

Historical Perspective of-Sikhs And Current Sikh Issues

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Introduction

Sikh religion was founded about five centuries back and is latest world religion. The eminent scholars of world religions and historians have stated it to be the religion of the present age, capable to solve the problems of the modern age, and that its message of love and peace needs to be conveyed to the world. It is in the list of the first five religions of the world. It teaches the practical way of life, based upon the three fundamental features of-Fatherhood of God, Brotherhood of mankind and Truthful living.

There are several current Sikh issues, some created by the outsiders while some created by the Sikhs themselves, due to which some controversies and confusions have been created. Sikhs of today are mostly in violation than in observance of the Divine teachings of Sikh religion, Sikh code of conduct and Sikh way of life. This book deals with these matters as to its causes and the solutions and Sikh historical perspective, so as the Sikhs may have their self introspection and their correct understanding and to strictly follow the dictums of their religion to become and act as true Sikhs.

The eminent Sikh scholar of 16th century who scribed Guru Granth Sahib under the direction and supervision of Guru Arjan Dev, 5th Sikh Guru, Bhai Gurdas, who had the eyewitness account of Sikh movement, described the Sikhs:

"The Sikhs through concentrated contemplation of Holy Word realize the presence of God. They attain the final stage of spirituality; they become sober, mature and conscientious. They become truthful and fearless. (Var 3.4)

"They spontaneously surrender to the will of God." (Var 3.13)

"They understand their real self." (Var 3.20)

"They become God inspired and use sweet words. Whatever they utter is prompted

by Divine Love." (Var 6.18)

"They live in their homes, undisturbed by worldly evils and seek best virtues; they live in the world inspired by noble thoughts like one liberated in spirit. (Var 6.15)

"They give up lust, anger, enmity, greed, worldly attachment and pride. They acquire the virtues of truth, contentment, compassion and dutifulness and practice remembrance of the Holy Name, charity and purity." (Var 11.3)

"They make a living through honest labor and give the charity and though respected but do not think highly of themselves." (Var 28.15)

Every Sikh should have his own self introspection that to what extent he is up to these qualifications of a Sikh.

Sikh religion is the Divine revelation for the entire mankind with its message of truth, name of God and pious deeds. It is the latest religion for the present space age and answer to the problems of the modern man. It satisfies the scientific and juristic mind of today, being without any myths and superstitions in which man had been made to indulge by some previous faiths and systems. It is

a religion of comprehensive moral and ethical values to elevate the man spiritually, morally and socially. Its aim is to convert the self centered mind to God tuned by Name of God in the mind and to transfer the control of the mind

from the narrow egoistic tendencies to higher consciousness to be activated for all the socio-political affairs during one's life and to finally unite the individual soul with the supreme soul, creator of the entire creation.

The doctrines, ideology and religious practices, leading to truthful way of life of Sikh religion are so impressive that every scholar of world religions who so ever got the occasion to study it paid high tributes to Sikh religion.

The Name of God is the nucleus of Sikh religion. It has to be imbued in the human mind, which burns egoism, eliminates vices and cultivates virtues leading to a truthful living. One and the only one God, the Almighty is to be worshipped, who is the Creator of the entire creation, its sustainer and destroyer, nothing in between. It is the light of God which shines in everyone. The will of God prevails everywhere and everyone has to submit to it and live in accordance with it. There is no one beyond that Divine will. The concept of God is to be unborn, formless and self-illuminated.

The entire humanity is of one race, being the creation of the same creator, without any distinction or discriminations. Selfless service of humanity is the natural outcome. The religions which advocate numerous Gods and Goddesses and incarnations of God, the class, caste and creed discriminations violating the equality of humanity, the useless rites and rituals, and which do not reach or preach the Name of God have been rejected in Sikhism.

Sikh religion is an independent and separate religion like other religions of the world with its own distinct ideology, doctrines and religious practices. There were mainly two religions in India when Sikh religion was founded in Punjab-North India in 15th century. One was the traditional Hindu religion with its allied groups while the other was Islam which had been brought by the Muslim invaders who started invading India for a few centuries earlier. Both of these religions were conflicting and hostile to each other.

Guru Nanak Dev, founder of Sikhism, proclaimed in the very beginning that "There is no Hindu and there is no Muslim." The hostilities of those religions were condemned, that every one is the creation of the same creator. God of Hindus is the same as those of Muslims, everyone has the same soul-light of the same God that shines in all. Everyone has to reach the same destination to unite with God, the Creator; then why the disputes and hostilities, if paths are different? In Sikhism, the harmonious co-existence and understanding of all the religions was preached with due respect to each other.

The love between man and God and the love between man and man was advocated in Sikhism with equality and dignity of each individual with a sense of selfless service to humanity. Great stress was laid on the responsibility to society. Injustice to be never tolerated not only against one's own self but against all others who are victims of injustice. The basic human rights have to be ensured not only for one's own self but for everyone else. Earning has to be by hard labor by honest means but to be shared with the needy. Truth has to be above everything but higher still, the truthful living.

Egoism and vices have to be eliminated by the continual presence of God in one's mind, While the virtues have to be inculcated. The main virtues being truthfulness, righteousness, kindness, mercy, forgiveness, sincerity, good and pious deeds, pure intent and mind, faith in God, service to humanity, God's

admiration, surrender to God's will etc. The negative tendencies of mind have to be converted to God tuned of higher consciousness and activated in all the socio-political spheres. These are the dictums of Sikhism.

The initiation of the 'Amrit' of double- edged sword to become a Sikh was prescribed by Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Sikh Guru, making the Sikhs to be the Singhs (men), and Kaurs (women). The order of Khalsa, with the possession of five Sikh emblems, to be mandatory for all the Sikh to which there could be no exemption. The appearance of the Sikhs became conspicuous from others to be seen to a blurred eye even from a distance. Guru Granth Sahib was ordained to be the Eternal Guru of Sikhs in perpetuity by him, while Khalsa, the commonwealth of Sikhs, to take their collective decisions under its guidance. Sikhs became a separate nation with all the ingredients of a nation.

They challenged the Mughal empire for their freedom and sovereignty to which rest of Indians had submitted. After a prolonged struggle of about a century, Sikhs wiped out the Mughals and Afghan invaders. They set up their own Sikh empire in the entire north of India, with its borders adjoining Afghanistan on one side while China on the other. Sikh army was one of the best in the world.

Sikhs remained devoted to their religion and followed the Sikh dictums with commitment. In the Sikh Rule, justice was ensured for everyone. The basic fundamental human rights were ensured for everyone. The freedom of worship and religion was ensured for everyone, which had been crushed under the Mughal regime by force of the sword.

To understand the current Sikh issues and shortcomings in Sikhs and to find the solution of these issues and to over come the short comings and to live in Sikh code of conduct and Sikh way of life ,it is a must to have the brief study of Sikh religion and history and the basic Divine teachings of Guru Granth Sahib.

It is the duty of Sikhs to convey the Divine message of Sikh religion to the world, being the universal religion for the present age, for which some eminent scholars of world religions have held them liable that they have not discharged their duty. They can not do it unless they themselves understand it and act upon it and live in Sikh way of life, having the Sikh initiation and observing Sikh code of conduct. In Sikh religion Divine knowledge is not the end of the matter and it has to be practiced in practical living in all the socio-political spheres through out one's span of life.

The current Sikh issues relate to the very basic and fundamental dictums of Sikh religion, the Sikh initiation, the Sikh code of conduct and the Sikh way of life itself, to make these controversial and to create confusions in Sikhs so as to dilute the separate Sikh identity and misrepresent the Sikh religion and history. Sikhs must understand it and resolve these made up issues in accordance with the Divine teachings of Sikh religion and the Sikh historical perspectives.