

# My Encounters with Christians: A Memoir

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**Birmingham, UK. - November 1958:** The first Gurdwara set up by Sikhs at Smethwick (UK) a suburb of Birmingham was in a big Church which the Sikhs had purchased along with its 5-6 acre land for a sum of only £10,000, (when the exchange value of pound was Rs. 13.40). The attendance at Churches in UK had gone down sharply. On account of this, the priest could not be paid, nor the annual repairs carried out. **The Christians were averse to pulling down the Church and felt relieved and happy if somebody could utilize the Church as a place of worship.**

**Glasgow - June 1969:** I stayed for a month at the Doctors residency of Gartnavel Mental Hospital before I could find my own house. I found that there were 20 medical students of both sexes who were looking after the patients during the night for which they were provided with free boarding and lodging. I learnt from them that none of them was prepared to take any money from their parents for their studies after the age of 18 years. They were all earning and paying for their medical studies. They were very devoted hard working men and women who were not going to Church at all. I learnt that all of them believed in 'earning their daily bread by honest means'. **I explained to them that even though they were against practicing any religion and did not read the Bible, this was the essence of Christianity.**

**Kalmar, Sweden – June 1970:** My wife was working as a Consultant Anaesthetist and was staying in a flat owned by a retired 75-year-old doctor. I spent a week with her. One day the doctor discussed with me that he and another 75-year-old man were the only two persons who were paying for repair of the beautiful church, across the road by the side of the sea, and he was extremely worried as to what is going to happen to this church. Government was not prepared to take over and look after the church.

He explained to me that I would be able to judge the society by the behaviour of his three children. His first born son, 45-year-old, was living with a woman and had two children. He refused to undergo any type of marriage ceremony. His 35-year-old daughter refused to get married and wanted to live with a person of her choice. His youngest child, a 30-year-old daughter, agreed to undergo an engagement ceremony to oblige her parents, for which he had arranged a big party inviting 500 persons. After the ceremony she started living with the person without undergoing any type of marriage ceremony.

**In Sweden, the police, at that time, would register any man and woman living together as husband and wife, and saw to it that the father paid for the upkeep of his children up to the age of 18 years.** Any man deserting his wife would be hauled up and made to pay 25% of his income to the mother of his children up to the age of 18 years. This was making the family stay together under the same roof even if they were leading a promiscuous life. During my stay abroad for 5½ years mostly in UK (1958-61 and 1969-71) **I found that by and large the vast majority of people were honest hardworking and believed in a work culture. The professors and teachers were always available to the students during lunch breaks and even after working hours.**

**Christian Medical College and Hospital, Ludhiana – March 1974:** I went on deputation from PGI, Chandigarh, to this institute from September 1973 to September 1976, as Professor of Radiotherapy. Professor Nambudripad, the Director of CMC called in a Cancer expert, Dr Utne from USA, for three months, to work in my department. **Dr Utne informed me when he was leaving CMC that he had been charged with the mission to try his best ‘to convert Dr Singh’ to Christianity!**

Within a few days Dr Utne remarked that he cannot teach me any Radiotherapy, or management of Cancer, because his personal knowledge of both was inferior. On the other hand, he would learn about the subject from my department.

He said that he is also a preacher of Christianity in USA, and would like to discuss Christianity with me. **I was mighty pleased and conveyed to Dr Utne that I too was trying to read the Bible and understand Christianity.** Every morning, as the head of my department, I was supposed to call in every member of my staff to my office and start the day after reading a page from the Bible. I asked Dr Utne to explain to me the essence and greatness of Christianity because nearly half the world population was Christian.

He informed me that Christ had sacrificed himself for the sake of humanity. Christ would not only pardon our sins but would also intercede on behalf of all Christians, and ‘recommend their pardon’ to God since he had laid down his life for Him. Dr Utne informed me that we can always depend on the grace and benevolence of Christ on account of the suffering of the Christ for our sake.

I explained to Dr Utne, the philosophy of Guru Nanak, the founder of our religion. I said that I am prepared to agree with him that Christ was the son of God. **Guru Nanak, on the other hand, regarded himself as the ‘dust underneath the feet’ of ‘servants of God’,** as stated by him in his *Bani* in Guru Granth Sahib, whom the Sikhs revere as their living Guru. **Guru Nanak acted as a Guru or Teacher to guide humanity and show them the path of righteousness.** He did not claim that he was an agent of God but taught how to lead a religious life and how to control our five basic urges of lust, anger, greed, attachment and ego. I brought to his notice regarding the Genesis and the structure of the universe as described by Guru Nanak. **According to Guru Nanak, there was total darkness for aeons of years when the Primal Lord created the universe by His Will in a moment. Our scripture (Guru Granth Sahib) describes 9 continents, innumerable galaxies containing uncountable solar systems and that the infinite extent of the universe cannot be comprehended.**

It is repeatedly stated by our Gurus beginning with Guru Nanak that there are **four modes of creation:** from egg, from placenta, self reproduction (like that in bacteria, viruses and moulds.) and reproduction by seeds, etc in the plant world: ਅੰਡਜ਼ ਜੇਰਜ਼ ਉਤਭੁਜ਼ ਸੇਤਜ਼ ਤੇਰੇ ਕੀਤੇ ਜੰਤਾ

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Guru Nanak had traveled to the prominent places of pilgrimage all over India and beyond. He had traveled from Assam in the east to Mecca and Baghdad in the west, from Himalayas in the north to Sri Lanka in the south discussing with religious leaders and singing *Gurbani* that is the revealed words of the Lord accompanied by his low caste Muslim childhood friend Mardana playing on the Rabab (a stringed instrument like Sitar). He traveled for about 28 years commencing in 1499. He was preaching a religion of humanity to all. He exhorted Muslims to be good Muslims and there are several Shabads (or poems) addressed specifically to the Muslims. He recorded that the Muslims reciting the Namaz five

times a day should have five basic virtues. He was preaching Brahmans the quality of a true Brahman. He met the Sidhs in the snow up the Mount Kailash and reprimanded them that if the religious teachers would shun society and are praying for their personal salvation then who would guide the public about the path of truthful living. He was preaching all over that instead of worshiping their personal gods, the Hindus should worship the one Creator of the Universe and stop quarrelling amongst themselves.

Guru Nanak wrote, "that in the present dark age (Kaliyug), the kings have become butchers and true religion has flown away. In the moonless night of falsehood, the moon of truth is not visible." "The Qazi who administers justice, takes bribes and delivers judgments. Brahmin literally 'slays' life and takes ablution. The 'blind' Yogi does not know the path. All three are leading the masses towards ruination." In the morning community singing in every Gurdwara, Guru Nanak highlights the demoralization and corruption of the Indian society.

Dr Utne ask me to summarize the core ideology of Sikhism. I put before him two compositions or *Shabads* of fifth Nanak which epitomize the Sikh theology in a nutshell.

(a) ਕੋਈ ਬੋਲੈ ਰਾਮ ਰਾਮ ਕੋਈ ਖੁਦਾਇ ॥ [SGGS: 885] ..... Some address Him as Raam and some as Khuda. Some pray to the True Master and others to Allah. You are the cause and effect of everything, bless us with Your mercy. Some bathe at holy places, others perform Hajj. Says Nanak: He who realized Lord's will, realized His mystery.

(b) n hm ih;wU n muslman . [SGGS: 1136] ..... We do not keep fasts, nor do we observe the month of Ramzaan. We serve only the One, who protects us in the end. The One Lord, the Lord of the World, is our Allah. He administers justice equally both to the Hindus and Muslims. We are neither Hindus or Muslims. Our body and breath of life belong to the One called Allah or Raam.

After about two weeks, Dr Utne requested me to provide him with a steel "*kara*" for his wrist. **He started wearing the "*kara*", which was noticed by everyone in CMC.** When questioned, Dr Utne conveyed to the authorities that he cannot understand two points: *Firstly*, what made Miss Brown select Ludhiana, in the heart of the Sikh land, as the place of her missionary activity.

*Secondly*, as to why the Sikhs have not converted all of them to Sikhi. Dr Utne conveyed to me that whatever discussion we had showed that Christianity was an old religion - which led the younger generation to reject the 'unscientific' ideas mentioned in the Bible. The modern youth asked why should Christ pardon the sins committed by individuals? They do not accept the story of Genesis as given in the Bible.

**Dr Utne was convinced and conveyed to me that Dr Singh all Christians are potential Sikhs. "The day, you Sikhs convey to the school children all over the world as to what is given in Guru Granth Sahib, then most Christians would become believers in the Guru Granth Sahib." The Sikhs have only to provide the essence of Guru Granth Sahib, in a booklet of 30-40 pages, and make it available to school children all over the world.** Not only the children would become admirers of Guru Granth Sahib but strife would disappear from the world. Dr Utne conveyed to the authorities that he would not be able to convert Dr Singh to Christianity but he was confident that if he stays in CMC for three months, he would go back wearing a turban. Dr Utne was recalled to USA after a month!

**Mauritius – 1995:** I happened to talk to a Christian Architect who had become a Buddhist a month earlier during a ceremonial lunch. He explained to me that he came

across a small booklet written by H.H. the Dalai Lama, about Buddhism and found that this was a better religious life as compared to Christianity. He discussed with his wife and son, and all of them became Buddhists and converted a room into a Buddhist Temple containing a Statue of Buddha. He was surprised when I explained to him briefly the essentials of *Sikhi*. He was amazed that being such a modern and scientific religion there is no small book on Sikhi in any library. He wanted me to urgently produce a book of not more than 100 pages containing the history and ideology of the Sikhs.

**Oswal Hospital Ludhiana – October 2002:** At a conference on Radiotherapy and cancer organized by the hospital Dr. Hoskins, from Vancouver, came as a participant. I inquired from Dr. Hoskins that he must have come across several Sikhs in his town, and what does he know about the Sikhs. **He remarked that “I have seen their noisy processions; that they are a ‘law and order problem’ for their country.”** I handed over the booklet on Guru Granth Sahib – “Light House of Humanity”, and asked Dr. Hoskins to read a few lines. When he read: “Men of charity gift away the riches they gather through sin; Women love their men for their money..... The Kazi mutters *Khuda, Khuda* (God) while accepting bribe, doles out injustice.....’Greed like that of a dog’. He read these quotes of Guru Nanak and asked me: “Who was Guru Nanak?” I explained that Guru Nanak was the founder of Sikhism. He was extremely surprised, and felt how could Guru Nanak be the founder of the religion which was being portrayed by the Sikhs at Vancouver? He was delighted to study the booklet containing extracts from Guru Granth Sahib.

The Sikhs spent crores of rupees during 2008 to celebrate the Tercentennial of SGGS. The mega event was held at Nanded which was visited by millions of Sikhs and President and Prime Minister of India had been invited to participate in the function. Similar celebrations were held in various countries of the world.

**There is hardly any mention in the world media regarding the contents of Guru Granth Sahib. No one knows that Guru Nanak had been preaching to Muslims of Mecca to imbibe true Islam and practice the same.**

Few know that the foundation stone of the Darbar Sahib, Amritsar (better known as Golden Temple) had been laid by a Muslim Divine, Hazrat Mian Mir.

Guru Gobind Singh had helped militarily Bahadur Shah, (son of the killer of his father and four Sahibzadas - Emperor Aurangzeb), to capture the throne of Delhi, which was his legal right.

Guru Hargobind had given land in a town founded by him for construction of a mosque which is still in existence.

The Sikhs have yet to propagate about the significance of the Five K's of the Khalsa.

