Business: Evidence from Sikh Religion

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Ethics and Business: Evidence from Sikh Religion¹

Abstract

Ethics in business though a seemingly recent subject finds its roots in the ancient writings of Manu, and is even articulated in writings of Adam Smith (1776) and Max Weber (1905). As religions and culture have developed prior to modern business practices, the impact of religion on all aspects of business is expected.

In this context, Sikh religion, relatively unknown and being of recent origin, also has some guidance to provide. Sikhism follows a two pronged approach – on one hand it guides to practice discipline and positive approach in all walks of life and on another explicitly mentions about various aspects of conduct and business practices. In brief, Sikhism encourages enterprise, workforce participation and economic progress. Rather, it redefines the concept of *Maya*, and preaches that not *Maya* but attachment to *Maya* has to be avoided. One of the three pillars of Sikh religion is to work hard and earn an honest living while the other is to share with others the fruit of such labor. As the emphasis is on family life, Sikhism encourages participation in economic and social activities. As Sikh religion does not discriminate between castes, gender or religion, it encourages high work force participation. Role of medicine, charity, and social welfare is considered paramount in Sikh value system. Finally, for a Sikh, human life in itself is a business, with every breath being a business period and the highest priority of life being Truthful Living.

Key words: investment, ethics, business, labor.

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Introduction

In recent years specially after the global crisis of 2008 there has been an awakening that ethics has an important role to play in business practices. This is mainly because of the sub-prime crisis in the US where businesses failed, and along with the US economy rest of the world also suffered. The recovery in the US has not taken place for more than five years now, and the global economy continues to splutter, reflecting the seriousness of the crisis.² In addition, in Europe as well as many other countries there have been numerous cases of scandals and scams in the last few years. To illustrate, the case of Enron and LIBOR, as well as closer home is the case of Satyam, which has raised numerous questions on the ethical practices being followed in business.

The human factor is an important input in any growth process and especially so in a developing economy. The quality of the labor force and business practices are of prime importance for the level of economic activity in the country. In this context, social and cultural factors play a significant role. One of the important socio-cultural factors that can have a significant influence on the development and nature of workforce can be religion (Tawney, 1926; Weber, 1930; Anderson, 1988; Iannaccone, 1998; Landes, 1999; Barro and McCleary, 2003; Noland, 2003). Some of the important issues that have been raised in the socio-economic literature are social mobility, attitude towards literacy, wealth and family life, and the reward system in after-life in terms of heaven and hell.

In this article, an attempt has been made to examine the important issues mentioned above in the context of Sikh religion and their impact on ethics and business. The Sikh religion is one of the most recent religions of the world, which originated during the late fifteenth century and was finally formalized in early eighteenth century. The total population of Sikhs, world-wide, is estimated at around 28 million or about 0.4 percent of the world population in 2011 with their presence in more than 34 countries. In India, Sikhs account for about 2 per cent of the population with more than seventy per cent living in Punjab. The literature on Sikh religion is in Punjabi, a South Asian language. Much of the literature has not been translated into English or in any other

² In the 30's after the great depression a number of studies were undertaken, one of the investigations led to the Glass-Steagall Act after it was found out that the banks were following unethical practices. The Glass-Steagall Act was repealed in 1999 and in about a decade the crisis had erupted in the US.

major languages of the world. To that extent, it is an unknown religion in most parts of the world. Being of recent origin, and having taken about two centuries to crystallize, its founders guided every sphere of modern life, including ethics and business. All behavior, including that in business is guided by three principles – cultivating virtues, honest labor and service to humanity.

The remaining paper is organized as follows. In section 2 a brief review of literature in the context of ethics and business in work place is discussed.³ Section 3 presents the basic philosophy of Sikh Religion as applicable to business environment. Section 4 discusses relevant elements that emerge from Sikh philosophy applicable to ethics and business. Section 5 provides select quotations from Sri Guru Granth Ji (SGGJ), detailing the philosophical guidance on various aspects of ethics in business. Finally, broad conclusions are presented in section 6.

³ For a detailed paper, see Singh (2013a).

Section 2: Review of Literature

The literature on role of ethics in business can be traced to ancient writings of Manu Smruti where it is mentioned that “Dharma protects who protect it and destroys those who try to destroy it.”⁴

Smith (1759) argues that competitive markets can lead to good economic outcomes even when people are acting in their self-interest. The concept of goodness is rather weak in economics which implies that no one can be made better off without making someone else worse off or what is popularly called as Pareto optimum (Singh, 2013). This concept of goodness, defined as such, could lead to increasing inequality in the country which may not be ethical. Again altruism may be beneficial if everyone is altruistic but if only one individual is altruistic and others are not then altruism may not be the best option (Singh, 2013). Similarly, emotions such as desires for vengeance may in some circumstances support co-operative more efficient outcome in the long run while, in general, competitive and self-interested behavior would lead to inefficient outcomes (Friedman and Singh, 2008). Friedman (2008) observes that moral codes are an instance of social norms that complement the working of markets. Social norms provide a way of controlling unchecked greed or other forms of self-interest that would lead to outcomes that are not Pareto efficient.

Weber (1905), in his work on the protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism, emphasized the role of interconnection of religion and market place. Weber emphasized relationship between certain religious teachings and economic behavior. Luther imputed religious meaning to daily life work and imbued with theological importance, on the same level, as that of priestly work (Miller, 2007). Calvin had a broader view of work as a calling for social movement and self-betterment (Goldman, 1990; Cotch, 1993). Hansin (1963), argued that God decides profitability as a means to demonstrate stewardship implying that a person who fulfills a calling does not waste time and resources.

Miller (2007) developed a theoretical model called the integration box (TIB) which argued that men and women increasingly desire to live an integrated life, where faith and work are integrated

⁴ Manu Smruti 8.15.

and not compartmentalized. Historically, economic progress has been through four stages, agrarian, industrial, service and the experience economy (Pine and Gillmore, 1998). The industrial era reflected the bifurcation between religion and workplace because it focused on rational economic activity, atomization, organizational bureaucracy, focus on specialization and division of labour, rule based work environment, ethical competency and impartiality in promotion and evaluation. The result was workers were expected to check their brain at the door - managers were responsible for the thinking required in the work place (Ashforth and Pratt, 2010). There is a demonstrable and growing body of evidence which clearly demonstrates that when people are permitted to bring their “whole self” to market place the output improves; and religion and spirituality are considered by many to be a component of “whole self”. Empirical studies show that such ‘whole-self’ employees lead to higher loyalty, lower absenteeism and greater activity (Mitroff and Denton, 1999; Lambert, 2009; Grossman, 2008). Neck and Milliman (1994), argued that spirituality positively affects employee and organizational performance by enhancing intuitive abilities in individual capacity for innovation, personal growth, employee commitment and responsibility.

Among the many challenges in the business world, workers face long hours of work and eventually burn-out (Fry and Cohen, 2009). The ‘occupy wall street’ and other anti-business movements demonstrate that there is a problem with the management paradigm (Mahadevan, 2013). Marqus (2011), reported that a growing number of dissatisfied employees felt that they were not aware of the meaning of life in their work place. Corporations base their hiring practices on short term revenue basis while aspects like ethical decision making, emotional intelligence and visionary development are sidelined. Sandel (2009), argues about what is the right thing to do in the context of different situations that emerge in daily life. Illustratively, after the hurricane Florida in the US when a \$2 bag of ice was sold for \$10 and small house-hold generators of \$250 value were sold at \$2000.

Implication of ethics in business

In the literature on ethics in business, various factors have been discussed. These can be broadly summarized as follows:

- a) Ethics and job – honesty, fairness, obedience to the law, compassion, respect for others, loyalty, dependability, courage, helpfulness, self-control, and truthfulness.
- b) Interaction with employees – selecting new employees, avoiding merit increases, setting goals and performance standards, evaluating performances, disciplining, promotion, termination, communication, delegation, training, safe work environment, and development opportunities.
- c) Interaction with the boss – goal setting, following orders, supporting management decisions; solving problems, and administering policies.
- d) Peer transactions – sharing facilities, equipments, sharing deadlines, peer review, identifying mutual objectives, solving mutual problems, and maintaining discipline.

There could be qualitative considerations which could be helpful in thinking of ethics and business. These can be summarized as follows

- a) Attitude – values, code of conduct, consideration of needs, feedback mechanism, reporting and training.
- b) Ethical fitness – moral awareness, values definition, ethical analysis (justice versus mercy, truth versus loyalty, short term versus long term and individual versus community) and dilemma resolutions.
- c) Principles – ends based, rule based, and care-based.
- d) Leadership – purpose and values, achieving universality in diversity, identifying key relationships, defining success, measuring and rewarding performance, and communication.
- e) Individuals – trust, respect, responsibility, fairness, and innovation.

Section 3: Basic Sikh Philosophy and Ethics in Business

The Sikh religion strongly believes that the universe is real but not eternal; everything that is visible has a lifespan. Additionally, Sikh philosophy believes that everything operates in the universe under principles set by God.⁵ The human mind has the potential to understand the principles set by God. The most basic and simplest principle is “As you sow so shall you reap.”⁶ This belief implies that everyone makes his/her own fate and cannot blame anyone else for their condition.⁷

In terms of the philosophy of the Sikh religion, the gift of life in a human body is considered unique and precious.⁸ The human mind has the unique potential to feel God through the soul.⁹ It is also precious because the human life is not often made available. Therefore, this opportunity has to be carefully utilized.¹⁰

Sikh philosophy recognizes that human beings have simple basic needs—the need to live, the need to love, the need to learn, and the need to leave a legacy. Sikhs endeavor to spend life in pursuit of these needs through good deeds and actions.¹¹ But, humans have the tendency to digress and simply follow the dictates of the body or the misperceptions of the mind. In this situation, life is dominated by “the five thieves that rob the unique opportunity” known in the Sikh religion as ego, attachment, greed, lust and anger. They disturb peace of mind and harm the body and one should be able to harness them.¹² For this reason, Sikhs do not renounce the world but continue to live with a positive and serviceful attitude.

As heaven and hell are defined differently, one has to carefully tread life. Heaven is an experience of equipoise or *sahaj* (ineffable bliss), while hell is characterized as the absence of

⁵ “All are within the ambit of Hukam, there is nothing outside it” (SGGJ, p. 1)

⁶ This rule has been stressed repeatedly. The soul knows that as one sows, so will one reap (SGGJ, p. 1243)

⁷ “Blame not anyone else, one consumes what one earns” (SGGJ, p. 888).

⁸ Of all the living species, God gave superiority to the human being (SGGJ, p. 1075). All the other species are the water-bearers of the human beings; humans have hegemony over this earth (SGGJ, p. 374).

⁹ Human body is compared as a mare/vehicle to reach God (SGGJ, p. 576).

¹⁰ Having obtained the human body, this is an opportunity to realize God (SGGJ, p. 378).

¹¹ “Listen, Listen to my advice, O my mind. Only good deeds shall endure and there may not be another chance” (SGGJ, p. 154)

¹² The mind is wild and ignorant under the influence of ego, is born from the five elements, and if it submits itself to the all-pervading God, it becomes equipoise, after conquering the five weaknesses of the flesh (SGGJ, p. 415).

sahaj or separation from God; hence these are conditions of the mind. A balanced practice of self-restraint and a consistent pursuit of unending bliss is the recommended path for a Sikh.

Sikh philosophy does not believe that the *Maya* or acquisition of property or wealth is evil, but the mental attachment to material wealth or *maya* is to be avoided.¹³ In the Sikh religion a very unique definition of *maya* has been given – it is simply any thing that makes the mind forget God, due to attachment and duality.¹⁴ The Sikh Gurus themselves led a householder's life, and that at certain times was very royal.

As Sikhs believe that all things are created and inhabited by God, there is no scope for exploitation, cheating, or falsehood in the Sikh way of life.¹⁵ Additionally there are no superstitions as to what are favorable hours, days, months or years within the religion. Social service, charity, and sharing with others in the name of God, without any discrimination about religion, cast, creed, or gender is another important idea within Sikh philosophy. Sikhs therefore, explicitly seek the well-being of all, all the time and specifically after their daily formal prayers.¹⁶ The practice of living on charity and begging, even in the guise of religion, is strictly prohibited in the Sikh religion. Instead, Sikhs are expected to earn their living by labor, out of which they must offer something to the needy.¹⁷

A Sikh's daily life keeps both the short-term and the long-term goal in view. This approach recognizes that our short-term day-to-day choices and endeavors in fact produce our long-term. In the short-term, Sikhs are expected to meditate, work hard to earn an honest living, and to then share their wealth with others. Throughout this daily practice, Sikhs are also expected to happily conduct daily life while cultivating the following virtuous attitudes/actions: forgiveness,

¹³ *Maya* represents delusion and non-reality in one sense and wealth, property, family and similar other possessions.

¹⁴ SGGJ Third Guru, p. 921.

¹⁵ In every particle of creation, God resides (SGGJ, p. 1427). From one source has all the creation been created, so who can be called noble or inferior (SGGJ, p. 1349). The sense of high and low and of caste and color are illusions (SGGJ, p. 1243). All creatures are noble, none are low – one maker has fashioned all of them (First Guru, p. 62).

¹⁶ The words '*sarbat da bhalla*' imply "well-being of all" and are uttered after every formal prayer – individual or collective.

¹⁷ Only that individual knows the true way who earns with the sweat of the brow and then shares it with others. Those who go dressed like religious people begging or living on charity for their livelihood do not know the true way (SGGJ, p. 1245). Sikh religion frowns on begging – p.26, Bauer, P.T. (1965) and begging is unknown amongst the Sikhs - p.102, Ray, N. (1967).

tolerance, patience, restraint, cleanliness, contentment, and sympathy.¹⁸ A Sikh is also encouraged to be rational and take all decisions only after intellectually analyzing the situation.¹⁹

¹⁸ Participate actively in your daily life while dealing with people; however cultivate virtues (SGGJ, p. 6 and p.8).

¹⁹ SGGJ, p. 8. By wisdom is God worshipped (SGGJ, p.1245).

Section – 4: Elements in Sikh Philosophy that Contribute to Ethics in Business

A Sikh is expected to work hard, yet stay absorbed in God.²⁰ A Sikh is expected to sleep adequately to fulfill the needs of the body, to meditate regularly, and to then, devote the rest of the time in earning a livelihood and building happiness within the family, immediate community and wider society. A major emphasis within Sikhism is on truthful living, and sincere attitude in all interactions and dealings.²¹

Literacy: Sikhism encourages every individual to be literate, without discrimination of caste, creed or religion. The language used in SGGJ therefore is accessible and is mainly written in simple languages of Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, Persian and Marathi. The divine message of SGGJ is conveyed in daily-spoken words and metaphors for the benefit of all of humanity.²²

Family life: Sikhism encourages family life and living on earned income. All the Sikh Gurus, who were in the marriageable age, as also most of the others whose compositions are included in SGGJ, were married and had children.²³ Similarly, most of Sikh Gurus worked in different professions.²⁴ For an honorable and respectful family life, some living standards are to be maintained and Sikh philosophy encourages a spacious house, healthy food and a comfortable transport for every household. A Sikh is expected not only be able to maintain comfortable family standards but also willingly be able to provide food and shelter to the guests and the needy.

In the times of Guru Nanak, female infanticide was not uncommon in India and birth of a male child was considered a religious necessity. The Sikh gurus prohibited female infanticide and encouraged a healthy family; a male child was not considered a must.

Democratic Institutions: In Sikh religion, democratic institutions and tradition are encouraged to provide equal rights to all individuals and participation in decision making. A Sikh is expected to lead by example, to practice before preaching or expecting others to follow – a worker or a

²⁰ The individual is advised to work with his hands and to firmly keep God in the heart.

²¹ Realization of Truth is above all else, but higher still is truthful living (SGGJ, p. 62).

²² Singh P. (1999).

²³ Householder's life is accepted and not considered a hindrance in spiritual advancement (SGGJ, p.385 and 496).

²⁴ Once having perfected true living, liberation can be attained in laughter, playfulness, enjoyment of wear and good food (SGGJ, p. 522).

manager.²⁵ It encourages diverse views, debate on the issues, and then seeks a common ideology, a consensus and dedicated implementation. An incidence of failure is not be dwelt upon, except for drawing lessons for future corrections, and one is expected to think positively and proceed ahead with optimism.²⁶ But accountability and responsibility has to be fixed for any mistake, with the objective that it is corrected and not repeated. Corrective action and not punishment has to be the rule.

Healthy Living: A Sikh is expected to lead a healthy life - sleep, eat and dress adequately, exercise regularly and maintain a good physical body, as in it resides the mind and the soul – the component of God, which he/she yearns to discover.²⁷ A Sikh is expected to cultivate austerity, contentment, simplicity, modesty and to avoid conspicuous consumption.²⁸ The body is expected to be the temple of God, therefore, should be kept healthy.²⁹

In Sikh philosophy, for healthy living, restrain on consumption by both mind and body is necessary, as both are affected by what is consumed.³⁰ In terms of consumption by body, explicitly, some food items are prohibited - use of alcohol, betel leaf, tobacco and other intoxicants.³¹ Similarly, some restrain on consumption by the mind is also prescribed - ears, eyes and tongue are advised to be filters for healthy mind and body.³² This is expected to minimize the scope of physical and mental illness, and thereby reduce medical absenteeism – conversely enhance productivity.

In pursuit of good health, if necessary, immediate resort to medical services is encouraged. The most rare and important Ayurvedic medicines were made available to the sick and needy from the medical store of the sixth Sikh Guru. The tenth Guru, encouraged the Sikhs to provide

²⁵ When the belief and actions are different, then false is the commerce, false is the capital and harmful is the sustenance derived (SGGJ, p. 471).

²⁶ Whatever had to happen has already happened, consider it as Gods order (SGGJ, p. 286). Look ahead and not backwards (SGGJ, p. 1097).

²⁷ Take care of the body; God resides in it (SGGJ, p. 554). Sleep and eat as much is required (SGGJ, p. 467).

²⁸ Work hard, be content and be humble (SGGJ, p. 595).

²⁹ SGGJ, p. 6.

³⁰ Such consumption should be avoided that pains the body and gives rise to unholy thoughts in the mind (SGGJ, p. 16).

³¹ Are prohibited as they make an individual senseless and devoid of reason (SGGJ, p. 554).

³² The ears, eyes and tongue are expected to perceive truth and God in all things (SGGJ, p. 921-22).

medical assistance to all the wounded in the battle field itself, without any discrimination of religion and irrespective of their allegiance.

Increased Workforce: In Sikh religion there is no discrimination based on caste, color or creed,³³ which implies that anyone can work in any area, given the need and specialization. It believes in pursuing an occupation in which one is adept and can establish competence, and believes in equal opportunities to all in terms of employment. Women are considered an important component of work force. In Sikhism, a woman has been given equal status as that of man in all spheres of life.³⁴ The Sikh Gurus condemned the notion of inferiority of women and respected women for she gave life to all humans (Fowler, 1997). Sikh Gurus did not approve of any inferior treatment to one-half of the humanity and observed that women had become very meek and submissive.³⁵

Sikhism does not believe in renunciation of householder's life and, therefore, each individual has to work hard for a dignified living. All labor is dignified, and no work is inferior or superior - to earn a living by hard work is the guiding principle. The Sikh religion prohibits earnings by gambling, racketeering, cheating or other unfair means. The Sikh Gurus themselves led a professional life – farmer, shop-keeper and trader. The economic profession of the saints, whose compositions are included in SGGJ and who are also considered to be role-models for the Sikhs, varied from that of a cobbler, sculptor, weaver, shop-keeper, trader, governor of a province, king, to a saint-teacher. Some of the Sikhs, during the period of the Guru's, were famous traders, some international, and owned fleets of ships. The labor, preacher, teacher and other professionals were advised to aim for perfection in their respective areas.³⁶

Encourages Investment: Sikh philosophy encourages investment, especially capital. Accumulation of wealth and idle savings beyond what is adequate to meet immediate or planned consumption, is discouraged. Further, it encourages employment generation and self-

³³ Caste and honor are determined by deeds (SGGJ, p. 1330). There is no caste or clan in the womb and all creation is from the Divine seed (SGGJ, p. 324).

³⁴ Why call them bad, from whom the kings take birth and from whom none can abstain (SGGJ, p.473).

³⁵ Women have become too meek and submissive in the modern times (SGGJ, p.1243).

³⁶ There are numerous instances in Sikh history, where the trade has been specialized – horses from Kabul, and woolens from Kashmir for the Sikh community. In the construction of the cities by the Gurus, same principle was followed – the best artisans and professionals would be encouraged to participate in the activity.

employment, irrespective of trade or industry.³⁷ The guiding principle has to be sincerity and sharing with others the fruit of hard work. The Sikh thought explicitly mentions that excessive profit margins and exploitation of monopoly power or that of labor is prohibited – God has to be witnessed in each human being.³⁸ The Sikh has been explicitly advised not to practice falsehood and hoard wealth but to have a long term vision and build a reputation of a truthful merchant.³⁹ In all economic dealings, an individual is expected to avoid anxiety and cultivate the virtue of detachment.⁴⁰

The kings/rulers/administrators were advised to be kind and just to their subjects. In years of drought and famines, Sikh Gurus would request the rulers to forgo or ease the terms of tax compliance. They insisted that tax laws should be uniform and not discriminatory on the basis of religion of the population.⁴¹ Similarly, imposition of death duty was criticized.

The Sikh Gurus encouraged proper accounting standards to be maintained. Anecdotally, during the time of the Guru's, the budget was made annually. The Sikhs would be advised in advance of the needs of the community and accordingly asked to make the contributions in kind or in cash. The budget constraint would be observed and expenditure would be adjusted accordingly to match the receipts.

The Sikh Gurus emphasized the institution of charity, without discrimination, for social welfare.⁴² They would organize relief operations consisting of food and medicine whenever drought or famine would occur. The Gurus themselves would help the needy farmers by sinking wells and building tanks for providing water for drinking and for irrigation purposes, wherever they would travel.

³⁷ A Sikh is prodded to work. He is encouraged to get absorbed in self-employment (SGGJ, p. 474).

³⁸ By exploiting others, the mind becomes sick (SGGJ, p. 140). To grab what belongs to another is bad (SGGJ, p. 141).

³⁹ SGGJ, p.418.

⁴⁰ Every individual who is born has to perish, be it the king or a wealthy man (SGGJ, p. 141). The landowners also have to leave one day (SGGJ, p. 188).

⁴¹ Pilgrimage tax was imposed by the Mogul kings on non-Muslim population.

⁴² The highest state of spiritual bliss is possible while engaging in truth, self-discipline and noble endeavors, amidst life's activity (p.26). The god-enlightened people always help the needy and are benevolent (SGGJ, p. 273). Learning induces in mind, service of mankind (SGGJ, p. 356).

The concept of sharing is not only restricted to fellow humans, but also has to be extended to animals and plants in the immediate surroundings – God is all-prevailing and lives in the creation.⁴³ The ecological balance and the concerns for environment were practiced by all the Gurus during their human life-time.

⁴³ The world is the chamber and abode of the holy Lord (SGGJ, p. 463).

Section 5: Select Quotations from Sikh Guru related to Ethics in Business

In this section, the evidence is based on compositions contained in Sri Guru Granth Ji (SGGJ) which had been collected during the life time of the Sikh Gurus, spanning between 1469 and 1708 AD.

The quotations are presented in the following order –

- a) General - which are the guiding principles, impacting attitude towards ethics
- b) Environment – need to respect environment
- c) Attitude towards work, trade and business
- d) Individual – general guidance
- e) Management – guidance on conducting regular activities
- f) Attitude of an Employee
- g) Behavior with peers
- h) Other issues related to ethics in business

General

Objective of Human Life

In Sikh religion, the objective of human life is to attain spiritual merger in Paramatma –

Bhaee Parapat Manukh Deyharea Gobind Milan Ki Eh Teyri Bareea.

You are blessed with human body. This is time for you to merge in God. (SGGJ, p. 378)

The Best Religion

To meditate and purify one's action is the best religion according to Sikhism -

Sarab Dharam Meh Sarayset Dharam. Har Ko Naam Jap Nirmal Karam.

Of all the religions, the best one is to remember God, and be Pure in action. (SGGJ, p. 266)

Truthful Living

Guru aims to make a seeker bloom spiritually, serene mentally and perfect morally. Life has to be based on righteous conduct and truthful living. To attain purity in life, first and foremost requirement, is truthful living.

Sachahu Orai Sabh Ko Upar Sach Aachaar

Truth is higher than everything; but higher still is truthful living (SGGJ, p. 62)

Sachai Marg Chaldeha Ustat Karay Jahaan.

Going on the true path, earns praise from all. (SGGJ, p.136)

Udham Karendaya Jio Toon Kamavdeya Sukh Bhunch, Dhinandheya Toon Prabhu Mil Nanak Utri Chint

Make effort and you shall live and enjoy the fruits of earnings, meditating meet God and Oh Nanak, your anxiety will vanish. (SGGJ, p.522)

Equality for Women

Women have played a glorious part in human history and have proven themselves as equal in service, devotion, sacrifice and bravery, many a times. According to Guru Nanak –

So Kio Manda Aakhea Jit Jameh Rajaan.

Why should she be called bad, she gives birth to kings. (SGGJ, p.473)

Conduct

The emphasis is on soft speech and pious intentions.

Mith Bolaada Je Har Sajjan Soami Mora Honh Sambhal Takhee Ji O Kadhe Na Bole Kodha.

Sweet spoken is my noble-hearted master - never within my recall has Master uttered a harsh word. (SGGJ, p. 784)

Nar c

hahat kach h aor aurai ki aurai bh ai hit vat rahio t h

Man wishes for something, but something different happens. Plotting to deceive others, O Nanak, instead finds noose around own neck. (SGGJ, p. 1428)

Look Ahead

Aaghaa Koo Thraag Pishaa Faer Na Muhaddarra, Nanak Sijh Eivah Vaar Bahur Na Hovi Janamadaha

Look ahead and don't turn backwards. Oh Nanak, be successful this time, not to be born again. (SGGJ, p.1096)

Alert and Ready

Kabir Kaal Karanta Abeh Kar Ab Karta Sohe Taal.

Kabir, that which you have to do tomorrow, do it today itself, rather do it immediately. (SGGJ, p. 1371)

Accountability

This is an essential ingredient, if ethics have to be practiced. Any violation of the practices must be punished and adherences rewarded.

Jaisa Bijeh Soh Lunay Karama Sandhara Khet

As you sow, so shall you reap, this farm depends on deeds. (SGGJ, p. 134)

Dadaa Dos Na Deoo Kisai Dos Karamaa Apnea; Jo Mai Keeaa So Mai Paiaa Dos Na Deejai Avar Janaa.

Don't blame others, it is your own deeds, As I sowed so I reaped, do not blame others. (SGGJ, p. 433)

Justice versus mercy

Pura niao kare kar ~~ta~~

The Creator administers complete justice. (SGGJ, p. 199)

Jaikar Kio D

harmia Ka Papi Ko Dand D_ioi

God honors the righteous and punishes the sinners. (SGGJ, p. 624)

Individual versus Community

Vic

h D_iunia Sev Kamaiai Ta D_iargeh Baisan Paiai

Serve in this world, and you shall be given a place of honor in Lord's presence. (SGGJ, p. 26).

Short-term versus long-term

Dekh Lambhi Nadar Nilhalyah

Plan long term (SGGJ, p. 474)

Stay Focussed

Fareeda Jini Kami Naahi Gun Te Kamrre Visaar; Mat Sarmina Theevae Saain De Darbar.

Hey Fareed, forget those activities which are not useful. Then you will not be ashamed in God's court. (SGGJ, p. 1381)

Concern for Environment

Guru Granth Sahib Ji mentions that though natural resources like water, earth, and air are free, they are precious and therefore, should be used wisely. In Gurbani, water is categorized as the father, earth the mother and air the guru.

Pavan Guroo Paanee Pitaa Maataa Dharat Mahat.

Air is Guru, Water is father, and vast earth is mother. (SGGJ, p. 8)

Saachay Tay Pavnaa Bhaia Pavnai Tay Jal Hoy.

The air is from the True, and from air comes water. (SGGJ, p. 19)

Attitude towards Work, Trade, Business

An active advice to Sikhs is to meditate in heart and work with both hands and feet. As the emphasis is on house-holders life, Sikhism encourages active participation in economic and social activities without exploiting others, including natural resources.

Don't be scared of Maya

Sikhism encourages enterprise, workforce participation and economic progress. Rather, it redefines the concept of Maya – and preaches that not Maya but attachment to Maya has to be avoided.

Eh Maya Jit Har Visray Moh Upjay Bhau Dooja Laya

This maya is any thing that makes one forget God due to attachment and duality, (SGGJ, p. 921).

General principles to be followed in Trade and Business

Sabh Ko Vanaj Karay Vapara

Everyone is in business and undertakes trade. (SGGJ, p. 1064)

Vanj Karo Vanjareo Vakhar Leho Sambhal

Traders undertake trade and carefully meditate too. (SGGJ, p. 22-23.)

Laida Bad Duaae Too Maya Karay Ikat

Oh, why do you gather bad feelings from others just for accumulating wealth. (SGGJ, p. 42)

Richness, Wealth and Success is not Bad

Tin Kaa Khaadhaa Paidhaa Maaya Sabh Pavit Hai Jo Naam Har Raatay

The food, clothes and worldly possessions of those who are attuned to God are sacred.

*Tin Kay Ghar Mandar Mahal Sareh Sabh Pavit Heh Jinee Gurmukh Sayvak Sikh Abhiagat
Jaay Varsatay*

At the homes, temples, palaces and rest stops are sacred, where the gurmukhs, the selfless servants, the Sikhs, the holy ones, go to rest.

Tin Kay Turay Jeen Khurgeer Sabh Pavit Heh Jinee Gurmukh Sikh Saadh Sant Charh Jaatay

All the horses, saddles and horse blankets are sacred, upon which the Gurmukhs, the Sikhs, the holy ones, mount and ride.

Tin Kay Karam Dharam Kaaraj Sabh Pavit Heh Jo Boleh Har Har Raam Naam Har Saatay

All the deeds and moral actions are sacred, for those who utter the True Divine Name.

Jin Kai Potai Punn Hai Say Gurmukh Sikh Guru Peh Jaatay.

Those Gurmukh Sikhs, who have purity as their treasure, go to their Guru. (SGGJ, p. 648)

Individual

Work, Charity and Humility

Ghaal Khaay Kichh Hathu Dey Nanak Raah Pachhaneh Say

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

Jay Lorheh Changa Aapnaa Kar Punnhu Neech Sadaea

If you yearn for goodness, then perform good deeds and feel humble. (SGGJ, p. 465)

Is Bhaykhay Thavho Girho Bhala Jithho Ko Varsay

Instead of wearing these beggar's robes, it is better to be a householder, and give to others. (SGGJ, p. 587)

Trust

Manmukha No Ko Na Vishee Chuk Gaiya Vaysas

No one places any reliance in the self-willed; trust in them is lost. (SGGJ, p. 643)

Greed/ Unfettered Profits

Lobhee Kaa Vaysaaho Na Keejai Jay Kaa Paar Vasaay Ant Kaal Tithai Dhuhai Jithai Hath Na Paay

Do not trust greedy people, if you can avoid doing so. At the very last moment, they will deceive you there, where no one will be able to lend a helping hand. (SGGJ, p. 1417)

Paapa Baajhahu Hovai Naahi Muiaa Saath Na Jaaee

Wealth does not come without wrong methods and does not accompany you on death. (SGGJ, p. 417)

Constant Meditation and Introspection to Release tension

Saas Saas Simru Gobind. Mann Antar Ki Utray Chind

Remember God by every breath. And your mind will be relieved of tension. (SGGJ, p. 295)

Haath Paavn Se Kaam Kar Cheet Niranjan Naal.

Work with your hands and feet while in your heart meditate on God (SGGJ, p. 1375)

Bandey Khoj Dil Har Roj Na Fir Paraysani Mahey. Ih Jo Dunea Sihar Meyla Dastgiri Nahey.

Oh man, search your mind every day, then you will not be in trouble. This world is simply like a magic play, this will not help. (SGGJ, p. 727)

Attitude towards Corruption and bribe

Haak Paryaha Nanaka Uas Suar Uas Ghaye. Gur Peer Hama Tah Bhare Ja Murdhar Na Khaye

Saith Nanak, to grab what is another's is evil. As pig's flesh is to them and cow's flesh is to them. Spiritual Guide will stand by only when carcasses are not eaten. (SGGJ, p. 141.)

Nis Din Maaiaa Kaarne Praani Dolat Neet. Kotan Mah Nanak Koho Naarain Jeh Cheet.

Every day, just because of money, human waivers regularly. In million, Oh Nanak, there is a rare one who has God in the heart. (SGGJ, p. 1427)

Je Mohaka Ghar Muhai Ghar Muhi Pitri De, Agay Vaast Sinjahaniay Pitri Chor Karey

Giving money earned by unfair means in charity is negative. (SGGJ, p. 472)

Steadfast in Approach

Ati Piaara Paway Khooh Kih Sanjam Karna; Gurmukh Hoe So Kare Veechaar Os Alipto Rahna

If a friend jumps in a well, you should practice restrain. Guru's followers should think and stay indifferent. (SGGJ, p. 953)

This implies that an individual should not follow a wrong example.

Setting Standards

Prathme Man Parbodhai Aapne Paachhai Avar Reejhaavai.

First, control your mind only then go to preach others. (SGGJ, p. 381)

Avar Updesay Aap Na Karai; Aavat Jaavat Janmai Marai.

Preaching others but not practicing: will continue to come and go, born and die. (SGGJ, p. 269)

Management / Firm/ Industry

No exploitation of Labor

Je Rat Lagey Kapre Jaama Hoe Paleet, Jo Rat Peevay Maansa Tinkio Nirmal Cheet.

If blood touches the clothes, it becomes unclean. One who drink blood of others, why their minds will be clean? (SGGJ, p. 140)

No Discrimination – Increased workforce

Sabhay Saajheevaal Sadaain Toon Kisai Na Diseh Baahraa Jeeo.

All are known partners; you are not seen Outside of anyone O! lovable. (SGGJ, page 97).

Naa Ko Bairee Nahe Bigana Sagal Sung Ham Ko Ban Aae.

Neither there is a foe, nor an alien, we are friendly with everyone. (SGGJ, p.1288)

Aval Alah Noor Upaia Kudrat Kay Sabh Bandy. Aik Noor Tay Sabh Jag Upjia Kaun Bhalay Ko Manday.

First God created light, all creation is product of nature. The whole world is product of the same light, who can be good or bad? (SGGJ, p. 1349)

Naa Ko Doot Nahee Bairaaee Gal Mil Chaalay Aikai Bhaaee

I have no enemies, no adversaries. I walk arm in arm, like brothers, with all. (SGGJ, p. 887)

Resolution of crisis

In Sikhism, resolution of any crisis is care-based and once forgiveness is sought, normal relations should resume. Forgiveness is considered divine.

Sut Apradh Karat Hain Jetay, Janni Cheet Na Avas Thethe.

Son commits many mistakes, Mother does not remember any. (SGGJ, p. 478.)

Dhaul Dharam Daya ka Pooth, Santokh Thaaap Rakheay Jeen Sooth

Superstructure of Religion is son of compassion, contentment binds the whole thing. (SGGJ, p. 4)

Attitude towards Employees

Gareeba Upar Je Khinjai Daarri; Paarbrahm Sa Agan May Saarri

Getting annoyed with weak and poor people. God will burn them in fire. (SGGJ, p. 199)

Training of employees.

Any organization must take steps to train the employees to hone their skills to perfection. The example given is that of *paras*, a touch stone that can convert anything that it touches to gold. The Guru says that training should be such that one *paras* should be able to touch and produce another *paras*.

Paras Parsiai Paras Hovai Sach Rahai Liv Lae

Touching the philosopher's stone, one becomes the philosopher's stone, remain lovingly attached to the True Lord. (SGGJ, p. 649)

Gur Paras Miliai Kanc ~~hantot~~ot Apar.

But meeting with the Guru, the Philosopher's Stone, I am transformed into gold; I am blended with the Pure Light of the Infinite Lord. (SGGJ, p. 427)

Attitude of an Employee

Chaakar Lage Chaakri Naale Gaarab Vaad. ----- Chaakar Lagai Chhakri Je Chalai Khasmai Bhaae

An employee should work as desired by the employer and not show ego or indulge in argument. (SGGJ, p. 474)

Behaviour with Peers

Encourages Communication

Jab Lag Duneea Raheea Nanak Kichh Suneea Kichh Kaheea.

Till the time we live in this world, Oh Nanak: let us listen something, say Something. (SGGJ, p. 661)

Sarbat Da Bhalla

Sikhism seeks welfare of entire humanity in its daily prayer.

Sabh Ko Meet Ham Aapan Keenaa Ham Sabhnaa Kay Saajan.

I have made everyone my dear friend, and I am everyone's friend. (SGGJ, p. 671)

Cooperation is Useful

Khave Kharche Raal Mil Bhai, Toat Na Ave Vaddho Jae.

Brother, consume and spend together, Decrease it shall not, ever increase. (SGGJ, p.186.)

Other Related Quotations

Egalitarianism

Jaatee Day Kia Hath Sach Parkhiay

What good is social class and status? Truthfulness is measured within. (SGGJ, p. 142)

Garabh Vaas Meh Kul Nahee Jaatee Barahm Bind Tay Sabh Utpaatee

In the dwelling of the womb, there is no ancestry or social status. All have originated from the Seed of God. (SGGJ, p. 324)

Shared Humanity

Khimaa Gahee Barat Seel Santokhan

To practice forgiveness is the true fast, good conduct and contentment. (SGGJ, p. 223)

Sewa Karat Hoay Nihkaami Tis Kao Haut Parapat Suamee

One who performs selfless service, without thought of reward, shall attain Master. (SGGJ, p. 286)

When to develop ethics?

In Sikh religion, it is believed that it is the mother that plays an important role in developing ethics in a family.

Jin Har Hriday Naam Na Vasioh Teen Maat Kijhe Har Bhanja.

In those hearts where God has not been realized, their mothers should have been barren. (SGGJ, p.697)

Mat Mata Mat Jio Nam Mukh Rama

Make that teaching your mother that it may teach you to keep the Lord's Name in your mouth.
(SGGJ, p. 172)

*Mat Mata Santok h *Pit* Sahj Samaho*

Wisdom is mother, and contentment is father; be absorbed in equipoise. (SGGJ, p. 1397)

Section 6: Conclusions:

In the last few years the role of ethics in work environment has gained importance. In Sikh religion the emphasis is on family life, active participation in social and cultural life and on honest earning. In terms of work force by providing equal opportunities to all, including women and insisting on no discrimination on the basis of caste, culture, religion or color, Sikh religion ensures an upward sloping curve of labour. The emphasis is on education, rational thinking, long term planning, modest consumption, high investment, self-employment, employment generation and regular contribution to charity.

Of the three main pillars of Sikh religion which are meditation, honest earning and sharing with others, two are directly related to ethics in business while the third influences the thinking of the worker leading to cultivation of virtues. As is empirically verified, people who regularly practice meditation, generally perform better, are more disciplined and don't resort to absenteeism.

In view of the religious teaching that all human race comes from one single God, therefore, universal brotherhood is strongly recommended and practiced. This leads to harmonious relationships at work place as well as in social life. The philosophy that human birth is a transitory phase in the long journey of the soul ensures that Sikhs plan with a longer horizon and are not intimidated by the immediate work culture. This ensures that Sikhs are detached from the immediate pressures of work and are able to speak the truth to their bosses as well as their peers.

This implies that Sikh workers are expected to work without fear and malice for the progress of their enterprise.

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