

Impact of Nirankari Mission in a Rural Setting

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The Mission was founded on May 25, 1929 in Rawalpindi by Baba Buta Singh Ji. This the day when Baba Avtar Singh Ji received God-knowledge from Baba Buta Singh Ji and joined him in taking the spiritual light to as many people as possible. He started the Mission to show the path of knowing and becoming aware of One Formless Almighty God and this is how Sant Nirankari Mission and Satguru tradition began. The present paper is an attempt to analyze the impact of Nirankari Mission in a rural setting. It has been shown that the Mission has provided common spiritual platform to everyone, without converting his/her caste and religion. It has helped in decreasing discrimination by bringing together the so called 'inferior and superior' in caste-based society.

[**Keywords** : Nirankari Mission, Rural setting, Discrimination, Almighty God, *Brahm Gyan*]

1. Nirankari Mission : An Introduction

As the name goes, the Mission's corner stone is the realization of God of Formless one, Nirankar. He is omnipresent and pervades every particle of the universe. He is imminent and all are in Him, and

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being transcendent, He is in all. He is the creator, nurturer and ultimate end of all that is visible. Though formless, one can know God, perceive Him and realize Him and liberate himself from the bondage of transmigration or life and death.

The mission, however, does not end up with the description of the Truth of God. The emphasis here is on knowing the Supreme Entity *i.e.* God. We do not mind to name God differently, but we would stress on His oneness despite the multiplicity of names. While the entire universe is subject to change, the Almighty God is not.

The Mission believes that God be realized only through the True Master (*Satguru*). Since the seeker requires a hint to perceive or realize God, *Satguru* must be present in physical form, even though his real importance lies in his formless entity. *Satguru* here is the embodiment of Formless God. Just like God, we can realize the presence of *Satguru* all the time, everywhere. Again like God, *Satguru* is not bound by the considerations of caste, colour and creed. Significantly, *Satguru* in our Mission attaches us with the Almighty and not own physical form when it comes to the question of devotion.

Just as God manifests Himself and function in the physical form of *Satguru*, *Satguru* manifests himself and functions in the physical form of saints who receive God-knowledge. He offers them his holy seat, his *Dupatta* (scarf) and bestows all his spiritual powers to them. Practically he bestows his entity on his disciples and operates through their physical form and blesses one and all. This, however, does not mean that the disciple replaces *Satguru*. It is *Satguru* who merges his spiritual identity into that of the disciple.

As we receive *Brahm Gyan*, we are advised to seek the company of spiritually enlightened saints (*Satsang*), do service to others (*Sewa*) and remember God (*Sumiran*) to keep us steadfast in our devotion to God and faith in *Satguru*. They also keep us away from bondage of superstitions. While *Satsang* presents a beautiful picture of unity in diversity and promotes love, respect and humility. *Sumiran* keeps us conscious of the presence of God in every thought and action and thus fosters noble virtues instead of negative feelings. *Sewa* enables every devotee to give expression to his or her devotion to the Almighty. A significant feature of *Satsang*, *Sewa* and *Sumiran* in this Mission is that they are free from bindings and restrictions.

Thee Mission believes that religion symbolized by rites and rituals which differ from faith to faith, rather set to sect, is not the reality simply because it seeks to segment one group of people from the other. The Mission feels that the rites and rituals being practiced by way of worship of God are not the end or the Truth by itself. If at all, they become meaningful only after one realizes the Truth or knows God. The best way to worship God, then, will be to realize His presence all the time everywhere and associate Him in every action of daily life. True religion, the Mission says, unites mankind, it never divides. Naturally, we conclude that Humanity, taking the entire human race into its fold, promising equality and universal brotherhood, is the best religion.

The Mission treats God as that sacred link that inter-connects every objects of the universe- animate or inanimate. His common cord unites every human being with one another. This feeling oneness takes the mankind beyond national boundaries and physical distances. We may live anywhere on earth, speak any language, wear any dress, follow any religion or culture, we are one simply because we exist in God and God exists in us all at the same time. God is also the supreme source of all divine virtues. Hence once we are with God, we imbibe these virtues including love, compassion, humility, tolerance, broad-vision, selflessness and so on. We become human beings in real sense.

To join the Sant Nirankari Mission means you have received God-knowledge or *Brahm Gyan*. Before this ceremony, however, every seeker is given five principles which help him or her not only to understand the divine truth but also to take full advantages of its realization, in day- to-day life. They are called 'Five pledges' not in the sense of a pre- condition for receiving *Brahm Gyan*, but because otherwise the devotee will neither understand it nor take its advantages in practical life. They are pledges or a commitment to oneself to follow these noble principles in one's life.

The first principles, is all worldly assets- physical, mental and material ultimately belong to God and one should treat them as such and not be proud of the same. Physical possessions include the body with its strength, height and look or appearance. The possessions of mind refer to one's educational qualifications, art or craft he learns and the occupation or career based on the same, and wealth includes not only one's property or money one has, all his social relations are also his wealth.

The second principal is that one should not be proud of one's religion, caste, creed and colour one should not consider one's religion and caste as superior or more sacred than the religion and caste of other, and be proud of the same. This will automatically remove the feeling of hatred against others on this account.

Thirdly, one should not hate or criticize others on account of their diet and dress declaring one's own as superior and pride-worthy. The Mission is convinced that such diversities are bound to exist, because they are dictated by Nature through different climates. Moreover, what one eats, drinks or wears is related to the body, having nothing to do with the soul. One may it should become a reason to be proud. One should not preach one's own choice and thrust it upon others and thus add on to the dimensions of discord, tension and conflict.

The fourth principal here is that one must not leave one's hearth and home and become a recluse or ascetic and thus be a burden on society. God can be realized while performing normal duties of daily life. So, one should not run away from his responsibilities towards himself, his family and the society at large, on the pretext of search for the Ultimate Truth. One must earn one's own livelihood through honest hard work and one must not be a burden on others for the pursuit of spiritual enlightenment.

The fifth and the last principal of the Mission is that one must not divulge to other the divine knowledge as revealed by the True Master without his permission.

With these principles at heart and God all around, a Nirankari devotee is a guiding star for the world by the practical life he lives. These principles enable the devotee to lead a simple and balanced life worthy of a human being. The Mission thus seeks to ensure individual development as well the welfare and progress of the society as a whole.

2. Ideology of Nirankari Mission

The ideology of the Sant Nirankari Mission takes its genesis from the fact that the world worships God without knowing Him in his real form, His real entity. That God exist and is the source of our being. The Supreme Creator, is acknowledged universally. Even those who do not believe in God, have no reason to deny His existence. An ordinary believer, however, fails to 'know' God

because God exists at a level of reality, which is beyond the five senses- sound, sight, smell, touch and taste. We live, act and move in God everywhere and all the time, but without realizing its existence within and outside. We go through every change or transformation in the world of ours bound by the dimensions of time and space but remain quite unconscious of the Supreme Force behind the same.

Satguru or the True Master here is believed as the true incarnation of the Formless in physical form as a human being. In this way, he has both the identities- formless as well as in physical form. As formless, he is ever- lasting and beyond the cycle of birth and death. In this way, he is one with God, both having one entity with all the powers or qualities of the Formless One. For its information or manifestation in physical form, its second entity, it may choose any human body, irrespective of age or gender, and function through the same to salvage the sinful world of human beings.

For the devotees of the Sant Nirankari Mission, the Nirankari Sant *Samagams* are an auspicious occasion to enjoy spiritual bliss. They are a powerful medium to take to the masses the Mission's message of truth, love and peace. They afford an opportunity to the devotees to see their *Satguru*, listen to the inspiring views of the Master and other preachers and feel blessed. *Samagams* offer a great opportunity for voluntary service not only for *Sewadal* but other devotees also. To the world, these *Samagams* present an ideal example of unity in diversity, equality and fraternity based on spiritual awakening, which helps the devotees to establish harmony at home when applied to their daily dealings.

A devotee is always keen to express his gratitude to the True Master who awards God- knowledge and thus salvages him from the darkness of ignorance. He would like to offer him the best of his possession- physical, mental and material. *Guru Puja Diwas* offers the devotees of the Sant Nirankari Mission an occasion for making the offerings to the True Master from their earning.

Manav Ekta Diwas or the Human Unity Day has been celebrated on April 24 every year since 1981. The date in this case has become sacred because it was on this day in 1980 that Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji laid down his life while crusading for the noble cause of truth, love, peace and human unity. Exceptions may, however, be made here also so that the date suits the convenience of devotees, particularly those living abroad. The Mission's followers recall the supreme

sacrifice of Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji and hundreds of other martyrs, and rededicate themselves to the noble cause they lived and died for.

The first death anniversary of Baba Hardev Singh Ji on May 13, 2017, was commemorated as *Samarpan Diwas*. Baba Ji relinquished his physical and merged into this eternal abode on this day in 2016. The day was marked by special congregations or *Samagams* all over India and abroad. Tributes were paid to Baba Ji for his glorious contribution towards the service to humanity. Every devotee of the Mission sought to dedicate himself or herself to take the Mission to those heights where Baba Hardev Singh Ji wanted to see it. They also pledged to work unitedly under the benign guidance of the present Spiritual Head, *Satguru Mata Savinder Hardev Ji Maharaj*.

The *Mukti Parv Samagam* is held on the 15th of August every year. While the country celebrates the Independence Day, the Mission adds to the spirit of jubilation by highlighting the need for man's spiritual liberation. It is of the opinion that just as political freedom from foreign rule is essential for socio-economic progress of the nation, spiritual liberation from the cycle of birth and death is necessary for lasting peace and real happiness.

3. Sant Nirankari Mandal

In order to institutionalize the organization and streamline the activities of the Mission, the then Spiritual Head of the Mission, Baba Avtar Singh Ji gave it an organizational outfit, Sant Nirankari Mandal. The Mandal was got registered with its Headquarters at Delhi in September 1948. Its aims and objects include to preach and propagate the concept of One Formless God (*Nirankar*) and promote peace, non-violence and Universal Brotherhood among the people all over the world by holding congregations and otherwise. It is also stated that Sant Nirankari Mission is a religious order which believes that God can be realized only with the grace of living *Satguru*. Further, it shall not associate itself with any political party.

The Mandal has the following organs :

1. General Body : It comprises all the *Pracharaks*, *Mukhis*, *Pramukhs*, Zonal Incharges, *Sewa Dal* office-bearers and such other members of the Mission as may be nominated by the *Satguru*. It meets at least once a year under the benign Chairmanship of the *Satguru*. The General Body reviews the

progress of the Mission and lays down Policy guidelines for its promotion further.

2. Working Committee,
3. Executive Committee and
4. Advisory Committees.

All properties, movable and immovable, belonging to and acquired by the Mandal from time to time vest in The Sant Nirankari Mandal. All donations, offerings, gifts etc. in cash or kind, constitute the funds and assets of the Mandal. These are utilized for activities and programs designed to achieve the aims and objects of the Mandal. Proper and true accounts of the income and expenditure in respect of the Mandal and its Branches are maintained at Delhi Headquarters under the overall supervision of the Executive Committee. The accounts of the Mandal are audited by the Chartered Accountants annually.

At present Sant Nirankari Mission has 3019 branches into 95 Zones in the country and 200 abroad. In a way, conventions are an essential part of any religious faith or spiritual movement. They lend practical expression to certain principles or aspects of their philosophy and tend to strengthen the faith of those who believe or follow them. Some conventions of Nirankari Mission Gursikh-Manifestation of *Satguru* the Sant Nirankari Mission believe in the Formless God (*Nirankari Brahm*) and the true Master in physical form of a human being (*Sakar Satguru*). *Satguru* is the manifestation of the formless in physical form.

Second Charan Sparsh While being blessed with God-knowledge, a devotee is told that God Nirankari exists in every object of the universe whether young or old. Every human being is, therefore, an image of God. He touches the feet of the other and greets him or her with *dhan nirankar*, which means 'Hail the Almighty'. The other devotee will also touch his feet and say 'Dhan Nirankar'.

Thirdly Charanamrit is the holy wash from holy feet. Devotees of the Mission wash the holy feet of *Satguru* and use the water as nectar (*Amrit*). It is a matter of deep faith in *Satguru* and the Formless One.

Fourthly *Dupatta* the white scarf has its own sanctity. It is a symbol of spiritual entity given by *Satguru*. Saints wear it when they

represent *Satguru*, particularly when they award *Brahm Gyan* (God-knowledge), preside over a congregation, pay a visit to a devotee's house or shop, etc., when they represent the Mission in approaches them for *Charanamrit*.

Fifth and last convection Bhog Like the followers of any other religion faith, the devotees in the Sant Nirankari Mission also would like to offer their first morsel of food to the Almighty. Since the Almighty is Formless, it is considered sufficient to offer the first morsel to a fellow- devotee who is a living image of the Formless One.

The the order to achive the aim of service to Humanity. The Sant Nirankari Mission has two arm viz. The Sant Nirankari Mandal and sant Nirankari charitable Foundation which are spearheading the drive throughout the Globe the organized volunteers of the mission in form of Nirankari Sewadal Supported by a sea of humanity in the form of devotees are ever ready to take up new challenge as well as undertake the regulare commitments of the mission

The Mission is leading organization in the field of voluntary blood donation in Indian and abroad. The mission is running 4 Hospital and 137 Dispensaries on charitable basis in India. His Holiness Baba Hardev Singh ji Maharaj Started the voluntary blood donation campaign in 1986 after Baba Grubachan Singh Maharaj ji's martyrdom as a tribute to him and individuals who sacrificed their lives to up hold ideals of truth. Baba ji spoke, Human blood should flow in the veins and not in drains"

Sant Nirankari Mission recognizes blood as a universal human lifeline all humans despite caste, colour, gender or creed, need it to survive. Blood donation camps are being organized throughout the year especially on the following occasions. 5046 Blood donation camps have held since 1986 and more than 86900 blood unites have been donated up 31st March 2017 after the conation. Nirankari Blood Donation has been recording in the Guineas Book of the world. Sant Nirankari Blood Bank has bee established in Mumbai. The mission is also coming up with Sant Nirankari Heath city (SNHC) a huge super specialty hospital in North Delhi, India to cater to the comprehensive wellness and health of the community.

Although from spiritual point of view the Mission is convinced that whatever one eats, drinks and wears is related to body and has

nothing to do with the soul, it does advise its followers to refrain from taking any kind of intoxicants since it considers the same as the root cause of social evils. At the same time the Mission stresses the need for austerity in the matter of marriages and other social functions. In order to encourage dowry-free marriages, the Mission has already started organizing mass marriage functions in a big way.

Sant Nirankari Mission has always been extending its support and co-operation in any type of calamity in the country and abroad. To fight COVID-19 pandemic, SNM has donated 5 crore Rupees to the Govt. of India and 2 crore to different state governments. The mission has offered the buildings of *Satsang Bhawans* to be used as quarantine Centres all over India. PPE kits also have been donated to the health workers across the country. Nirankari volunteers are providing food to the poor (almost one Lakh people daily) Dry ration is also being distributed to the people who are in need of it.

SNM is also following all the guidelines of the Government for exm. from the 13th March onwards daily or weekly congregation are suspended to maintain social distancing.

In the field of education. The mission operates many schools colleges and other educational institutions in various cities of India along with this vocational institutes for youth have been set-up for upskilling. Youth empowerment and women empowerment programs are also organized regularly.

The United Nation organize world environment Day every year on June 5. This year. The theme was 'pollution free Air'. On the this day, SNCF organized, an awareness campaign in 17 hill stations to conserve trees and promote cleanliness and protect environment and promote tree plantation.

In recognition of the leading role performed in the field of blood donation, the Indian Red cross Society honoured the Sant Nirankari Charitable Foundation (SNCF) for its excellence in blood donation and promotional efforts. In a function organized in the Raj Bhawan, Hyderabad, Shri E.S.L. Narasimhan ji, the Governor of Telangana handed over a Certificate of Honour to Shri Rakesh Pal ji.

'Oneness' to encompass the total societal existence of human race without. Differentiation of any kind. The voice of Oneness reverberates around and within all living and nonliving beings. Oneness is a wholesome word, which, in my humble opinion, cannot be further subdivided.

The one who has identified with God, imbibes purity, love and brotherhood, while the one who has not, nurses hatred and jealousy. God realization cleanses one of all evils. Ignorance of God is the cause of hatred and enmity. When ignorance is dispelled, such negative feelings are eliminated. God knowledge fosters love and brotherhood."

4. Impact of Nirankari Missions

As far as the impact of Nirankari Missions is concerned, it has been enumerated as follows :

1. Mission preaches merger of soul with God. It dispels the darkness.
2. Mission escorts the seekers straight to kingdom of God and establishes direct and constraint communion with the omnipresent God.
3. Mission provides a common form, where all human beings professing different religious faiths, cultures, and nationalities up divine Nectar (*Amrit*) and enjoy everlasting peace, bliss and salvation.
4. Though the respondents have different socio-economic background, but no discrimination is found here.
5. The respondents do believe in caste and creed system and they do not discriminate between rich and poor.
6. They help financially each other and always remain ready to help each other.
7. Respondents feel more peace and harmony in social network the maturing factors I found in my study are as follows: Sanskar (ritual), problem of ghost (free soul) and motivation of relative, social security and financial support, mental satisfaction, motivation by lady *jajman*, behaviour of Nirankari followers. For salvation realization inspiration of Nephew.
8. Some respondents told that they get self satisfaction and ultimate truth of human life.
9. One respondent told after joining the mission that he gave up all his vices such as drinking, smoking, hunting etc.
10. One respondent told after joining the mission his family quarrel has ended.

11. According to some respondents, they have got a right path of spirituality.
12. One respondent told that I got a sense of mental peace with the meditation.
13. One respondent told he felt the sense of casteism loosened, He told that he did not hesitate in sitting among the upper caste.
14. Some respondents told that mission brings together all people professing different religious faith, culture and make them live together as member of universal brotherhood.
15. One respondent told that there was no bar of caste and creed. He got the theory of social equality in the Nirankari Mission.
16. Followers believe that Mata ji is charismatic personality. But Mataji, is source of Charisma. Mata ji is the sakar roop of Nirankar which is the ultimate reality of the cosmos.
17. Most of followers told that *Satguru* Mata Sudiksha ji appeals to try to see her image in the faces of all the Nirankari persons. So every Nirankari person treats other Nirankari as Mata Sudiksha Ji. So she tries to give other Nirankari a lot of respect. Due to these practices society is shifting to equalitarian society.

5. Conclusion

It may be concluded that the Mission is successfully mitigating caste-based distance in India, which has been caste-based society for centuries. It is giving opportunities to the socially backward classes to perform their rituals and decreasing discrimination by paving the way for so called 'inferior and superior' classes of society to come together. Consequently, the society has started moving from a stratified one to a decentralized one. Giving stress on accepting the diversities in society and declining discrimination on the basis of caste, religion, gender and race is the important Impact of Mission. It has further provided a common spiritual platform to everyone, without converting his/her caste and religion.

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