

Guru Nanak Dev Ji and his mission

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Guru Nanak's sympathetic way of dealing with the existing religions of the world is often misinterpreted by those superficial observers of Sikhism who see in our great Guru nothing more than a reformer, who carried a message of peace for everybody, and who found here nothing to quarrel with. His largeness of view, in holding all men equal before God, is brought forward to witness that he recognised no defects in the prevailing systems of belief. The popular opinion about him is that he was a great Faqir like so many others, who from time to time have been appearing in India to enrich its sacred literature and reawaken for a time of love of God in the minds of its people. Even the best lovers of Sikhism, like Mr Maccauliffe, have not been able to improve upon this limited view. Nay, even some of the most enlightened Sikhs of today gives us better idea of Guru Nanak's religion.

Guru Nanak, upon his advent, found Hinduism a seething mass of moral putrefaction. He defected among its elements a certain superstition, which would make out an end of everything which was first intended as a means. He saw living spirit dried up into formulas, and formulas whether or contracts of reward and punishment, were ever so contrived as to escape making any demands upon the conscience. He struck at the root of this superstition by demanding truth in faith and spirit in worship. He cleared away everything that encumbered the relation – between God and man. He recognized no incarnation, no direct revelation,

no human intercession on behalf of man in the court of heaven. He preached Purity, Justice, Goodness, He held out no promises in this world except those of suffering, as his successors and followers were to suffer, rejoicing that they were counted worthily to suffer His sake. He held out no promises even in his next world, of the 'Houris of the retiring glances', or the 'Kama Dhenu' or the 'Kalpa tree'; but the meeting of the loved One Himself, it was to be with God-to lose one's self in him. The idea of life, the measure of salvation, he taught, is not happiness or peace of mind. To serve God and be able to love Him is in itself better than happiness, though it be with wounded feet, and bleeding brows, and hearts laden with sorrow.

Now take the relation of man with God, as preached by Guru Nanak. Man and women are equal before one another and before God – a truth higher than ever preached before in India – nay, even in the whole world except in Arabia. Woman becomes more sacred, her life is even higher than man's so much so that our Guru could not adore God but in her disguise. Christ could not think of a better relation between God and man than that of a father & son. With Guru Nanak, however, a wife's constancy to her husband represented more befittingly the relation between faithful man and God. A son may not be the constant companion of his father after his marriage; but the wife is always wife, always constant, always seeking support of her Lord and Love.

Woman also gained the religious rights. Hinduism, like Judaism had denied her practically all shares in Immortality. She had no personal religion nil spiritual responsibility, no claim no part in the law of God. She was denied all access to Holy Scriptures. She was to remain content with the mere performance of domestic, social and individual duties, never to vivify or heighten them by the rays of God's eternal love. Poor Indian woman! Even in her happiest rot there is always left a void in her heart, which ever-acting piety alone can fill' and she whose portion is to suffer, whose lot is lonely, O! What misery must be hers, unless she can lean upon her God and draw from His word the blessed conviction that she is not forgotten, that His love, His tenderness, are hers, far beyond the feeble conceptions of the earth. Guru Nanak felt for the suffering womankind and gave them their full share in goodness of God. She was declared (see Var Asa, XIX) to directly responsible for her morals to God. Religious congregations were thrown open to them. They were to partake freely in the religious and secular observance, and no social custom was to hinder them in doing so. Sikh women are to this day seen attending all occasions of public worship all conferences, along with the members of the other sex and their conjoint as well as alternate singing, in which they often lead the chorus, must move the heart of every man wants to see what Guru Nanak did for womankind.

Guru Nanak's moral laws are written on the tablets of eternity they are

not made up to human ideas and notions about things, which the mere increase of knowledge makes incredible, they are not mixed up with absurd miracles, revelations and miscalculations about the creation of the world. The world may change its theories of life. It may overhaul the whole relations of science, history and what is received as relation, but Sikhism will not have to undergo any the least change in its creed. Sikh can only change by going out of Sikhism.

With all this we yet feel there is something wrong with us who profess to believe Sikhism. How those high feelings ebbed a way and Sikhs became what we know them, we are partially beginning to see. It seems we have been for the least century retreating back into the Hindu ranks, and have been slowly accommodating the spiritual truth contained in Sikhism with the same effete system of belief, from which our Gurus had so bravely endeavoured to rescue us. Let us see, how as soon as we allowed escaping from the city of Destruction, we fell into the Slough of Despondence.

From a few Years Sikhism is again striving to return to its original level; but the circumstances have so changed and the progress of Sikhism has been neglected so long, that to a great extent we have to fight the battle over again. The first and most urgent need is that we should reclaim our Gurdwaras (temples) from the hands of corrupt men, and freeing them from the immoral influences.

We have to make them the real sources of true knowledge. Then we have to spread correct knowledge about Sikhism and its history. The more exact habit of thought engendered by the Science has notoriously made it necessary that grounds should be reconsidered on which we are to believe and show that India was governed for centuries on the principle quite different from those of Sikhism. The haphazard attempts to explain Sikhism by identify it with the old system of thought, which it was its special function to replace, with always end in failure, they would do more harm to the progress of Sikhism than if there were nothing more to comment upon our, faith than our Holy Book. Bad pleading in a good cause is the surest way to

bring discredit upon it.

Instead of indulging in mere sentiment we should try from a clear conception of Sikhism and create homogeneity in the doctrines of our Faith. We should be clearly convinced of the greatness of the mission of our Gurus. At present we seem to be contented with the narrow sphere in which the truths of Sikhism are allowed to work. If we had known their greatness we would not have confined them to ourselves. Missionary enterprise in a nation is the measure of its faith, one thing we require now a day is enthusiasm, burning enthusiasm to feel the spirit of Guru Nanak in our minds and convince others or its presence among us.

A Map of Guru Nanak's Travels

