

## **HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF-SIKHS AND CURRENT SIKH ISSUES CHAPTER 1**

### **SIKH RELIGION-A UNIVERSAL RELIGION OF THE PRESENT AGE**

#### **I-FOUNDATION OF SIKH RELIGION**

Guru Nanak Dev's advent in this world took place in 1469 AD at V. Talwandi in Punjab in North India, which is now in Pakistan after the 1947 partition of India. Sikh religion as founded only five centuries back and is the latest religion of the world. It is an original universal revealed religion with the Divine message of truth, Name of God and pious deeds for the present age in which there is the dominance of falsehood and burning desire of materialism. At that time in the 15th century the religious, political, social and economic setup had gone to the lowest ebb. The faked religious leaders besides the ruel autocratic rulers were exploiting the innocent masses requiring a prophet and a new universal religion to uplift and enlighten the mankind. Hinduism with all its allied faiths and systems was the main traditional religion in India, while Islam had been brought forth by the Muslim foreign invaders, who started invading India from 8th century. They tried to enforce it upon Hindus by force and threat of tortures, which created contempt and prejudice in the minds of Hindu society against Islam. The fundamentals and doctrines of Islam were neither taught by Muslims nor learnt by Hindus. So it proved of no help and guidance in the religious sphere in India. The Muslim invaders by their aggressive brutal acts misrepresented Islam as to be altogether based upon violence and violation of all the basic human rights and values, though Islam itself means peace and submission to the will of God and is based upon oneness of God and equality of mankind without caste and creed systems. The religious preachers of Islam, Qazis and Mullas told the line of Muslim rulers and invaders to misrepresent the Muslim law to the extent that God has created Hindus to be the slaves of Muslims and that Prophet had ordained that of Hindus do not accept Islam then they should be tortured and put to death and their properties confiscated- what a false interpretation. Christianity professing the worship of one and only one God and brotherhood of mankind with emphasis on Jesus Christ as redeemer and protector of humanity had no doubt spread all over the West, but it was not known in the East till 18th century. In 15th century this religion also faced a great turmoil. Exploitation of innocent masses for monetary consideration had erupted in the Christian priests. Certificates of heaven were even being issued. Letters of pardons of sins were also being issued by the Pope. John Wycliffs, a Catholic priest and translator in English of Bible who was professor in theology at Oxford, England in 14th century raised his voice against corruption and irreligious practices asserting that to rebel against the erring Pope is to obey Christ. There was thus the rebellion against the so called corrupt Church regime but of no much effect. Martin Luther King, a German professor of biblical studies had written 95 thesis disputation of the clarification of the power of indulgence to challenge the authenticity of the Roman Church as to point out the abuses and excesses regarding the role of papal indulgences. He was excommunicated by the Pope in 1521 instead of the desired reformation to end corrupt practices. Thus a new group of Protestants in Christianity came into existence that separated from the old Catholic Church. It is just to show that there was turbulence everywhere in 15th century when Sikh religion was founded. Hinduism, the traditional religion of India, stood victim of its own amalgamation of

different and contradictory faiths and systems with separate principles, practices, rituals and rites and the division of its people on creed and caste discriminations. All the systems in confrontation with each other were aimed at to be united under one label, but ensuring the supremacy of Vedas and Brahmans which ultimately resulted in the disintegration and demoralization of the Hindu society making it incapable to resist the foreign Muslim aggressors. On the one hand there was the Vedantic theory as contained in four Vedas and Shastras coupled with the Samirtis of their sage Mannu, providing the supremacy to Brahmans and the untouchability to Shudras, dividing the society in four castes of Brahmans, Kashatriyas, Vaish and Sudras with the religious dictum of Mannu, that if this division of mankind is interfered with, Dharma itself would stand polluted. The irreligious act, having been done in the Name of religion by dividing the Hindu society was attempted to be covered by indulging the innocent masses in useless rites and rituals and other faked religious practices. The worship of numerous Gods and Goddesses and incarnations of God in different systems as one may like is the characteristic of the group of this category. On the other hand, there is the Epic of Mahabharat, the hero of which is Shri Krishna, King of Mathura who gave the philosophic lesson to Arjuna, at the battlefield of Kurukshetra, when he was driving the chariot. He exhorted him to take part in the battle on the side of Pandavas, his relations as contained in "Gita," the scripture of Hinduism, teaching the human problems, and that Pandavas should not be fickle minded to wage the war against Kauravs to get their rights. He is considered as incarnation of God in Hinduism and worshipped by his devotees in their own way. The other Epic was of Ramayan, hero of which is Ram Chandra, King of Ayudhya, who was at the battle field with Ravan, King of Lanka, as he had abducted his wife Sita, to rescue her. He is also considered to be the incarnation of God and worshipped by his devotees in their own way. Yet, There was the Yogic cult as well, with altogether different ideology and practices with their own symbolic distinctions. They practiced the meditation in groups in seclusion in forests and mountains, far away from the maddening crowds of humanity, of no social responsibility to the society discarding the householders' life but living on the alms of householders, still divided in twelve sects, suffering from egoism, alleging to have acquired occult supernatural powers, against the wish of God. There were several other groups of Bairagis, Udasis and Sadhus, worshipping their own Gods and Goddesses in their own way, dependent upon the alms of the householders, without themselves earning with their hard labor and beyond any social responsibility. Though all these groups and systems were brought under the domain of Hinduism but they remained lost in their own different practices, rites and rituals. Overall impact of the contradictions in the religious systems, caste and creed discriminations, unconditional non-violence theories, escape from social and political responsibility, stress on individualistic and selfish cause brought the total disintegration, demoralization, and sense of fear and cowardliness in the Hindu society to such an extent that it became incapable to resist the foreign Muslim invaders, who took an advantage of it. Had the religious system been compact and uniform, believing in the fatherhood of one and only one God and brotherhood of mankind without caste and creed distinctions and discriminations, the people could remain united and the invaders could dare not invade India. Neither the Hindu society would face such humiliations and brutalities, nor could the Mughals ever rule over India. Muslim invaders boasted to have invaded India whenever they liked; put

to death millions of Hindus; put to ashes thousands of their temples; and made Hindu womenfolk their slaves and having taken away to their countries, with the looted wealth, without any resistance from such a huge populated Hindu society. Though it appears to be incredible but it is the historical fact that Muslim invaders on such occasions, several times, were only in hundreds of their gangs (armed forces) but still millions of Hindus resisted them not. If such huge population of Hindus would have jointly blown one breath, the tiny forces of invaders could fly to their countries; but their divisions and demoralization stood in the way. Sikander Lodhi, Feroze Shah Tuglak, Bakhtyar Khilji, Amir Taimur, Shahal-ud-din Ghazna, Qutab-ud-din Aibak, Ala-ud-din Khilzi are in the list of the foreign Muslim invaders, whom Hindus could not challenge. In the fifteenth century, the Mughal tyrant Babur, invaded India and committed indescribable cruelties and brutalities on the Hindu population. He established his rule in India to which Hindus could not challenge, due to their demoralization and sense of non-resistance to invaders for several centuries. Hindus were forcibly converted to Islam, under the threat of gun. Their religious leaders could not resist it as they were not prepared to make their supreme sacrifices. Indeed they had lost their religious spirit and were engaged in useless rites and rituals to exploit the innocent masses to have the empty hold on them for their monetary considerations. The politicians were themselves submitting to these tyrant invaders. They had no courage or will to face their force with force to resist their cruel aggressions. The general public had no avenue to stop their onslaught. The Hindu womenfolk were the worst victims in such a situation. Just prior to the foundation of Sikh religion in 15th century there was turmoil in religion and political affairs in East and as well in West. In India Muslim invaders and Islamic preachers were aggressive and unjust and brutal, violating all the human rights and values of Hindus. The Hindu religion and political leaders were demoralized having disintegrated and demoralized the entire Hindu society by exploiting it for their monetary considerations for centuries and having involved them in useless rites and rituals, and discriminations based on caste and creed systems. Exploitation of innocent masses was everywhere, there being no one to protect them and to provide Divine guidance. In fact, the human mind had virtually forgotten its creator. There was ill will in the mankind, instead of good will; hatred, instead of love; falsehood, instead of truth; darkness instead of light; egoism instead of humility; selfishness instead of selflessness; sense of selfless service to mankind had vanished. Feeling of brotherhood of mankind had withered away. Instead of the worship of God, there were numerous Gods and Goddesses to be worshipped Idolatry. There was no Divine guide to enlighten the mankind. In the words of Bhai Gurdaas, eminent Sikh scholar of 16th century: "Disappointing state of affairs was in the world and the entire universe was ensuing in human ego. Some persons were worshipping stones, while some cremation grounds; fraud of black magic increase the human anger; numerous faiths and systems were being setup after the strife between individuals. Truth was pushed to the corner; the Brahmans and Mullas were quarreling between themselves without any purpose; Everybody was putting forth his own faith; everywhere sinful acts were being committed." (Var 1-7, 1-18) Bhai Gurdas further stated Guru Nanak to be a Prophet: "The mankind had cried and shrieked to its creator to send a Prophet to enlighten and protect them in this Dark age. God, the Almighty, sent Guru Nanak with His message of truth and Name for the entire mankind to uplift them."

Guru Nanak founded Sikh religion, the latest religion of the World to spread the message of lively truth and Name of God for the redemption of mankind in this present age and to solve the problems of the modern man. Commented Dr. Muhammed Iqbal, the eminent Muslim scholar and philosopher: "After ages the house of false Gods was illuminated again and the light of god again radiated in the house of man. Then arose in Punjab, the call for oneness of the spirit; and the ideal man, Guru Nanak awakened India from its world of dreams." Reverend H.L. Bradshaw of USA, the eminent Christian missionary scholar:

"The older faiths were good in their day, but that day is now past and we are living in the dispensation of Guru Nanak. The other religions contain truth but Sikhism contains the fullness of truth." (Sikhism, Sikh Review Calcutta).

Mewa Singh  
USA