

Guru Nanak Sahib: Prophet of Universal Harmony and Synthesis

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ABSTRACT

Guru Nanak Dev Ji's teachings are profound and universal, emphasizing the oneness of God and the unity of all creation. He was a spiritual leader, philosopher, poet, and social reformer who dedicated his life to spreading the message of unity, equality, compassion and love. This paper reveals the God as Love Oneness of Humankind, Compassion and Service Formless Creator. It is a Religion of perfect and universal Love totally free from man-made barriers of colour, caste, creed and status. He declared that there is only one God for whole humanity. Guru Nanak has said a couple of basic qualities as incarnations of God and requested that people make one indistinct God as a protest of love and nobody else. Sri Guru Nanak Sahib's religion of love is cosmic and universal in its appeal, holy folds and dimensions.

Keywords: Sikhism, Nirvana, religion, God, love, universal, unity, and equality

INTRODUCTION

Guru Nanak taught that every person, regardless of caste or background, carries the same Divine spark. The most famous teachings attributed to Guru Nanak are that there is only one God, and that all human beings can have direct access to God with no need of rituals or priests. His most radical social teachings denounced the caste system and taught that everyone is equal, regardless of caste or gender. Guru Nanak attained enlightenment after taking a bath in the Kali Bein, and despite its religious history in Sikhism, the rivulet is not considered holy by the Sikhs in Punjab, as no bodies of water are considered holy in Sikhism aside from the Sikh Sarovars (pools of water within gurdwaras) of Gurdwaras (Sikh Temples). God is love, and love is God, and the way back to God is also through love. He was love personified, and inspired love in everyone.

In Sikhism, the word 'Guru' has a very specific definition. It means the decent of divine guidance to mankind provided though ten Enlightened Masters. The honour of being called a Sikh Guru is applied only to the ten Gurus who founded the religion starting with Guru Nanak in 1469 and ending with Guru Govind Singh in

1708. The divine spirit was passed from one Guru to the next, in the words of Guru Nanak, as "The light of the lamp which lights another does not abate. Similarly a spiritual leader and his disciple become equal" (Gupta, Hari Ram. 130) after the ten Gurus, the word Guru is referred to the Sikh Holy Scriptures the Guru Granth Sahib. Guru Nanak got his enlightenment in Sultanpur in 1496. After enlightenment, he travelled extensively to spread the message of love and brotherhood.

Guru Nanak Sahib, the founder of Sikhism was born in 1469 on full moon day of the month karthik-at Rai-Bhodi talwadi in the present district of Shekhupura (Pakistan), now Nanakana Sahib. Born to Mehta Kalyan Das and Mata Tripta, Nanak, had an elder sister, Nanki, who always cherished her younger brother. At a young age of seven, Nanak learnt Hindi and surprises his teachers with the sublimity of his extraordinary knowledge about divine things. At the age of thirteen, he learned Persian and Sanskrit and at the age of 16. Married to Mata Sulakhi ji, Nanak had two sons, Sri Chand and Laxmi Das.

Bhagat Namdev, Guru Granth Sahib, 525. In Hinduism, after death, a person is reborn to pay for his bad actions or to enjoy the rewards of good actions in the previous life. The goal of life is to become free from the cycle of birth and death or attain nirvana. Nirvāṇa is a term found in the texts of all major Indian religions – Hinduism, Jainism Buddhism, and Sikhism. It refers to the profound peace of mind that is acquired with moksha, liberation from samsara, or release from a state of suffering, after respective spiritual practice or sādhanā.

However, it was not until August 1507, that Guru Nanak Sahib heard God's call to dedicate himself to the service of humanity after bathing in vein, a small river near Sultanpur Lodhi. He was 38 then. The very first sentence uttered by him then was, "There is no Hindu, no Musalman" (Anand Coomaraswamy, 41). Soon, he undertook long travels to preach his unique and divine doctrine (Sikhism). After visiting different places in Punjab, he proceeded on four long tours called Udasis covering different religious places in India and abroad. In the process, he awakened the people to realize the truth about God and introduced Sikhism. He established "Manjis", network of preaching centers and appointed

able and committed followers as its head. Thus, the seeds of Sikhism were sown all over India and abroad.

Guru Nanak Sahib rejected the path of renunciation, the authority of the Vedas and the Hindu caste system. He emphasized on the leading of householder's life (Grista), unattached to gross materialism. He preached new idea of God as Supreme, Universal, and All-powerful and truthful. God is formless (Nirvana), the sole, the Creator, the self-existence, the Incomprehensible and the Ever-Lasting and the creator of all things (Karta Purakh). God is infinite, all knowing, True, All-giver Nirvair, and Omnipotent. He is Satnam, the Eternal and Absolute Truth. God is conceived as the Oneness that permeates the entirety of creation and beyond.

Guru Nanak taught that there is one God who dwells within the human heart and can be known by the grace of the guru. Great Gurus prayed for the whole global community; they preached universal love. As born poet, Guru Nanak Sahib wrote 947 hymns which were later included in Guru Granth Sahib settled down at Kartarpur city (now in Pakistan), founded by him in 1522 and spent the rest of his life there. There was daily Kirtan and the institution of Langara (free kitchen) was introduced. In 1539, he installed Bhai Lehna ji (Guru Agard Sahib) as the second Nanak, and after a few days passed into Sachkhand on 22nd September 1539. His teachings focus on the upliftment of the weaker sections of the society and their empowerment to live a life of dignity.

Nirvana in Classical Hindu scriptures; in the Mahabharata and Kavya Literature the word Nirvana is used in the sense: immersed, plunged, immovable, final emancipation from matter and re-union with the Supreme Spirit. "In the Upanishads it does not mean the dying out of anything, but rather perfect self realization; to those in whom the darkness of ignorance has been dispersed by perfect knowledge", as the highest, Nirvana (Chandogya Upanishad 8, 5,1). In the Gita the word 'Nirvana' is used for the highest spiritual state of peace which is "Serene and fearless, firm in the vow of celibacy, subdued and harmonized in God, intent on God alone". (Bhattacharya, 31) The Yogin of Subdued mind, ever keeping himself thus harmonized, attained peace, the supreme Nirvana, which abides in Me" (Gita: 15). He taught universal brotherhood, love, peace and emancipation of the soul through simple living.

The concept of liberation as 'extinction of suffering', along with the idea of samsara as the 'cycle of rebirth' is also part of Sikhism. Nirvana appears in Sikh texts as the term Nirban. However, the more common term is Mukti or Moksha, a salvation concept wherein loving devotion to God is emphasized for liberation from endless cycle of rebirths. In Sikhism Nirvana is not an afterlife concept but a goal for the living. Furthermore Sikh nirvana/mukti is achieved through devotion to satguru/truth who sets you

free from reincarnation bharam/superstition/false belief. Guru Nanak Dev spoke of the unity of mankind, that people of all faiths should work together.

Nirvana in Jainism: Jainism is older than Buddhism and it is in Jainism the word began to be used in the sense of annihilation. For the Jains it is an escape from the body. The energy of past karma is extinguished and the spirit though still existent, has no chance of re-embodiment it is annihilation of the self from samsara, mundane existence. Nirvana in Buddhism, what is Tao to the Chinese mystic, Fana to Sufi, Nibbana is to the Buddhist. There are tests which suggest that deliverance is annihilation. "A Hindu festival held in the 19th century on Kartik Purnima in Amritsar attracted a large number of Sikhs. The Sikh community leader Giani Sant Singh did not like this, thus starting a festival at the Sikh shrine of the Golden Temple on the same day, presenting it as the birth anniversary celebration of Guru Nanak" (Gupta, Hari Ram 86) Guru Nanak taught that everything in the universe unfolds according to God's order, and that true spiritual wisdom.

Nirvana in Sikhism: Buddhism has used only one term, Nirvana to express the state or release. Different schools of Buddhism express the meaning with variations in interpretations. The Sikh Gurus were extremely liberal in the use of language, and they took up terms from various languages and dialects to interpret their meanings and thoughts. They have used, Sanskrit, Prakrit, Apabhramas, Braj, Avadhi, Persian and all dialects of Punjab to express their mystic experiences.

The Sikh Guru takes us out of the linguistic multiplicity of terms into the unicity of the highest spiritual goal. The different interpretations are also due to lack of the fullness of experience, and attempts to give intellectual interpretation without the complete intuitional knowledge of the highest state. The experience which describes Nirvana from the foothills naturally differs from those who describe from the peak of the heights of experience. Nirvana in Sikhism is thus a living experience of the spirit of God in man. It is the last fruit and consummation of the highest perfection attainable to man. It is an inner grasp on immortality as opposed to darkness and death, and a personal communion with Truth and Beauty.

Guru Nanak uses the word sunya and unmani for the highest spiritual state. Other Sikh Gurus have used almost all the words for the highest state of release given in the foregoing list. But Guru Tegh Bahadur exclusively uses Nirvana (nirbhana) and identifies it with the state of fearless (nirbhan pada), and the state of release (mukti-pada). This is not without reason or significance. It is to highlight this fact that the author has given the sub-title 'Divine Songs of Nirvana' to this translation of the hymns of Guru Tegh Bahadur. Why songs? Because

all the hymns are strung to Ragas (musical modes) , the musical excellence of which will be discussed presently. Nirvana in Sikhism is not extinction of the flame called life, but it is a sublime experience, an exaltation of self and perfect communion with God. With this realization, the seeker of truth not only attains illumination of the highest wisdom but also complete freedom from fear and mundane authority and identity of the self with all human beings. In Sikhism Nirvana is not mere abolition of desire during life and karma after death. It is the stoicism of action in which instead of turning inwards and closing, the soul could open wide its gates to a universal love.

Guru Nanak, and other Sikh Gurus emphasized bhakti (love', 'devotion', or 'worship'), and taught that the spiritual life and secular householder life are intertwined. In the Sikh perspective, the everyday world is part of an infinite reality, where increased spiritual awareness leads to increased and vibrant participation in the everyday world. Guru Nanak described living an "active, creative, and practical life of truthfulness, fidelity, self-control and purity as being higher than the metaphysical truth.

This is now Guru Nanak redefines sunya in the light of his experience sunya(External silence) is the power of the infinite. Air, water, fire and all elements are created out of sunya. Out of sunya emerged. Brahma, attains sunya becomes perfect. His doubts and delusion are dispelled.” (Pruthi, R. K. 33) During his travels he visited major religious and cultural centers to engage with leaders and spread his teachings of one God and universal brotherhood. It highlights his commitment to equality, social reform, and spirituality, emphasizing his rejection of caste and rituals while promoting love.

According to Plotinus and many schools of Indian mysticism “action is a weakening of contemplation. It was granted to him (Plotinus) look upon the promised land, but not to set foot upon the soil. He went as far as ecstasy, a state in which the soul feels itself, or thinks it feels itself, in the Presence of God, being irradiated with His light; he did not get beyond this last stage; he did not reach the point where, as contemplation is engulfed inaction, the human will become one with the divine will” (Singh, Khushwant 223) In Sikhism the state of Nirvana is an all absorbing state of boundless joy. God is there and the soul is in God. Mystery is no more. Problems vanish and darkness is dispelled, everything is flooded with light.

The man who attains Nirvana state feels truth flowing into the soul from the fountain-head like an active force. He can no more help spreading it abroad than the sun can help diffusing its light. For the love which consumes him is no longer simply the love of man for man god, it is the love of God for all men. Though God, in the strength of God he loves all mankind with divine love. It was this

love mankind that impelled Guru Tegh Bahadur to sacrifice his life for the freedom of worship of the Brahmanism although he did not agree with their mode of worship of the deity. It was this love of mankind arising out of this higher mysticism of action that inspired Guru Govind Singh to take up the sword against tyranny and despotism. Though God, in the strength of God, the Guru Govind Singh to take up the sword against tyranny and despotism. Though God, in the strength of God, the Guru loves all mankind with a divine love. It was a mysticism and faith that moved mountains and within a century to the two made glorious history.

CONCLUSION

Guru Nanak extended this doctrine to include the idea that, if all people worship the same God, then all people are equal. The goal of life is to become free from the cycle of birth and death or attain nirvana. Many modern historians give weight to his teachings' linkage with the pre-existing bhakti, sant, and wali of Hindu/Islamic tradition. Scholars state that in its origins, Guru Nanak and Sikhism were influenced by the nirguni ('formless God') tradition of the Bhakti movement in medieval India. However, some historians do not see evidence of Sikhism as simply an extension of the Bhakti movement. Sikhism, for instance, disagreed with some views of Bhakti saints Kabir and Ravidas. The number of Guru Nanak's followers increased through the sixteenth century under his successors. They belonged to a number of castes, but traders, agriculturists, artisans and craftsmen predominated.

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