

RELIGIOUS RESPONSIBILITY TOWARDS PEACE - SIKH PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

The humanity, from the very beginning has been at war against itself and will continue fighting until it realizes the cause, in itself. Even today, the religious zealots supporting socio-political conflicts, in one form or another in the name of God, are killing thousands of innocent people. The historical evidence of almost every religion loathed with strife against humanity proves lack of religious responsibility. Guru Nanak (the pioneer of Sikh religion 1469-1539) challenged aggressive and oppressive Islamic invaders of India, and Hinduism for selfish gains trampling on lower castes. He raised conscious of all, to bring some peace in India. He held human responsible for his/her deeds instead of the God by promulgating 'Truth' in the Universal Laws administering natural phenomena and maintaining equipollence.

INTRODUCTION

The religion by definition [10] is a disciplined system of beliefs, and practices relating to the sacred scripture/s and uniting its adherents in a community. Adherence to such a system has a powerful hold on a person's way of thinking and interests etc. The religious people under guidance of the religious mentors follow opinions concerning the creation, nature, natural phenomena, worship of a deity, and divine involvement in the universe and human life. The religious leaders for personal gains manipulate psyche and morality of their followers to support political leaders as brutal and cruel enemies of the humanity. However, the people at personal levels, regardless of their color, creed, gender, religion and nationality; exchange information, feelings, and commitments through open communication. They wish to better not only their own lives but to help others in doing so, as well. The noble laureate physicist Steven Weinberg [17] expressed his feelings about humanity indulged in religious strife, when he stated, "*The whole history of the last thousands of years has been a history of religious persecutions and wars, pogroms, jihads, crusades. I find it all very regrettable, to say the least.*"

Guru Nanak (1469-1539) observed that in the age of renaissance and technology the religious leaders including Sufis, Brahmins and Popes and Rulers were acting as crazy butchers. The religions and religious principles had simply flown away. He rightly noticed that falsehood had gripped people and Truth could not be found anywhere. Everybody was suffering pains due to egotism. Guru Nanak, promulgated truth, and using his truthful rendition of natural phenomena, he brought an amicable resolution among the attacking Muslim invaders and Indians living in Punjab, India. Guru Nanak won the hearts of hundreds of

thousands in Islam and Hinduism, simply through an open and effective *dialogue* [8].

The religious mentors having significant influence upon the humanity and the governments hold more responsibility to promulgate peace, equality and love. But, the history dictates [15] show that the religious leaders in Semitic as well as in Indic religions, for sharing the booty, either initiated or supported the crusaders, jihadists and Indic wars. This paper is to review historical background of religious strife, significance of dialogue, Guru Nanak and his philosophy in holding religions responsible for conflicts, and recommended solutions for sustainable peace in the world.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

India had been invaded by Muslim Tyrants [13, 14], beginning with Mahmud Ghazni (993-1030 CE). Subsequently, other raiders followed until in 1192 CE, Muhamed Gauree established permanent base of Muslim rule in India. His general Qutb-ud-din Aibak succeeded him and settled as first Sultan of Delhi. Guru Nanak was born in 1469 CE. At the time Bahlol Khan Lodhi, (1451-1489) the founder of Lodhi dynasty was restoring glory to Delhi Sultanate. He was followed by his son, Sikander Khan Lodhi (1489-1517 CE), and succeeded by Ibrahim Khan Lodhi (1517-1526). Because of Ibrahim's obnoxious behavior towards other nobles and relatives, his uncle Alam Khan and Governor of Lahore, Daulat Khan invited Zahir-ud-Din Babur to settle scores with Ibrahim. Babur attacked India in 1521CE, plundered and pillaged the town of Syedpur/ Eminabad. Guru Nanak [8] became one of the captives in his prison and witnessed the plight of women and children under

captivity. And then in the famous battle of Panipat (1526 CE), Ibrahim Lodhi got killed opening the corridor for Babur to establish the Mogul Empire in Delhi.

Guru Nanak [9] narrated rational and pragmatic rendition (*Babur-vaani*) of Babur's ruthless invasion, which diminished Babur's cruelty towards women and children. He was spiritually very sensitive [13] to be stung deeply by the truthful, effective and honest narrations of Bani by Guru Nanak. Babar made amends and spared all prisoners (Muslims and Hindus) from further torment, and asked for forgiveness in the name of God.

Following devastation of the world and loss of several million human lives during Second World War (WW II), United Nations held a conference and on December 10, 1948 adapted 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights [7], the dignities, equal and inalienable rights of all members were recognized as the bases for foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world. *The whole world was supposed to abide by these regulations, but, did anybody pay mind to it?*

Apparently, the humanity did not learn anything about the value of human life and rights of living free in peace. The religious-socio-political conflicts in every corner of the world have been prevalent ever since. The Jews in Israel and Muslims in Palestine have been at each other's throat, since the state of Israel got created in 1948. The Catholics and Protestants of the same country, Ireland, for **the sake of religious dominance** and control of treasury have been killing each other from seventeenth century into the end of 20th century [6].

Martin Luther [2] (1483-1546) an Augustinian monk and John Calvin [2] (1509-1564), the French Lawyer, made Protestant Movement ^[8] **an international theological rebellion against Rome**. Luther wanted the German Christian body to be cleaned of papal corruption; whereas Calvin wanted the entire Christian community to be made over into the image of what he thought God intended. When they were done, a part of it had been done. These European wars of 16th and 17th century, and the onset of Protestant Reformation, although unconnected were **mostly influenced by the religious change of the period, and conflicts and rivalry that it produced.**"

The human-bombs using psychologically conditioned and emotionally oppressed innocent Muslim citizens (including women and children) as carriers are exploding almost every day in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Approximately, 5337 American soldiers and 2500+ allied forces, 750,000 Iraqis, 40,000 Afghanistan's and over 5000 in Pakistan civilians plus more have been killed since 2001[11]. The agonizing truth in all this anarchy is that

Muslims are killing Muslims just for the sake of socio-political gains but more so for their egotistical gains in religious dominance.

Significance of Dialogue

The term Di-a-logue [4], (a noun), is conversation between two or more persons for an exchange of ideas or opinions on a particular issue, esp. a political or religious issue, with a view to reaching an amicable agreement or settlement.

Guru Nanak, founder of Sikhism, travelled all over India and abroad for 28 years of his active life promulgating 'Truth' via dialogue among religious mentors and others. He emphasized communication among people so much that he wrote;

ਜਬ ਲਗੁ ਦੁਨੀਆ ਰਹੀਐ ਨਾਨਕ ਕਛੁ ਸੁਣੀਐ ਕਛੁ ਕਹੀਐ ॥

So long as you live in this world, Nanak says, have a dialogue, listen some and say some. AGGS. M 1, p.661.

Guru Nanak corrected egotistical religious leaders preaching and practicing fraudulent rituals for selfish gains to innocent and ignorant populace. The words applied during dialogue must have been of value that every person conversing or listening to him became his follower. He could influence officials and rulers like Daulat Khan Lodhi, Babur and other religious leaders like Sidhas, senior Imam of Mecca, and Brahmans at Hardwar from further fraudulent rituals and cruelty upon populace [13, 14].

Guru Nanak, identified with the ones practicing truthful life and even borrowed some of their literature (Bhagats-Kabir, Farid, Namdev and 27 others), to be incorporated in Aad Guru Granth Sahib [1] by Guru Arjan. And, at times during dialogues, when he observed falsehood, he corrected amicably. For example, visits to Hardwar-India, Mecca-Saudi Arabia, Baghdad-Iraq and several other incidents recorded in his biographies [13, 14].

GURU NANAK AND NANAKIAN PHILOSOPHY

Guru Nanak (1469-1539 A.D.) as the founder of Sikhi, completed his education, established his genius supremacy with the teachers and other elders, got employment for a short period of time, was married and had two sons. He was not just another Sufi, Saint, Bhagat or a detached devotee of the God, but a divine person deeply concerned with the pains and suffering of the people. He wanted to awaken demoralized, depressed, dependent, and desperate people by understanding the cruel and manipulative tactics of the religious leaders, teachers, and ruling officials/kings. He was a social reformer, an activist, a superb singer-poet and an unmatched philosopher of the time. He was a

wonderful uniting force between contending religious leaders of Hinduism and Islam. **He forged a breed of humanity in the world based on morality, honesty and fundamental human rights that was supported by the concept of One God for whole humanity.**

Nanakian Philosophy

The term “Nanakian Philosophy” coined by Prof. Devinder Singh Chahal [3] is defined as, “the philosophy promulgated by Guru Nanak that was taught and enriched by other nine Sikh Gurus, who succeeded to the House of Nanak, is Nanakian Philosophy.” This philosophy practiced, disseminated and further enriched was then compiled in a Holy Granth called ‘Aad Bir or Aad Pothi’ by Guru Arjan and in 1604 enshrined in Darbar Sahib, Amritsar, Punjab, India. Guru Gobind Singh later added the Bani of his father Guru Teg Bahadur and completed the Holy Granth in 1708 A.D. that is now called Aad Guru Granth Sahib [1] as the sole embodiment of GURU for the Sikhs.

Guru Nanak believed in the God that permeated in natural phenomena (ਕੁਦਰਤ—Nature) and evolved humanity to survive, sustain, and organize itself with love, redemption, and reclamation of individual rights and community ethics. He firmly believed in the principle that a *human is responsible for its own actions*. Guru Nanak during his life helped people to comprehend the value of human life, love, compassion, and living with the universal laws (*hukam-hukamim*) ministering natural phenomena. People in India and abroad listened to Guru Nanak, believed in his truthful sermons and human values.

Following are some salient principles of Nanakian Philosophy for peace.

1. Guru Nanak, promulgated truth, equality, dignity, humility, modesty, love and compassion as the fundamental requirements to appreciate human rights, hence, basis for peace. He held human instead of God responsible for his/her actions:
ਜੈਸਾ ਕਰੇ ਸੁ ਤੈਸਾ ਪਾਵੈ॥ ਆਪਿ ਬੀਜਿ ਆਪੇ ਹੀ ਖਾਵੈ ॥
ਜੇ ਵਡਿਆਈਆਂ ਆਪੇ ਖਾਇ ॥ ਜੇਹੀ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਤੇਹੈ ਰਾਹਿ ਜਾਇ ॥
One receives according to one's deeds. As one sows, so shall one reap.
One may praise gloriously while adoring self. As the intellect dictates, so one must follow .
AGGS. M 1, p.662.
2. Guru Nanak preached to practice *Naam* for self and communicate with others:
ਆਪਿ ਜਪਹੁ ਅਵਰਾ ਨਾਮੁ ਜਪਾਵਹੁ ॥
ਸੁਨਤ ਕਹਤ ਰਹਤ ਗਤਿ ਪਾਵਹੁ ॥

Chant the Naam yourself, and inspire others to chant it as well.

Hearing, speaking and living it, emancipation is obtained.

AGGS. M 5, p.289

3. ‘Life of a householder with due restraint of mind for spiritual evolution is attuning with consciousness and living righteously serving fellowmen.
ਇਕਿ ਗਿਰਹੀ ਸੇਵਕ ਸਾਧਿਕਾ ਗੁਰਮਤੀ ਲਾਗੇ ॥
AGGS.M1,p.419
4. ‘Self determination of each entity is a fundamental aspect of the universe.’
ਮਨ ਤੂੰ ਜੋਤਿ ਸਰੂਪੁ ਹੈ ਆਪਣਾ ਮੂਲੁ ਪਛਾਣੁ ॥
The Divine Light - recognize your own origin.
AGGS.M3, p.441.
5. ‘Sharing (*daan*) materialistic, spiritual and intellectual wealth with every seeker of truth,’ maintaining clean intellect and extrinsic outlook, while realizing attributes in spirituality.
ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਦਾਨੁ ਇਸਨਾਨੁ ॥
AGGS. M1, p. 942.
6. Earnest and truthful living, instead of living on other’s earnings. He wrote:
ਸਚਹੁ ਓਰੈ ਸਭੁ ਕੋ ਉਪਰਿ ਸਚੁ ਆਚਾਰੁ॥੫॥
‘Truth is higher than everything, but higher still is truthful living.’
AGGS. M1, p.62.
7. Casteless society and Equality, including women having equal status with men.
ਜਾਤਿ ਅਜਾਤਿ ਕੇਈ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਧਿਆਵੈ ਸਭਿ ਪੂਰੇ ਮਾਨਸ ਤਿਨਛੇ ॥
Anyone who meditates on God, regardless of caste, will have all of his hopes and desires fulfilled.
AGGS. M 4 1178

ਭੰਡਹੁ ਹੀ ਭੰਡੁ ਉਪਜੈ ਭੰਡੈ ਬਾਝੁ ਨ ਕੋਇ ॥
ਨਾਨਕ ਭੰਡੈ ਬਾਹਰਾ ਏਕੇ ਸਚਾ ਸੇਇ ॥
From woman, another is born; without woman, there would be no one at all.
O Nanak, only the God is without a woman.
AGGS. M1, p. 473
8. A true Guru is the one that harmonizes people together.
ਨਾਨਕ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਐਸਾ ਜਾਣੀਐ ਜੋ ਸਭਸੈ ਲਏ ਮਿਲਾਇ ਜੀਉ ॥
Nanak, Recognize the true Guru that can bring harmony among people.
AGGS. M1, p.72.

Guru Nanak realized restrictive fundamentals in dominant religions of the time (Hinduism and Islam) that were stuck in stationary nature. He promulgated fluency in the Sikhi; So that the Sikhs could learn much as the Guru and comprehend the mystics about the Supreme to progress further.

DISCUSSION

The science and technology have progressed tremendously in several aspects for improving materialistic comforts in human life. But, at the same time the human has created advanced ways of destroying itself as well. The improvement in literacy has failed in transcending rationalistic comprehension of universal laws in humanity. And, that leaves human in mental distress, discontent with self and the surrounding environment. The trust in religion and religious leaders promoting anthropomorphic gods, goddesses and the God is feigning by the day.

For the fundamental human needs, reaching future in search of age old values of truth, goodness, caring, sharing, compassion and love, our faiths can still be powerful allies particularly when we all believe in One God permeated in every aspect of phenomenal nature. The basic principles of every religion teach moral precepts for perfecting mind, body and deeds. The control over egoistic thoughts and actions is emphasized more commonly but seldom applied. The religious leaders and mentors preach unselfish altruism to better human life and attain happiness. But, at the same time their actions display nothing more than greed, anger and ego promoting even violence just for dominance of their religion. The 'Freedom from Religion Foundation' on August 28, 2000, issued an open letter to the Vice-Presidential candidate Senator Joseph Lieberman that was written by Steven Weisberg [17]. He wrote "good people will do good things, and bad people will do bad things. But, for good people to do bad things—that takes religion."

The religions in general are meant for lessening emotional stress; bring comfort and happiness to humanity. The human under extreme circumstances (wars, and natural calamities) confronting helplessness seek support and truths for unity and equality in humanity. Every now and then distressed with human suffering, some humanitarians express possibility of having 'one world and one religion'; So that equality, compassion, and caring for others prevail regardless of divisions created by religions. In 1985, while the concerned citizens of living faiths were discussing such a possibility, Diana Eck [5], one of the members commented on interfaith dialogue as the basis for creation of one world. She said, "One world cannot be built on the foundation of competition and polarization

between the super-powers. One world cannot be built on the foundation of science, technology and media. One world cannot be built on Christian, Muslim, Jewish or Sikh triumphalism. One world cannot be built on the foundation of mutual fear and suspicion. *Whereas laying foundations for one world is the most important task of our time. These foundations are not negotiated statements and agreements. These foundations are, rather, in stock piling of trust through dialogue and creation of relationships that can sustain both agreements and statements.*"

It seems pertinent to say that not one religion or a new religion will be able to promulgate civility and peace in all the nations. Thus, it will be better to call upon all **religions of the world to accept RESPONSIBILITY** in rejuvenating compassion, mutual understanding and harmony enriching humanity towards sustainable peace. The religious mentors putting their selfish gains aside have distinctive role in manipulating destructive political schemes into constructive plans for the sake of humanity. The parliament of World Religions and the United Nations' efforts for opening venues for dialogue between different faiths are commendable. The president [12] of UN general assembly while receiving 'Path to Peace Foundation' award on June 13, 2007, said, "Promoting a true dialogue among civilizations and religions is perhaps the most important political instrument that we can use to reach out across borders and build bridges of peace and hope."

CONCLUSION

All religions promulgate control of ego, greed and selfishness to avoid sufferings and attain emancipation through realization of universal laws and acceptance of natural phenomena. It can make us feel more responsible for our actions and help us function better in perfecting our mind, body and deeds. The religious mentors and leaders in the name of God should also for a change assume responsibility for giving evil advice and putting their ego aside start practicing unselfishness.

As the old saying goes, "charity begins at home", so does the change in the deeds of religious and political leaders of every country. Then, interfaith understanding can be popularized at international levels as well. If the religions make their goal to attain peace in the world as their main objective, harmonizing and unifying the world will be most significant contribution made by them. After all at the end of the day, we the people know that the world needs all the responsible religions.

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real perspective to the humanity of the 21st century involving the representatives of other faiths during the next conference of the CPWR in 2014 to justify the following statement of Arnold Toynbee: **“Mankind’s religious future may be obscure; yet one thing can be foreseen: the living higher religions are going to influence each other more than ever before, in these days of increasing communication between all parts of the world and all branches of the human race in this coming religious debate, the Sikh religion, and its scriptures the Adi Granth, will have something of special value to say to the rest of the world.”**

Toynbee admits that “Mankind’s religious future may be obscure;” I agree with him to a great extent since the religions based on mythology will not have any acceptability by the humanity of 21st century.

But the second part of his above statement that “...the Sikh religion, and its scriptures the Adi Granth, will have something of special value to say to the rest of the world.” has inspired me for conducting research to explore if there is any uniqueness and originality in the philosophy of Guru Nanak embodied in his Bani, which could have special value to the rest of the world? In this respect the Institute for Understanding Sikhism, Laval, Quebec, Canada has published my work as a Research Monograph, **NANAKIAN PHILOSOPHY: Basics for Humanity**, which portrays uniqueness and originality of philosophy of Guru Nanak and its universal acceptability and applicability during the 21st century, the Information Age/Current Science Age . This Research Monograph can be taken as a steppingstone to achieve the above objectives.

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