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Moulana Rumi & Sikhism

*Je pahunche te kah gaye tin ki ekai bath.
Sabai siyane ek math un ki ekai jath.*

A Rajasthan saint Sant Dadu Dayal in this beautiful couplet has said, “Whoever attained spirituality has said the same thing. All wise persons thinks alike, and their caste and religion is one”.

I will try to focus a few similarities of basic ideology between Moulana Rumi and Sikhism, though there was a difference of thousands of miles and hundreds of years among them. But this couplet proves to be true in letter and spirit and shows the togetherness between them.

Moula is an Arabic word for God. And Moulana is a Persianised form that means a person who dispels ignorance about God. Guru is a Sanskrit word for God. And also means, who dispels ignorance about God. Thus Moulana and Guru are the same words for the person who educates spirituality and dispels ignorance about God. Both are the theologian traditions for propagation of spirituality in true sense in different languages.

Moulana Jalal Uddin Rumi a Sufi Saint belonged to *Wahadtul Wajood Stream* of Islam was born in the year 1207 at Balkh, and left for heavenly abode in the year 1273. In his famous couplet:-

Too braye wasal kardan aamadi.
Naa braye fasal kardan aamadi.

He says “The purpose of your coming into the world is to unite the people and not to separate the people”. In his view, Muslims, Christians, Jews and Zoroastrians (Parsis) were all the same. Therefore, he reminded people that it was essential not to look down on non-Muslims and respect others’ religions and beliefs. He regarded all religions, sects and nations as waves of the ocean of Unity of God. His thoughts were completely Islamic and should not be misunderstood.

196 years after Moulana's departure, Shri Guru Nanak Sahib a saint of self designed independent ideology in no way affiliated with Hinduism or Islam, was born in the year 1469 in Punjab of present Pakistan, and left for heavenly abode in the year 1539. He started a movement which is popularly known as Sikhism and was continued by his 9 successor Gurus for 239 years. The movement still continues by the Scripture, the present 11th Guru Shri Guru Granth Sahib as his 10th successor. This Holy Scripture should not be presumed to be of the Sikhs only, on the assumption that they are its custodians. The Gurus had demolished the barriers of caste, creed, religion and gender and propagated for the oneness of God and oneness of humanity. That is how, along with the 6 Sikh Gurus, 7 Muslims and remaining from different denominations of Hindus along with 2 deemed to be untouchables are seated together in this Scripture, to which Sikhs bow their heads in reverence and follow. The basic teaching of Sikhism is that "All the religions and their Scriptures are equally true".

Though Moulana Rumi lived in an age and area where slaves were bought and sold as animals and employed. He said, "I have faith in a God, that has not created any slaves". Once his daughter was scolding her female slave, Moulana entered the room. He said to her, "Why are you hitting this slave? Where do you get the right to hurt her? Nobody except God has slaves. In fact all the slaves are our brothers and sisters". She apologised the slave.

Shri Guru Nanak Sahib said, "Nanak is found among the lowest of the low caste. What he has to do with the high and mighty? Where the lowest are looked after, there shower the grace of God". He travelled for forty years and covered about forty thousand miles within and beyond the boundaries of the country in the east, west, north and south. He always preferred to stay and dine with the low caste poor people alone, though he was born in high caste Khatri family of Hindus. He refused to put on *Janevu* the sacred thread, saying that he cannot accept any difference between man and man. He gave a new slogan that, "Naa ko Hindu – Naa Musalman ", means nobody is Hindu and nobody is Musalman, everybody is a human being . He was always accompanied in his travels by one Bhai Bala a Hindu and another Bhai Mardana a Muslim of low caste Mirasi musician.

Once, a Christian craftsman was working in Moulana's house. Moulana's friends teased the craftsman saying, "Why don't you become Muslim? Islam is the best of all religions". He replied, "For 50 years I have been in Jesus' religion. If I abandon my religion now, I am fearful I would be ashamed in front of him". Upon hearing this Moulana said, "The essence of faith is fear. Whoever fears God, even if that person is a Christian, he is a man of God". Shri Guru Nanak Sahib and Sikhism were also against converting the people's religion. They stood for religious freedom and against conversions by practising, preaching, sacrificing their lives and properties and even by struggling and using the force.

One day praising the God, a *rebab* (a musical instrument) was being played in Moulana's presence. Moulana was listening with great pleasure. Suddenly a respected man came in and said, "Stop this, as the *Azaan* (call to the prayer) is being heard. Moulana said, "No, no, that voice is calling to God, this voice is also calling to God. The *Azaan* is inviting the outer aspect of human beings to duty while the voice of *rebab* is inviting the human spirit, his inner face and his invisible aspect to God's love and awareness".

Shri Guru Nanak Sahib also praised God singing, while his companion Bhai Mardana played *rebab*. For prayers, singing the praises of God with musical instruments is called performing Kirtan. This has become a custom in Sikh tradition for the same reason as Moulana has described.

Moulana and most of the Sufis followed the ideas of *Wahadat-ul-Wajood* (Unitarianism). One has to understand its spiritual aspect. It is a monotheism philosophy based on *Tauheed* (oneness of God). According to this belief, existence is only one, and that is God. There is no other existence other than the existence of God. All the beings in this universe, visible or invisible, have appeared in the knowledge of God. They came into existence with God's manifestation of His Divine Will. The real existence is only the existence of God, and the Creator is present in the creation itself. Hazrat Ibne Arabi has said: "If I break my pen into pieces, God will be present in every piece". This was also called *Hama Aust* (*He is Everything*). Thus taking birth in this world is coming from the Divine Light and leaving this world is reuniting with God. That is how the anniversary of the death of a Sufi saint is marked with celebration as if it is a wedding and is called "Urs" or union with God.

Sikhism staunchly believes that the all pervading Creator is One Alone, and contains himself in his own creations inclusive of everything living or lifeless every where and every time. There is no place or thing without God. A human being is like waves coming out from the ocean and again merging within the ocean of God, there is no duality between God and man, and both are one and the same. According to the deeds one has to be punished or rewarded and ultimately reunited with the God.

These are a few similarities and teachings contained in Moulana Jalal Uddin Rumi and Sikhism. If followed in true letter and spirit they can bring dignity for human beings. Let us celebrate the Moulana's centenary by resolving to make this planet a heaven to live in as God has created and made us the most honourable and the most superior of all creatures. This will help to bring peace, social justice, equality, religious harmony, human integration and a sense of honourable co-existence

by the religions, nations and countries. Instead of finding disparities and faults in the customs and rituals, let us find the similarities in the basic fundamentals of different faiths which can unite us.