

## **(RE)TRACING THE RADICAL POETICS AND VISION OF GURU NANAK: A SOCIO-POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE**

(RE)TRAZANDO LA POÉTICA RADICAL Y LA VISIÓN DE GURU NANAK: UNA PERSPECTIVA SOCIO-POLÍTICA

**Aparna Lanjewar Bose** aparnablin@gmail.com

Department of English Literature, School of Literary Studies at The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad, India.

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### **Abstract**

The entire landscape of Northern Indian religious practices underwent a sea change in the 15th and 16th centuries with Nirgun Saint poets like Kabir, and Guru Nanak. Nanak invariably became one of the leading voices of his times whose modernist vision can be visualized through his poetics. His egalitarian worldview has made him popular amongst all sections of society. Choosing a linguistic idiom of the masses he refuted the consecrated value rendered to scriptures, invalidated many prevalent notions of Karma Kand (Vedic rituals) and its hegemonic approach and showed a revolutionary path to devotion. His Japji sahib is a cultural model of co-existential plurality resistive to rigid authoritarianism and entails a democratized mysticism. It's a unique philosophy that dismantles the regressive upholders of repressive ideologies. His Shabads and Gurbani in the Guru Granth Sahib are poetics of plurality offering an alternative model of openness and multidimensionality. Reminiscent of the style of English Romantics, in Nanak, the mundane and commonplace gets elevated to

larger significance in his poetry. The rationality, equality and liberal ideology preached and rendered in his poetics stands in stark opposition to the irrationality, inequality and orthodoxy prevalent. The important rationale of Nanak's philosophy is the psychological freedom it accords to those despised and dispossessed because of caste, class, and gender. It moves beyond the boundaries of community, religion, language, culture and nation. The consequential philosophy of holistic liberation becomes more relevant in a multilingual, multicultural, multireligious Indian ethos today. This paper therefore, shall explore the radical, emancipatory potential in the poetics of Guru Nanak, its contemporary relevance in an age of religious polarizations, bigotry and divisiveness; Further, it explores how the pluralistic paradigms of Guru Nanak's vision and poetics become a panacea to the ongoing invasions on secular democratic beliefs.

## **Resumen**

Todo el panorama de las prácticas religiosas del norte de la India experimentó un cambio radical en los siglos XV y XVI con poetas santos de Nirgun como Kabir y Guru Nanak. Nanak invariablemente se convirtió en una de las principales voces de su época cuya visión modernista se puede visualizar a través de su poética. Su cosmovisión igualitaria lo ha hecho popular entre todos los sectores de la sociedad. Eligiendo un idioma lingüístico de masas, refutó el valor consagrado otorgado a las escrituras, invalidó muchas nociones predominantes de Karma Kand (rituales védicos) y su enfoque hegemónico y mostró un camino revolucionario hacia la devoción. Su Japji sahib es un modelo cultural de pluralidad coexistente resistente al autoritarismo rígido e implica un misticismo democratizado. Es una filosofía única que desmantela a los defensores regresivos de ideologías represivas. Sus Shabads y Gurbani en el Guru Granth Sahib son poéticas de la pluralidad que ofrecen un modelo alternativo de apertura y multidimensionalidad. Con reminiscencias del estilo de los románticos ingleses, en Nanak, lo mundano y común se eleva a un significado más amplio en su poesía. La racionalidad, la igualdad y la ideología liberal predicadas y plasmadas en su poética se oponen rotundamente a la irracionalidad, la desigualdad y la ortodoxia predominantes. El fundamento importante de la filosofía de Nanak es la libertad psicológica que otorga a los despreciados y desposeídos por su casta, clase y género. Va más allá de los límites de la comunidad, la religión, el idioma, la cultura y la nación. La filosofía consecuente de liberación holística se vuelve más relevante

en un ethos indio multilingüe, multicultural y multirreligioso actual. Por lo tanto, este artículo explorará el potencial radical y emancipador de la poética de Guru Nanak, su relevancia contemporánea en una época de polarizaciones religiosas, intolerancia y división; Además, explora cómo los paradigmas pluralistas de la visión y la poética de Guru Nanak se convierten en una panacea para las invasiones en curso de las creencias democráticas seculares.

**Keywords:** Nanak; Indian History; Philosophies; Emancipatory vision; Revolutionary poetics; Comparative analysis

**Palabras Claves:** Nanak; Historia de la India; filosofías; visión emancipadora; poéticas revolucionarias; Análisis comparativo

## Introduction

In the Bhakti tradition eliciting comparisons between various sects and traditions is not new and researchers are often lured to privilege one over the other depending on their personal affiliations. There are scant efforts to look at the secular democratic possibilities or the quintessential goodness of the teachings of the entire corpus of devotion literature, its uniqueness or the emancipatory potentials entailed within its revolutionary, ideological formulations. Today, when religious, ethnic, linguistic, caste, gender, national and cultural polarities are ripping apart humanity to the level of bestiality; when multiple existential concerns inform our living, it becomes imperative to contextualize the poetics and teachings of some of these enlightened men for a better understanding of the issues confronting us today. And also to further understand how their philosophies still hold relevance and provide a universal panacea to heal the bruises of those oppressed by the vague incomprehensibility of classical religions. This paper deals with the revolutionary poetics and vision of Guru Nanak and rather than probing into the mystical understanding, greater religious and spiritual aspects of Nanak which generally scholars on Guru Nanak do, this paper attempts to humanize him more and dwell more objectively, on how he revolutionized not just his own times but the entire gamut of human understanding about self and the world around.

The poetics and philosophy of Nanak entail a dynamism, and newer liberation discourse underpinning the foundation of secular democratic principles. The whole body of Nirgun Bhakti<sup>1</sup> had great potential in this regard and Nanak being the last in line also became the founding father of the religious tradition- Sikhism. He was a poet of great merit though

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<sup>1</sup> Nirgun Bhakti: devotion and prayer to a formless god. They represented poet saints extolling God beyond all attributes or forms. It stands opposed to Sagun Bhakti that entailed devotion and prayer to a form and attributes.

the religious clout surrounding him obscures his poetic ability. Nanak became one of the leading voices of his times whose modernist approach can be seen through his egalitarian worldview that made him popular amongst all sections of society. He chose a linguistic idiom popular among the common masses.

Guru Nanak's *Japji*,<sup>2</sup> *Siddha Goshti*,<sup>3</sup> *Dakhni Omkar*<sup>4</sup> are longer poems written at the time he settled to live a humble life of a farmer. *Japji* refers to jap or recitation and is placed at the beginning of the Guru Granth Sahib. It comprises of well-structured 38 stanzas or Pauries<sup>5</sup> and filters, and in totality, entails Nanak's concept of god or divinity along with the concept of impermanence. It speaks of sadhana or the efforts man has to make for the realisation of the divine. The *Dakhni Omkar* is composed in Raga Ramkali.<sup>6</sup> It is exemplary for its use of metaphorical language and splendid imagery. His concept of the divine strewn with symbolic details abound the text, to delineate the realm of the formless being. Highly imaginative and detailed in embellishments, the poet explicates how divinity works through wind, water, fire and various shapes.

The *Siddha Goshti* like *Japji* is more sombre and articulates Nanak's philosophy and world view where he is seen making a case for the futility of karma kanda<sup>7</sup> practiced by yogis and nathis.<sup>8</sup> Most of Nanak's verses save *Japji* are superadded with meter, rhymes and musical measures called the Ragas. *Siddha Goshti* admits a dialogic mode and a debate

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<sup>2</sup> Japji sahib: It is also the earliest composition in Shree Guru Granth Sahib

<sup>3</sup> Siddha Goshti: Siddha Goshti means a dialogue with the Hindu Siddhas. they were mystical yogis who attained high level of physical and spiritual perfection by means of yogic and tantric practices. Siddha also means the perfected being who through practice or sadhana has realised his goal of superhuman powers or siddhi and also bodily immortality.

<sup>4</sup> Dakhni Omkar: Dakhani comes from the word Dakhan which means the South and Omkar is a reference to the creator but more precisely Dakhani stands for the raga, more the measure of music.

<sup>5</sup> Pauries: form of stanzas literally meaning ladder, rung, step, or stair

<sup>6</sup> Ramkali Raga: Considered as ancient, it is an early morning raga or music based on a traditional scale /note pattern. The mood is soulful, devotion

<sup>7</sup> Karm Kand: Vedic sacrificial rites and rituals

<sup>8</sup> Yogis and Nathis: Those who perform special yogic practices are the Nath yogis. Based on Shaiva tradition the nath is a syncretic yoga Vedanta school of Hindu philosophy.

between Nanak and some ascetics who claim to perform miracles. Nanak unsparingly lashes out at them. It propounds the Sikh spiritual path as opposed to the yogis who were more interested in cementing their hegemony over gullible masses by claiming to possess occult powers rather than showing them a fruitful path of how they could enrich and better their lives: spiritual and temporal. Instead they advocated penance and self-deprivation of the valid pleasures of life. Therefore, it is this attitude of the siddhas that Siddha Goshti seeks to correct. Thus it renders a polemical attack against the esoteric monastic life and practices of the Siddhas.

The phrase “Punjab Gurva(n) di dharti hai” essentially means that Punjab is the land of Gurus. So if there were Hinduism and Islam what really prompted Nanak to carve an independent path and panth?<sup>9</sup> From Nanak’s shorter verses, it becomes evident that he didn’t find anything commendable in the socio-political religious practices of his times. He says “ “the dark age of kalyug<sup>10</sup> is the knife, the kings are butchers, dharam has taken a flight. There is no justice in righteousness.”(SGGS 145) again he mentions “Man-eaters do the Namaaz.<sup>11</sup> Those wearing the sacred threads wield the knives.”(SGGS 471)

Hinting at the corruption prevalent he says “ the people are blind and unwisely feed the greed of the officials with bribes.”(SGGS 469)

*Asa-di-Var*<sup>12</sup> consists of 24 stanzas with 59 shlokas or Pauries, out of which 45 are by Nanak and the remaining 14 are by the second Sikh Guru Angad who succeeded him. Essentially, sung in the mornings,

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<sup>9</sup> Panth: is a spiritual path or sect.

<sup>10</sup> Kalyug: age of darkness, demon, misery

<sup>11</sup> Namaz: Islamic prayer or worship

<sup>12</sup> Asa di Var : literally means A ballad of hope. The var is a popular poetic genre in Punjabi akin to the heroic ballads depicting the heroic exploits of a high personage-praising and extolling his virtues. Thus more of a heroic Ode describing the brave deeds of a hero. The Sikh Gurus used this form to extol the virtues of the supreme being.

meant for congregational recitation, it entails a praise of the one god, and later shifts towards the evils prevalent in society. Composed or sung in Raga Asa which is a Raga of predawn hours, the composition is said to create an environment of hope and confidence. Nanak, vehemently criticizes the existing aberrations in his unique sarcastic style. These verses are philosophical and lyrical in nature and though delving into metaphysical realms also adopt a radical and revolutionary tonal quality. He says, “There is a famine of truth, falsehood prevails/ the blackness of the dark age descends/ it has made men demons”(SGGS 1546) Similarly, he maintains, “the pandits are butchers....they who wield the scalpel wear the thread around their neck”(SGGS 1556) *Asa di Var* is a compilation aimed at ridiculing contemporary vices, questioning the social evils practised under the garb of organised religion while also exposing hypocrisies of both Hindu and Muslim Priests, with a rational outlook and profound insight.

The Janam Sakhis<sup>13</sup> are the outcome of legends surrounding the life of Nanak and as such have their limitations. While the Babur Vani series reveals his poetic anguish when he questions the rationale of numerous destructive bloody invasions. His lesser-known poems are composed in musical measures and ragas that lie in the pages of the Adi Granth. Jaapji Sahib especially, is a cultural model of co-existential plurality that is resistive to rigid authoritarianism and entails a democratised mysticism. Nanak challenges the essentialisms of his time by superimposing a “timeless entity” who is beyond all essentialisms. This, thus reflects his ability to de-class and de-caste by referring to that one omnipotent model of supreme that one can aspire to reach. The very notion of the supreme being uproots all that is held sacrosanct within the

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<sup>13</sup> Janam sakhis: literally means birth stories. They claim to be professed biographies of Nanak written at various stages after his demise ,mostly 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century. They remain largely imaginary hagiographies built on Sikh oral tradition and a few historical facts.

theistic traditions thereby challenging the idea of sacred and profane that is imprinted by certain religious unitarian texts on gullible minds. Thus liberating humanity from the strict adherence of do's and don'ts, Nanak's vision dismantles the regressive upholders of repressive ideologies. His Shabads<sup>14</sup> and Gurbaani<sup>15</sup> in the Guru Granth Sahib are apt models of openness and multidimensionality.

The revolutionary approach of Nanak was to go a long way. The Gurumukhi<sup>16</sup> script advanced by him was a gift for posterity. His call for belief in one creator being- the Akal Purukh<sup>17</sup> embodying the source of reality that humans need to aspire to or the fact that there is no intermediary between man and god debunks many other orthodox religious beliefs based on faith traditions. Wahey Guru<sup>18</sup> whose love manifests in different ways is the knowledge giver and also the dispeller of darkness. Nanak as a married man advanced the idea of leading a family life and yet aspiring for divine love. Thus monasticism or asceticism is rejected in favour of a simple and humble life of means. The concept of Sangat (congregation)<sup>19</sup> and the Pangat (langar/communal kitchen)<sup>20</sup> broke all barriers of caste and creed. Similarly, the concept of Sewa (selfless service) and Simiran (meditation ) again implies selflessly serving all without any distinction and remaining immersed in divine love which would lead one to true salvation.

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<sup>14</sup> Shabad: Hymn, sacred songs or verses

<sup>15</sup> Gurubani: The utterances of the Guru, their various compositions hymns within the central texts of the Sikhs  
Guru Granth Sahib. It further means the speech of wisdom or the conscious mind

<sup>16</sup> Gurumukhi: The script used to write the Punjabi language also called painti meaning 35 as it had a total of these many letters.

<sup>17</sup> Akal Purukh: Refers to the timeless eternal being that has no caste, no marked features. Indescribable in words it can be experienced by those who reach a certain meditative state. It is not a personified deity centered around the concept of personal salvation rather to a concept of ultimate reality.

<sup>18</sup> Waheguru: means wonderful god, the formless one with whom the devotee may establish a personal relationship by following the teachings of the Gurus

<sup>19</sup> Sangat: A true congregation or community of people who meet and pray in the gurudwara

<sup>20</sup> Pangat: refers to the act of people dining together irrespective of their caste and creed.

Many of the concepts Nanak shared with earlier and contemporary religious figures including Kabir, show evidence of his thought being closely aligned to the Sant tradition of Northern India. There is no doubt that much of it was derived directly from this source.<sup>21</sup> Guru Nanak spoke about the Vedas, Puranas, Shastras, Smritis and various philosophical schools. He spoke of the holy trinity, the Naths, Siddhas. That there is no headlong confrontation with these doctrines nor a willing acceptance is what some critics feel; Contrarily, Nanak refuted the consecrated value rendered to the scriptures and invalidated the belief that reading and hearing the Hindu scriptures could ensure salvation to mankind. Nanak set aside the authority of the Vedas for its lack of rationale and debunked them as incomplete and conditional. He saw men perform religious rites and rituals believing that it would render them comfort and peace but both were farfetched. Where he neither condemned nor repudiated existing religious philosophies as some feel, the hagiographic detailing about Nanak's life reveals that he picked up that which was essential and valuable, that was free from religious and polemical jargon, something that was more simplified for the common man's understanding. The detailing also further amplifies the importance rendered by him to the fundamental and essential truths that could serve as the foundational premise for a new order he was to establish.

The stone and idol-worshipping Hindu culture was vehemently questioned by Nanak time and again. He detested the numerous images and deities in favour of one formless, shapeless, colourless, omnipotent supreme being who dwells in all creation. Thus paving a radical path to devotion. The Brahminical Karma Kanda (Vedic rituals) theory was stiffly opposed as also the scriptural indoctrination of the gullible masses. The religious rites, yagna and sacrificial rituals were ridiculed

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<sup>21</sup> For details see W.H. Mcleod. *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969. p.151

for the endorsement of love of the one and only supreme being and for the greater love and service of humanity at large. The rites and rituals were meant to be performed only by the Brahmin priests and pundits and this was detested and vilified by Nanak who scoffed at this Brahminical hegemony. Their arrogance, pride and haughtiness were challenged by him. When the mind is full of pride and sin how can it be purified just by a holy dip in the sacred rivers... For such a person even the waters fail to redeem his sin, said he. Likewise, the holy Trinity of Brahma-the creator, Vishnu-the sustainer and Mahesh-the destroyer, was disfavoured by Nanak in favour of a more selfless service to be rendered to humanity which needed and awaited practical resolutions of their misery. If the heart is not cleansed of ego how would holy pilgrimage help or how would wanderings to sacred places enable one to wash off misery<sup>22</sup> True faith remains in **Nam** and Shabad feels Nanak.<sup>23</sup> when he says my being is filled by Shabad that he may not find another life he seems to be blatantly denying the rebirth theory.<sup>24</sup> What is indeed interesting about Nanak's emancipatory creed is that rather than claiming to be divinely inspired, he preferred to claim himself as the bard who could sing the glory of the divine. Rather than proclaiming himself as the son of god, the alpha and the omega the first and the last, the beginning and the end<sup>25</sup> or worst still as an avatar he humanises himself. Neither Nanak nor the successors to his metaphysical realm had anything to do with such claims. The times of Nanak and the preceding period were turbulent and saintly men were very conveniently bracketed as avatars. However, the word assumes an altogether different recasting as the name for the superior formless God.

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<sup>22</sup> Guru Granth. 1102

<sup>23</sup> Guru Granth. 687

<sup>24</sup> J.S Grewal *Guru Nanak in History* p.208

<sup>25</sup> see Revelation 22:13

Guru Nanak rejects external authority, ceremonies, religious texts, pilgrimage, ritual bathing and many such things. However, many historians seem to miss out why he got into the enterprise of gathering a community with numerous institutional structures. G.S. Mann feels that by merely emphasising the religious side of his life and legacy, historians like Mcleod, seem to undercut the importance of such institutional structures on one hand, and seem to point toward it being some sort of “Hindu” group centred on meditation, on the other”<sup>26</sup> For Nanak the lives of the people were oriented around three things meditation, search for liberation and work in the fields. His poetics has the interwoven vision of liberation and landscape, replete with images of soil, plants, animals and birds. He finds beauty in creation. His emphasis on monotheism and belief in human equality, his social commitment distinguishes him from the Hindu saints. his discomfort with corruption and vices of his times is well expressed thus

*Raje sih muqadam kute, jai jagain bethe sute*<sup>27</sup>

He couldn't bear to see the hapless innocent people bearing the brunt of merciless conflicts, and repudiated violence

*Je sakata sakate ko mare ta man rosu na hoi /*

*Sakata sihu mare pai vagai khasmai sa pursai* <sup>28</sup>

At Kartarpur<sup>29</sup> his home served as the sacred place and the destination of pilgrimage for people and the initiation ceremony brought many new people into the community fold. The recitation of his poetics were followed by community cooking and sharing of food. The revolutionary concept of

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<sup>26</sup> Gurinder Singh Mann “Guru Nanak Life and Legacy: An Appraisal” Volume 17.1-2, 2010 p.14

<sup>27</sup> Guru Granth 1288

<sup>28</sup> Guru Granth 360

<sup>29</sup> Kartarpur: A village on the west bank of river Ravi, present day Pakistan where Nank spent the last 18 years of his life.

Langar (communal meal) also distinguishes him from the other Hindu saints. His affection for the downtrodden is reflected in the lines

*Niche andari nich jati nichihu ati nichu, nanaku tin kai sangi sathi vadia  
siau ka ris*<sup>30</sup>

Nanak wrote in the language of the people. And for the people to join a Guru who dreamt of building a corruption-free, oppression-free society, who stood for human equality, was a viable option rather than being part of the oppressive Brahminical Hindu hierarchical order or the exploitative feudal regime prevalent. His followers were called Nanak Panthis. Modern scholarship underlines Nanak's affinity to Nirgun Bhakti of which Kabir was an exponent. Like Kabir in Nanak too, the Rama and Krishna do not embody the mythical, classicistic Rama / Krishna, sons of Dashrath and Vasudeva, rather they are names of the formless one. And whenever he harks back to the classicistic personages they become ordinary mortals divested of all superhuman powers. Mcleod examines the teachings of Guru Nanak and comes to the conclusion that "In Guru Nanak as in Kabir there is the same rejection of exterior forms, the same insistence on the need for inward devotion and its sufficiency as the sole means of liberation."<sup>31</sup>

The works of Nanak like Kabir, present a system of interrelated ideas which are independent of all other systems of religious ideas. Their positions are similar not because they belong to the same tradition but because each had a new path to show to his contemporaries. Similarly, if Nanak is compared to Buddha we find that both revolted against the Brahminical ills and rituals, the caste system, preached equality and humanity and service to mankind. It is only through one's deeds in life that proclaims one's caste and therefore truthful living is advocated by

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<sup>30</sup> Guru Granth 15

<sup>31</sup> Mcleod, *Sikhism* Penguin Books, 1998 p101

both. Nanak accepted Buddha's four-fold noble truth and eight-fold noble path. In fact, any believer in humanity and equality cannot fail to be not influenced by Buddha. Some theologians go to the extent of comparing Buddha's concept of *Shunyata* with Nanak's concept of Naam. Shunyata refers to the voidness, emptiness of self and what pertains to self. A self, empty of attachments, anger and confusion. It refers to the ultimate freedom from all suffering, our suffering and this achievement is Shunya because its devoid of suffering, causes of suffering and suffering itself. It entails a state of happiness as this state entails the absence of suffering or Dukkha. It is used to describe Nibbana. Guru Nanak's concept of *Nam* is used to describe the spiritual manifestations of the omnipotent God, the formless being. The remembrance of God or the Akal Purkh is the essence. The Nam is '*Wahe Guru*'- the preceptor who is God himself an indescribable wondrous being whose creation creates a sense of wonderment. It is *Nam*<sup>32</sup> that sustains all. Buddha's salvation is freedom from suffering that renders perfect happiness and liberation from the cyclic process of dukkha, the attainment of a state of mind free from ignorance in this very lifetime. Buddha denounces the concrete existence of a fixed external entity such as soul or a creator God. Nanak's concept of salvation is through disciplined meditation on the divine name. This is possible through escape from the cycle of death and rebirth to the mystical union with the divine. The Nam is thus looked upon as an expression of the inherent nature of the Akal Purukh. He is infinite and so too his name.

In Asia, in course of history various sultanates had territorialised and terrorised the beliefs of the people by unleashing unsurmountable and

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<sup>32</sup> Nam: According to Nanak it comprises the whole of creation everything outside and within the believer. In Gurbani, it stands for the essential essence of God, the constant reiterating of which is to realize the all-pervasive supreme reality that sustains all universe. Only when the believer is imbued with Nam the true essence of Waheguru (wonderful God) and his mighty presence.

inconceivable tyranny. But what is of greater wonder and import today, is the continuity of such tyrannies within larger democracies of the world. Marginalisation on the basis of caste, race, gender, religion, and ethnicity is perceptible and what is also perceptible is the complex nature of these tyrannies. While culture theorists, post-colonial and post-modern critics have emphatically addressed culture as a coexistence of pluralities and shown how cultures that are marginalised adopt different modalities of resistance against the onslaught of hegemonic cultures. They have also been very specific in terms of how power structures create and operate to the detriment of humanity which eventually pays a heavy price. The politics behind platonic and universalist paradigms in promoting homogenisation and assimilation of peripheral differences necessitate cultural resistance and counterhegemonic articulation in the literary, linguistic and cultural practice of the margins. Though, historically one may situate many instances of cultural resistance that disrupted and continues to challenge Brahminical paradigms, the major corpus of Bhakti /devotion literature was a brilliant articulation of the common concerns of the people.

It is also important to note that the dominant repressive systems have always worked in tandem with oppressive structures and regimes in retaining the status quo. The binary of the oppressed and oppressor serves vested socio-economic interests. Therefore instead of demolishing these binaries, they are more fortified first by un-acknowledgement of the other second by repudiating or trivialization of their potential, third by delegitimization of the peripheral cultures, fourth by superimposition of their socio-cultural practices and world views thereby derecognising and un-authenticating the exclusivity of the “other” and finally assimilation into their own in an attempt to homogenise differences. Within the binary contestations of centre and margins, the emergence of distinct aesthetics

and revolutionary signs foregrounds the demand for celebrating the “other.”

Guru Nanak’s poetics asserts the difference of “other” and rejects universalist assumptions rupturing hierarchical notions of the cultural superiority of Brahminical and disruptive Islamic forces. It stands as an emancipatory intervention to stifling power structures, their pernicious ways, practices and beliefs. It exemplifies how an alternate culture and paradigm can create “difference” by its difference.

Celebrating marginality, asserting difference, rendering space to plurality, and a harmonizing vision are the benchmarks of Nanak’s poetics. He represents an epoch whose radical resistance takes place through aesthetics and semiotic intervention.

The important rationale of Nanak’s poetics and philosophy is the psychological freedom it accords to those despised and dispossessed due to various socio-political factors. His consequential philosophy of holistic liberation becomes relevant in a multicultural multi-religious Indian ethos today. His vision and poetics become a panacea to the ongoing invasions on secular democratic beliefs.

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