

The Spirit of True Religion

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Man is inquisitive by nature. Since his arrival on earth, he has been wonder struck by phenomenal grandeur of Nature around him. From his very inception, he has tried to delve deep into the mysteries and basic fundamental questions of life and tried to find their answer. Who is the Creator of the universe? Who am I ? Where do we come from, and why? Is there some higher power that guides our destinies? What is the relation of man with his Creator? What is that power which separates man from God and ties him down with earthly ties and casts an illusion on him? What is the goal of our life and how can we achieve that? What happens to us when we die? Is there life after death? Do we reap the fruit of our actions? Relation of man with man, society, with his own self, are some of the basic questions which have always been the subject of research. If man is light illumined, then how can he empower himself spiritually, develop his latent potentiality and achieve peace and bliss in life. Religion and spiritualism try to answer these questions.

The question then arises: what is religion, what is spiritualism, what is their relationship and what is the role they play in moulding the personality of man?

Religion defies easy definition. Thoughts considered to be supernatural, sacred divine, rituals, associated with such beliefs or system of thought come into the domain of religion. According to Sanskrit word Dharma what ever is useful and beneficial for life is Dharma Dharma is a way of life, path of life which helps a man to develop spiritualism in life and become a higher developed person. In Rigveda (11/9/17) the word Dharma means benevolent output derived from yajnas. In chandogya upnishada (2/2/3/1) the word Dharma has been used for duty. In Gita (1/1) also it has been used in this sense. In Gita higher values of life like fearlessness, purity of heart, alms giving, religious rites, right study of scriptures, self-discipline, truth, compassion toward all beings and such other eternal values of life constitute Dharma (Gita Chap XVI). In Buddhism moral virtue (sila concentration (samadhi) and wisdom (prajna), these three combined with vimukhi (Nirvana) constitute Dharma (*Digha Nikaya*, Vol. 2 p. 25). In Sikhism, the three main cardinal principles of Dharma are to earn one's livelihood with the sweat of one's brow, to share it with the needy for social reconstruction and name meditation to develop spiritual values in life which can be well expressed in the words of Guru Arjun Dev Ji.

"You live your life making earnest efforts,
And make your life happy through rightful earnings.
Meet the Lord through contemplation,
And your anxieties will be dispelled.

(SGGS: 522)

Religions are diverse: like Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity. They may have different view points regarding religious questions. But the ultimate goal of all these religions is the same that is spiritual development of man, self-realization and union with God. This is the common thread, the binding force in all religions, this is

spiritualism. Spiritualism is a much wider term. It encompasses the entire vista of man's life, i.e. physical, mental, spiritual, emotional and social. Religion also does the same. All the religious sages, Lord Krishna, Lord Buddha, Guru Nanak, Kabir, Christ, Muhammad, preached the same higher moral values of life, universal love, brotherhood of man and fatherhood of God. Guru Govind Singh says: "The temple and the mosque are the same. The Hindus worship and the Muslim prayer are the same. Allah and Abhekh are the same. The Puranas and the Quran are the same. Recognise all mankind as one as it is the same God who creates all", (Dasam Granth, p. 19). Spiritualism crosses the barriers of caste creed and religions and takes the entire mankind in one fold. As a man may be a Hindu or Sikh, or Musalman or Christian according to his religion but a man is a man. All the people are children of God according to spiritualism. God is one, but sages call it by different names. Yf m= rJv{t cnwDt J=rà; (Rigveda-1 / 164/20). Religions are many but spiritualism is one single entity at the base of all the religions. Out of spirituality religions are born. Out of the revealed sacred writings of the sages scriptures are unfurled. The sacred writings of spiritually evolved souls incorporated in sacred scriptures like Gita, Sri Guru Granth Sahib, Bible, Quran, becomes the basis of different religions. And when the followers of these religions try to implement the higher values of these sacred scriptures in life, they develop spiritualism in life. Thus spiritualism and religion are inter-related and inter-dependent, each giving birth to the other. But one can be a great spiritual soul without practising any set religion. Religions are organized while spirituality is not. Lord Buddha did not mention the Divine as such, but he is considered the Enlightened One. The moral values of universal love, compassion, non-violence make him a great spiritual leader. "One who loves man finds God," says Guru Gobind Singh, in Dasam Granth (p. 14). Love thy neighbour as thyself, says Christ. This common thread of universal love found in all the religions is spiritualism. There may be wars, strifes, invasions in the name of religion. But when one rises on the higher plane of spiritualism all hatred, ill will, violence ceases and the factor of love dominates, which is best expressed in the words of Guru Arjun Dev Ji:

(SGGS: 1299)

The body is the temple of God in which are revealed precious pearls of knowledge (SGGS: 1346) and if these precious pearls of knowledge are explored and developed with the help of a true Guru, the harmonious development of personality takes place. Man is carved in the image of God. *The drop is contained in the ocean, the ocean in the drop.* (SGGS: 1318). The human body is not a mere body. In the body, there is divine light which has been placed there by great God. "Oh! My body the lord imbued thee with light and then thou comest into this world." (SGGS: 91). That is why Guru Amar Das asks man to recognize his essence, i.e. know thyself in the modern words.

"You are the embodiment of light oh! Man Recognise thy essence."

(SGGS: 441)

Within the mind are the jewels and the rubies, whose worth is infinite (SGGS: 754). Man has got a storehouse of energy. He has great potentialities to solve his own problems. He can carve out his destiny through his own efforts. If guided and inspired properly he can work wonders that is why lord Buddha asks man to become his own lamp of knowledge to guide his own path.

On the basis of his actions and qualities, the Guru Granth broadly divides man into two categories, 'Gurmukh' and 'Manmukh'. The Gurmukh or Brahmgyani (a man having divine knowledge and experience) or Khalsa (the pure) is the ideal man of the Gurus whom they tried to carve in their own image through moral, spiritual training. If a man controls his evil impulses, his haumai (ego) and attunes himself to God he becomes a 'Gurmukh' a God-dedicated soul. But if he forgets God and does not control his evil

impulses he degenerates and becomes a 'Manmukh' self-willed egoist away from God. The manmukh is attached to worldly wealth, worldly allurements and sensual enjoyments. He is bound by the whirlpool of desires. Getting and spending he lays waste his powers. He is enveloped by the darkners of ignorance. He is tossed in bondage from birth to birth.

He writhes in pain day and night
And the noose of death is round his neck
He gets no peace even in his dreams,
And anxiety tears at his heart.

(SGGS: 30)

In Gurbani the example of Ravana is quoted to distinguish between 'Gurmukh' and 'Manmukh'. He was a great scholar and had mastered all the Shastras and Vedas and yet he could not control his lust for revenge and sex. Far away from real spiritualism, the animal in him took the better of him and led to his destruction and degeneration. In Sukhmani Sahib, Guru Arjun Dev has described the character, personality and spiritual powers of Brahmgyani or Gurmukh in detail. His spiritual powers are developed. He is the purest of the pure rays serene. His mind is illumined and nourished by divine knowledge. Meditating over the name of God he enjoys supreme bliss. He is compassionate and works for the welfare of humanity at large. He lives like a lotus flower, fully blossomed, who scatters his fragrance around to beautify the world. There is peace and contentment in his life.

The question arises how the powers of body, mind and soul can be developed through spiritualism to strengthen and empower oneself. In the beginning of Japji one important spiritual question is asked "How can one become sachara (true)" in the court of God and how the veil of ego can be torn asunder? Prompt comes the reply, "Follow God's Ordinance, Hukam and thou can achieve your goal."

The Gurus ask their disciples to discipline their physical, mental, moral and spiritual faculties. It is the training of the body, mind and soul to act according to rules and regulations. It means moderation, control, sublimation and balance in our thoughts, words, deeds and desires. Body is the gift of God and taking care of the body and keeping it in a healthy and sound condition by regular habits and good diet taken in moderation is the first Dharma of man. In Gita, Krishna insists on taking sattvic diet to develop a satvic mind. Chastity is emphasized. Smoking and use of intoxicants are prohibited in *Gurbani*:

"Avoid such foods which cause pain to the body and arouse passion in the mind.
Avoid such dresses which cause pain in body
And arouse passion in the mind.

(SGGS: 16)

For the physical fitness of their disciples, the Gurus emphasized outdoor games, sports and training in arms. There was blend of Bhagti and Shakti in their educational curriculum. Guru Har Gobind was a saint soldier, whom Guru Arjun, the first martyr of the Sikh religion admonished to sit fully armed on the throne. Guru Gobind Singh turned the Sikhs into a martial community through games, sports and training in arms. He

raised the dormant energies of the vanquished people and filled them with rare spirit of valour and confidence. "Men who had never touched a sword or shouldered a gun were empowered by him to become heroes and soldiers in the battle of life. Confectioners and washermen, sweeper and barbers became leaders of armies before whom the Rajas quailed and the Nawabs cowered down with terror

2."

"The Sikhs whom you see around are men of sturdy built, handsome countenance, of tough strength and unflinching courage. They are Sishyas, disciples of Guru Nanak. It is through his teachings that their temper is fearless. They keep their heads erect. Their character and countenance are brightened with magnanimity." These physical qualities of the Sikhs based on spiritualism have empowered them to carve a niche for themselves in the whole world.

"He alone is learned and educated
who gains self knowledge through self enlightenment."

(SGGS:25)

Ignorance is a spiritual bondage. Gurus emphasize acquisition of knowledge for mental enlightenment. "*Of all elements, the most significant is the element of knowledge.*" (SGGS 152) "*Of all the yajnas, the most divine is the Gyan Yajna*" says lord Krishna in the *Öttlul m=JNk vrJ°trbn rJš;u* (Geeta 4/38). It is Avidya (Ignorance) which forges fetters to bind the mind. It is divine wisdom which enlightens the mind. Sakyamuni became Buddha (the enlightened one) by the acquisition of knowledge. Just as darkness disappears when the lamp is lighted, similarly through the study of books of wisdom, ignorance of mind is removed. It becomes clean and does not get dirty again.

mhlw 5 sUrdws" i.e., "*Shabad* of Shri Guru Arjun Dev Ji with Surdas", which has been placed as an explanation with reference to this *shabad* of Bhagat Surdas Ji. In this *shabad*, Guru Sahib has suggested the ways and means to get rid of the company of non-believers. After this, the total number of *Shabads* is given as 8. This clearly indicates that the one line of Bhagat Surdas Ji has been taken as a complete *shabad*. That is why the total number of *shabad* is given as 8, to the *shabad* after this one line *shabad*. After this *shabad* there is one *shabad* of Bhagat Kabir Ji and the total number *shabad* is given as No.9, which ends the *shabad* of Raag Saarang chapter.