

## POLITICAL RESPONSE OF GURU NANAK DEV JI

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Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the founder of Sikhism was born in the Rachna Doab which later was known as Talwandi (now in Pakistan) on April, 1469. At that time Bahlol Lodhi was the ruler of Delhi and Tatar Khan Lodhi was governing the province of Lahore on his behalf. Guru Nanak's father, Mehta Kalu, was a Khatri, a high caste among the Punjabi Hindus. Kalu worked as a tax collector (patwari). His mother was Mata Tripta and elder sister Bibi Nanki. Guru Nanak mastered the Vedas and Sanskrit and was enrolled into a Madrasa to study Persian and Arabic languages. As a young man Nanak was married to Sulakhni, daughter of Mula, a Khatri, Mula belonged to the subcaste Chona which was less important than the sub caste Bedi. As a married young man Nanak was expected sooner rather than later to earn a living for himself. Sometime before or after 1490, search for employment took him across the Bari Doab to Sultanpur in Bistjalandhar Doab. Sultanpur at this time was the seat of an important Shiqdar, Daulat Khan Lodhi, who was later to become the governor of Lahore. Jai Ram, an Uppalkhatri, who was married to Guru Nanak's sister, Nanki, on his request and surety Guru Nanak was given employment in the Modikhana of Daulat Khan Lodhi. Guru Nanak performed his duties well, living as a house holder in Sultanpur. His two sons, Sri Chand and Lakhmi Chand were born

there. Guru Nanak spent 57 years of his life under the reign of Lodis. Guru Nanak was 20, when Sikandar Lodi came to the throne of Delhi and he was 34 when he set out on his first tour, therefore obviously Nanak spent the first 34 years of his life in Punjab. The first twenty years he spent at his birth place Talwandi and thereafter he took to service under Daulat Khan Lodhi at Sultanpur as store keeper (Modikhana).

Guru Nanak, the founder was a contemporary of five monarchs Bahlol Lodhi (1469-89), Sikandar Lodhi (1489 - 1517), Ibrahim Lodhi (1517-1526), Mughal rulers – Babur (1526-1530) and Humayun (1530-1539). But Guru Nanak does not mention the name of any of these rulers except Babur while attacking their unrighteous politics.

Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh religion, criticized the political condition and administration of his times and made many indirect references to the contemporary political situation, where the kings were unrighteous and harassed their subjects. Guru Nanak described this time period as **Kaliyuga** and says:

*Such is the way of the Kali – age that everyone says that,*

*He himself knows everything.*

Guru Nanak was witnessed the conditions of the people under the Lodis and the behaviour of the ruling class towards the people. He expressed political degradation in the following hymn like:

*The Kali –Yuga is a knife;the rajas are butchers;dharma is fast vanishing;in the dark night of falsehood the moon of truth nowhere seems to rise.*

Guru Nanak described the times in many of his writings “The age is like a knife.Kings are butchers .Religion hath taken wings and flown .In the dark night of falsehood I cannot see where the moon of truth is rising”( Majhkivar ). And again: ‘Modesty and religion have disappeared because falsehood reigns supreme.The Muslim Mulla and Hindu Pandit have resigned their duties ,the Devil reads the marriage vows.....Praises of murder are sung and people smear themselves with blood instead of saffron’ (Tilang).

Guru Nanak was thoroughly familiar with the political –administrative arrangements made by Lodhi rulers in Punjab.The rulers are unjust;they discriminate against their non-Muslim subjects by extorting jajia and pilgrimage tax. The ruling class is oppressing the cultivator and the common people.The rajas prey like lions and the muqaddams eat like dogs;they fall upon the raiyat day and night.

Guru Nanak exhorted people to turn to **God,the true king,the king of kings**.His service alone is true service .He who finds a

place with the true king does not have to look towards an earthly potentate. In a trice he can degrade the high and the mighty and raise the low to rulership.He protects the righteous against brute force many a time. He cast down the wicked and exalted the righteous.

The founder Prophet of Sikhism,stands unique in the field of spirituality,for his teachings of a new religious sect which excelled all others prevalent during his time.He was concerned more about man’s spiritual enlightenment than the political affairs which attract every human being.He kept himself away from active participation of politics and even never coveted any political authority for himself.

Guru Nanak was primarily a religious preacher and up-lifter of society.Active politics was not his field.He observed with keen interest the functioning of the Government in the country.Guru Nanak did think of the social and the political disabilities of his people.

Guru Nanak had a vision about society based on Justice, fraternity, liberty and equality and free from every type of oppression.Guru Nanak had depicted the contemporary political condition of India very vividly. The sufferings of the people during the Babur’s invasion had been described by Guru Nanak with deep emotion.The Guru resented the Lodi’s inability to discharge their duty of providing protection for their subjects.

Guru Nanak does not show any regard for temporal power and he does not show any

respect for political authority. This aspect of his attitude to politics, in which man's moral commitment is given importance rather than his political obligations if the distinction between moral allegiance to God and political allegiance to the state was to be carried to its logical conclusions.

His perspective on corruption is so high in the administration that there is no one who doesn't receive or give bribe. Even the king administers justice only when his palm is greased and none is moved in the name of God. Guru Nanak feels that the rulers are busy in amassing wealth. Guru Nanak was deeply moved by the oppression and suffering caused by Babur's invasion. Guru Nanak's viewpoint on Babur's invading army was considered as marriage procession of sins. Moreover, his account of the invasion of Babur is incorporated in Guru Granth Sahib (Rag Asa) also known as Babur Bani in the following speech:

***Bringing a bridal procession of sin  
(Babur), hath hasted from Kabul and  
demandeth wealth as his bride, O Lalo.***

***Modesty and religion have vanished; false  
hood was strutting about in glory O Lalo.***

***The occupation of the Qazis and the  
Brahmans is gone, the Devil readeth the  
marriage service, O Lalo.***

***Musalman women read the Quran, and in  
suffering call upon God, O Lalo.***

***Hindu woman whether of high or low  
caste, meet the same fate as they, O Lalo.***

***They sing the paeon O murder, O Nanak, and  
smear themselves with the saffron of blood.***

Guru Nanak reacted against such atrocities committed by the Babur's army. Guru Nanak's sharp response to Babur's invasions

underlines the most important political development during his life, the transition from Afghan to Mughal rule in the Punjab and in northern India.

Guru Nanak's composition Babur Bani gives a vivid description of the devastation done by armies of invaders led by Babur. Guru Nanak also clearly indicates the type of rulers and administrative machinery of his time in the following hymn:

***Rulers are turned beast of prey, their officers  
hounds.***

***None do they allow in peace to rest.***

***The Subordinates wound the people with  
their claws***

***You dogs! lick on the blood and marrow of  
the poor.***

Guru Nanak's age was an age of political chaos, oppression, tyranny and corruption. Guru Nanak gives expression to his anguish over the age in these words:

***Kings are butchers, cruelty their knife,***

***Sense of duty has taken wings and vanished.***

***Falsity prevails like the darkness of darkest  
night,***

***The moon of truth is visible nowhere.***

***I have tired myself in search, but,***

***In the darkness of the age, no path of  
righteousness is visible.***

In Babur Bani he complained to God for allowing the weak to be trampled upon by the strong. He called invaders yama (the angels of death) disguised as Babur. Sitting in the city of corpses Guru Nanak said to the Lord:

***The Lord from Babur's invasion protected  
Khorasana,***

***And on Hindustan, let loose the terror.***

***The Lord Himself Punishes not:***

*So the Mughal Babur He sent down, dealing  
death as yama.*

*As in their agony of suffering the people  
wailed,*

*Didst Thou feel no comparison for them ?*

*Listen, Thou who art creator of all.*

*Should a powerful foe molest one equally  
powerful?*

*Little would the mind be grieved?*

*But when a ferocious tiger falls upon a herd  
kills it,*

*Then must the Master be called to account.*

*These dogs that despoiled the jewels and  
wasted them,*

*Now in their death none shall remember  
them.*

So Guru Nanak pained to see the suffering of weak and ordinary people who had little to do with politics and war.

Guru Nanak's philosophy teaches man to develop transpersonal outlook and to transcend the boundaries of races and nations. Guru Nanak perceives the whole universe as a single unit created by God. He preached the idea of universal brother-hood among the human beings. He advised man to establish and maintain such a political order in the world wherein all people can live in peaceful co-existence.

In fact, Guru Nanak's attitude towards politics is very much related with the welfare of man and society.

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