

## THE VIEWS OF GURU NANAK ON HINDUISM AND ISLAM

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The notion and essence of present religions i.e. Hinduism and Islam during the time of Guru Nanak incite him not to recognize himself with any of them. Infact, he utilizes such concept to judge all present religious theory and process. For Guru Nanak, ‘the true believer does not adopt a *marga*; he does not belong to a path; he is concerned with true religion alone.’

For Guru Nanak, spiritual knowledge is the basis of perfect divinity like other great saints. He was against the constituents of present religion which create caste discrimination, narrow-mindedness, sectarian divisions and all formalities. He appeared to brighten the life of people from false beliefs and prejudices. Nanak tried to inculcate logic behind every religious practice so that all men should not follow it blindly. In this way he was able to provide clear idea of religion. It resolves the malaise of doubt, thus supplied a ray of hope.<sup>1</sup>

The invasion of Muslims had effected the cultural development of India immensely. At that time, Punjab had to face Muslim arms as well as culture which entered India. The Punjab was under the Muslim rule in the fifteenth century than any other state. The Muslim saints and faqirs were penetrated in the towns and villages of Punjab. The thoughtful environment was created by such saints in people. It prepared ground for integration of ideas that could take place<sup>2</sup>. In such atmosphere of gloom and blindness, saints and prophets come to recover it from unpleasantness.<sup>3</sup> In such world, Mehta Kalu (an accountant) was blessed with a son, Nanak, a name common to both Hindus and Musalmans.<sup>4</sup>

In the history, Guru Nanak is one among great men whose reflection was preserved in the sentiments of people and whose personality go beyond time and space. Infact, he was associated great men who are not the proprietorship of any particular creed or religion, but universal to entire human race. The subsequent well-known statement of the Punjab clearly represents the public perception of regard and honor for him:

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## Guru Nanak Shah Faqir

### Hindu ka Guru, Musalman ka Pir.

During the whole life, Guru Nanak constantly tried to unite different communities and cultural groups of India and teach them the doctrine of truth, love, honesty and moral virtue.<sup>5</sup>

Guru Nanak was born at a time, when the essence of religion had disappeared. Both the Hindus and the Muslims had identified their religion with rituals or ceremonies.<sup>6</sup> In the views of Indu Bushan Benerjee, Guru Nanak was generally a critic of formalism and ritualism in Islam and Hinduism. He instructed both the Hindus and Muslims to be truthful to their own religion.

A comprehensive intimacy was acknowledged in the compositions of Guru Nanak with the contemporary Hinduism and Islam. He referred to the Vedas; discussed about Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh; four-fold 'blessings' of life: *dharma*, *artha*, *karma* and *moksha*; three ways of liberation: *jnana*, *karma* and *bhakti*. At various times, Hindu and Muslim usual procedure is specified simultaneously. However, quite frequently references to Islam stand apart. Guru Nanak discusses about Allah and the Prophet, the Quran, the shari'at, and the prophets; he also discusses about the *ulama* and the *mashaikh*, *pirs*, *walis*, *qalandars* and *dervishes* and the *salik* and the *faqir*. He indicates to some of the utmost practices of Islam.

We may first examine Guru Nanak's views towards Hinduism.<sup>7</sup> It is precisely certain that from the point of view of Guru Nanak, the Hindu sacred writings were completely inappropriate to restoration. To hear or to read, to write (expositions) or to comprehend them was to accumulate mere 'burden'.

Guru Nanak's view towards Hindu deities is not much distinct from his view towards the Hindu texts. He says, without Guru's *sabad*, Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh were as much 'miserable' as sansara in general. Guru Nanak's denial of Hindu texts and deities is closely linked with his disapproval of accustomed practices and ways of prayer. He identifies no merit in pilgrimage to religious places (*tirath*). For absolute devout, the association of saints is the actual *tirath*. The true *tirath* is in the Name and the *sabad*. There is no *tirath* like the Guru. Guru Nanak encourages people to pray to the Lord, in place of the salagram; he addresses them to use truthful living as the rosary of tulsi. Guru

Nanak has no compassion for established practice of Hindu deity and the sacraments and adherences related with it. Neither Jap nor tap, nor living at tiraths, was of any use without the True One. Guru Nanak believes that trust in the One Lord means putting a real tilak on one's forehead. For Guru Nanak, the understanding of the only one God includes in it all traditional prayer and generosity.

Regarding the real Pandit, Guru Nanak says that he is one who rightly recognizes and perceives the one in everybody. The true Pandit embraces God's Name. Without True Name, the tilak-mark and the sacred thread of the twice-born remain worthless. The belief in the Boundless one and His sabad is more worthwhile than, *Japa, tapa, sanjam* and the path of puranas. No fasting will decide the dignity one shall earn; it relies upon the true action.<sup>8</sup>

Guru Nanak's view towards contemporary Islam is very much like to his view towards Hinduism. In Guru Nanak's view, Muhammad was a *paighambar* but not the 'seal of the prophets.' In addition, Guru Nanak emphasizes the charm as well as the superiority of Allah, reasonably to bring home the point by mere loyalty to Islam, one could not assure pardon. Each and every one hears and talk about Him; but no one honestly acknowledge His virtue. The *Pirs, paighambars, saliks, sadiqs, faqirs* and *shahids; Shaikhs, qazis* and *mullas* and *darvishes*—all admire Allah through their prayers (*durud*), in desire of forthcoming blessings (*barkat*). But, (Allah) He observes everybody and favors His grace on whomsoever He wills.

Guru Nanak criticizes the *qazis* for their negligence. He appreciates the *qazi* to regulate his action to his occupation and thereby evolve as a true musulman. Guru Nanak says that Sheer talk at no time can lead to paradise; liberation lies in right action. Falsehood brings about only falsehood.

Besides this, the *qazi* is suggested to consider good action as his Kalima and to reinstate his five daily prayers with five doctrines of action and prayer; truth (*sachch*) lawful earning (*halal*), wishing well of others (*khair*), right aspiration (*niyat*) and appreciation of the Lord (*sifat, sana*). The five daily prayers, the recitation or study of the Quran and the delight of the table will be left behind; even the well informed 'sink' likes the vessel that has a hole at its bottom. Only he is a *qazi* who eliminate himself and who absolutely recognize God who ever was, is and shall be for all time, the True Creator. In

addition, the Shaikh as well as qazi is destined to be left chained in the wheel of transmigration if he does not become aware of that only noble deeds are repaid.

In guiding the Mualsmans, Guru Nanak turns up to pick the way of the Sufis. The Muslmans applause the Shari'at : they read and think about seriously; but only those are the true servants who, to see His face, become his slave (*banda*).<sup>9</sup>

Guru Nanak advocates the Muslmans to create gentleness their *mosque* and goodwill prayer-mat, to constitute fairly earned food their Quran, and timidness and politeness their Ka'ba, and truth their pir; to realize God's grace as their *kalima* and *namaz*; and to form *raza* their rosary, undoubtedly.

To be a muslman is ardous; only those who are true musalman should be called so. They should first accept the religion of the *auliya* and regard surrender as a record that gets rid of the rust (of the mirror).

Only then they become muslmans when they live their religion and expel all thoughts of life and death. They should approve God's legal order most cheerfully, faith in Him as the true Creator and fade themselves. Only then may they secure his grace (*rahmat*) and only then shall they be true muslmans. There is no confusion that Guru Nanak disagrees with the 'orthodox' in the wording of the Sufis, and, in doing so, reveal inclination for the latter.

Anyhow, this relative gratitude for the Sufis path should not lead us to conclude that Guru Nanak appreciate of the contemporary Sufis. He supports the qazi and the Shaikh in many ways—In Rag Gauri, for instance, they are supported as of suffering from *haumai*: They think too much of themselves. A real *dervish* while he lives is dead and leaves behind everything to unite with his creator.<sup>10</sup>

In the views of Guru Nanak towards contemporary religions, he demonstrates little admiration for the established orders of his time. He rejects Hindu and Muslim texts cannot lead to salvation. He observed Muhammad and his religion as one of the diverse explanation of God's creation. He attribute to Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva as ways, which propose that he acquired their presence as real, but they emerge as the creatures of God, deprived of all functions and subject to *maya* and to death.

## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> J.R. Puri, “*The Mystic Teachings of Guru Nanak*”, *Perspectives on Guru Nanak Seminar Papers* (ed.) Harbans Singh, *Religious Studies*, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1975, pp. 170-172.
- <sup>2</sup> Tara Chand, *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture*, Indian Press Pvt. Ltd., Allahabad, 1936, p. 136.
- <sup>3</sup> K.A. Nizami, “Some Social and Religious ideals of Guru Nanak,” *Perspectives on Guru Nanak Seminar Papers* (ed.), Harbans Singh, *Religious Studies*, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1975, p.151.
- <sup>4</sup> Tara Chand, *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture*, p. 166.
- <sup>5</sup> K.A. Nizami, “Some Social and Religious ideals of Guru Nanak,” p.151.
- <sup>6</sup> J.R. Puri, “The Mystic Teachings of Guru Nanak”, p. 170.
- <sup>7</sup> J.R. Puri, “The Mystic Teachings of Guru Nanak”, pp. 201-202.
- <sup>8</sup> J.S. Grewal, *Guru Nanak in History*, Publication Bureau, Chandigarh, 1979, pp. 206-215.
- <sup>9</sup> J.S. Grewal, *Guru Nanak in History*, pp. 228-230.
- <sup>10</sup> J.S. Grewal, *Guru Nanak in History*, pp. 231-232.