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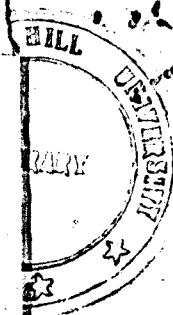
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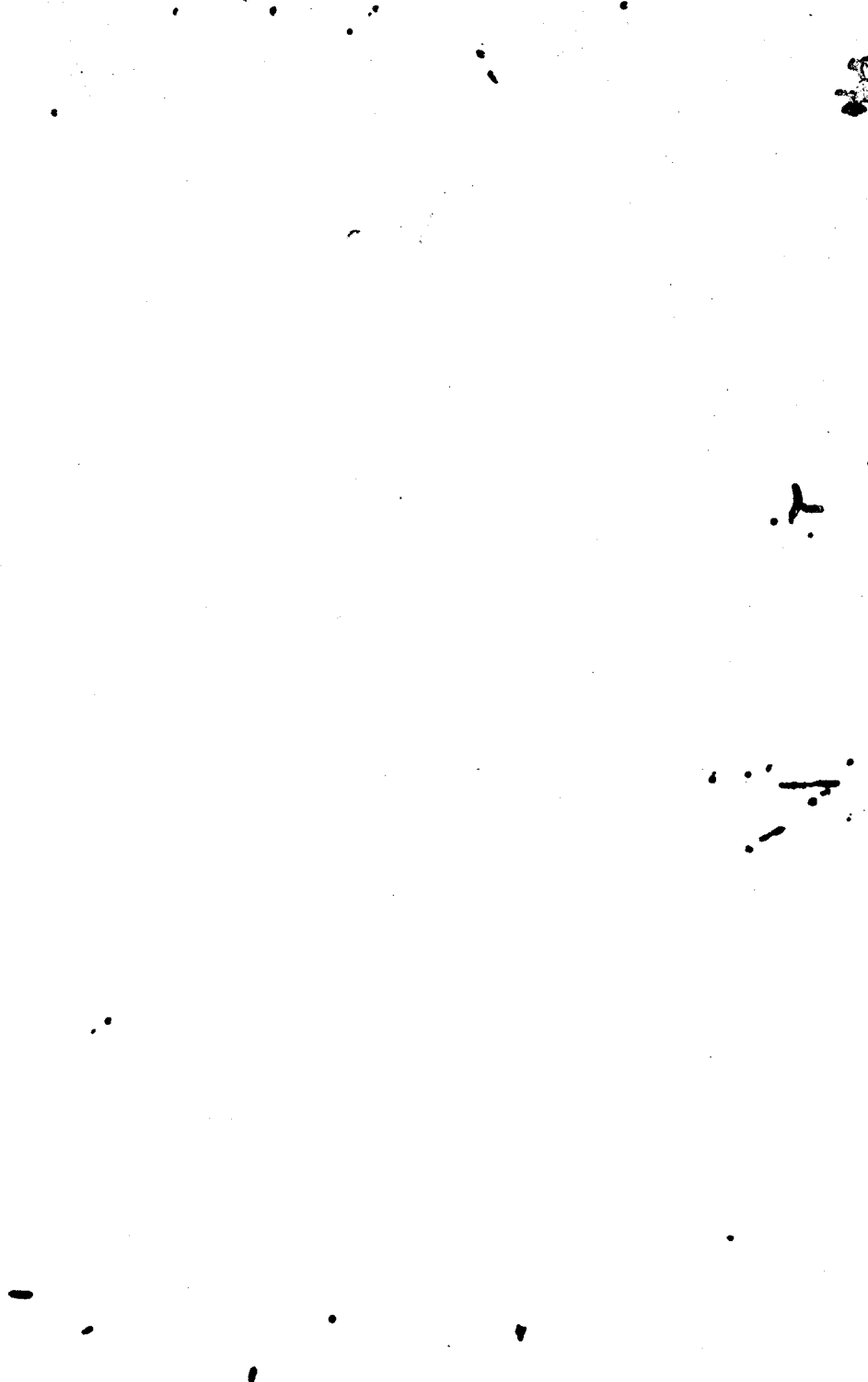
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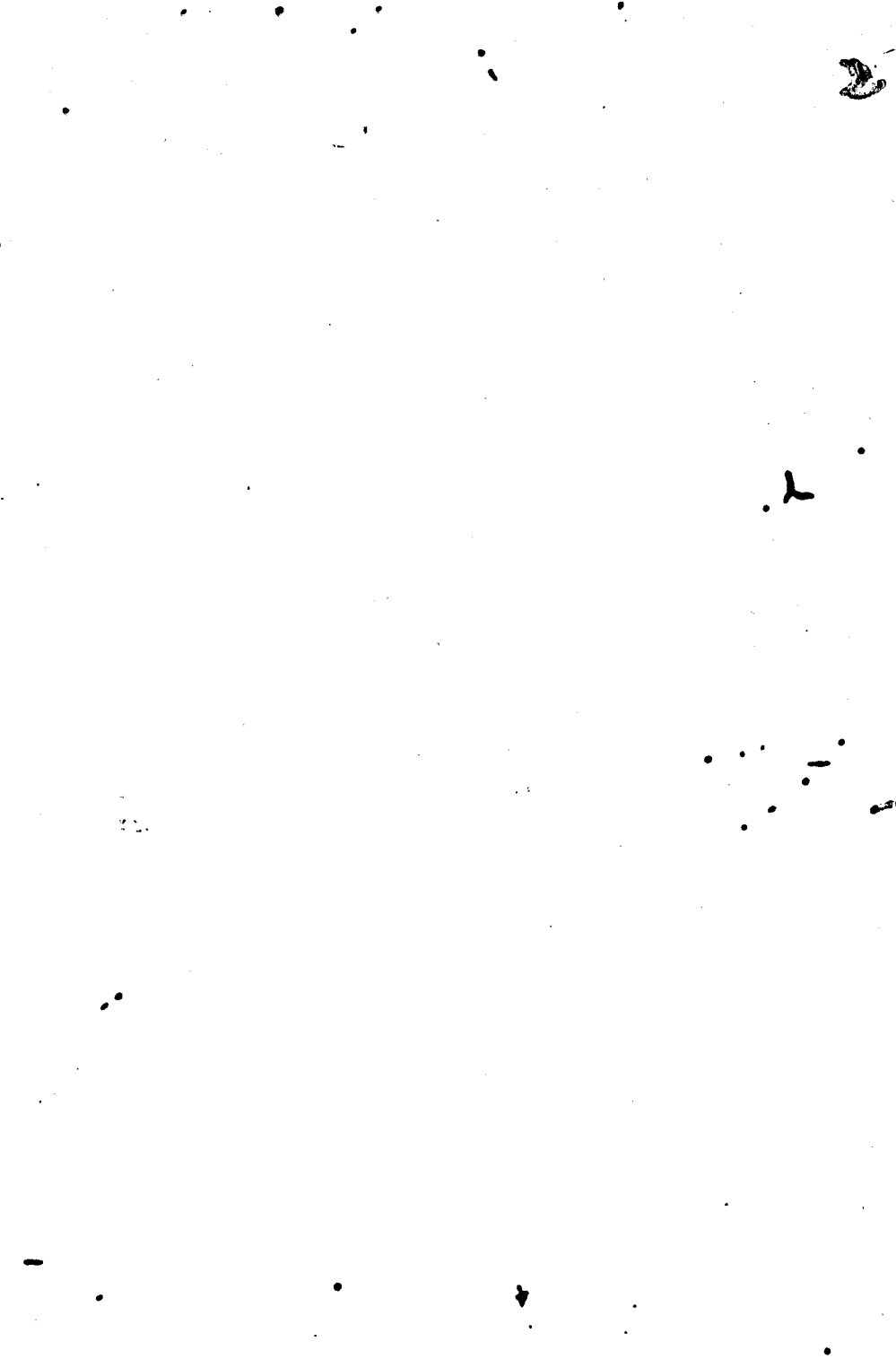
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THE ETHICAL PHILOSOPHY OF GURU NANAK



THE ETHICAL PHILOSOPHY OF GURU NANAK

Guru Nanak Lectures 1969-70

by

TRILOCHAN SINGH

PUBLISHED BY
THE UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA
ON THE OCCASION OF
500TH BIRTH CELEBRATION OF GURU NANAK

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

On the 15th of December, 1968, the University of Calcutta, received a letter from Sri Gurumukh Nihal Singh, Chairman, Publications Committee, Guru Nanak Foundation, New Delhi. In the said letter he requested the University to arrange for a programme of a course of lectures on the life of Guru Nanak, during the academic year of 1969-70, the Quincentenary Celebration Year of Guru Nanak. The University Grants Commission agreed to sanction a financial aid to the tune of Rs. 5,000/- to each of the six universities, viz., Punjab, Bombay, Madras, Rajasthan, Calcutta and Banaras to celebrate the occasion in a most befitting manner by way of arranging lectures on the life and works of Guru Nanak.

The matter was placed before the Syndicate (*vide*, Item No. 1 dated 6.1.69) and the Syndicate accepted with thanks the offer for arranging a course of lectures on the occasion of the 500th Birth Celebration of the great prophet. The matter relating to the appointment of a lecturer well versed in the life and philosophy of Guru Nanak was referred to the Gift and Trust Committee.

The Committee on Gift and Trust, University of Calcutta, accepted the suggestion made by Sri Gurumukh Nihal Singh and on 19-3-69 recommended the appointment of Dr. Trilochan Singh for the delivery of a course of lectures on Guru Nanak.

Dr. Trilochan Singh delivered three illuminating lectures on the Ethical Philosophy of Guru Nanak in the Darbhanga Hall, Calcutta University, on 2nd, 3rd and 4th of February, 1970. It has now been possible to publish the series of lectures in a book form through the grant of the U.G.C.

Sri Jagadiswar Pal, Estate and Trust Officer, Calcutta University, made all arrangements and took keen interest in the publication of the book.

The University acknowledges with thanks the help it received from the Chairman, Publications Committee, Guru Nanak Foundation, New Delhi and the University Grants Commission in matter of publication of the book.

We take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation for the illuminating series of lectures delivered by Dr. Trilochan Singh exposing the Ethical Philosophy of Guru Nanak under the most trying circumstances prevailing in Calcutta at that period.

10th November, 1973

S. N. SEN
*Vice-Chancellor,
Calcutta University*

PREFACE

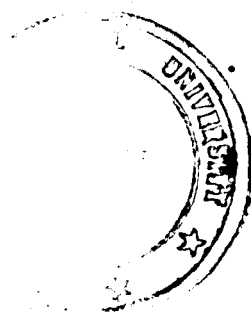
I am extremely grateful to the Senate, the Syndicate, and the Academic Council of the Calcutta University for appointing me Guru Nanak Lecturer for 1969-70. It is this great University which instituted research work on Sikh history nearly four decades before any University in Punjab ever thought of doing so. The name of Sir Asutosh Mookerjee, who first instituted research on Sikh studies in Calcutta University, and the memory of a galaxy of historians who have made outstanding contributions on various periods of Sikh history after sincere, sympathetic and laborious investigations, will ever be enshrined with respect in the hearts of lovers and readers of Sikh history, and in the hearts of generations of Sikh community to come.

Of all my association with the scholars all over India and outside India, I am justly proud of my intimate and fruitful association with the historians and scholars of Bengal whose friendship has been a beacon-light and inspiration to me in my work. Their deep perception of the life and works of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh, their profound reverence for these great prophets of Indian history, and their acute analysis of the contribution of the Sikh Gurus to Indian history puts to shade the faith and findings of many contemporary Sikh writers.

I thank Dr. Satyendranath Sen, Vice-Chancellor, Sri Arun Ray, Registrar, Calcutta University, Sri Jagadiswar Pal, Estate and Trust Officer, for arranging these lectures under very difficult circumstances, and for all the kindness and generosity shown to me during my visit to the University for lectures. I earnestly hope that these lectures will stimulate Sikh studies and open the door for greater contributions.

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Ludhiana-2
Punjab.

TRILOCHAN SINGH



LECTURE I

THE DYNAMIC PRINCIPLES OF GURU NANAK'S ETHICS

Guru Nanak leaves us in no doubt as to where he stands as a moral thinker. Not only does he develop a clearly articulate system of moral principles, based upon a coherent view of nature of man, but he presents a remarkably distinctive ethical philosophy which is rooted in the heart of man. It manifests itself in his social and cultural life and seeks consummation in the life and experience of God. Eliminating the distinction between human and divine, the individual and society, the Hindu and Muslim, Guru Nanak saw things in their entirety. He was the bridge-builder between the Vedic and Semitic Cultures, between the monotheism of Mecca and piety of Benaras, and between the holiness of Ladakh and the *dhamma* of Ceylon. The fundamental aim of his ethical thinking was to link the daily life of human beings with the eternal purpose of life, and inspire moral and spiritual unity amongst people divided by class, castes, race and religion.

In Guru Nanak's own personality and utterances there was a happy combination and harmonious blending of his characteristic qualities as a whole. There is in it the perfection of an equally universal and thoroughly original nature. His triumphant superiority and moral victory over all the forces of darkness, and his consummate originality gave to his ethical

LECTURE II

VALUES, VIRTUES AND VICIES

When we ask the question, "What is right for me to do?" we open the question of ethics of duty. When we ask the questions "What is good? what is Truth?" we enter the realm of values. The whole of moral and spiritual life of a Sikh revolves around the values he considers to be precious, and the proper understanding and appreciation of higher and lower values.

Scale of Values

There are absolute values as well as relative values, but no one can understand absolute values without a proper discrimination of relative values. "Love Truth" is an absolute norm, but the path to the realization and experience of this value is through the rugged path of relative values of human existence. So, placing the absolute values as ethical ideals before us, Guru Nanak lays great stress on the mental and spiritual grasp over relative values, which everyone has to pick and choose according to the situation he faces in his search for truth.

So complex and paradoxical is human life that one is bound to sacrifice one value for another. He may sacrifice his wealth and children for political and social freedom, or he may sacrifice his material interest for the sake of artistic and literary activities. One may sacrifice the future of his wife and children for religious

LECTURE III

MORAL RESPONSIBILITY AND CHARACTER IN SIKHISM

There was no dearth of ethical ideals in India at the time of Guru Nanak, and yet the poignant cry of the sensitive Founder of Sikhism was that the moon of Truth had disappeared behind the cloud of falsehood. People had utterly lost their sense of human dignity, their feeling for righteousness and sense of shame. The great Indian civilization was crushed under the weight of its own weaknesses. It was dying not because of external physical causes, but from mental lethargy, sterility, lack of moral responsibility, cultural decadence. It was committing suicide at social, political and cultural level by moral failure and self-disintegration, as did the small kingdom of Ranjit Singh even within Sikh history.

There were the Pundits and Mullahs who preached the moral ideals of the great scriptures, but their own life was so corrupt, and they exploited the poor masses with their religious authority to such an extent that for the common man the religion they preached meant nothing more than an instrument of exploitation. The *Kshatriyas* who were supposed to preserve freedom, were, says Guru Nanak, busy imitating the language, the culture, the dress, the food habits of the Muslim invaders even though they considered them *malechas*. Religious piety was a domestic affair to which they paid some lip service, but they allowed

8

