Samrat Ashok followed Vedic principles of administrating his kingdom. It was the Vedic practice to know the source of income of new places added to the kingdom and accordingly allocate resources to it. The administration was based on astute governance laid by his ancestor Kings under guidance of Great Chanakya. So, after the battle of Kalinga was over, King Ashok went on a tour of the cities. He could see nothing except burnt houses and scattered corpses. This was the first time in his life that Emperor Ashok realized the consequences of wars. It is said that even after he had returned to Patliputra, he was haunted by the scenes he saw in Kalinga.

Ashok’s queen, Devi, was practicing Buddhism, even though she was married to a Hindu King, left him after seeing the brutality at Kalinga. It was opportune time for Buddhist monks, they again persuaded Ashok and he embraced Buddhism under the Buddhist sages, Radhaswami and Manjushri. After adopting Buddhism, Ashok started propagating its principles throughout the world, even as far as ancient Rome and Egypt. So Ashok is also credited with making the first serious attempt to develop an anti-Vedic Buddhist policy and promote the spread of Buddhism across the world.

References

4. P. 171 Ashoka and his inscriptions, Volume 1 by Beni Madhab Barua, Ishwar Nath Topa
Vision of Environment in Sikhism

Dr. Vikram Singh
Associate Professor,
Vaish College, Bhiwani (Haryana)

The present article entitled ‘Vision of Environment in Sikhism’ focuses on the consciousness of Sikhs. Sikhism was founded by the saint Guru Nanak Dev in the late fifteenth century. A little information is available on the ecology and environment in Sikh literature. However, the ecological as well as environmental problems were not so serious as they are today, yet the Sikh Gurus identified their awareness about ecological equilibrium as well as they fixed our responsibility to maintain healthy and pure environment in nature. A sacred scripture the Shri Guru Granth Sahib is the Eternal Guru of the Sikhs which is ‘living’ embodiment of the light of the ten ‘Gurus’. The Sri Guru Granth Sahib is venerated by the Sikhs as the final embodiment of the holy message for them.

Guru Nanak Dev as well as Gurus’ writings are included in the Holy scripture - Shri Guru Granth Sahib. All the Sikh Gurus dedicated their lives to creating an ideal society with spiritual awareness as well as moral integrity and their philosophic vision were to nurture healthy environment and beautiful nature.

Guru Nanak in his ideology explains that man creates himself is a reflection of his inner consciousness. He found a sacred vision for the healthy environment and ecological equilibrium while he composed this shabad:

Pavan Guru Pani Pita, Mata Dharat Mahat. ¹

Thus, the great Guru explains that the ecosystem, the pure environment, the atmosphere, the air is a vital force as the Guru, Water is the progenitor as the Father, and the Earth is the Great Mother of us. Shri Guru Granth Sahib advocates to respect our natural resources like water, earth, and air, which provide the basic and necessary elements of life as well as they are sacred also. The Sikh Gurus considered our Earth to be used, respected, loved as well as it is a nurturer, a guide and a servant. Our Sikh Gurus believed that human being have an intrinsic sensitivity and awareness of the nature and that five elements i.e. water, air, earth, forests, and biodiversity make our society worth loving and sustainable.²

¹ Shri Guru Granth Sahib: 8, line 10)
² The Sikh Scripture, emphasis the importance of the elements in this Shabad/hymn Shri Guru Granth Sahib: page 146
The Sikh Gurus emphasis human responsibility towards the phenomena of the material world that is why three main essential elements of life, i.e. Air, Water and Earth are given importance again and again in our sacred Sikh scripture. The pollution of our environment and ecological disturbance is strictly prohibited by our Sikh Gurus through the principles and they advocated for dire necessity to be taken to ensure no devastation on our Mother Earth while doing our daily chores in life. The Shri Guru Granth Sahib proclaims that our purpose is to get a heavenly position and for it we must live in harmony with Nature especially the earth and with Almighty’s creation.

The Shri Guru Granth Sahib philosophizes the innovative ideas, i.e. all God’s creation are equal and they advocate to respect them like our environment. “Asmaan jimee darkhat aab paidaa-is khudaa-ay”3 (The sky, the earth, the trees, and the water - all are the Creation of the Lord). Guru Nanak stated “The earth is your mother. Respect for ‘mother earth’ is the only solution of these problems (meaning destruction of forests leading to soil erosion).”4 The Guru Granth Sahib stressed the vital importance of healthy environment especially about the biotic components in the hymn: Pavan paani dharati aakas ghar mandar har bani.5

The Shri Guru Granth Sahib states that air, water, earth and sky are His abode and shrine, which must be protected, conserved, respected and kept eco-friendly. Our God created the universe by infusing light into the dust and produce the sky, earth, trees, and water and air which are necessary elements to sustain our living world.6 The Shri Guru Granth Sahib opines vividly that our mother Earth guides us to live with patience and love; sky guides to live with equality and broad-mindedness; air guides mobility; water guides to live with purity and fire guides warmth and courage.7 The major element of our environment is Nature which is spiritually a true guide that enables us to be in contact with our Lord where we may get solace. Gurbani remarks that everything seen in action is God as Almighty has a powerful Creative nature. The Sikh scriptures are enriched with examples of the interdependence of Nature and our Creator Almighty.

Nanak sach daataar sinaakhat kudaratee.8

Shri Guru Granth Sahib states that server of all is the True one who is vividly revealed through His powerful Creative Nature. Outabhuj chalat keeaa sir karatai bisamaad sabad

3 Shri Guru Granth Sahib : p. 723
5 Shri Guru Granth Sahib : p. 723
6 Shri Guru Granth Sahib : p. 723
7 Shri Guru Granth Sahib : p. 1018
8 Shri Guru Granth Sahib : p. 141
dhekhaidad.9 Our supreme Almighty Creator created the Universe with the play of Nature as our Lord plays His Wondrous Shows through His Shabad. Our sacred scripture – Shri Guru Granth Sahib states that we can learn spiritual, moral, selflessness, renunciation and sacrificial teachings through Nature:

“Creating the world, God has made it a place to practice spirituality”10

Sikhs have a great awareness for the environment which is an integral part of life and nature. Humans must have an awareness of their place status and relationship with the Universe as all creations have same fate i.e. birth and death. The Human being must live in harmony with the Nature i.e. God’s creations so that they identify themselves with God, therefore, they live with love, compassion and justice. Becoming one and being in harmony with God is to become one with the Almighty. Sikhs scripture advocates against such a life which is full of wasteful consumption as Sikhs considered that environmental awareness must be treated with social justice having an integrated approach.

Sikhism considers God is a ‘Living Truth’, the Creator and the Sustainer of the world as it stresses on the omnipresent nature of God. God demonstrates Himself as a determinate Infinity in the phase of Time and History. He is omnipresent in the cosmic form (moorati) conceived to be Creator. The very first line of Shri Guru Granth Sahib is Karta-Purukh which means that God is the creator of the universe, therefore, Sikhs considers Nature and eco-friendly environment is the visible form of God which is equivalent to the concept of mind and matter. Sikh Gurus preached that we mustn’t harm any living being in the universe that is why the Sikhs prefer a vegetarian diet, which is prescribed in Guru ka Langar that is served in all Gurudwaras.

Sikhs consider that there is no scope of ecological imbalance, exploitation of the environment as well as living beings as all are creations of Almighty produces, animates and sustains Nature as it is the God’s creations and works on progressive life-giving principle. God’s abode is Nature, therefore, reverence for Nature. The Shri Guru Granth Sahib states that Almighty creates the Universe and Himself looks after it imparts understanding11 who is considered to live in spaces as well as inter-spaces cherishing all living beings.12 The Almighty has created this universe an arena of symphonic dance, placing several forms and colours.13 Almighty lives amongst all and His devotee remains pleased with their Lord in the Universe.14

9 Shri Guru Granth Sahib: p. 1037
10 Guru Granth Sahib: p. 1035
11 Shri Guru Granth Sahib: p. 767
12 Shri Guru Granth Sahib: p.760
13 Shri Guru Granth Sahib: p. 746
14 Shri Guru Granth Sahib: p. 748
Our Lord has created all living beings and provides sustenance to us.\(^\text{15}\) Sikhism opines that source of cosmic formation is Almighty God who manifests in it, therefore, Nature has intrinsic dignity and its own importance that is why we mustn’t consider it a mere object of human utilization.

\textit{Shri Guru Granth Sahib} stresses the importance of several aspects of Nature and proclaims the Dharamsaal to Earth, which is a place for righteous action: \textit{raatee rutee thitee vaar. pavan paanee agnee paataal. tis vich Dhartee thaap rakhee Dharam saal.}\(^\text{16}\)

In the above, the great Guru explains that Almighty God has created Night and Day, Seasons and Occasion, Air, Water, Fire and the Nether Regions. He placed the earth righteous action\(^\text{17}\) as the world is a Holy place, according to the Sikhism and we must have holy relation to it as well as we must absorb its purity. We must find acceptance at the Almighty’s portal by discarding egoism.\(^\text{18}\) Guru Nanak advocates that we must behave with equality and justice. Sri Guru Granth Sahib vividly explains that by subduing and diminishing desire and greed, we can achieve solace in reality. We can find solace when we realize that God is omnipresent and we must stop devastating Nature as well as its elements to satisfy our materialistic greed:

\textit{saant paavahi hoveh man seetal agan na antar Dhukhee.}

\textit{gur naanak ka-o parabhoo dikhaa-i-aa jal thal taribhavan rukhee.}\(^\text{19}\)

Thus, we shall find peace, our mind shall be soothed and calmed; the fire of desire shall not ignite within us. Guru Nanak has revealed God that there are three Lokas. Sikhism considers that the material world and Nature with its phenomena is a manifestation of God and all living beings are also a manifestation of the Almighty. All living beings are a part of God and He has the primary relations among all existing living beings:

\textit{Jo antar so baahar daykhhu avar na doojaa ko-ee jee-o.}

\textit{gurmukh ayk darisat kar daykhhu ghat ghat jot samo-ee jee-o.}\(^\text{20}\)

Thus, the Guru elaborates that the Lord is within-See Him externally as well; there is nobody like Him. By the divine prompting look upon all existence as one without any

\(^{15}\) Shri Guru Granth Sahib: p. 751
\(^{16}\) Shri Guru Granth Sahib : p. 7
\(^{17}\) Shri Guru Granth Sahib : p. 7
\(^{18}\) Shri Guru Granth Sahib: p. 142
\(^{19}\) Shri Guru Granth Sahib : p. 617
\(^{20}\) Shri Guru Granth Sahib: p. 599
differentiation; the same light enters the Universe. \textit{Shri Guru Granth Sahib} opposes the struggle of the human race against Nature and stresses that human supremacy lies in the notion of “harnessing” Nature. The main aim is harmony with God means a life of harmony with all existing living beings i.e. Nature. Several Sikhs also have a strong vegetarian food habit. Sikhism has an idea of a life that emphasizes mastery over the self rather than mastery over Nature.

Sikhism teaches us to revere the dignity of all life and recognize the Divine ignition within ourselves and others to nurture respect for all life. We have a dire necessity to derive sustenance from the earth instead of depleting, exhausting and polluting it. Sikhs consider that there is a holy tie up between human and the environment which is the basic requirement for our survival as well as a healthy environment of our earth. \textit{Shri Guru Granth Sahib} explains that man and the material world have interdependent relationships with each other therefore, this holy scripture preaches us to cultivate an awareness about ecological equilibrium without any depletion of the environment.

\textit{The Sri Guru Granth Sahib} proclaims that our purpose is to encourage harmony with all creation and discourage undesirable human domination. The Sikh Gurus preached us showing way to live in harmony with the ecology as well as all their constructions are adhered to this philosophy. The \textit{Shri Guru Granth Sahib} states that human beings have evolved through many phases from various stages traversing the path of life of flora as well as fauna and got an ultimate gift of human life who has a rare characteristic of self-realisation.

The Sikh Gurus had a plan of eco-friendly environment new cities they set up Amritsar,\textsuperscript{21} Anandpur Sahib,\textsuperscript{22} Goindwal,\textsuperscript{23} Kartarpur,\textsuperscript{24} Kiratpur,\textsuperscript{25} Paonta Sahib,\textsuperscript{26} and Tarn Taran.\textsuperscript{27} They

\textsuperscript{21} Foundation stone was laid in 1577 A.D. by the fourth Sikh Guru Ram Das.
\textsuperscript{22} Foundation stone was laid in 1665 A.D. by the ninth Sikh Guru, Guru Tegh Bahadur.
\textsuperscript{23} The city was popularized by the third Guru Amar Das.
\textsuperscript{24} Founded by the fifth Guru of Sikhs, Sri Guru Arjan Dev Ji. in 1594 A.D.
\textsuperscript{25} Founded by son of the sixth Guru Hargobind Sahib ji, on May 1, 1626 A.,D. Sikh Guru, Guru Hargobind Sahib ji.
\textsuperscript{26} Founded by the tenth Guru Gobind Singh in 1685 A.D.
\textsuperscript{27} Guru Arjan Dev Ji, the Fifth Sikh Master, founded Tarn Taran Sahib in the year 1590.

For Further Reading:
were especially concerned for some eco-friendly facilities like pure adequate water sources and the drainage of waste water, gardens and open spaces etc.

Kiratpur Sahib which was situated at the bank of the Sutlej known as a town of parks and gardens which was set by the seventh Sikh Guru, Guru Har Rai. This eco-friendly environmental beautiful city, attracts several species of beautiful birds to the town which turn it into a heavenly abode to live in. A symbolic to live in harmony with nature is vividly shown in the construction of Gurdwaras by the Sikh Gurus surrounded by large ponds supporting marine creatures especially shrines. Biodiversity in Sikhism is vividly seen as Guru Nanak Devji stated, “Within the universe, Earth was created to be a shrine”. Sikh Gurus have explained several love stories for flora and fauna as well as biotic and abiotic elements of the universe. They stated that God had created a superior creation as the man in the universe who had responsibility for sustaining earth, care for animals, and stress on forestation as well as strictly prohibited the killing of animals. Their such philosophy provides conservation of biodiversity as well as ecology. The parts of the trees have been revered as God in Sri Guru Granth Sahib and the plants which are grown beside near sacred places are known as “Guru Ke Bagh” or the Garden of Guru. The followers of Sikh religion who are lovers of eco-friendly environment as they planted trees, especially beside Gurdwaras, tanks, pools etc.

The sacred verses of Shri Guru Granth Sahib are known as Gurbani, which tell about several species of trees which are beneficial to the mankind and environment Universe. The Sikh Gurus emphasized that trees have importance for their usefulness not for their shape or size. Sikhism considers sanctity of the trees viz Bohr (Ficus bengalensis), Pipli (Ficus religiosa), Jand (Prosopis spicigera), Garna (Capparis horrida), Karir (Capparis aaphylla), Phalahi (Acacia modeta), Reru (Mimasa leucophloea), Luhura (Cordia latifolia), Tahli (Shisham), Imli (Tamarind), Amb (Mangifera indica), Harian velan, Neem (margassa), Ritha (Sapindus mukorosa), Kalp (Mitragina parvifolia) and Ber (Zizyphus jujube).


International Research Journal of Commerce Arts and Science

http://www.casirj.com