

The Highway to Happiness

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The cacophony of divergent beliefs baffles and confuses the common man pulling him in different directions, contradictory to one and other. Yet, there is only one Truth that is all pervading.

Sikhism as the latest established creed had to study and sift existing dogmas to arrive at the Supreme Truth. Guru Nanak defined Godhead as Truth and exhorted Sikhs to live strictly by truth and never compromise truth with any worldly or other-worldly benefits whatsoever. In a nutshell, Sikhism is total adoption of Truth:

Aad Sach Jugad sach

Hae bhi sach Nanak hosi bhi sach.

Truth at the Beginning,

Truth in the Eons,

Truth Inherent,

Nanak, Truth it shall be.

To a Sikh it is thus imperative to shun that which is not Truth. He has no hesitation to declare as invalid whatever he finds not conforming to his scale of Total Truth.

In spite of this unambiguous position, many in our community are seen to dither and waver these days, influenced by the neighbours' rituals and beliefs, leading to superfluous superstitions where there should be none.

SEMITIC ORDER: The Sikh belief system does not accept Semitic line of thought that warns of punishment in hell and damnation without reclamation for the sinner despite repentance. Sikhism firmly believes that God is ever merciful and pardons our blunders ad infinitum:

Hum apradhi sad bhultey, tum bakhshanharey. SGGS 809

We sinners are ever faltering; You are ever pardoning.

Guru always led the flock away from the theory of Heaven and Hell:

325 *Na jana Bekunth kaha hee; Sadh sangat Bekunthey aahe.* SGGS

I do not know where Heaven is; Heaven is in the Holy congregation.

And

Sabh koi chalan keht hae oo(n)haa(n); na jano Bekunth hae kahaa(n)
SGGS 1161

All say about going 'there'; I do not know where Heaven is.

And

Kabir, surag Nark te mae raheo Sat Guru ke Parsad

Charn kamal ki mauj meh raho antt ar aad. SGGS 1370

Kabir, By Guru's Grace I have given up on Hell and Paradise.

In the Lotus feet of the Lord, Beginning and End are shed.

DEFINITIONS

Guru says:

Dehura Masit soee Pooja oh Navaj oee Akal Ustat

God is in temple and mosque. He is in Hindu worship and Muslim prayer.

However, it is necessary to understand Guru's purport of message, so that even though common language was used as the channel of communication, the definitions were clearly at variance from the established Hindu and Semitic beliefs.

Bed kateb parhey bahutey din bhed kachhoo tin ko nah payo

Poojat thaur anek phireo par Ek kabhi hia mey n basayo Tetees
Sawaiye

For long you read Vedas and Semitic books, but still have not understood the secret of God. You worshipped One God after another and moved from place to place but never thought of cherishing the One Lord in your heart

And

Pah gahey jab te tumre tab te kou ankh tare nahi anio...
Sawiye

Ever since I have grasped God's feet, I have not thought of any one else, I do not accept doctrines of various faiths of *Ram, Rahim, Puranas, Quran. Simritis* and *shastras* and the Vedas and Semitic scriptures define variously but I do not subscribe to any of them.

Similarly,

Bed Kateb n bhed lakheo sabh haar parey Har hath n aiyo

Tav Prasad Sawiye

Vedas and Semitic scriptures have not unravelled God's mystery; they wearied but have not attained Him.

Guru Nanak defined Muslim belief thus:

Mehr Masit Sidq musla haq halal Quran

SGGS 140

Take Mercy as Mosque,

Candour as prayer-mat

Correct behaviour as *Quran*

Honesty as the circumcision

Piety as Fasting,

So be Muslim

Guru Nanak defined five time prayers of Islam thus:

Panj nivaza vakhat panj panja panje nao....

SGGS 141

Five prayers at five times all immersed in God's name

First Truth Second rightful conduct

Third charity in God's name

Fourth good intentions and clean mind

Fifth God's Praises

Pure actions as *kalma* then only call yourself a Muslim.

Guru was equally critical of Hindu precepts and defining God as Rama, Krishna, Vishnu, Mahadeva etc. taking birth:

Thakur chhod daasi ko simreh manmukh andh agyana

Hari ki bhagati karhe tin nindeh nigureh pasu samana SGGS1138-39

Instead of Lord, the foolish egocentric prays to minions

He mocks God's disciples, the direction-less brute.

And

Tum ju keht ho Nand ko nandan nand su nandan ka ko ry... SGGS 338

You who call God as Nand's son, how is he God

When there was neither Earth nor Sky in all directions

Where was this Nand?

God is beyond troubles nor is He born

He is called Immanent.

And

Nanak Nirbhau Nirankar hor kete Ram raval

Ketian kann kahanian kete bed bichar

SGGS

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Nanak, God is Fearless and Formless

There are many Ramas lying in dust

There are many stories about Krishna

There are many thought-provoking Vedas

HINDU PRECEPTS

While Muslims firmly adhered to Judaic concept of God, with theory of Origin, of Adam, the original sin, Heaven and Hell and a general amnesty to those who accepted

Muhammad as the Saviour, with promises of houries; milk and honey; streams of wine which a Muslim is directed to abjure in this life; and gardens laden with fruits, Hindu was wholly confused about God. His basic belief in Cause and Effect matured into mathematical proportions:

Cycle of Cause and Effect (*Karma* and *Bhog*)

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Cycle of Transmigration

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Cycle of Fate and Fixed predictions

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God's Will

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Concept of Heaven and Hell

Buddhists and Jains are firm adherents of the concept of *karma* and *bhog* and the dogma of transmigration. This renders God as quite irrelevant.

On the other extreme is the Semitic thought accepting God as the Doer. However God is handicapped by the resurrection of Devil who is projected as equally powerful if not more than God and has a hobby to lead good pious men astray. Perhaps, God cannot subdue Satan nor protect against Satan's machinations for which purpose Semitic prophets Moses, Jesus and Muhammad claimed responsibility to guard their own flocks only, as Satan rules over the rest.

Hindus who fashioned the dogma of cause and effect, leading to the theory of unending transmigration for the chastisement of the sinners and gainful rewards to the pure have parallel stream of God's Will which is a total contradiction. Somewhere on the way Fate does not remain arbiter of past follies and good actions linked to one's record of deeds but dependent solely on God's Will which is illogical.

If it is God's Will which prevails, then there is nothing that one can do about it.

Moreover, in Hindu Karma philosophy, once human birth is attained, it may not be a definite step forward. It is rather like the childish game of snakes and ladders where one slip from the top of the table, tumbles one to the entry point and so remain caught up in the vicious circle. The irony is that the soul, though defined as unsullied and pure in itself, becomes a victim of circumstances as it is placed in new environs, in a new body

and is rewarded or punished for the previous birth span into the next. But it has not the right to know about its past deeds, even after complete break with the past life, to enable it to avoid possible pitfalls and improve. Yet, it has to carry the burden and responsibility of those actions in a blind alley. In *Gita* Krishna tells Arjun that both of them had transmigrated ad infinitum.

On the other hand, we have the parallel conjecture of the infallibility of predestined fate that is blamed on circumstances beyond a person's control. If there is an earthquake, cyclone, war, riots, draught, floods, famine, landslides, or accidents, where whole communities equally stand to suffer, it is put on fate, which is as unremitting and there is no escape.

The third angle in Hindu tangle to a man's woes is God's whims. Notwithstanding Karma theory, on which Hindu Edifice rests firmly, a contradictory responsibility is fixed on the gods and the helpless wretch rants and raves at gods. Vedas give recipes for mitigating suffering by recitation of *mantras*, *yagnas*, *havans*, which claim to yield fruitful results and *tantric sidhis* to defeat evil designs of gods, as well as the inauspicious timings of planets, which the scared man dare not ignore at his own peril.

Transmigration is inevitable in Hindu scheme; therefore, *nark-swarg*, hell and heaven fall flat as a concept, since the soul continues to be reborn. The entire rigmarole of offering prayers, flowers as well as water to Sun for the dead and *shraad* become meaningless as ancestors migrate to new situations and conditions, de-linked with the previous lifespan.

Poor wretch! He does not have a fair game plan foisted by Providence, in which the man continues to suffer, loses all the plus points in no time and has no way to chart his course. There is no escape until *Maha Parley* when the whole script and set up is wiped out.

The above is necessary to appreciate, as most of the Sikhs were converts with firm Hindu background and convictions and their roots remained firmly entrenched in Hindu lore.

Our revered Gurus had to address congregations composed mainly of Hindu seekers and the idiom Gurus used was based on the Hindu mythology and karma theory. However, Guru Nanak unambiguously remarked: *Hindu moole bhoole akhuti jahin* (SGGS 556): The Hindu belief is erroneous and basically unfair.

Hindu had kept God in abeyance and had dug deep in his tinkering with mantras, rituals, *havans* to avoid and escape God-The Doer by propitiating the deities to get quick rewards. Gurbani says: *Hindu Anha Turku Kana* (SGGS 875) Hindu is blind; Muslim is partially knowing.

Ram Ram sabh ko kahe kahiye Ram na hoey

The Highway – "GAADI RAH"

Guru was aware of the resistance and hypocrites who paid lip service to the Straight Path propounded by Guru. They drew a clear distinction between self-centered *manmukh* versus *gurmukh*, which is one of the founding concepts, and doctrine of Sikh Straight Path.

Jin ke Chit Kathor hah so bahei n Sat Gur pas

SGGS 314

Those whose minds are hard do not sit near the true Master

There Truth prevails which bores the wicked

They willy-nilly pass a moment or two, and then join the wicked

The evil minded cannot be planted among the pious, this may be understood

Vicious mix with wicked; the virtuous Sikhs stay with the true Master.

Our Guru strived for over 239 years of continuous guidance and lead the Sikhs on to the correct road of *gursikhi* and men, women, children who readily embraced death to defy old taboos and totem is proof enough of their achievements.

Jo Jan lujhe maney siou se soorey Pardhana...

SGGS 1089

Jin Gurparsadi man jiteya jag tinhey jitana

Those who struggle with their mind are the brave supermen

Those who by God's grace vanquish the mind are successful in the world

But, now under the influence of overwhelming majority of Hindus, Sikhs are spiritually choked and are apologetic about the excellent truths bestowed by our Gurus.

However, the above confusing state of Hindu practices has continued to dominate Sikhs who have not studied the clear statements of our Gurus. They harp on the misguided notion that transmigration has been mentioned in *gurbani* so often that it seems that Gurus accepted this dogma as inescapable.

Please refer to Guru *sabad* :

Har Har Arth Sareer hum becheya purey Gur ke agey SGGS 171

Un Satgur agey sees na becheya oe aveh jaye abhagey SGGS 172

We have dedicated our existence to (the cause) of the perfect Master

Those unfortunates who have not sacrificed their mind to the True Master remain in the cycle of transmigration.

And on Page 993 M:3:

Gur Parsadi Ek liv lagi dubhida tade binasi

Jo tis bhana so sat kar mania kati jam ki phasi

Bhanat Nanak lekha mange kavna ja chukka mun abhimana

Tas tas Dharm rai japat hai pae sache ki sarna

By Grace of God I have merged with One Primal Being; doubts have vanished

Whatever is His Doing is accepted as True; it cuts the strangle-hold of Death

Nanak says, who will ask for the account of deeds (and misdeeds) when Ego is gone,

The Angel of Judgement meditates only on Him whose protection I have taken.

And

Jaman maran n tin ko jo har liv lage

Transmigration is not for those who are engrossed in God

Guru proclaims in unambiguous terms that a Sikh who sheds his ego at alter of Guru does not remain subject to Hindu dogma of transmigration or *Karma* and *Bhog*.

Nanak Gurmukh sach kamavai manmukh avajjai.

And

Ava gaon nivarya hae sacha soi.

SGGS 729

Gur ka sevak Nark na jaye

SGGS 1075

Sikhism clearly moves away from Hindu and Muslim line of thought:

Pandit Mulla jo likh diya

Chhad chale hum kachhu n liya.

SGGS 1159

Sikhism develops people on firm planks of God-centered actions: *adi sach* (Supreme Truth); *sach aachar* (Truthful Living), involving oneself into community welfare and freeing the Self from fear and enmity. With Gurus healing touch to merge Sikh personality into All Pervading *Akal Purkh*, in ascendancy, the Sikh should be totally rid of confusion of Hindu pedigree. Guru beckons; to respond is for the Sikh, to throw away the shackles of rebirth, to be free of the cycle of *karma*, fate, destiny.

The resurgence of Hindu wave has created hesitation about God being *Niranjan*, *Nirankar*, Immanent, *Nirguna*, omni-potent, omni-present, without a sign, colour, shape, unborn, undying, inside and all around us. The relapse into images, pictures, idols and 'living' guru which are seen by normal vision is worrying. Guru is *gyan* and *gur-sabad*, not human body. Guru illumines the dark confines of mind. This is the literal translation of the word *guru*. Unfortunately, it seems that the sight as seen by human vision, sound heard by normal ears, smells which waft into nostrils attract those who have forgotten Guru Nanak's refusal to take part in the priests' *Arti* at Jagan Nath Puri describing the entire creation as offering *Arti* to the Lord. What about the resumption of *Arti* with decorated salvers by Sikhs at their homes and *sant deras*, denying the subtle *guruvak*:

Antar Deyo n janey andh; bhram ka mohya pavey phandh

N pathar boley na kichh dey; phokat karm nehphal hae sev SGGS 1160

The blind one does not perceive God inside him; Immersed in doubts he gets entangled; Idol neither speaks nor gives; mere meaningless actions without any rewards.

Jin hari ka naam n gurmukh jata se jag meh kahe aiya

Gur ki sewa kade n kini birtha janam gavaya

SGGS 1130

Those who did not understand Guru's naam philosophy,

Why were they born?

They never served Guru and squandered their life away.

Guru encourages Sikhs to ever try to improve, develop his personality to perfection. Once a Sikh attains a superior spiritual and intellectual status, adopts truth and truthful living, sweet demeanour, courtesy and ready-to-help attitude, shares with others and craves for God's love, he is in *sahaj* state and friend of all and enemy to none; he

certainly is the *gurmukh*, who throws away the yoke of *karm* and *bhog*, transmigration, as he accepts that Doer is God and he must ever conform to God's Will.