

CONCEPT OF SPIRITUALITY IN SCIENCE AND RELIGION

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ABSTRACT

Truth cannot contradict itself. Truth from Science and truth from Religion must eventually converge into one grand whole, a unified knowledge of the laws that govern our Universe. Those who fight for superiority of one over the other are blinded by ignorance about both. In fact Science and Religion that blend truth and spirituality constitute the True Religion.

INTRODUCTION

This is the right time when reconciliation between science, religion and spirituality can be seen, and can be understood. The East has lived religiously-- that is one pole - and because it has lived religiously it has not been able to produce good science. The West has lived scientifically, and because of its science it has lost track of religion and spirituality. Now for the first time in this space age and internet, the East is no more East and the West is no more West. The earth is becoming one global village. The modern generation is ready to look at religion and spirituality scientifically.

CONCEPT OF SPIRITUALITY IN SCIENCE AND RELIGION

These days' people prefer to become spiritual, which is their nature/genetics [5], rather than religious. They now want to explore the true human spirit that can sustain the entire human population in an atmosphere of love and peace.

Majority of the religions did not expose spirituality in its pristine beauty with sufficient logic and rigor. On the other hand, scientists were wrong that they hesitated to include spirituality in their scope of study. Their exclusion of spirit and consciousness encouraged the religions to flourish in the past. The hesitation of

scientists to study consciousness and the realm of the spiritual domain left a vacuum that led to the birth of the present unscientifically expressed religions. Scientists almost went into an arrogant phase when they were appreciating the art that this creation is, but refused to even explore the artist/creator.

This is where inner sciences will play increasingly more important role. We are entering into a beautiful exciting period. Who would have imagined a few decades ago that more than 10 million Americans, grownup in science-dominated society, will practice meditation everyday to find happiness within? The ever increasing human population is deriving benefit from inner sciences wherein one explores his/her innermost core of individuality, the individual's spirit. Who would have imagined that over 90% of Americans profess belief in God, while church attendance is down [5]. Also while trusting god, they also trust science to take medicine, to fix their heart and brain, drive cars, and use electricity every day. Who would have imagined that beef-eaters in the western world would become compassionate enough and give up not only meat eating but stand for animal rights? The times are changing rapidly. Every religion will now find its base shrinking and on the other hand science will be widening its base.

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The world consists of both matter and spirit closely inter-linked. A human being is the closest example. We should note that we are a composite of body and spirit. There is an urgent need to create a fusion of science and spirituality, call it scientific spirituality or spiritual sciences. We must study, explore and experience both matter and spirit, call it a unified theory of both matter and spirit.

The scientific spirituality is a religion, which helps many of us deal with ups and downs in life and keeps the mind tranquil. And it is spirituality which helps us deal with life-crises [3].

There is no value anymore in articles that gave titles such as "Is God Dead?" If he was, the likely culprit was science, whose triumph was deemed so complete that "what cannot be known (by scientific methods) seems uninteresting, unreal." Now we are using science to complement our spirituality.

The new generation of 21st century is not looking for a solid theology and be orthodox to the core, but to *experience* God in their own life? "Young people got tired of hearing that once upon a time people experienced God directly," says historian Martin E. Marty of the University of Chicago. "They want it to happen for themselves. They don't want to hear that Joan of Arc had a vision. They want to have a vision [6]." Rather than being about a god who commands you, it's about finding a religion that empowers you spiritually. The religion that empowers you everyday in your life while enjoying worldly duties.

Sikh religion doesn't require you to leave the family life or to be a yogi living in a cave far away from the civilized world to be spiritual to realize spiritual practices. Most of us have homes, mouths to feed, bills to pay--we live in the temporal world. Here's a temporal metaphor to explain how the daily practices enhance our lives: "Our bodies are like a car; they carry our soul around [4]; they're a vehicle for our consciousness. And if you take good care of your spiritual-self, your ride becomes less bumpy, your human experience becomes a little more enjoyable, and you avoid many of those stresses that take away your enjoyment."

Those who are able to achieve their spiritual goals, can make this Earth a worthwhile place to live, make this society a worthwhile society to belong to and exist in, make the world full of true love for each other and end hatred and crime.

*The language of the head is words.
The language of the heart is love.
The language of the soul is silence.* [3]

FAITH AND SCIENCE

Science is not about knowing the mind of God; it is about understanding nature and the reasons for the things. If we want to recruit younger generation of scientists, we don't draw a box around all our scientific understanding to date and say, "Everything outside this box we can explain only by invoking God's will".

Science can give us the glimpse into things - such as genetic code, functioning of human body and mind, space, energy etc - previously known only to God. Shouldn't that be exciting to both religion and science! Science may not teach us about moral values and ethics. Science, however, can predict how human activity may change the climate and whether it would be good or bad.

The "battle" between science and religion is not as polarized as it seems? Unfortunately, the evidence of potential harmony is often overshadowed by the high-decibel pronouncements of those who occupy the poles of the debate. One pole throws a bomb: Faith is the great cop-out, the great excuse to evade the need to think and evaluate evidence. The other pole: When science and the scriptures such as Bible differ, science has obviously misinterpreted its data or science knows nothing about human existence. Such statements can come from any fanatic, irrespective of religion. **The fact is: Science is the technology of knowing or understanding the essence of the Universe, and religion is the actual experience of one's own identity with that essence.**

We must fundamentally understand that true religion is that experience. The religion is not what we usually consider it to be, i.e., a set of beliefs or ideals, or even a philosophy or manner of behavior, but it is, in fact, the moment to moment experience of one's origin, the source of one's being, God. The experience of God can be called spiritual.

Where can this experience be found? The answer is: everywhere! For it is not really a question of where at all, but one of how. Obviously if one is experiencing the living presence of God, which is by nature infinite and inexpressible, the experience can only be that, an experience. It cannot be written or told.

Spiritual experience is invisible comfort like fragrance in a flower, taste in a fruit, cream in a milk, and fire in a wood. [3]

Our founding Guru Nanak expressed that experience in *Japuji* Sahib whose philosophy is extended into our holy *Aad Guru Granth Sahib*. *Japuji* Sahib is the ecstatic and transforming experience of Guru Nanak in which he understood the essential nature of existence. After

undergoing this experience, his first impulse was to express in words what had happened to him. *Japuji Sahib* is creation of that experience. The first part of the *Japuji*, known as the root or “*Mool*” *mantar* is the expression, in as few words as possible, of Guru Nanak’s experience of reality.

That experience is realization of God within, the spiritual experience. How one feels with that experience of God within is experience of being without fear, without enmity, immortal without the fear of death or birth, complete within itself-- timeless, ageless, and formless (*Akaal Moorat*). We know that only physical body ages, spirit is not affected by time or age or birth or death. A few blessed ones realize that experience (*Nirbhau, Nirvair, Akaal Moorat, Ajooni Saebhang, Gur Parsad.*)

The very first verse of *Japuji*, the *mool-mantar*, begins with **Ek Onkar**. The implication is that the Creator (energy) and the Creation (matter) are ONE! This primal truth is expressed in various ways in all the world’s religions. Such as Taoist symbol called the “*Tai Chi*”, which many people know as the “yin-yang” symbol. It is interesting to realize that the very first line of *Japuji* that begins with *Ek Onkar* expresses exactly the same concept which is the foundation of all modern relativistic science: $E=mc^2$.

According to scientific law of thermodynamics, there is one Universal energy that we can call God, Allah, Ram, Parmatma, Hari, Lord of the Universe, Nature or any other name we choose. That energy is constant; it can neither be created nor destroyed. However, this energy can convert into matter and matter can convert back into energy. Therefore, everything is created out of this energy and goes back into this energy. All matter is a form created from formless Energy, and the creativity is infinite and method of self-creativity is a real wonder when we look at the creation and growth of living organisms. A scientist cannot deny the feeling of being startled at Nature’s absolutely phenomenal and the most intelligent work of self-creation into all the complicated life forms including a human being through a greatly thoughtful and organized manner – whether it is a sperm and an egg uniting into zygote that grows into complicated human form or small seed growing into majestic tree. This reminds me Albert Einstein when he said: “*God does not play dice with the world.*”

We may rephrase the above revelation of one universal energy and inter-conversion of energy and matter that “The Creator (energy) is in the Creation (matter), and the Creation is in the Creator.” That is the ultimate truth. *Gurbani* says the same:

ਖਾਲਿਕੁ ਖਲਕ ਖਲਕ ਮਹਿ ਖਾਲਿਕੁ ਪੂਰਿ ਰਹਿਓ ਸ੍ਰਬ ਠਾਈ ॥੧॥ ਰ

ਗਉ ॥

Khālik khalak khalak meh khālik pūr rahi°o sarab thān°ī. ॥1॥ rahā°o.

The Creation is in the Creator, and the Creator is in the Creation, totally pervading and permeating all places.

AGGS, Kabir, p 1350.

ਜੇ ਬ੍ਰਹਮੰਡੇ ਸੇਈ ਪਿੰਡੇ ਜੇ ਖੋਜੈ ਸੇ ਪਾਵੈ ॥

Jo barahmande so°ī pinde jo kḥojai so pāvai.

The One who pervades the Universe also dwells in the body; whoever seeks Him, finds Him there. AGGS, Pipa, p 695.

In order to explore the nature of creation itself, we must correlate the sciences of biology, subatomic particle physics, chemistry, and mathematics because sound vibration is the integrating phenomenon of life, the common denominator, through which and by which everything in the Universe operates.

Most people are aware that the “stuff” of reality (matter) is made up of molecules, and that molecules are made up of atoms. Most are also aware that atoms are made of so-called particles known as protons, neutrons, and electrons.

The One appears as many in all His manifested forms

ੴ (*Ek Onkar*): There is One Creator/Creation. This is the fundamental discovery of modern science. That not only is all matter convertible into energy, and vice versa, but that energy and matter are simply different appearances of the very same thing. And those not only are energy and matter the same thing, but that the constant interplay of this energy is the very play of God itself. (*saibha^N*-Self-Existent)

The religious experience is the experience that **we and God and God and we are one and the same. It is only our minds, our egos that make us** feel that we are observing that we are **separate** from other forms of consciousness and energy. But science is the process of observation, and observation implies an observer. How wonderful it is to realize that there is only One Observer... and that He is constantly observing Himself through His/our eyes, and enjoying it immensely!

Both science and religion are the attempt to share the experience of the infinite and inexpressible with our fellow travelers on this beautiful spaceship we call Earth. Science and religion are identical in purpose, but they are opposite in method. In fact, one might almost say that **science is religion without a heart, and religion is science without a head**; two opposite

approaches to the identical task: to express the inexpressible so that others may share it and experience a spiritual life. The current evolutionary state of human consciousness is that these two are finally becoming one. Religion is giving its heart to science, and science has given its head to religion. The logic we use in religion is the head.

The age of blind faith is over. The age of belief without knowledge died with the advent of instantaneous global information sharing. We have irrevocably entered the age of conscious knowledge, experience, and responsibility. The union of science and religion is now taking place. The people of planet Earth can no longer march under a banner that reads: “*I believe - therefore I know.*” But are joining together under a new banner which proudly proclaims: “*I know! Therefore I believe*”.

This is the age of the joining of all the religions. We are entering the age of the spirit - an age of purified and subtle creative behavior and consciousness - an age of the self-sensory human being.

The religion of the future, which is evolving out of the union of science and traditional religion, is the worship of God as Universal Truth.

So here is the central question: In this modern era of cosmology, evolution, test-tube babies, and the human genome, is there still the possibility of a richly satisfying harmony between the scientific and spiritual worldviews? We can answer with a yes! There is no reason for a conflict in being a rigorous scientist and a person who believes in God. Science's domain is to explore nature. God's domain is in the spiritual world, a realm not possible to explore with the tools and language of science. It must be examined with the heart, the mind, and the soul -- and the mind must find a way to embrace both realms [4].

These perspectives can coexist in a fashion that enriches and enlightens the human experience. Science is the only reliable way to understand the natural world, and its tools when properly utilized can generate profound insights into material existence.

But science is powerless to answer questions such as “Why did the Universe come into being?” “What is the meaning of human existence?” “What happens after we die [4]?” [Religion is equally helpless unless it ends with a familiar word-- God's will.] One of the strongest motivations of humankind is to seek answers to profound questions, and we need to bring all the power of both the scientific and spiritual perspectives to bear on understanding what is both seen and unseen.

The consideration of such weighty matters can be unsettling. Whether we call it by name or not, all of us have arrived at a certain worldview. It helps us make sense of the world around us, provides us with an ethical framework, and guides our decisions about the future. Anyone who tinkers with that worldview should not do it lightly. A view that proposes to challenge something so fundamental may inspire more uneasiness than comfort. But we humans seem to possess a deep-seated longing to find the TRUTH, even though that longing is easily suppressed by the mundane details of daily life. That is what our founding Guru Nanak is asking-- **How to realize the truth!**

How do we realize the truth?

In *Jap*, Guru Nanak raised the same question:

ਕਿਵ ਸਚਿਆਰਾ ਹੋਈਐ ਕਿਵ ਕੂੜੈ ਤੁਟੈ ਪਾਲਿ ॥

Kiv sachī-ārā hoī-ai kiv kūṛhai ṭutai pāl.

How to become truthful; and how can the veil of illusion be torn away?.” [2]

AGGS, Jap1, p 1.

His answer is:

ਹੁਕਮਿ ਰਜਾਈ ਚਲਣਾ ਨਾਨਕ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਨਾਲਿ ॥੧॥

Hukam rajāī cḥalṇā Nānak likḥi-ā nāl. ॥1॥

That is walk in the way of His Will.”

AGGS, Jap1, p 1.

Accepting the “*Will of God*” was the basic philosophy of religious prophets. Nanak called “*Hukm*” to His will. Taoism called “*non-interference*” Zen called “*let-go*,” Christianity called “*to the will of God*”

Understanding the ‘Divine’ (The knowledge of the “Divine Will”) means the destruction of the ego - whether it is the racial ego, the religious ego, or the individual ego:

ਨਾਨਕ ਹੁਕਮੈ ਜੇ ਬੁਝੈ ਤ ਹਉਮੈ ਕਰੈ ਨ ਕੋਇ ॥੨॥

Nānak hukmai je bujhai ta ha-umai kahai na koī. ॥2॥

O Nanak, one who understands ‘Divine Will,’ is freed from ego.

AGGS, Jap 2, p 1.

The racial and religious ego, which is the root cause of religious wars, is far more dangerous than the individual ego. When the ego becomes racial or religious - we don't think we are claiming anything for our self. Indirectly we are claiming, “*I am great because I belong to a particular race or religion which is great.*” However, it's the individual ego which is the building block for any kind of ego. The iron curtain of individual ego separates us from each other and from understanding God.

"An Enlightened person sees not only himself in the world, but the whole world in himself." [3]

Absence of ego means that we all are actually the one humanity regardless of our color, caste, creed, national origin, gender.

A universal mind or one mind or *Ek Onkar* or one God of which we are part of is one Universal Energy, because "the universe is all energy and the energy is whole Universe [3]."

We're like the spokes on a wheel, all radiating out from the same center. If we define ourselves according to our position on the rim, we seem separate and distinct from one another. But if we define ourselves according to the center of the wheel, we're a shared identity with the same mind. Just as a sunbeam can't separate itself from its source-the sun, and a wave can't separate itself from the ocean, we can't separate one mind from another. Our grades, credentials, jobs, cars, and homes are like a spoke at the rim, a sunbeam, and a wave-- all with characteristics of their own but a part of the same source -- the wheel, the sun and the ocean. We are all part of one indivisible divine mind or the universal mind or one universal energy or God. Our individual mind or soul (*atma*) is divine image of supreme (or *Parmatma*), but we have to recognize it:

ਮਨ ਤੂੰ ਜੋਤਿ ਸਰੂਪੁ ਹੈ ਆਪਣਾ ਮੂਲੁ ਪਛਾਣੁ ॥

Man tūn jot sarūp hai āpṇā mūl pachhāṇ.
O my soul you're the image of Divine light; so know your source.

AGGS, M 3, p 441.

And the same mind or one mind or One Energy is the same as One God (*Ek Onkar*).

Once we recognize our Universal nature then: we have no one to fear from (*nirbhau*) and no feelings of enmity (*nirvair*) towards others (*nirbhau, nirvair.* AGGS, Mool Mantar, p1). The fear and enmity are the products of others. The word other separates us from universal mind or universal love. (Guru Arjan says:

ਬਿਸਰਿ ਗਈ ਸਭ ਤਾਤਿ ਪਰਾਈ ॥

Bisar gaī sabh tāt parāī.

ਜਬ ਤੇ ਸਾਧਸੰਗਤਿ ਮੇਰਿ ਪਾਈ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥

Jab te sādhṡangāt mohi pāī. ॥1॥ rahāo.

AGGS, M 5, p 1299.

Since I have found universal love, there are no more enemies and strangers.

And Guru Ram Das says:

ਮੈ ਉਪਰਿ ਨਦਰਿ ਕਰੀ ਪਿਰਿ ਸਾਚੈ ਮੈ ਛੋਡਿਅੜਾ ਮੇਰਾ ਤੇਰਾ ॥

Mai ūpar naḡar karī pir sāchāi mai chhodiāṛā merā terā.

AGGS, M 4, p 561.

I tender my gratitude to the Eternal Wisdom that granted me the gift of inner understanding towards abandoning every distinction between mine and others.

In everyday living, seeing ourselves as separate, we create chaos and disorder between things, "out there" and ourselves. We war with other people and destroy the environment. Being separate from other people, things, and events, we want to force them to be what we want. In harmony there is no violence. Instead of futilely trying to control the uncontrollable, a person in unity learns acceptance, not because he has to but because there actually is peace and orderliness in himself and his extended body.

If we see ourselves in others-

Then whom can we hurt?

What harm can we do?

The Buddha

The possibility of experiencing unity has tremendous implications in life, because when there is harmonious interaction between us and our extended body, we feel joyful, healthy, and youthful. "Fear is born of separation." The transformation from separation to unity, from conflict to peace, is the goal of all spiritual traditions. "Don't we live in the same objective world?" a disciple once asked his guru. "Yes," his master replied, "but you see yourself in the world; I see the world in myself. This minor perceptual shift makes all the difference between freedom and bondage."

We have to raise ourselves to new reality about science, religion and spirituality, which is needed to transform this Earth into a paradise.

Guru Nanak has done it. He has given us the universal philosophy that we the Sikhs have in *Gurbani*. It was the message of Guru Nanak that could survive in a country dominated by Hinduism and Islam. He was *Guru* and *Pir* for Hindus and Muslims, respectively, but now be father for Christians. At a seminar conducted at Simla, by the Panjab Historical Society Lahore in early 1900, the lieutenant governor of Punjab, who was presiding over the seminar said, "According to what had been told by the speaker, Guru Nanak was a great Christian." If he was born in the west, Sikhism would have been the world religion in this age of Science and Technology.

In theory, Sikhism is the only universal religion with none of the problems between science and religion like creation vs evolution, or immaculate conception, or resurrection, or the only son of God or last prophet, or worshipping stones or priestly class. In fact, *Gurbani*

explains that there is no such thing as immaculate conception:

ਜੈਸੇ ਮਾਤ ਪਿਤਾ ਬਿਨੁ ਬਾਲੁ ਨ ਹੋਈ ॥

Jaise māṭ piṭā bin bāl na hoī.

Without a mother and father there is no child).

AGGS, Kabir, p 872.

Or resurrection:

ਕਬੀਰ ਮਾਨਸ ਜਨਮੁ ਦੁਲੰਭੁ ਹੈ ਹੋਇ ਨ ਬਾਰੈ ਬਾਰ ॥

Kabīr mānas janam dūlambh hai hoī na bārai bār.

Kabir, precious human existence, does not just come over and over again).

AGGS, Kabir, p 1366

In contrast to only son of God or last prophet, Guru Nanak on the other hand regarded himself as the dust underneath the feet of the servants of God as stated by him in his Bani as recorded in the Aad Guru Granth Sahib.

AGGS recognizes a common Creator as the only God: who sustains all people of all faiths and is addressed by many names by devotees in various faiths. Sikh Gurus embraced the revelation of Hindu and Muslim saints making it a scripture for people of all religions. The secular nature of AGGS has a universal appeal for the benefit of emerging global society of the twenty-first century. It offers a hope for our collective survival by providing new realities about religion and its positive relationship to entire humanity. Such is one of the basic requirements of a true religion.

What Constitutes the True Religion?

So many forms of religion have been described in the human history; the whole world is practicing them in some form. However, very rare and fortunate ones practice them with intuitive wisdom, while the others practice them with sense-blind mind.

ਪਾਚਹੁ ਮੁਸਿ ਮੁਸਲਾ ਬਿਛਾਵੈ ਤਬ ਤਉ ਦੀਨੁ ਪਛਾਨੈ ॥੩॥

Pāchahu mus muslā bichhāvai ṭab ṭa^oo dīn pachhānai. ॥3॥

“Spread your prayer mat by conquering your five desires, and you will recognize the true religion.” (AGGS, Kabir, p 480).

The *Sabd* or *Naam* is the Insignia of the One True God.

ਪੂਰੇ ਗੁਰ ਤੇ ਜਾਣੈ ਜਾਣੁ ॥੩॥

Pūre gur te jāṇai jāṇ. ॥3॥

ਏਕੇ ਧਰਮੁ ਦ੍ਰਿੜੈ ਸਚੁ ਕੋਈ ॥

Ēko dharam dāriṛai sach koī.

Through the Perfect Guru, the All-Knowing God is known. If someone grasps this thing, there is only one Religion of Truth.”

AGGS. M 1, p 1188.

The ultimate objective of any genuine religion is attainment of Self-realization/spirituality/killing false ego. In other words, the purpose of religion is to know the Supreme Truth and man's relationship with Him.

(So baura jo aap naa pachhaanai ; aap pachhaanay taa aikay jaanai.. AGGS, Kabir, p 855;

“He alone is insane, who does not understand himself.

When he understands himself, then he knows the One God, one creation, one origin, one humanity...”)

Therefore, a true religion is that which teaches living entities as to what actions will bring them emancipation from material bondage (suffering), and total perfection. Thus, a religion is not a declaration of such noble objectives; it is an action to fulfill these objectives. In other words, religion is meant to be practical, not theoretical; for it is good to speak wisely, but the best of all is to act wisely (practice). Any religion devoid of this central intention cannot be called a religion. It may be called a mundane business, but it certainly cannot be called an Eternal *Dharma*.

This brings us to the basic question:

What does constitute the true religion?

Does *Gurbani* provide answer to this fundamental question?

If yes, are we aware of the *Gurbani's* position and teaching in this context?

In the Divine Light of the *Gurbani* (AGGS), we will attempt to reflect on as what constitutes a true religion.

First, let us find out as to what constitutes a religious person. *Gurbani* declares that a person cannot be a religious unless he possesses the Spiritual Wisdom or Self-knowledge (*Aatam Giyan*). However, unfortunately, many of us try to become religious before gaining the True Knowledge. It is like placing a cart before the horse!

ਜਿਨਿ ਆਤਮ ਤਤੁ ਨ ਚੀਨ੍ਹਿਆ ॥

Jin āṭam ṭat na chīñhiā.

ਸਭ ਫੋਕਟ ਧਰਮ ਅਬੀਨਿਆ ॥

Sabh fokat dharam abīniā.

“Whoever does not gain the knowledge of the Self (realize the essence of soul), all his religious acts are vain and blind.”

(AGGS, Bains, p 1351).

ਕਬੀਰਾ ਜਹਾ ਗਿਆਨੁ ਤਹ ਧਰਮੁ ਹੈ ਜਹਾ ਬੂਠੁ ਤਹ ਪਾਪੁ ॥

Kabīrā jahā giān ṭah dharam hai jahā bhūṭh ṭah pāp.

ਜਹਾ ਲੋਭੁ ਤਹ ਕਾਲੁ ਹੈ ਜਹਾ ਖਿਮਾ ਤਹ ਆਪਿ ॥੧੫੫॥

Jahā lobh ṭah kāl hai jahā khimā ṭah āp. ॥155॥

Says Kabir:

“Where there is Knowledge, there is dharam, and where there is falsehood, there is sin; where there is greed, there is death and where there is forgiveness, there is God Himself.”

AGGS, Kabir, p 1372.

The above verses of *Gurbani* make it very clear that a person cannot be a truly religious without knowledge of the Self and knowledge of God. Knowledge of the Self is believing in one's own Self as *Aatma* only, and discarding the consciousness of the physical body. After realizing one's own Self as *Aatma*, when one becomes linked to *Parmatama*, one is said to have attained the knowledge of God. That is realization of spirit/self realization.

“Understanding others is wisdom;
Understanding yourself is divine (enlightenment).” [3]

ਆਤਮ ਮਹਿ ਰਾਮੁ ਰਾਮ ਮਹਿ ਆਤਮੁ ਚੀਨਸਿ ਗੁਰ ਬੀਚਾਰਾ ॥

Ātam meh rām rām meh ātam chīnas gur bīchārā.
The God is in the soul, and the soul is in the God. This is realized through the Guru's Teachings.

AGGS, M 1, p 1153.

We can go across a river by mere swimming. However, in order to cross an ocean, we need the help of a ship. This material world is likened to a dreadful ocean of desires and fear, and resulting actions. In order to overcome such mighty ocean, we require the help of Spiritual Wisdom, unflinching devotion, and trust in One God/*Ek Onkar*.

Due to lack of such spiritual awareness, a person becomes victim of seductive objects that seduce his respective sense-organs. One who has no knowledge of the Self as *Aatma* and who has grossly identified himself with his gross body and its decoration in certain ways, and the false ego attached to it becomes unfit for receiving Spiritual Wisdom. Such person cannot ascend the Divine ladder.

Where such divine wisdom (*Gyan* or Self-knowledge) is to be found?

It is hidden within! It is not perceived by reading books, rolling beads, listening to sermons, attending meetings or seminars, attaining degrees or titles, and then turning around giving lectures to others or repeating what we have heard. This intuitive understanding is gained through the true devotion (*Naam*-consciousness). When we gain this understanding, the true wisdom (*Budhee*) manifests within our consciousness; without which we will not be able to understand what true religion is. With such pure understanding comes the storm of spiritual wisdom, which totally blows away our doubts, bonds of

Maya, double-mindedness, emotional attachment, desires, fear, greed, self-conceit, enviousness, evil-mindedness, bad habits, weaknesses, fanaticism, stubbornness, unrighteousness, etc.

ਝੰਡਾ ਛਿਆਨੁ ਨਹੀ ਮੁਖ ਬਾਤਉ ॥

Ṣāṅḍā ḥiān nahī mukh bātāo.

ਅਨਿਕ ਜੁਗਤਿ ਸਾਸਤ੍ਰ ਕਰਿ ਭਾਤਉ ॥

Anik jugat sāstar kar bhātāo.

ਛਿਆਨੀ ਸੋਇ ਜਾ ਕੈ ਦ੍ਰਿੜ ਸੋਊ ॥

Ḥiānī soie jā kai dṛiṛ soū.

ਕਹਤ ਸੁਨਤ ਕਛੁ ਜੋਗੁ ਨ ਹੋਊ ॥

Spiritual wisdom is not obtained by mere words of mouth. It is not obtained through the various debates of the shastras and scriptures. They alone are spiritually wise, whose minds are firmly fixed on the Lord. By just hearing and telling stories, no one attains Yoga (union)."

AGGS, M 5, p 251.

ਗਿਆਨੁ ਧਿਆਨੁ ਗੁਰ ਸਬਦੁ ਹੈ ਮੀਠਾ ॥

Giān dhiān gur sabad hai mīṭhā.

“Spiritual wisdom and meditation come to those unto whom the Sabd is sweet.”

AGGS, M 3, p 162.

A false pride of becoming a religious person becomes veil to one's own oneness with the Universal Consciousness, thus a block to one's own enlightenment. Due to spiritual ignorance, one falls victim to entanglements of useless religious rituals, which bind him to Maya (cosmic illusion). The *Gurbani* emphasizes that the religion is not a matter of outer rituals or dogmatism. It is a man's inner surrender to God's *Sabd* or eternal teachings.

ਬੰਧਨ ਕਰਮ ਧਰਮ ਹਉ ਕੀਆ ॥

Bandhan karam dharam haō kīā.

A false pride of being religionist will bind or entangle one to this material body.

AGGS, M 1, p 416.

ਕਰਮ ਧਰਮ ਸਭਿ ਬੰਧਨਾ ਪਾਪ ਪੁੰਨ ਸਨਬੰਧੁ ॥

Karam dharam sabh bandhnā pāp punn sanbandh.

The religious rituals are all entanglements; the bad and the good are all bound up with them. AGGS, M 3, p 551.

So of all the religions, what is the true religion?

According to AGGS, the best religion is to chant the Name of the God (*Bhagti* or devotion) and maintain pure conduct (mental purity). Of all religious acts, the most sublime act is to erase the filth of the dirty mind

in the company of the devoted souls. Of all religious efforts, the best effort is to chant the Name of the GOD in the heart, forever. Of all religious speech, the most ambrosial speech is to hear the God's Praise and chant it with the tongue. Of all religious places, the most sublime place is that heart in which the Name of the God abides:

ਸਰਬ ਧਰਮ ਮਹਿ ਸੈਸਟ ਧਰਮੁ ॥

Sarab d̥haram meh sareset d̥haram.

ਹਰਿ ਕੇ ਨਾਮੁ ਜਪਿ ਨਿਰਮਲ ਕਰਮੁ ॥

Har ko nām jap nirmal karam.

Of all the religions, the best religion is to repeat God's name and do pious deeds.

AGGS, M 5, p 266.

Of all the religions, what is the eternal religion?

The *Gurbani* asserts that abandoning the mental delusion (duality) and reflecting on the God's Name is the eternal religion. One may distinguish between good and evil actions, and listen to the scriptures, but doubt still may persist in his mind. Skepticism and ego may continually dwell in his heart. Outwardly, one may bathe and wash with water at so called religious places, but deep within, his heart still may be tarnished by all sorts of vices. The method of purification of such person compares to that of an elephant, who covers himself with dust right after his bath! Then, how can we become pure? The *Gurbani* asserts that one can become purified by realizing the eternal religion; renouncing the doubts, and meditating upon the God's Name:

ਬਲਿਓ ਚਰਾਗੁ ਅੰਧਯੁਗ ਮਹਿ ਸਭ ਕਲਿ ਉਧਰੀ

ਇਕ ਨਾਮ ਧਰਮੁ ॥

Bali^o ch̥arāg and̥h̥y̥ār meh sabh kal ud̥hrī ik nām d̥haram.

The Name's lamp is lit in the midst of spiritual darkness; all are saved in this Dark Age of Kali Yuga through the One Name or Dharam of spiritual light.

AGGS, M 5, p 1387.

ਤਜਿ ਸਭਿ ਭਰਮ ਭਜਿਓ ਪਾਰਬ੍ਰਹਮੁ ॥

Faj sabh̥ bh̥aram bh̥aji^o pārbrahm.

ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਅਟਲ ਇਹੁ ਧਰਮੁ ॥੪॥੮੦॥੧੪੯॥

Kaho Nānak atal ih d̥haram. ॥4॥80॥149॥

Renounce all your doubts, and ponder upon the Supreme God.

Says Nanak: *This is the eternal religion.*

AGGS, M 5, p 196.

What is the essence of all religions? How one can abide in this true essence of the Divinity? According to the *Gurbani*, the essence of all religions is the Lord's Name. That is understanding yourself and your

relationship with the God as *Ek Onkar*. It abides in the heart of those true devotees who surrender unto Him, the fortunate ones:

ਸਗਲ ਮਤਾਂਤ ਕੇਵਲ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ॥

Sagal matānt̥ keval har nām.

ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਭਗਤ ਕੈ ਮਨਿ ਬਿਸ੍ਰਾਮੁ ॥

Gobind̥ bh̥agaṭ kai man bisrām.

Sagal mataant̥ keval hari Naam, Gobind bhagat kai man bisraam.

The essence of all religions is the God's Name alone; and it abides in the minds of devotees of God."

AGGS, M 5, p 296.

The foregoing verses make it very clear that there is only one religion in the Universe that is, becoming immersed in the *Naam* or Love Divine by understanding yourself and your relationship with the God as *Ek Onkar*; which, according to the *Gurbani*, has nothing to do with any religious garbs or rituals. In fact, the nature of the *Naam* is said to be totally opposite to such outer and superficial beliefs:

ਕਾਹੂ ਜੁਗਤਿ ਕਿਤੈ ਨ ਪਾਈਐ ਧਰਮਿ ॥

Kāhū jugat̥ kitai na pā^{ai} d̥haram.

Naam (or dharam) cannot be obtained by any rituals."

AGGS, M 5, p 274.

ਭੇਖ ਅਨੇਕ ਅਗਨਿ ਨਹੀ ਬੁਝੈ ॥

Bh̥ekh̥ anek agan nahī bujh̥ai.

ਕੋਟਿ ਉਪਾਵ ਦਰਗਹ ਨਹੀ ਸਿਝੈ ॥

Kot upāv d̥argēh nahī sijh̥ai.

Wearing various religious robes, the fire (of desire) is not extinguished; even making millions of efforts, one will not be accepted in the Court of the God.

AGGS, M 5, p 266.

ਭੇਖੁ ਭਵਨੀ ਹਠੁ ਨ ਜਾਨਾ ਨਾਨਕਾ ਸਚੁ ਗਹਿ ਰਚੇ ॥੧॥

Bh̥ekh̥ bh̥avnī haṭh̥ na jānā nānkā sach̥ gēh rahe. ॥1॥

I know of no religious bodily-dress or garbs, pilgrimages, or stubborn fanaticism; O Nanak, I only holdfast to the Truth.

AGGS, M 1, p 844.

For the spiritual progress, peace and happiness, good population in the society is very essential. Without the practice of proper religious principles outlined in the true scriptures, there will be an increase of unwanted population in the human society, causing hellish life for their families and community. The *Gurbani* declares such people to be unwanted burden on this Earth. When such people become leaders in the community, their irresponsible activities bring chaos in the society, and

consequently people forget true religion and the aim of life.

ਵਿਸਰਿਆ ਜਿਨ੍ਹ ਨਾਮੁ ਤੇ ਭੁਇ ਭਾਰੁ ਥੀਏ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥

visriā jinh nām te bhūe bhār thīe. ॥1॥ rahāo.

Those who have forsaken the God's Name are burden on this earth.

AGGS, Farid, p 488.

ਜਿਨੀ ਐਸਾ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਨ ਚੇਤਿਓ ਸੇ ਕਾਹੇ ਜਗਿ ਆਏ ਰਾਮ ਰਾਜੇ ॥

Jinī aisā har nām na chetiō se kāhe jag āe rām rāje.

They, who did not contemplate on such a Name of God, why did they come in this world?

AGGS, M 4, p 450.

Ek Onkar pervades in everything and everywhere; including the body. The realization of this Ultimate Truth is very simple; as simple as winking of an eye! It is so because the Truth is very simple, and open to all. It simply loves the Self which is hidden within! That's all. However, deluded mind dominated by duality and confusion makes simple things complicated because it will read complex and far-fetched meanings in simple things. People want complexity because they are not contented with simplicity. This is why so many religions have come into existence with their own complex adherents and antagonists! Although these religions often start good but later turn bad when they fall in the hands of those who want name and gain. Consequently, they end up in worthless rituals, ceremonies, paths, and traditions; creating fake fear of hell and death, and expectation of far-off heavens, etc.

The spirituality begins where the religious rituals packed with fear end. Consequently, enlightenment is not the product of customary religions; for only awakened and spiritually mature can grasp the simple Truth in all its nakedness. The *Gurmat* is opposed to exclusive claims of any religion, including the Sikhism itself. The *Gurbani* proclaims that for anyone who is determined to practice the Truth there is only one religion.

ਏਕੇ ਸਬਦੁ ਸਚਾ ਨੀਸਾਣੁ ॥

Ēko sabaḍ sachā nīsāṇ.

ਪੂਰੇ ਗੁਰ ਤੇ ਜਾਣੈ ਜਾਣੁ ॥੩॥

Pūre gur te jāṇai jāṇ. ॥3॥

ਏਕੇ ਧਰਮੁ ਦਿੜੈ ਸਚੁ ਕੋਈ ॥

Ēko ḍharam ḍariṛai sach koī.

The Sabd or Naam is the Insignia of the One True God. Through the Perfect Guru, the All-Knowing God is known. If someone grasps this thing, there is only one Religion of Truth.

AGGS, M 1, p 1188.

Thus, the religion *Gurbani* talks about is not the formal

or customary religion, but that eternal religion which underlies all religions, which brings us face to face with the Divine Light, because it is inherent in the soul itself.

Most of us look at Sikh religion from two points of views. The sacrifices of Guru Sahiban for humanity and the universal scripture, AGGS, for entire humanity. Both are true. But the sacrifices are true from Sikh point of view (not so for Muslims who tortured them), whereas later is true from entire human aspect. Only at spiritual level the entire humanity merges. That's why message of *Gurbani* in AGGS is universal and for entire humanity. This has no conflict with science because one Universal Energy and *Ek Onkar* represent the same universal truth.

Therefore, in the *Gurbani*, the word religion does not mean sectarianism. It not only transcends all sectarian labels, but also gives them harmony and reality.

It bestows on the sincere disciple a spiritual insight or illumination. Practice of anything less than this will bring nothing but obstructions in the form of dogmatic fanaticism, bigotry, intolerance, practice of outer and superficial rituals, fights, wars, etc., which will only take us farther away from the source, the Supreme Lord.

ਹਰਿ ਕੀਰਤਿ ਰਚਰਾਸਿ ਹਮਾਰੀ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਪੰਥੁ ਅਤੀਤੰ ॥੩॥

Har kīraṭ rahrās hamārī gurmukhī panth aṭīṭāṅ. ॥3॥

The Praise of the God is my occupation; and to live as Gurmukh is my pure religion.

AGGS, M 1, p 360.

Thus, the key to becoming a truly religious person is in becoming a *Gurmukh* (spiritual being) or living a truthful life. Many of us think that the wars that are fought on the name of religion in the world are prompted by religion. If we reflect on it, we will realize that they are really not prompted by religion.

Since most of us are not true spiritual beings, people have the tendency to consider one's own religion superior and thereby insist that others should join and follow it. This is the cause for most of the wars fought on the name of religion.

The real purpose of a religion is spirituality.

When religion is used to protect our insecurities, then it becomes a religious war! [3]

A truly religious person refrains saying something bad to another person that he wouldn't want someone else to say to him. Thus, those who have understood the true religion will not attack beliefs of others because they realize how much it would hurt if someone else

did the same to them! They would never rejoice in another person's suffering; for they always look to their spiritual wisdom to find ways to help others overcome their problems. They see God in All. Such persons become loving Gurmukh!

The essence of religion, hence, is realizing Oneness of the Spirit, the vision of Truth. Then comes the noble moral and ethical values founded based on the understanding of this essence of religion. These aspects of religion will ever remain relevant to the mankind, thus unchanged. Without this there can be no real love, compassion, peace, harmony, and integration in the human society.

ਜਤੁ ਸਤੁ ਸੰਜਮੁ ਨਾਮੁ ਹੈ ਵਿਣੁ ਨਾਵੈ ਨਿਰਮਲੁ ਨ ਹੋਇ ॥

Jat sat sanjam nām hai viṇ nāvai nirmal na ho-e.

Jat sat sanjam Naam hai vin naavai nirmal na hoi.

“The Name of the God is abstinence, truthfulness, and self-restraint. Without the Name, no one becomes pure. AGGS, M 3, p 33.

Time denotes birth and death. Bound in the framework of time and space, religions exist in the ever changing world. Since the world is constantly changing, so are the religions. This change is inevitable because people are changing, their environment and conditions are changing; also their appreciation of things is changing. Therefore, only that religion will survive in the future which, keeping the essence as well as noble values intact, understands the ever changing nature of the material world and is able to adjust at the empirical level. Combine science with it to seek the truth; the truth that leads towards our true-self, our spirituality. Those religions that become very rigid, stubborn, fundamentalist, and oppose to change will disappear with time.

CONCLUSIONS

"The very first word of *Ek Onkar* in *Mool-Mantra* expresses exactly the same concept which is the foundation of all modern relativistic science: $E=mc^2$. **Ek Onkar: The Creator (energy) and the Creation (matter) are ONE!**

Only at spiritual level the entire humanity merges into one *Ek Onkar*, universal energy. That is the message of true religion of TRUTH as conveyed in *Gurbani* of the Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS) [1]. It is the TRUTH that both religion and science recognize.

Age of blind faith is over. We have begun to recognize now that science and religion are identical in purpose, but are opposite in method. "Science is religion without a heart (consciousness), and religion is science without a head (logic)." The religion of the future, which is evolving out of the union of science and

traditional religion, is the worship of God as Universal Truth.

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