ੴ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ



Sikh Concept of God

by

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THE SIKH RELIGION

The Sikh religion was founded by Siri Guru Nanak Sahib (1469-1539 C.E.) in the South Asian region of Punjab. A succession of Gurus followed each taking on the name "Nanak". Before his passing in 1708 C.E., the tenth Guru declared that after him the Divine Word, the Granth Sahib, shall be the Eternal Guru. The Gurus were perfect beings sent by God for the benefit of all people. The Gurus' divine attributes are described as:

> "My Satguru is forever; he does not come and go. He is beyond birth and death. He pervades all."

FUNDAMENTAL STATEMENT ABOUT GOD

It is impossible to completely describe all of God's attributes. However, the following statement, in full or in an abbreviated form, appears at the head of every collection of verses in Siri Guru Granth Sahib and may be considered the fundamental statement of Sikh concept of God.

> ੧ ੴ ਸਤਿਨਾਮੁ ਕਰਤਾ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਨਿਰਭਉ ਨਿਰਵੈਰੁ ਅਕਾਲਮੂਰਤਿ ਅਜੂਨੀ ਸੈਭੰ ਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ॥
>
> "One God, Eternal, The Reality, The Name, Creator and Doer, All-pervading, Without fear, Without rancor, transcending time, Unincarnate, Self-existent, (understood) through the Guru's grace."

The opening statement in the Sikh scripture, after the "fundamental statement" referred to earlier, is:

> "God was there in the beginning; and at the beginning of all eras. God is there at the present time and O Nanak, will be there forever."

God is the sole Reality, and there is none other. Thus all else is His creation, out of Himself, at His will, pervaded by Him throughout, controlled by Him at all times and in every way, and must merge into Him at His will. Because there is no other, there can be no fear or enmity. God does not have a beginning or a creator, and, therefore, is self-existent. This truth is understood through the Guru's grace.

God is also merciful and loving, the benevolent Provider, the forgiving Father interested in all beings getting to understand Him through love.

The purpose of human life is to realize God. However, this realization is possible only if it so pleases God. Otherwise, people stay caught up in the illusory world of *Maya* (created by God) controlled by its agents, the five thieves: lust, anger, greed, attachment and self-will. God, in His mercy, gets one to meet the Perfect Guru. The Guru, teaching God's Word, helps the Sikh understand the true nature of the creation and overcome the five thieves through prayer in humility and love and attain a state of contentment and joy.

GOD THE CREATOR

God has created the universe at His own will and He can destroy any part or all of it at will. He has done this innumerable times and may do so in the future. The Creation is a manifestation of God Himself. It forms out of God and returns to God at His will. It has no permanent independent existence. Everything that has been created must come to an end when God so desires. Siri Guru Granth Sahib tells us:

> “All this Creation has been created by the Creator. God, the Creator, has manifested His own existence in it. God is the One thread pervading all Creation. When He pulls this thread (Creation comes to an end), only the One God remains."

And,

> "Millions of sparks arise from a fire and, after existing separately, finally merge in it. Innumerable dust particles arise from the dust and will again become dust. Millions of waves arise on a large body of water but the waves on water still remain water. The same way, from the infinite state forms arise out of the formless and arising from it will all merge in it."

GOD THE DOER

The entire universe and all the beings in it serve at God's will and according to what He has desired. All that happens and all that all beings do is what is given them to do by God and in the manner He wills it. It is a play within Himself that God has caused to occur and is watching. The Guru tells us:

> "The Bengalis of Bengal, the Franks of France, the Dilwalis of Delhi, all act Your will. The Rohillas of Rohi, the brave Maghelas of the country Magh, the Bundelas of Bangas destroy the source of evil. The Gurkhas sing Your praises, the Chinese bow their heads, the Tibetans worship You to destroy the bodily ailments. Whoever worshipped You, attained perfect illumination, all the treasures, all the flowers and fruits."

And,

> "Whatever we do or have done is according to Your will. We would do something only if we could. There is nothing that we can do; we live as God wishes us to. My God, everything is in Your control. We have no power to do anything, give us (to do) as You wish. You have Yourself given us this body and soul; You have Yourself given us things to do. Everyone performs all acts according to Your orders as You have already laid out. Out of the five ingredients, You have created this universe; if there is someone who can do anything, let him create a sixth. Some You enlighten through getting them to meet the True Guru (and there are) those who follow their own minds and wail. I cannot describe the greatness of God; I am foolish, ignorant and lowly. O God, my Master, save Nanak, the ignorant one, who has come to Your protection."

ALL-PERVADING GOD

The universe created by God is pervaded by Him completely and yet He transcends it. He is everywhere, knows every thought and action of everyone because He is Himself the Cause and the Doer, and is present at all times and at all places.

> "God pervaded all in the beginning of the universe, pervades all now and will pervade all in the end."

And,

> "One God, assuming innumerable forms is present everywhere and pervades all existence. Whichever way I look I see Him. However, only a rare one understands this because people are completely bewitched by the forms of Maya. God is everywhere, God is everywhere, no one is without God. God is woven through everyone just as there are hundreds or thousands of beads but there is a single string going through all of them. The wave or the bubbles (on the surface of water) have no existence separate from water. In the same way, this Creation is a manifestation of God. Carefully thinking about it leads to the understanding that there is no other."

UNINCARNATE, SELF-EXISTENT

God is not born as a creature. Siri Guru Granth Sahib tells us:

> "My Master is forever. He can be seen only by following the Word. He is unincarnate; He is not born nor does He die. We should always serve Him who pervades all. Why serve another which is born and dies? Lives of those who do not know their Master and (instead) are attached to another (Maya) are fruitless. It is not known O Nanak, how these persons will be punished by the Creator."

And,

> "When He created Himself, there was no other. He had only Himself to consult with and did as He wished. At that time there was no higher regions or lower, nor the three worlds. At that time there was only the Formless Himself, there was no creation. He does as He wishes, (for) there is none besides Him."

THROUGH THE GURU'S GRACE

It is not possible to realize God's presence in all creation without advice from the Guru. The Perfect Guru will tell the seeker about the all-pervading God and teach him how to live his life in prayer and love, in humility and service, controlling lust, anger, greed, attachment and self-will through study of God's Word. For example, Siri Guru Granth Sahib tells us:

> "Listen to the teaching of the Perfect Guru. Realize that God is near you. With every breath remember God and thus get rid of the worry in your mind. Give up longing for what is not going to be forever and seek the company of saints. Give up pride, and pray so that, in the company of the Guru, you may cross the ocean of fire (life full of desires). Make obeisance to the Perfect Guru and receive the treasure of God's Name."

And,

> "Company of saints has brought me to the Guru's feet and given me the Name (of God). (Through this) I have been delivered from the bondage (of Maya) and all of my mind's worry has disappeared. In the company of saints. I have given up dependence upon others (than God). I have buried my ego, and my desire for illusory things, in a deep pit. No more do I have any enemies nor do I have enmity towards anyone. The Guru gave me this understanding that God pervades all. Everybody is my friend and I am a friend to everyone. Since I came to the company of saints, my separation from God has ended; I am united with my Beloved (God). I lost my stubbornness and life-giving (Name of God) rained upon me; I find Guru's word sweet. O Nanak, I have seen the all pervading God present in water, on land, and in the air, everywhere."

LOVING GOD, DEVOTED FRIEND, LOVING PARENT

God is always merciful and helps His devotees understand Him. Prayer to God in love is the way to understanding.

> "My friendship is with the One God and I love only Him. God alone is my friend and He is my only companion. I converse with God alone; He never has a frown on His face. He knows all that worries me and never turns His back on me. God alone, with the power to create as well as destroy, is my only adviser. He, who has His hand on the heads of all the givers in the world, is my only Giver. The One God, who has power over all, is my support. The Guru has placed his hand on my

> head and united me with God, the source of peace, the One who is Savior of the whole world. O Nanak, one's heart's desires are fulfilled and one finds the True Name if the union is ordained (by God) to start with."

In Siri Guru Granth Sahib there are numerous references to love between a devotee and God. Just as a father provides for, instructs and protects his children, God helps the Sikh to acquire the moral, intellectual and spiritual strength to overcome the five thieves (lust, anger, greed, attachment and self-will) and understand that God is near us, pervades all creation and loves all.

> "My God, The Merciful Lord, have mercy upon us so we sing Your praises. I am always waiting in hope as to when God will hold me in His embrace. We are ignorant foolish children, our Father will teach us. The son will repeatedly err and do wrong but the Father of the Universe will still love him. O Master, we receive only what You give us; I do not know of any other place whither we can turn. Those devotees whom God likes will love God; they will merge their soul with Light (God) and become one with the Light. When God Himself has mercy, He will create His love in us. The servant Nanak has sought shelter at (God's) door, God Himself will protect my honor."

And,

> "You are my Father; You are my Mother; You are my friend; You are my Brother; You are my Protector everywhere; how can I have any fear or worry? Through Your mercy I have understood You. You are my support, You are my strength. Besides You there is none other. It (the creation) is all Your play. You have created all the creatures and all of them do what You have willed them to do. All that happens is controlled by You; we have no control over it. Remembering the Name (of God) we found supreme joy. Singing God's praises, my mind became cool (rid of the heat of desires). O Nanak, through the Perfect Guru there is joyous music, I have won the battle (against the five thieves, the agents of Maya)."

