

# SIKHISM

## THE SCIENTIFIC RELIGION FOR THE MANKIND

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### ABSTRACT

**Religion and science are both engaged in the exploration of truth. Religion explores consciousness while the science explores material aspects of Nature. Sikh religion has the distinction of combining the material and spiritual aspects of Nature. Reality has dual nature in science and religion. Sikh cosmology as enunciated in the Aad Guru Granth Sahib has been found to be most scientific and compatible with the modern theories of science. Guru Nanak used both inductive logic and rationality in preaching his mission.**

### INTRODUCTION

In the history of religious thought, Sikhism appears on the world scene towards the end of the fifteenth century. Europe was experiencing an age of renaissance in science and arts during this epoch. Reformation movement was started by Martin Luther (1483-1546 CE) in Germany as a protest against Roman Catholicism. India was passing through a phase of reformation and the old Hindu religion was under constant attack by *Bhagats* and *Sants*, who criticized the Brahminical cult of India. Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikh religion, appears on the Indian scene at a crucial juncture when Hinduism and Islam were confronting each other for their supremacy. However, Sikhism discards the old value system of the both, Hinduism and Islam, and creates new concepts and precepts in the religious history of the world. In a way, it is the most modern religion in the world dominated by science and logic. The above thesis is based on the *Gurbani* as revealed by Guru Nanak and the Gurus of the Nanakian School.

Religion and science are both engaged in the exploration of TRUTH. The field of religion concerns consciousness and its flux in molding the destiny of man. Science explores the Nature or its manifestation through the material world. It starts from gross matter and moves toward subtle consciousness pervading in the material world. The modern science, viz. quantum mechanics has brought consciousness into the frame of

reference of experimental and theoretical physics [14].

### CONCEPT OF GOD IN SIKHISM

The Sikh scripture, *Aad Guru Granth Sahib* (AGGS) [1], defines the concept of God through Its attributes right in the beginning: Eternal Unity, Being of Truth, Creator Person, Without Fear or Hatred, Beyond Time and Space, Unborn, Self-Existent, Transcendental, Cosmic-Spirit made manifest by grace of the Guru [2]. These attributes of God, are termed as "*Moolmantar*" or "*Manglacharan*" by many scholars. This fundamental formula enunciated above is the corner stone of Sikh belief, an epitome of the AGGS, which is itself expanded expression of its vision [15]. A positive relation between God and the world is a revolutionary postulate in Sikhism, which forms the basis of Sikh cosmology. God is both Transcendent and Immanent. It is both in the universe and outside it. Sikhism dialectically unites the ideas of God and the world. God itself transforms into creation, that is, changing his *nirgun* (un-attributed) form into *sargun* (attributed) form. The formless God manifests Itself in the creation, and there is no dichotomy in *nirgun* and *sargun* forms [3]. The Sikh religion postulates the synthesis in the Supreme Being of the un-attributed and the attributed aspects of Reality [4]:

*"The Formless is attributed and un-attributed, and gone into absorption in the Cosmic void. Saith Nanak: Itself has made creation, Itself on it meditates."*

These abstruse concepts of Reality are most scientific and can be understood using the analogy of modern

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physics, viz. dual nature of matter and radiation. The Formless (God) without attributes (*nirgun*) and with attributes (*sargun*) can be understood in terms of matter-energy equivalence (the famous  $E = mc^2$  equation of Einstein). It is also established that the Cosmic Void is not mere empty space; it is the source of creation of elementary particles, the building blocks of our universe. How wonderfully, the Gurus propagate this concept of creation of the universe that contains the germs of modern cosmology.

According to *Upanishads*, the books of Hindu philosophy, Brahman or *Atman* which is the essence of ultimate Reality, is of the nature of existence (ਸਤਿ), consciousness (ਚਿਤ) and bliss (*Anand*). It is one only and non-dual. The pluralistic universe is only an illusory appearance of Brahman or *Atman* due to *maya* or *avidya*. Sikhism fundamentally differs from this stand point of Vedanta philosophy of Hinduism. The world is neither *maya* (illusion) nor a perversion. It is a *dharamsala*, a place for righteous actions. Guru Nanak discards the *Vedantic* conception of Reality in *Asa di Vaar* [5].

The realm of mystic experience is a reality beyond the comprehension of our senses. But there is convincing evidence in the AGGS regarding the transcendental nature of this phenomenon [6]:

*"In this realm, one sees but without the eyes; One listens but without the ears; One walks but without the feet; One works but without the hands; One speaks but without the tongue; Thus attaining life in death. O Nanak, one meets the God after realization of the divine law."*

### SIKH COSMOLOGY IN THE AGGS

Cosmology deals with the problem of the creation of the universe. It has played a decisive role in the struggle between science and religion. Cosmology is the long-sought link between these two fundamental disciplines on which lie all the hopes of mankind to know the ultimate nature of Reality. Various cosmological models have been put forward in both science and religion to explain the creation and evolution of the universe.

Sikh cosmology as enunciated in the AGGS has been found to be most scientific and compatible with the modern cosmological theories. In fact, it is a forerunner of modern world-

view presented by science. Guru Nanak challenges the Hindu world-view as archaic and based on dogma. In *Jap*, Guru Nanak sums up his view-point about creation of the universe, which is elaborated further in

a most scientific manner in the *Raag Maru Solhae*. The creation hypothesis is summed up as follows [7]: *"God created the universe by uttering a Word."*

Thus, the problem of 'Singularity' faced by Big Bang model of the universe is solved by the Guru by assigning the task of creation to the God, Lord of the universe. Once this riddle is solved, the sequence of creation is described in a most rational manner. Guru Nanak poses the question [8]:

*"What was the time and the moment, the day and the month, when the world was created."*

In the next stanza of *Jap*, Guru Nanak provides the answer as follows [9]:

*"Neither the Pundit can find this date by looking through the Purana texts, Nor the Qazi can tell from the Koran, Neither the Yogi nor any one else knows the day, week, season and month of creation. The creator who creates the World, It alone knows the time."*

Guru Nanak does not want to formulate any hypothesis based on false assumptions and leaves this question open. The creation process is started under the command of God, the creator of the universe. The role of God, as the creator (*Kartapurkh*) is established in the *Manglacharan*/commencing verse of the AGGS, the epitome of Sikh cosmology:

*"From the True Lord, proceeded the air, and from air became the water. From the water, God created the entire world, and in every heart It infused Its light."* [10]

Guru Nanak elucidates this wonderful drama of creation further in his mystic reverie. Surprisingly, there is a perfect correspondence between the epoch of 'Big Bang' and the creation out of *Sunya* phase as enunciated in *Maru Solhae*, the most beautiful hymn on Sikh cosmology [11]:

*"For billions of years, there was nothing but utter darkness. There was neither day nor night, nor moon, nor sun, but the Lord alone sat in profound trance.*

*Neither there was creation, nor air, nor water. There were no continents, nor underworlds, nor seven oceans nor rivers, or the flowing water. There was neither death, nor time. There was no Brahma, no Vishnu, no Shiva. When He so willed, God created the world and*

*supported the firmament without support. God created Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva and extended the love of mammon. God founded the continents, solar systems and underworlds, and from the Absolute Self, It*

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became manifest.”

Guru Arjun describes in *Sukhmani* the myriad forms of creation [12]:

*"There are millions and millions of galaxies and solar systems in the universe.*

*The phenomenon of creation has occurred so many times. But the one Lord remains for ever and ever".*

The riddle of creation of the universe will remain an enigma for cosmologists and there is no final word yet in cosmology.

### SCIENTIFIC APPROACH OF SIKH RELIGION

The founder of Sikh religion, Guru Nanak, embodied in himself a revolution: religious, social and political. This revolution in the religious world was manifested also by a corresponding revolution in society. Guru Nanak rejects the rituals and myths prevalent in Hindu religion in his *Bani*. His approach is far more rational and scientific in analyzing these myths. For example, in *Jap*, Guru Nanak questions the myth that a bull is supporting the earth on its horns. He demolishes this myth by his logical argument [13]:

*"A wise man can understand and appreciate the truth, How much load (of earth) is carried by the bull?*

*There are innumerable planets like earth in the universe,*

*What is the force supporting them?"*

In scientific research both inductive and deductive methods are followed to establish the truth of a scientific hypothesis. Guru Nanak follows these methods in a very convincing manner to bring home the truth of Sikh philosophy. The *Janam Sakhi* (biography) tradition illustrates beautifully his scientific approach in converting Sajjan thug into a holy person. The *sakhi* (story) of Hardwar is one of the best examples of using inductive logic to convince the Brahmins of the futility of throwing up water of Ganges so that it reaches their forefathers in the other world. Guru Nanak prevailed upon his adversaries by his scientific approach and logical arguments. This is amply illustrated in his debate with *Siddh-Yogis*, called *Siddh-Goshti* [AGGS, M 1, P. 938].

It is unfortunate that the Sikh chroniclers and interpreters of the *Gurbani* ignored the scientific approach of Guru Nanak and introduced metaphysical concepts and mythological tales to interpret the *Bani* of the Gurus. Sometimes there have been deliberate attempts by the learned scholars in the universities to misinterpret the original message of Guru Nanak and of the Gurus of the Nanakian School. Sikhism was born in Punjab at a critical juncture of history, when the people were engulfed by Brahminical traditions. Guru Nanak and

the Gurus of the Nanakian School liberated them from the unscientific and illogical traditions and concepts. Let us hope the tercentenary of Khalsa imbibes the true scientific spirit of Sikh religion and Khalsa culture.

### REFERENCES

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