

Advent of the Gentle Guru Nanak

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*Saints, sages and the good,
Gods, angels in high Heavens
Rejoice and shower flowers
When the Guru Nanak appears.*

THIS WORLD OF OUR IS SUBJECT TO SUNSHINE & SHADOWS.

The shadow-chaser is the shadow-maker also. Man inherits both the light of love and the gloom of hate. The Jiva, the soul, a spark from the divine, descends to earth clothes in the darkness of the self and struggles for salvation.

Every individual inherits a *dharma*, his own conscience the light that never fails in revealing that love is the law of life and to transgress this law is to sin and to suffer.

All religions teach us that we are limbs of the same body and that truest worship is to serve our fellow men: to be helpful is to be happy. But men have war in their hearts, they delight in discord and perpetrate atrocious persecutions in the name of God, who is the Father of all. They give their lives in the name of religion and refuse to live it.

In any age of country in which godliness and selfless tendencies suffer an eclipse, Sovereign Power passes into the hands of men, who, cheated by desire to enslave others and exalt themselves, range nations against nations to pillage and to plunder. They make lawlessness not only permissible but praiseworthy and cause moral and material devastation and ruin.

The divine law never fails or falters, as day follows night so good follows evil, peace pursues war, righteousness overtakes unrighteousness. The storm of self is allowed to work itself out and God sends a true teacher to lead mankind from darkness to light. With the coming of a true teacher the darkness of desire suffers a defeat and the sunshine of truth prevails. It is this truth which Shri Krishna in Bhagwad Gita declared –

“Whenever there is decay of righteousness and exaltation of unrighteousness than I myself come forth for the protection of the good. For the destruction of evildoers and for the sake of firmly establishing righteousness I am born from age to age.”

The true teacher holds aloft the torch of truth which destroys shadows and superstitions. He himself being the incarnation of love defeats the spirit of hate and distrust and leads misguided men to paths of goodness by the divinity of his own personality. He kindles into a flame of love the divine spark in every human heart.

India, in the fifteenth century and the centuries that preceded it, had experienced the march of invading armies, ruthless beyond description, massacring men without mercy in the name of religion and plundering hearths and homes without distinction. The people of India had forsaken their spiritual heritage and lost the art of united action and with it the power to defend themselves. In spite of their heroic traditions,

without the firmness of faith in one God, they wasted their stock of noble emotions in the observance of endless ritual and taboos which robbed them of the power to unite sapped the source of their strength. They were divided into castes and classes and small independent states at war with each other, in no position to snatch the scepter from the successive tyrants, who compelled them to accept subjection and serfdom. Guru Nanak himself said:

The age is like a drawn sword.
The kings are butchers.
In the gloom of falsehood
The moon of the truth is never seen
And the law of life has taken wings.

In spite of the clear teachings of Bhagwad Gita that men should find action the way of salvation, men lost in the maze of metaphysics ignored the truth that desireless action was essential to attain mental purification and without proper purification the path of light was beyond reach.

The earth was weary of false doctrines, heresies and schisms, the unruly wills of men and their deceit and tyrannies and was waiting for the appearance of a redeemer. Nature itself as if spellbound swooned to welcome his advent. Peace reigned on earth that night. Yes, night indeed it was, but darkness was dispelled by the divine light of truth, which lit the heavens and all the earth beneath when he appeared. All evil passions anger, lust desire retreated, while feeling of friendliness forbearance and forgiveness awakened in the desires-imbued hearts of men. Heavens and earth and the under-worlds echoed with the audible sound of the sacred name. In this auspicious moment. Sri Guru Nanak Dev came to earth. He came as prophets have always come-in a humble home and in a small village named Rai Bhocki Talwandi, away from any seats of learning and culture. Blessed were they in whose midst he came and blessed were they who followed his light and live in his light now.

Guru Sahib's father, Mehta Kulu, was a Patwari-a rank which was fairly high in the Revenue Department in old times, his mother's name was Tripat, and he had an elder sister named Nanki.

Mehta Kulu was also a landowner and was rich in a large herd of cattle, Rai Bular, the landlord, held him in high esteem. He named his son after his daughter. His parents cherished the baby as the delight of their eyes. His mother nursed him with a loving care and discovered that he was unlike other babies. He never cried or clamoured for his mother as other babies did. He lay calmly in his cradle gazing upward with his deep luminous eyes. In due course he learned to walk and to speak, but he never played like other children of his age. He would sit as if lost in contemplation. He would give to other children his toys and persuade his mother to feed them on milk and buttered bread, wanting nothing for himself. The Guru was in his ninth year when his father on an auspicious day selected by his *prohit* (village priest) took his son to the village Pandit who ran a small school. He offered the Pandit a tray full of sweets and live rupees and prayed that he would accept Nanak as pupil.

The Pandit received the child with pleasure, wrote out a few letters on a slate and asked the boy to repeat each letter after him. The Guru learned the alphabet in no time as though he had known it already. Then he turned to his teacher and asked:

“What are these letters meant for?”

“Two or three letters make a word, words make sentences” repeated the Pandit, “and thus transmit knowledge and wisdom from age to age.”

The Guru took the slate and sat aside lost in thought, joined the letters and formed words. The teacher turned to the Guru and saw that he was sitting quietly, motionless, with his eyes fixed on the slate as though he was wholly absorbed in its contemplation.

“Why are you sitting as if struck dumb?” asked the Pandit with impatience.

“I have joined the letters and formed a word,” replied the Guru.

“What is it?” asked the Pandit.

“I have made ‘Soi’ – Him,” repeated the Guru.

“My son, what meaning are you trying to read in these simple symbols?” asked the Pandit on receiving this unexpected reply.

“He who has created this Universe.” Said the Guru. “He is the one, He is the Lord of all.”

“What more passing through your little mind?” asked the Pandit with an indulgent smile.

“Thus,” said the Guru with conviction, “all learning is in vain, except to know Him and to serve Him.”

The Pandit was astonished at the boy’s precocity. “What do you know about Him?” he asked.

“This, that to love Him is the end of knowledge and to forget Him is to forget the truth, even though one may carry a cartload of books,” said the Guru.

The boy seemed to have passed into a state of ecstasy and spoke as if from some far away height. The Pandit was bewildered but wanted to test him and said, “God, of whom you speak, what is He and where is He?”

“This creation is His,” said the Guru, “and He is every where.”

“Why cannot we feel Him and why cannot we see Him?” asked the Pandit.

A flickering smile passed over the lips of the Guru as he answered: “Do the blind see the sun?”

“No”, say the Pandit.

“Are we not blind?” asked the Guru. “Blind to all else, but sense objects. He is beyond all senses, and it is only when the darkness of the sense is removed that He can be seen. His love pervades all things.”

“If His love is in all things, why are there chains and pains and sorrow and suffering?” asked the Pandit.

“The answer is simple and you could have found it if you had searched your heart. When we act against the law of love, we forge fetters for ourselves, and entwine ourselves in the wheel of cause and effect.” Said the Guru.

“You mean we create Karma?” asked the Pandit.

“Yes,” said the Guru.

“It has been said by wise ones that with the fire of knowledge the seed of Karma can be permanently destroyed.” remarked the Pandit.

“Yes, with realisation but not with book knowledge,” said the Guru. “He alone is learned who knows Him.”

The Guru then took up each letter of the alphabet and said: “As letters are symbols of speech, so myriads of forms are manifestations of God. He is the Enjoyer of all sense-objects, He is within and without all beings. He who knows that God is all and in all and consequently loses all sense of otherness, he alone escapes from the prison-house of ‘I-amness.’ In selfhood is bondage; in losing the self, freedom.”

The Pandit was not only astonished, but convinced that Nanak was an incarnation of God. He humbly bowed before his boy-pupil and took him to his father.

Mehta Kulu was sitting with some friends. He was surprised to see his son and his teacher coming back to him so early. Nanak must have played the truant and the Pandit must have brought him back to be reprimanded, he thought.

“Mehtaji, this son of yours is an Avatara, an incarnation of god and no ordinary mortal,” said the Pandit as he took his seat near Mehta Kulu. “He has come to redeem the victims of Kalyug.”

Mehta Kulu smiled incredulously. He was a worldly man and thought the Pandit was just flattering the boy. He wanted his son to be wise in the ways of the world, to know how to gain riches and power. So he said, “You are paying the boy a great compliment but I trust you will continue to instruct him.”

“Instruct him! How?” exclaimed the Pandit. “He knows all that there is to be known.”

“What does he know?” asked Mehta Kulu.

“He knows more than I do,” answered the Pandit. He knows:

1. God is one, Infinite without a second. He is the Author of all Creation.
2. He knows that to transgress the law of love is to sin.
3. He knows that ‘I-amness’ is the disease and carries its own cure.

Tell me what more there is to know?” said the Pandit.

Mehta Kulu looked at the Pandit with unbelieving eyes, but the Pandit rose and prostrated himself at the feet of the Guru and before departing again repeated: “Mehtaji, I am not a fool. I believe in what I have said, your son has all the characteristics of an Avatara.”

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Introspection - Need of the hour

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I was just a toddler when my mother instructed me to pray every morning as soon as I got up from sleep. I used to be rewarded with sweets kept under my pillow, and my elder sister used to sing *shabad* in the evening *darbar* in the Gurdwara and she got oranges. These were the practices adopted in the family to encourage us to pray to the Almighty. But today when I am at the fag end of my life I still continue praying in the same 'childlike manner' and have not learnt to go to the depth of what religion factually means. I go to Gurudwara only on the Gurburabs and just bow my head, I failed to understand the presence of God? Who is to be blamed? I had turbulent periods in my life time when I introspect, I find I have not prayed to God from my heart, that is why my prayers have not been answered on occasions. I take refuge in 'destiny' and thus I am far away from self - realization and when I look around I find like me many people have not understood God and they are all the time busy in rituals and ceremonies. These rituals and ceremonies might be symbolic but they don't know the meaning of symbolism.

On the Gurburabs when celebrations are there and Ragis are invited, our religious leaders start narration of events of Gurus' lives in a very unprofessional manner and sing shabads far less. In fact Kirtan should be (nirol) pure with no additions from the Ragis. They are still continuing the old mode of narration. The result is that they are not captivating the attention of Sangat (congregation) at all. Ladies keep gossiping, children of course have fun whereas adolescent children in majority abstain from attending congregations. Their main object of attending Gurudwars is to have *langar* which of course they relish very much.

Once I expressed my desire to participate in the Akhand path in my township and was refused. Reason given was that 'women are not allowed'. In Sikh religion time and again Guru Nanak had been saying "So kyon manda akhian, jit jamae rajaan."

Guru Nanak had been teaching commoners through simple illustrations, such as sraad ceremony, SAKHIS of Mallick Bhago and Bhai Lalo. Today in the complex world teachings have more significance. People are confused and want to be led as they have become bankrupt on account of empty rituals and superstitions.

Spirituality teaches tolerance, charity and forbearance, they are the attributes of religion. Religion means anubhav/experience so one has to experience union with God. Religion comes from a Latin word religo means to unite. Human beings have a tendency to categorize others as either high/low caste, superior/inferiors and do not consider anybody as one's equal.

Guru Nanak's teachings are for the humanity as a whole, good for all times and at all places. He talks about "*Manas ki jat sabe ek pehchanbo*" and Sikhism with its ethos is a global religion. In 1958 Caplow, a researcher mentioned that human beings have the tendency to under-estimate others 8 times and over-estimate themselves 8 times. Gurunanak at his time could feel the pulse of the people and found out that priesthood was parasitical. What activists talk about gender - discrimination today, Guru Nanak had raised that issue more than 500 years ago. He spread the message of love, peace, social justice, tolerance devotion to God, universal brotherhood. He while describing the sufferings of the people in Babar Vani, condemned war and also complained that How God could become merciless

“Tiaan ki dard no aaya”. He thus challenged the prevalent practices of his time such as Sati custom, caste system, religious division between Hindus and Muslims “*Na ko Hindu na Musalman*” only, means good deeds/karma’s are important for everybody. Good habits, clean mind, rationality, honesty, justice, truth, fearlessness and simplicity’ are the attributes of code of conduct and everybody must cultivate them. He removed the gap between the rich and the poor by introducing Langar system or community kitchen.

Daily in mass media, large-scale coverage is given to the human rights violations in the form of murders, loot, threats and dictations from the super powers to the weaker nations. There is every need to return to the Lord. The bloated ego of the statesmen is a great hindrance to the universal peace, ego and also is the causative factor of worries and physical sufferings. So Guru Nanak teaches the elimination of “I” or “Mine”. He met many Maulvis, Pundits, Fakirs from different religions and held discussions over worldly and other worldly conflicts and antagonism. He travelled far and wide and contacted diverse people from various cultures.

He travelled as far as Sri Lanka, Nepal, Tibet, Iraq, Persian Gulf and Afghanistan. He spread the message of freedom from the shackles of matter, while living in society. He believed that man required the discipline of body, mind and spirit in order to lead a good life. According to him- there is harmony and no antagonism between man, society and God “*Man jeete jagjeet*” God is one call him Ram, Rahim or by other name, one has to distinguish between good and bad and acquire knowledge about the formless and his countless creations, then surrender to Him for His blessings. At this stage mind is totally annihilated and one becomes united with the ultimate truth.

Lack of unity amongst the Sikhs is a cause of shame and pain. It saddens me to the extent, my children question me why our community does not come to our help. All the time in the management of Gurudwaras whether in India , US or Britain, Australia or any other country, fights are going on, why not like other religious communities, we promote education of our children, open technical college, management schools and much needed good modern hospitals. We are not implemented “*Sarbat da bhala*’ at all. What is the use of our daily Ardas? I think Lord understands us well. By now sikh message of equality should have been advocated throughout the world but unfortunately sikhs have betrayed their own faith. They too are very much ritualistic, by erecting new Gurudwaras, they are raising their statuses and income, getting politically socially empowered but what about the social evils which are rampant. Religion performs functions such as ,it prepares individual for social life by imposing self discipline. It reinforces social solidarity. It transmits enduring values to the future generations. It creates a sense of moral obligation to adhere to society’s demands. It establishes a sense of well being and confidence. It serves to counter-act feelings of frustrations and loss of faith.

Need of the hour is to introspect which reveals that your mind is lost in confusion, doubt, lust anger , greed, worldly attachments, — to purge oneself of these is to pray to God for guidance, directions and prayer bestows peace on the mind of the seeker of truth.

One has to be in tune with God and then one can hear cosmic music.

Today scientists are proclaiming of the discovery of new planets stars etc. But Guru Nanak mentioned that there are countless skies and spheres: "*Patala patal lakh agasa agas*".

By reciting Jap-Mantra daily man can have control over his mind and resists temptations. Research indicates that it lowers B.P and tension and leads to longevity of life.

Today's Gurudwaras are commercial places. Rates are fixed for getting Akhand Path done. I have never heard that Bhajji advises you that you all family members participate in it and would be more fruitful. At the renowned Gurudwaras you don't get the turn and you have to book Akhand Path a few months in advance. When the recitation of Akhand Path goes on, family members are not even present. In the present times, some of the scholars have discovered and projected the splendid work which Japji Sahib contains.

All non-sense is going on all over the world in the name of religion. Fanaticism, conversions, blood shed and wars, killings are rampant with evil consequences.

Ironically the matrimonial ads in national newspapers emphasise castes: a Brahmin Sikh, Rajput, Jatsikh, Ramgarhia, Saini, Ahluwalia, Khatri, etc. We seem to be sliding back to the vicious caste system. Our core values, taught by Guru Nanak, are getting eroded. A casteless society is the cornerstone in Sikhism, casteist mindset has damaged the Sikh psyche, they are losing their identity. Result is that children are getting married outside the community. Contradictions are coming to the fore which are responsible for the alienation of our youth.

Simple thing in today's complex turbulent world required of priests is ' how to pray and recite naam' in the true sense that is all. Are all the religious leaders and Granthis listening? On the foreign soils, sikhs conduct camps, teach gurmukhi and NAAM simaran with meaning whereas in India, after Bhog there are no such activity carried on. Our youth in the 21st century needs scientific explanation of religion. Questions ' Why and How' are to be answered where are those leaders to answer the questions?

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