

Faith: Renewal and Peace - After Calamity*

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* This was presented, in part, at 'Katrina' [Hurricane] Inter-Faith Prayer Service on **FAITH, RENEWAL AND PEACE** on **August 29 2008**, at Temple Sinai, Louisiana

. - USA - Perhaps, it might be helpful to some other speakers in presenting the Sikh Faith as a messenger of universal peace, on special occasions. - JSW

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At this Inter-Faith Prayer Service commemorating the third anniversary of hurricane 'Katrina' as one of the greatest tragedy befalling New Orleans (U.S.A.), the objective is to earnestly pray together for our lost citizens, our city, our region, and the world at large. The big question is, **how can we, through our unwavering faith in God, and its renewal, bring about comfort, security and peace, not only to the suffering people of this great city, but also to the people from other parts of the world, who have suffered similar catastrophic natural disasters.**

We human beings are all children of one God and the same divine life (light) current is present in each one of us. This is what the Sikh faith instructs us in the following hymn, as divinely revealed to Guru Nanak Dev Jee:

kwieAw mhlu mMdr Gr hir kw
iqs mih rwKI joiq Epwr mhl' 1 ml'r; pn' 1256
*kayaa mahal mandar ghar hur kaa
tis meh rakhi jaut apaar (SGGS: 1256)*

"The body is the palace, the temple and home of God, and into it (God) has placed infinite Light".

That the Divine Spirit resides within each one of us is further illustrated by the following hymns of Gurus Ram Dass and Arjan Dev jee:

qUM Gt Gt AqMir srb inrMqir jl
hir eyko purKu smwxw (SGGS: 11)
*too ghat ghat untir sarbh nirantur jee
har aiko purakh samaana*

"Thou, oh one God, are present within each and every heart and in every thing".

so AMqir so bwhir AnMq
Git Git ibAwip rihAw BgvMq (SGGS: 293)
*sau antur sau bahur anant
ghat ghat biaap rahya bhagvant*

"God's (spirit) is within and without. God is residing in every heart".

pRB kl joiq sgl Gt sohY
gauVI suKmnI (SGGS:282)
prabh kee jyot sagal ghat sohai

"(Presence of) God's Light in all human beings shines beautifully".

Undoubtedly then, God is present in each one of us and is present in us all the time, at this very moment. This is a fundamental belief in the realization of God within us as our

inner Self. We are in God and God is in us. Clearly all the people in the world are thus related to one another and that all of us are therefore part of one giant God's family. In simple words **God is present in every one of us and is always with us as a constant companion. This is admirably illustrated in the hymn:**

hir myrw swQl sMig shwel (SGGS: 375)

Har mairaa sathee sangh sahayee

"God, my companion (is with) me as a helper (supporter)".

Doesn't this intimately connect each one of us to God, and therefore to one another? Doesn't this make each one of us part of God's family? Doesn't this mean that we are divinely bonded to one another as brothers and sisters? We just need to remember this universal Sikh doctrine common to all human beings.

It would now be obvious that God is present in the virtuous person as well as in the evil one. The only difference is that the former knows it and the latter does not. We should see God in the faces of men and women of all races, of all religions, of all nations and of all kinds. With this belief firmly embedded in your mind and heart, now visualize and imagine God appearing before you and instructing you, "**To make and build a better world**". How should I do it, you ask God? God responds, "**Just make and build a better you**". When each one of us will follow this supreme counsel starting with oneself, then, **wouldn't it be easier for us to unconditionally get along with each other, be kind, caring and helpful to one another, be compassionate to one another, and to love each other? Remember, true nobility is not in you being better than everybody else, but in you being better than you used to be. This is, what a true renewal of faith is?**

With such a profoundly meaningful eternal command, you may wonder, why a universally caring and compassionate world society is not being established? Perhaps, it is because of the over indulgence of our mind in evils of envy, contempt, jealousy, and in racial, ethnic and religious differences. All of these lead to intolerance. Therefore, **first, we should eliminate intolerance from our life because intolerance leads to anger, anger leads to hatred, and hatred leads to violence and crime. Second**, since our actions, our thoughts, our feelings, our attitude, our behavior are all influenced by our mind, so **our mind must be tamed, controlled, and disciplined so it carries out only virtuous deeds**. Only then we can have equality, brotherhood and love among all the people of the world regardless of one's gender, race, ethnicity, sect, religion, social and economic status, and nationality. Only then we would have lasting security and peace in our society and in the world.

Let us see how we can practically accomplish this. This is possible only through our deep abiding faith and unwavering love in God, and a genuine heart-felt concern for all His created human beings. We know love cannot exist as long as there is sense of "**me**" or "**I**", the "**self or ego**". A mind that is self-centered with its own ambition, agenda, greed and intolerance has no capacity to love. It is our mind, therefore, which needs an overhaul. To purify and spiritualize our mind the Sikh faith teaches us to **eliminate five hidden enemies from within because these are really the culprits inside us and robbing us of our virtuous qualities and making us commit evil deeds.**

kwm kRoD Aru loB moh ibnis jwie AhMmyv

nwnk pRB srxwqql kir pRswidu gurdyv (SGGS: 270)

kaam krodh aur lobh moh binus jaaiy ehmaiv

Nanak prabh sarnagatee kar parsaad gurdev

"Nanak has come to God's refuge, bless Thy grace oh Gurdev (God), so lust, anger,

greed, worldly attachments, and arrogance get eliminated”.

This hymn advises us that through earnest prayer, divine grace, total surrender to God, and earnest personal efforts, we can get rid of the evils of greed, worldly attachments, lust, sin, falsehood, deceit, enmity, conflicts (quarrels) and arrogance, and also of negative emotions like hatred, anger, sadness, despair and anxiety. Remember our mind is the root cause of all our sorrows, our problems and our misery. By completely surrendering our mind to God out of pure love, deep gratitude and complete trust, and not out of fear, we are most humbly pleading with God to help our mind to become pure and stay calm, serene, unexcited, poised, and peaceful.

This way of making **changes in personal lifestyle will translate into developing better social, ethical, moral and spiritual habits, and to character re-building one person at a time.** This methodology of self-improvement can then be propagated to our families, children, youth and adults through **Churches, Synagogues, Gurdwaras, Temples, Schools, Universities and other faith based and social organizations. This is so because such institutions are ideally suited and** are well equipped to reform our minds, our hearts and our lives. Such a systematic and organized drive would arouse the enthusiasm of not only the religious and social leaders but also of the individual members of the organization(s). It would then be natural for all the people to act **in unison for a common cause of living a holy life based on love, truth, justice, liberty, freedom and true equality.** Remember love is a superior antidote and a superb opposite of all negative or evil feelings, emotions and practices or doings. With this newly reformed attitude and behavior we will radiate and exhibit affection, warmth, kindness, contentment, compassion, truthfulness, humility, sweetness of tongue and acceptance of God’s command. Additionally, this will generate divinely enlightening vibrations within us, and all around us with eternal energy lifting our spirits upwards. This will usher an era and aura of deep spirituality worldwide. Therefore, this is, how the **divinely revealed message of Sikh faith provides us with an unprecedented opportunity to renew and recommit our relationship to God and to all His created human beings so that a lasting peace can be established on earth.**

