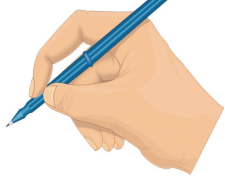


Editorial



CASTES IN SIKHISM

India is relenting under the pressure of astecism, fundamentalism and, communalism, apart from terrorism. Our political parties in place of finding solution of these vices, are further fueling them for their vote banks. Punjab, once one of the richest state of India was also not spared from such problems. Gurbani is the only answer for such problems.

Recently a Hindi movie 'Udta Punjab' tried to defame Punjab in general and Sikh community in particular, much beyond its realities. It is true that Punjab being a border state, some of its youths are involved in one or other type of drug addiction. Punjabi's have already been defamed as being Liquor addict. There was a time when Punjabi youth was leading in games and have produced Olampian like Milkha Singh. But now other states are leading, particularly Haryana. Punjab government ruled by Akali party itself is hand in gloves with smugglers who smuggle narcotics from across the border. Punjab is the land of Sikh Gurus but it is going away from the teachings of Ten Gurus. Recently an issue of drunkard MP from Punjab was reported in national electronic media and Government had to start enquiry against his conduct.

It is known that men of upright conduct do not resort to any drugs. Gurubani prohibits Sikhs to indulge in any type of intoxicants. Drugs and intoxicants cause all sorts of maladies in life. In this context Gurubani gives explicit advice, on page 554 of SGGs:

SHALOK, THIRD MEHL: One person brings a full bottle, and another comes to fill his cup. Drinking it, his intelligence departs, and madness enters his mind. He cannot distinguish between his own and others' — he is struck down by his Lord and Master. Drinking it, he forgets his Lord and Master, and he is punished in the Court of the Lord. Don't drink the false wine at all, if it is in your power.

Keeping in mind the demerits of drug addiction hinted above by Guru Amar Das ji, an addict should desist from this vice which ultimately engulfs him and he withers in pain day and night and the noose of death gets its grip tightened him every moment.

Sikh Gurus have always guided their desciples to abstain from all vices apart from intoxicants. Right from the incept of Sikhism, the Sikh Gurus have emphasised the concept of the equality of mankind in the sacred verses found in the Sikh holy scripture, Sri Guru Granth Sahib. Guru Nanak says in Japji Sahib: "Accept all humans as your equals, and let them be your only sect" (Japji 28), and Guru Gobind Singh tell the world: "manas ki jat sabhe eke paihcanbo - recognise all of mankind as a single caste of humanity". But we have to search our inner self, are we following these teachings? Is there no discrimination on the name of castes? Still

we distinguish Sikhs as Ramdasiye, Ravdasiye, Jat and various other names. Still we identify ourselves by castes attached with our names.

During the 239 years of the Guruship of the ten Sikh Gurus, these messages of the equality of mankind was vigorously promoted by them. It was their mission to root-out the injustices and prejudices of discrimination from common human behaviour and to bring to the masses this concept in clear focus.

Sikhism believe that all human beings are equal. "We are sons and daughters of Waheguru, the Almighty". Sikhs have to treat all peoples of the world on an equal footing. No gender, racial, social, etc discrimination is allowed. This is the message of Guru Nanak as taught by the ten Sikh Masters during the period 1469 to 1708.

Guru Angad stood for a caste-less and class-less society, in which no one was superior to the other and no one, through greed or selfishness, could be allowed to encroach upon the rights of others. In short, he visualized a society in which members lived like a family, helping and supporting one another. He not only preached equality but practised it. Bhai Lehna (later Guru Angad) was the son of a successful trader, came to meet Guru Nanak dressed in fine clothes of silk yet no task was beneath him. Guru Nanak's sons, even in those days, felt entitled and above the work and tasks that Guru Angad Dev ji gladly undertook.

To promote the acceptance of human equality, Guru Angad established a community kitchen where all sat together in a row, regardless of caste or status, and ate the same food. So strong was his disregard of caste and status that even the Emperor Humayun (Guru refused to meet with the then deposed Emperor until he had first shared a meal in the Guru ka Langar) was taken to task for thinking himself above sitting and eating 'common food' among 'common men'. Guru believed that God's creation is equally created

Speaking of the Almighty Guru Angad said in the Sri Guru Granth Sahib in bani, Sarang ki Var, "He Himself creates, O Nanak; He establishes the various creatures. How can anyone be called bad?. There is One Lord and Master of all; He watches over all, and assigns all to their tasks. Some have less, and some have more; no one is allowed to leave empty." - Guru Angad Dev (SGGS p1238).

Furthermore, Guru stressed the importance of adopting a uniform way of praising God and the utility of a social organization based on equality. He established a holy congregation, or Sangat, where people of different beliefs and varying social status sat together to hear the Master's singing of hymns and to be inspired to lead a noble life.

At present our country is relenting under the pressure of casteism. Political parties are also fuelling this vice for their benefits, to keep them in power. Human being are being butchered on the name of saving cows. Religious believes are imposed on others ignoring the principals of humanity. such acts are condemned in Sikhism.