

# Guru Nanak's Footprints in Islamic World

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ਅਵਲਿ ਅਲਹ ਨੂਰ ਉਪਾਇਆ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਕੇ ਸਭ ਬੰਦੇ ॥ ਏਕ ਨੂਰ ਤੇ ਸਭੁ ਜਗੁ ਉਪਜਿਆ ਕਉਨ ਭਲੇ ਕੇ ਮੰਦੇ ॥

[SGGS:1349]

ਬੇਦ ਕਤੇਬ ਕਹਹੁ ਮਤ ਝੂਠੇ ਝੂਠਾ ਜੋ ਨ ਬਿਚਾਰੈ ॥

[SGGS:1350]

ਅਲਹੁ ਗੈਬੁ ਸਗਲ ਘਟ ਭੀਤਰਿ ਹਿਰਦੈ ਲੇਹੁ ਬਿਚਾਰੀ ॥

ਹਿੰਦੂ ਤੁਰਕ ਦੁਹੁ ਮਹਿ ਏਕੈ ਕਹੈ ਕਬੀਰ ਪੁਕਾਰੀ ॥

[SGGS:483]

Institution of religion is man made. There was no religion at the time of creation or even when man started to walk erect on this blessed planet of ours. Under divine guidance Prophets showed the light and religion was born. Primarily this was to give wisdom to man to live peacefully in cultured and civilized ways without fear and in peace. Religion is something like a school or a university from which one graduates walk the path to Lord.

## Guru Nanak enters on the scene

Guru Nanak was born on this holy land at Talwandi, now Nankana Sahib, in 1469. Those who were God-fearing could see light of divinity in Nanak in childhood. Nanak's sister, Nanki, had realized divinity in her little brother, as also Rai Bullar, Muslim ruler of region was impressed with child Nanak's divine indulgences. Nanak did have formal schooling and learnt letters from Pundits as well as from Maulvis. Maulvi Ghulam Mohammed wrote *Siyar-ul-Mutakhirin* that was quoted in his compilation History of Punjab. It said, "Nanak was remarkably talented youth, of good character and a perfectionist." He was struck with Nanak's straightforwardness, truthful approach lacking any bias or fear. Nanak used to write in Persian verse while studying under Maulvis. This is included in Guru Granth Sahib in Rag Tilang. It says:

ਯਕ ਅਰਜ ਗੁਫਤਮ ਪੇਸਿ ਤੇ ਦਰ ਗੋਸ ਕੁਨ ਕਰਤਾਰ ॥ ਹਕਾ ਕਬੀਰ ਕਰੀਮ ਤੂ ਬੇਅੈਬ ਪਰਵਦਗਾਰ ॥

[SGGS:721]

Nanak did not go looking for followers, as Westerners seem to imply. Nanak embarked on journeys to give His message to the world at large. He would confront falsehood without any fear or bias, demonstrate and expose falsehood and confront it with Truth. Nanak considered whole world His home. He went from one city to another like he was going from one room to another. He confronted maulvis in the mosque offering Namaz without putting heart into it in Sultanpur, confronted Malik Bhago who was feasting holies for his ancestors, Pundits in Hardwar sending food and water for ancestors, confronted egoist multi millionaire Duni Chand of Lahore and showed him the light of Truth.

Nanak's journey was like outward movement of consciousness hemmed by claustrophobia of climate thought. Consciousness moves in space looking for something collecting awareness of not only Truth but also Falsehood. It must collate awareness into singular continuum of questions, solution to which would solve problems of life. Knowledge of books needs to be rotated through its angle of observation to align with Truth. There is deep sadness, anguish, in the heart of every consciousness that drives one towards the hows and whys of life. It is for this reason that Nanak called His travels as *Udasis*, angst.

It is no coincidence that the Islamic scholars understood Guru Nanak much better than Hindu scholars. Because of Nanak's crusade against false rituals Pundits felt danger to their *khir poori* and called Him Kuraiya, a corruptor. Muslims were more liberant in understanding Nanak. Many Pirs and Fakirs made very good close relationship and understanding with house of Nanak, although very few joined the fraternity, Foundation stone of Har Mandir in Amritsar, the sanctum sanctorum of Sikhs, was laid by Mian Mir, a Muslim Pir of great repute. However, common folk Hindus, bonded as they were to Brahminic rituals, found freedom in Nanak's thoughts and flocked to Him in greater numbers but hardly anyone from amongst scholars.

All religions are basically man made under divine guidance. All religions offer inducement in the form of rewards and also deterrent in shape of punishment to those who do not follow the path. To draw people to God, Jesus called Himself Son of God, Mohammed called Himself as messenger of Allah. Compare this with Gur Parsad (*Kindness of Guru, enlightener*) in Sikh faith. Guru Nanak did not put his person forward but He did call Himself as a middleman - *vichola* - between God and man.

Pillars of any new religion are built on the ruins of old faiths existing then. Bricks from the old religions are bound to be recognized here and there. Holy Bible as also Holy Koran has similar moral stories to those in Jewish Old Testament. In Sikh religion also one can recognize cues and wisdom from both Hindu and Muslim faiths.

All Prophets, divine inspired, worked hard in their lifetime and turned out beautiful religions just as any good engineer would sit on a lathe and turn out a beautiful product. Nanak was somewhat different; He was more like a scientist who had to be meticulous about what is being produced. It took ten generations, in more than two hundred years, to produce the finished product. **Sikh religion has not only the revealed holy scripture that is fully authentic, the whole truth without admixture of stories and civil laws, is fortified by numerous sacrifices not only for its own faith but also for human rights of other's faith, provided a new language we are proud of, and, last but not the least, raised an army of Saint Soldiers to defend the oppressed against oppression, something never ever heard of before.**

### Universality of Nanak's Teachings

When Nanak came out of His experience with Infinite while going for daily bath in river Vein, He pronounced "*Na koi Hindu, musulman*" meaning that there are no Hindus or Muslims, all are children of same One God. He believed God is One and same for all, methods of worship and ceremonies may differ, Lord's manifestations are numerous.

Guru Nanak believed in universality of religion and said "*Chai ghar chai gur chai updesh, gur gur aeko vaes anek*"

ਛਿਅ ਘਰ ਛਿਅ ਗੁਰ ਛਿਅ ਉਪਦੇਸ ॥ ਗੁਰ ਗੁਰ ਏਕੋ ਵੇਸ ਅਨੇਕ ॥

[SGGS:12]

Six are the schools, (Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, Jews, Christians and Muslims) six are the guides (Prophets) and six advises, Lord God is same, manifestations are numerous." (Rag Asa M: 1)

### Similarities in Islam and Sikh Religion:

In Holy Koran, opening verse is Kalma that describes attributes of One Allah and that Mohammed is Allah's messenger. In Guru Granth Sahib, opening verse describes attributes of One Omnipotent Lord. As Holy Koran Kalma is repeated many times, even if it is in abbreviated form, opening verse of Guru Granth Sahib is repeated numerous times at the beginning of a new chapter, often in abbreviated form, e.g. *ੴ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥* has been

repeated 528 times.

Islam means peaceful submission to Allah, Islam firmly believes in One God and complete submission unto His Will. Nanak said, “ਕਿਵ ਸਚਿਆਰਾ ਹੋਈਐ ਕਿਵ ਕੂੜੈ ਤੁਟੈ ਪਾਲਿ ., *Nanak asks*, how then one attains Truth and how one breaks wall of falsehood around us. Himself Nanak replies, “ਹੁਕਮਿ ਰਜਾਈ ਚਲਣਾ ਨਾਨਕ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਨਾਲਿ ॥” meaning by submission to the Will of Lord that is writ by destiny. (Pauri 1 Japji Sahib) Again in the next Pauri Nanak says, “ਹੁਕਮੈ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਸਭੁ ਕੇ ਬਾਹਰਿ ਹੁਕਮ ਨ ਕੋਇ ॥ meaning that all beings are bound in Lord’s Will, none is beyond it. When Prophet Mohammed returned to Mecca from Yathrib, now Medina, about 630 CE, Prophet demolished more than 360 idols that were objects of worship there then. Complete submission to Will of One Lord and no idol worship obviously the foundation rock of both the great religions.

### **Philosophy of Sikh religion**

Philosophy of Guru Nanak can be summarized in first three words of opening verse. ‘Ik Onkar’ consists of two words. ‘Ik’ is numerical one. ‘Onkar’ is considered an ancient divine word. Originally it was called Om that carried the meaning of One Lord in His manifestations as Creator, Destroyer and Sustainer, Vishnu, Shiva and Brahma. Under the influence of Brahmins, these three manifestations gradually assumed independent roles and each became a god in his own right, thus they started worshipping three gods rather than One. To give it role of doer, Brahmins added a curve denoting all manifestations as Doers in their manifest field and called it Onkar. Nanak accepted the word Onkar but was not willing to compromise on oneness of God. He closed the open end of Onkar signifying all the three manifestations in One only. To make sure that the concept of being One God never gets blurred, Nanak added numerical One before Onkar and it became Ik Onkar. In this form Ik Onkar < like an ensign of Sikh faith.

**Sat Naam** means Name of God is Truth, in fact God is Truth. Truth is something that is eternal and cannot be destroyed, that cannot perish. Only God cannot be destroyed nor can perish and God is Truth. When you see waves on sea shore or see dream at night in your sleep, both waves and dream are true, it existed, you saw them but they vanish and new ones take their place instead. There is another word in Sanskrit, Satya, which also means Truth but with a difference. We know now that 2+4 is 6 but we did not always know it. It is true that 2+4 will never make 7 or 8 but we learnt it from experience and experiments. This Truth is Satya in Sanskrit, something that did not exist but was discovered. Nanak called Akal Purkh Truth, both as Sat as well as Satya embodying Eternal Truth as well as that is discovered by experimentation.

**Karta Purkh** literally means a person who can do, who is Doer. Word ‘Purkh’ or being flashes an image in mind that looks like man, someone who has a head on his shoulder. This is in spite of the fact that we believe that God has no shape or form and has no signs or marks by which one can recognize God. It is difficult to visualize a conscious being without a form and even more difficult trying to explain it away. A being that is Doer must be aware or conscious otherwise how can he do anything. We always consider consciousness, awareness (

cyqnw, suriq) Chetna or surat, with head, a human head. A quote from Bergson does seem to clarify the concept of conscious without apparent human head and body - but a conscious being all the same. I reproduce the same.

“Mind, then, is not identical with brain. Consciousness depends upon brain and falls with it. But so does a coat fall with the nail on which it hangs, which does not prove that coat is an epi-phenomenon and ornamental ectoplasm of the nail. The brain is the system of images

and reaction patterns, consciousness is the recall of the images and choice of reaction. The stream flowing is distinct from the riverbed, although it must adopt its winding course. Consciousness is distinct from organism, which it animates, although it must undergo its vicissitudes.

We seem to associate consciousness directly with brain and deny it to those who have no brain. Fallacy of this argument is seen easily. We could say that digestion is directly connected with stomach, therefore organisms, beings, that have no distinct stomach should have no digestion. But we do know that there are organisms that have no distinct stomach, yet they do imbibe food, digest it and expel the residue. Amoeba is an almost undifferentiated organism, which carries out all the functions. **Consciousness** in man is undeniably connected with the brain, but it does not follow that brain is indispensable to consciousness. In lower series of life form, nervous system is much more simplified and separate from each other, at the very lowest form they disappear altogether merging with the almost undifferentiated protoplasm. At the top of living scale of beings, consciousness is attached to very complicated nervous system. Does it not follow that consciousness accompanies the nervous system down the descent and when nervous system is merged in yet undifferentiated protoplasm of the living matter, consciousness is still there, embedded in diffused, even confused plasma but is not reduced to nothing."

Discriminative function is beautifully illustrated if we were to study functions of different organs and their cells. For example, when we eat and drink food, carbohydrates start getting digested while still being masticated in the mouth. Once it reaches the stomach, glucose and water get absorbed rather urgently from stomach only whereas other nutrients need further digestion in the intestines before they are absorbed. Kidney excretes sodium selectively while retaining potassium. Glucose is selectively excreted if beyond certain limits in blood while retains it completely if within limit. Explanation for such selective functioning is possible only that organs and cells are allotted functions, possibly through genes, and are carried out by presence of Consciousness or awareness that pervades every where in body of all organisms.

If we were to continue this thought still further down the line we might be in a position to realize that there could be consciousness still present when protoplasm has also disappeared completely, replaced perhaps by a sort of imperceptible hazy mist only. This consciousness is present in all living beings, in fact everywhere in all the worlds and universe. This is the Conscious Absolute, as an abstract being, which is affected not by hot or cold, time or space, is beyond fear or malice, is not born nor dies either. This consciousness could be the explanation of Conscious Ultimate, the Karta Purkh, Lord Himself. The Consciousness Absolute pervades everywhere, in every crevice, in every being, in fact in every cell of the being and directs to perform the allotted function.

When a person dies, the consciousness is withdrawn and brain falls with the body. Memory being function of brain is lost completely and forever. Even when blood chemistry is normal, person will die if consciousness glides away. This is what we refer to as soul. Soul does not reside in pituitary gland or pineal body or any other single place in the body but it pervades in every cell of the body of every organism directing individual cells to perform its allotted function. This also seems to explain the Christian concept of Holy Ghost that pervades everywhere - one of the trinity. Whereas consciousness acts in a supervisory capacity in the body through each cell of each organ it cannot remove the physical onslaught of a malady as such. In brain also it acts in similar way but does not have complete control unless the thought process of brain is in unison with consciousness. Here pleasures of illusion struggle for supremacy with thought process of brain. If thoughts succumb to short-lived pleasures of

illusion, guiding voice of consciousness is silenced and individual becomes victim of illusion. If the individual controls his thoughts and by effort does not let illusion take possession of thoughts, the individual becomes Sage, nay God Himself, for consciousness of the Sage is now unblemished. It is said in Guru Granth Sahib, "ਹਉਮੈ ਨਾਵੈ ਨਾਲਿ ਵਿਰੋਧੁ ਹੈ ਦੁਇ ਨ ਵਸਹਿ ਇਕ ਠਾਇ ॥ (Vadhans M: 3 p: 560 SGGS)

### **Conclusion**

We have just now seen that Islam and Sikh religion, two great religions of the region, worship the same Eternal Truth, though rituals and ceremonies may vary. Truth of the matter is we are two nations, two countries but also we must not forget that we are One mankind. Our customs and our thinking is same, concept of what is good and what is wrong is exactly same, our sorrows and pleasures are same. We are in fact one people and not two. I appeal to my brothers and sisters in both the countries to think in terms of one people and to struggle for peace rather than for a piece of land. Let us pledge now on this holy land to wage a relentless war, not against fellow human beings but common five foes: Lust, Anger, Greed, Worldly Attachment and Ego. Every act of violence is tragic expression of need unmet. Give peace a chance.

