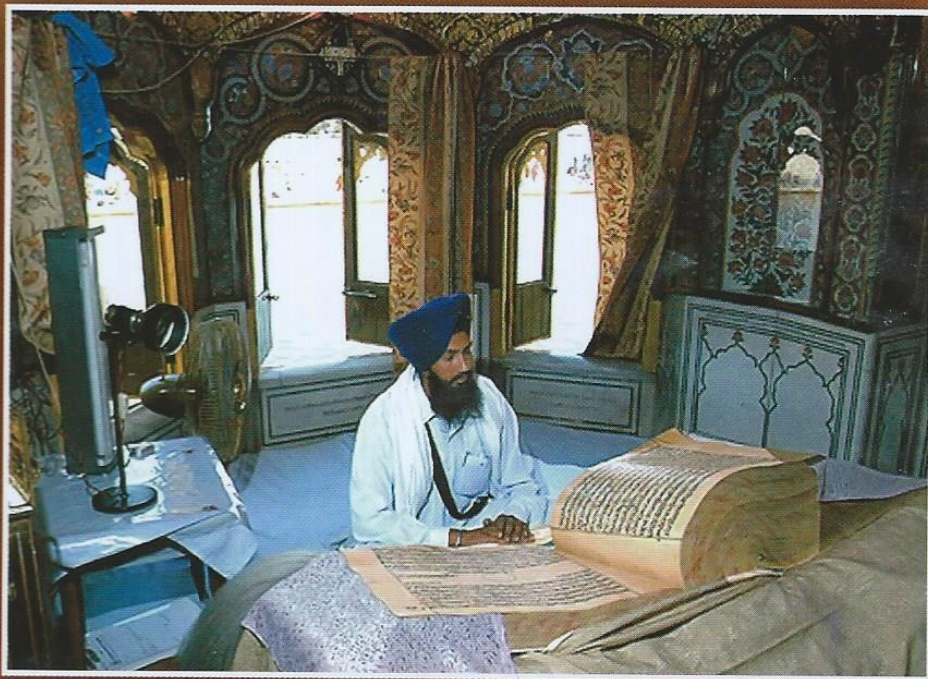


ੴ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥

Philosophy of Sikhism



Dr. Jagraj Singh



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Philosophy *of* Sikhism

(*Gur darsan*—ਗੁਰ ਦਰਸਨੁ)

Dr Jagraj Singh



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by
Dr Jagraj Singh

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Preface

Philosophy is a Greek word and comes from: Philo i.e love; and Sophia i.e wisdom or knowledge. Therefore philosophy literally means love with wisdom. Man from the very beginning has been engaged in this endeavour that nothing should remain beyond his knowledge. He was challenged with such important questions: Why it happened? How it happened? The education (ਵਿਦਿਆ), which deals with knowing i.e, why it happened is philosophy, while the education which deals with how it happened is science. Philosophy deals with the vast principles regarding creation viz: What is universe? Who is its creator? What is human being? What is the purpose of life etc, etc.

It is a well known fact that the earliest spiritual / religious traditions in the world began in the Indus Valley in the Punjab region of the Indian subcontinent. Those practicing spirituality were called Jogis / Siddhas, who believed in one 'Supreme Eternal Reality', whom they called *Brahma*. They lived away from human habitations in the caves of snow clad mountains eating wild fruits, berries and tubers etc. They had a script, which was called *Brahmi / Siddhmatrica*. The statues / seals bearing the image of the meditating Jogis have been found among the ruins of Harappa and Mohenjodaro towns in the Indus Valley, so far no scriptures belonging to them have been found. In Punjabi jog literally means to unite / to yoke together, but in spirituality it means to unite with the 'Supreme Eternal Reality-God'. The people of the Indus Valley had reached a very high level of civilization more than 4000 years (2000-1500 BC) ago, when people of a white tribe from Asia Minor who called themselves Aryans entered the hills of the ancient Punjab through the Hindu Kush mountains as herds-men and graziers of cattle and settled in the mountainous region of the Punjab in Kashmir. They were smart people. Some of them learnt spirituality from the Punjabi Jogis. The Punjabis at that time spoke many different dialects of Punjabi language in various parts of the Punjab, which changed at almost

every ten miles. The Aryans developed a slang version of a local Punjabi dialect for their worship purposes and named it *Brahm Bhasha* literally meaning language of God, which was subsequently named Sanskrit. Around 1000 BC; the Aryans produced scriptures in Sanskrit and named them Vedas literally meaning books of knowledge, which were remembered by them orally and transmitted from generation to generation verbally. The oral tradition continued for centuries. Rishi Panini wrote its grammar *Ashtadhyaya* around 500 BC in Taxilla, in the foot hills of the Punjab. The social interaction between the Aryans and the indigenous people produced a new culture, now known as Vedic culture. The Brahmanical language (Sanskrit) created by the Brahmins for their worship purposes was neither spoken nor understood by the common mass of people. The Vedas became the religious books of the Aryans and Sanskrit became their religious language. Aryans having knowledge of Vedas called themselves Brahmins (Who knew 'Brahma' - 'God'). Sanskrit became the domain of the Brahmins, the priestly class of the Varn Ashram Dharma/Sanatan Dharma now called Hinduism. The Aryans were vociferously meat eaters. They ate beef (*Gaomedh yajna*).

Philosophy in Indian culture is called '*Darsan*', which literally means to see. The thing which was realized or seen was named '*Darsan*'. The Aryan Brahmins developed six systems of thought. These six Brahmanical (Hindu) philosophical systems are popularly known as '*Khat Darsan*':

1. Nyaya system (Darsana) of Rishi Gautama
2. Purva Mimamsa system (Darsana) of Rishi Jaimini
3. Vedanta system (Darsana) of Rishi Vyasa
4. Sankhya system (Darsana) of Rishi Kapila
5. Vaishesika system (Darsana) of Rishi Kanada
6. Yoga system (Darsana) of Rishi Patanjali

Before the birth of Sikhism, there were two ancient religious philosophies in the world: The Indian philosophy known as Eastern philosophy and the Greek philosophy called Western philosophy. The Indian *Rishis* (Philosophers) developed classical Indian music, poetry, astrology, mathematics, political science and social sciences etc, but simultaneously propagated pessimism and preached about the un-

reality / Falseness of the world, detachment (*Vairag*) i.e asceticism and renunciation of the worldly life. All these things weakened the Indian society instead of making it strong. Instead of making the society dynamic they made it static. The pessimism put breaks on the development of the society. Buddhism and Jainism were born as a reaction to Brahmanical Hinduism. The Ahinsa (Ahimsa) propagated by Jainism made the people desert the profession of agriculture for fear of killing organisms and became traders (Banias). Buddhism described birth, youth and old age as suffering and desire as root cause of sufferings. The Brahmanical *Varn Ashram Dharma* divided the society on the basis of caste. All this made Indians weak, which resulted in their slavery to foreign powers.

When Guru Nanak appeared on the religious scene in the 15th century all the six systems of ancient Hinduism (*Sanatan Dharma / Brahmanism*), Islam, Jainism and Buddhism existed there in the Punjab. Guru Nanak received enlightenment at Sultanpur Lodhi in Punjab and founded Sikhism here in 1496 A.D. He laid down the complete ideology of Sikhism. Thus with the birth of Sikhism in the 15th century in the 'Punjab' in the Indian subcontinent the third branch of philosophy was born, which is called '*Gurmat*' or *Gurdarsan*, which is absolutely different and distinct from the previously existing eastern i.e Hindu philosophy. Guru Granth Sahib, the holy book of Sikhism says, "ਖਟੁ ਦਰਸਨੁ ਵਰਤੈ ਵਰਤਾਰਾ ॥ ਗੁਰ ਕਾ ਦਰਸਨੁ ਅਗਮ ਅਪਾਰਾ ॥—*Khat darsan vartay vartaara, Gur ka darsan agam apaara* i.e. Although six systems of Hindu philosophy are prevalent everywhere but the Guru's philosophy is profound and unequalled" (GGS, p.360-61). The philosophy of Sikhism known as *Gurmat / Gurdarsan* has been propounded in the holy Sikh Scripture, 'Guru Granth Sahib'. Its fundamentals differ from the fundamentals of all the major world religions including all the six systems of Hinduism. Before a Sikh goes to bed he reads a short prayer Sohila, which contains following stanza on six Hindu systems, ਛਿਅ ਘਰ ਛਿਅ ਗੁਰ ਛਿਅ ਉਪਦੇਸ ਗੁਰੁ ਗੁਰੁ ਏਕੋ ਵੇਸ ਅਨੇਕ ॥—*Chhea ghar chhea gur chhea updes, Guru Guru eko ves anek*, meaning "Six are the Hindu systems; six are their divine teachers; six are their different teachings / doctrines, but the teacher of all is One Lord, though He has numerous forms.Pause. ਵਿਸੁਏ ਚਸਿਆ

ਘੜੀਆ ਪਹਰਾ ਥਿਤੀ ਵਾਰੀ ਮਾਹੁ ਹੋਆ ॥ ਸੂਰਜੁ ਏਕੋ ਰੁਤਿ ਅਨੇਕ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਕਰਤੇ ਕੇ
ਕੇਤੇ ਵੇਸ ॥ -i.e-There are seconds, minutes, hours, quarters of a day,
lunar days, week days, months and several seasons that spring from
the lone sun, so all forms of beings, originate from the same creator,
says Nanak. (GGS, Rag Asa M1 pp12, 357).

The holy Sikh Scripture, Guru Granth Sahib, further adds: “*Gur
darsan udhray sansaara. Je ko a-ay bhao piara*”-“Through Guru’s
philosophy the whole world can be saved if the same were accepted
with devotion and love (GGS, Rag Asa, M3. p.361).

Sikhism (Sikh religion) teaches uniformity in thought and action
(ਇਨਸਾਨ ਦੀ ਕਥਨੀ ਤੇ ਕਰਨੀ ਵਿਚ ਫਰਕ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੋਣਾ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ i.e, A person
should mean, what he says). The philosophy of Sikhism is not a matter
of mere intellectual discussion of mantras only. It gives an insight into
the metaphysics, ethics, mysticism and cosmology of Sikhism. It says,
Akaal Purkh (God) is the creator of this universe and Soul is immortal.
Sikhism believes in equality of all human beings as compared to
Vedanta, who believes in the division of the society upon the basis of
caste system. Sikhism says this world is the field of action and
denounces asceticism and renunciation in strongest terms and
preaches a house-holder’s life.

The philosophy of Sikhism envisages that a true Sikh loves all
humanity, earns his livelihood by all fair means, shares his earnings
with the deprived and strives for the realization of God by abiding His
Will and seeking Grace. It believes in the doctrines of *Karma*,
transmigration, salvation-(Mukti), *Surag* (Heaven), *Narak* (Hell),
Hukam (*Raza*) and Grace, but according to its own way. From the
inception of Sikhism by Guru Nanak in 1496 AD, to its ritual
consecration by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699 AD, barely within a
period of about two hundred years, the Sikhs were able to evolve a
comprehensive philosophy embracing spiritual, religious, social,
economic, cultural, political and military aspects with the objective of
creating a more disciplined organization of saint soldiers.

During the past about four hundred years the discoveries of
science in the western world regarding nature have made remarkable
progress and science threw challenge to the ancient religious

ideologies. Science believes in proving and demonstrating things through experimentation and research. Religion makes efforts to know the Reality (Truth / Supreme Eternal Reality / God) and depends upon the path of spiritual experience, devotion and belief. To think about God, good and evil fall within the domain of religion whereas the research on nature is the purview of science. Religion likes ancient-hood and stagnation. For the traditional religions progress, modernity and change are enemies. In the western world every scientific discovery was opposed by Christianity and described as irreligious by the religious leaders there. Scientists were tortured and even killed mercilessly. Science was treated as enemy of religion. In spite of their repression, the scientists in the west remained undeterred and continued their research. During the 17th and 18th centuries science made rapid strides in Europe which changed the entire ideology there and gave birth to atheism and materialism, resulting in drift of the people away from religion in the western world.

In this universe everything is stable on its axis because of the gravitational force and it disappears if dislocated. Human society can flourish only on the support of religion. Because of the lack of mental peace which the religion provides, people in the western world remain mentally tense and upset.

The western world adopted science and relegated religious philosophy to the back burner but this did not happen in India. Unlike other traditional religious systems, Sikhism is not opposed to science rather it is a blend of Philosophy and science. Sikh Gurus were neither scientists nor trained in scientific methods. Yet they provided tremendous insight into working of the natural and physical world. They have remarkably stated their ideas in a language that not only satisfies religious but also proves true on the touchstone of science. Sikhism is scientific and consistently challenges the illogical superstitious beliefs.

Presently in Sikhism the self-styled *Sant Babas*, who are Sikh in appearance, Vedantic in thought and Hindu at heart are standing in the way of interpreting Gurbani scientifically and also in the way of doing away with the un-Sikh ritualistic practices prohibited in Sikhism.

Of all world religions, Sikhism alone can, with the fullest justification, claim to possess the gospels of its founders in their original purity. Truths revealed to Prophets and seers have often been mixed up, in course of time with spurious and imperfect additions through the ignorance, prejudices or ill-conceived zeal of their followers and lost their purity. The sagacity and the foresight of the Sikh Gurus envisaged the possibility of such a situation in respect of their own scriptures and they took steps to ensure against this eventuality. Guru Arjan compiled the Holy Granth embodying the Sikh teachings under his personal supervision and created for all times the imperishable and yet the visible embodiment of the Gurus as also of their wisdom (ਪ੍ਰਗਟ ਗੁਰਾਂ ਕੀ ਦੇਹ). He has thus placed all mankind under a permanent debt of gratitude by bequeathing to it the highest moral and spiritual Truths in the purest form as were revealed to the Gurus. These were clothed in the dialects and languages of the people of the land of their birth and were thus made accessible to every person without any distinction of caste, creed, colour or race.

All the fundamentals, thoughts both mystic and material, principles, doctrines and concepts etc, which constitute the theology and philosophy of Sikhism are very clearly enshrined in the holy Sikh Scripture, Guru Granth Sahib. Further, the ten Sikh Gurus during their lives, apart from demonstrating the principles of religion, led the path of ideal life. Guru Granth Sahib is the only scripture in the world that has words of the Gurus compiled and authenticated by the Guru himself. And it is the only scripture that has been sanctioned by the Guru (Guru Gobind Singh) as the sole Guru or guide to the followers of the religion: “ਸਭ ਸਿਖਨ ਕੋ ਹੁਕਮ ਹੈ, ਗੁਰੂ ਮਾਨਿਉ ਗਰੰਥ”... *Sabh Sikhan ko hukam hai Guru maio Granth*—”All Sikhs are commanded to have faith in Guru Granth Sahib.

Sikhism visualizes possibility, in everyone, of transforming himself from man to superman and thus gives opportunity to one and all to take care of himself / herself along with other fellow-beings without any distinction whatsoever, in love and harmony, getting away from petty self interests and ego-centricity.

According to *Gurmat* (Philosophy of Sikhism) biggest obstacle in the path of practice of *Dharma* (righteousness) and realization of God

is 'ego' (*Haumein*). In *Gurmat*, God oriented man is called 'Gurmukh' or 'Sachiara' and a self-centered-egoistic person is called, 'Manmukh'. In Sikhism, "I and I am-ness" is called 'manmat' in which man defies the Guru's counsel and acts according to his own will. *Gurmat* is exactly in opposition to it. It talks only of 'You':

- ਜਬ ਹਮ ਹੋਤੇ ਤਬ ਤੂ ਨਾਹੀ ਅਬ ਤੂਹੀ ਮੈ ਨਾਹੀ॥ — When there was egoism in me, Thou were not within me now that Thou art there, there is no egoism (GGS, p, 657).
- “ਕਬੀਰ ਤੂੰ ਤੂੰ ਕਰਤਾ ਤੂ ਹੂਆ ਮੁਝ ਮਹਿ ਰਹਾ ਨ ਹੂੰ॥ ਜਬ ਆਪਾ ਪਰ ਕਾ ਮਿਟਿ ਗਇਆ ਜਤ ਦੇਖਉ ਤਤ ਤੂ॥ — i.e; Kabir says, by repeating Your Name, I have become like you. In me there is no egoism now. When difference between me and others has been removed then there is wherever I see, there is I see but You, O Lord” (GGS, p. 1375).
- ਨ ਦੇਵ ਦਾਨਵਾ ਨਰਾ॥ ਨ ਸਿਧ ਸਾਧਿਕਾ ਧਰਾ॥ ਅਸਤਿ ਏਕ ਦਿਗਰਿ ਕੁਈ॥ ਏਕ ਤੁਈ ਏਕ ਤੁਈ... i.e; Neither gods, demons and men nor men of miracles, seekers and earth shall stay. The Lord alone is. Who else can there be? Thou alone art, O Lord! Thou alone art (GGS, p.143-44).
- ਅਬਿਨਾਸੀ ਅਬਿਗਤ ਆਪੇ ਆਪਿ ਉਤਪਤਿ॥ ਏਕੈ ਤੂਹੀ ਏਕੈ ਅਨ ਨਾਹੀ ਤੁਮ ਭਤਿ॥ — i.e; My imperishable and Formless Lord, Thou art born of Thyself. Thou art but One None else is like Thee (GGS, p,1385).
- ਸੋਈ ਮਿਲਿਓ ਜੋ ਭਾਵਤੋ ਜਨ ਨਾਨਕ ਠਾਕੁਰ ਰਹਿਓ ਸਮਾਇ॥ ਏਕ ਤੂਹੀ ਤੂਹੀ ਤੂਹੀ— He alone meets with Thee, who is pleasing to Thee. Slave Nanak remains merged in Him. Thou alone, the One alone art real, solely Thou, O Lord (GGS, p, 1305).

In *Vedanta* (Hinduism), the believer says, '*Aham Brahma*': meaning, "I am Brahma" i.e 'I am God'. Similarly Shankara (Hinduism) says, "Man is God"—*Tat Tvam Asi*—ਤਤਵਮਸਿ, which has not been accepted by Gurbani / Sikhism, because when man is Brahma (God) Himself, there is no need for efforts towards the unification of man and God.

Guru's teaching is universal. It has come from the 'Supreme Eternal Reality'-'*Parm Purkh*'. It never gets old like our worldly

teachings. *Gurmat* says that during the development of human body in the mother's womb with body suspended upside down, *Atma* (Human Soul) remains attached with its source (*Parmatma*-Creator) and is free from ego (*Gurmukh*), "*Re nar garbh kundal jab aachhat urdh dhian liv laaga*" (GGS, p. 93), but after coming out of mother's womb and entering into the mortal world, he forgets the Creator (*Parmatma*-God), develops ego and becomes *manmukh* (self-centered), "*Garbh chhod mrit mandal aaiya taan man har mano visaaria*" (GGS, p.93). It is the ego that keeps man away from God, "*Haumai nawein naal virodh hai, doe na vase ik tha-ay*" i.e, "Ego and *Naam* (God) are opposed to each other and they cannot share same place" (GGS, p. *Haumein kithon upje* i.e; , "Where does the ego come from" *Gurbani* says, "*Haumein vich jag upje, purkha Naam visre dukh paa-ay*, i.e, "After coming in this world man develops ego and forgetting *Naam* (God) becomes unhappy, resulting in pain and suffering,".

It is stated in *Guru Granth Sahib* that *Maya* (illusion of materialism) and Ego (self-hood), prevent man's union with God, "*Ih Maya jit har visaray*" i.e; 'It is *Maya* that causes God to be forgotten". *Gurbani* says,"*Dhan pir ka ik sang he vaasa vich haumai bheet kararee*, i.e," "The bride (*Atma*-Soul) and the bride groom (*Parmatma*-God) live together in this body with a powerful wall of ego separating them". It further says," *Antar alakh na jae lakhia vich parda haumai pai*" i.e, "The unfathomable is within, not realized because of the veil of ego in between (Ibid Gauri M5).

The evils of lust (*Kam*), anger (*Karodh*), greed (*Lobh*), attachment (*Moh*) and pride (*Hankar*) constitute *Haumai* (ego) and make a man self-centered (*Manmukh*) and prevent his union with God. *Guru Nanak* says, "*Haumai boojhay taan dar soojay*" i.e, "The gate way to Him opens when the fire of ego is extinguished" (GGS, Var Asa M1). According to *Gurmat* enlightenment happens only through God's grace and inspires humans to dedicate their lives to the service (*Sewa*) of humanity and contemplation (*Naam Simran*), "*Kirpa kare je apni taan Gur ka shabad kamahay, kahay Nanak sunuh jano it sanjam dukh ja-ay* i.e, "Lord sends grace and man practices the *Guru*'s word, then this leads to elimination of the evil (ego). The reward is peace in mystical union.

Sikhism neither believes in the *ritualistic path of Vedantic Bhagti* nor *outer acts of show of Vaisnava Bhagti* for *Moksha* (salvation), as mentioned in *Bhagwat Gita*. Sikhism is unique, extremely radical in ideas and ideals and original in its approach to life. The Sikh Gurus have repudiated many of the ancient concepts and ideas and ideals that form the basis of earlier Indian religions, who have a tendency to regard Sikhism as their part and parcel.

Semitic religions believe that God lives up above in the seventh sky and they regard Him separate and distinct from nature and therefore condemn the worship of nature. Guru Nanak says, “The Creator resides in the creation / *Kudrat*”—ਬਲਿਹਾਰੀ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਵਸਿਆ (GGS, p 469). But Sikhism does not believe in the worship of created beings, it only believes in the remembrance of the Creator i.e God, “ਬਿਨ ਕਰਤਾਰ ਨਾ ਕਿਰਤਮ ਮਾਨੋ... *Bin Kartar na kirtam maano*—Except the Creator do not worship any created being” (*Mukh vaak Patshahi* 10). Vedanta (Hinduism) believes in reality of God but considers His creation as *Mithya* (unreal / false) but Sikhism believes in the reality of God and reality of the world—ਇਹੁ ਜਗੁ ਸਚੈ ਕੀ ਹੈ ਕੋਠੜੀ ਸਚੇ ਕਾ ਵਿਚਿ ਵਾਸੁ ॥ (GGS, 463).

The primary objective taught by this faith is not to look for a heaven or paradise in the hereafter but to aim for ultimate union with the Eternal Reality and to achieve liberation from moral death. In this endeavor one needs guidance which is contained in the *Guru Granth Sahib*.

To realize the Eternal Lord, an individual has to inculcate purity of body, mind and soul, both in personal conduct and in relation to society. Emphasis is on *Naam Japo* (meditate and pray), *kirat karo* (earn by honest labour and *vand chhako* (share your earnings with needy). The individual has to live in and as part of this world while resisting temptation.

Stress is laid on (positive action or effort) in any situation. Results are not in one's control. They are dependent on what is ordained which, In turn, is subject to karmic forces. Therefore, what is required is acceptance of and surrender to the Divine Will.

The basics indicate the need for a balance between an active and

contemplative life- one of a grahasti (householder) and seeker of salvation, as an integral member of society and being a good individual. In the endeavor to tread an upright path in an active life, a Sikh is enjoined to be wary of and consciously resist the five elementary temptations or weaknesses of kaam (lust), karodh (anger) lobh (greed), moh (attachment) and ahankar (pride).

The essence of Sikh faith then is harmony, universal love, honest labour, moderation in living and complete faith in the One God—the God of all creation.

The object of this book is to explain the identity, unity and integrity of the Sikh Gospel and to bring out the place of Sikhism among other religions. There is little doubt that this needs be done by a person abler than me and more learned than me. My only excuse for making this attempt is that it might provoke other scholars to produce something with distinction and thoroughness. Suggestions for improvement will be appreciated.

It is hoped that this humble attempt will enable the readers to look at their ideas afresh and re-examine the basis of their beliefs, so that the mist of ignorance and prejudice may be dispelled and the light of *Gur Gian* shines.

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