**Sikhism and Islam: The Inter-Relationship**

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Sikhism,the fifth-largest organized religion [1] in the world,wasfounded in the fifteenth century in Punjab, India. Guru Nanak Dev and his successor Sikh Gurus established this system of religious philosophy. The sacred scripture, Sri Guru Granth Sahib [2-3], is the present Guru of the Sikhs. The religious philosophy of Sikhism is traditionally known as Gurmat. Sikhism originated from the word Sikh, having the Sanskrit root śiṣya meaning "disciple" or "learner." With about 27 million followers or 0.39% of the world population [4], approximately 83% of the Sikhs live in India.

Islam is the religion articulated by the Holy Quran [5-6], a religious book. Its adherents consider it the verbatim word of the one incomparable God (Allah). The Muslims live by following the Prophet of Islam Hazrat Muhammad's demonstrations and real-life examples (Sunnah). The Sunnah has been collected through Prophet Hazrat Muhammad's companions' narration in collections of Hadith. Islam means submission to God. The word Islam is derived from the Arabic word "Salam," which means peace. With about 1.7 billion followers or 23% of the global population [7-8], Islam is the second-largest religion by the number of its adherents.

**Similarities between Sikhism and Islam**

Despite being different religions, Sikhism and Islam share many similarities. Most of these similarities center around the notion of a single, all-powerful, and loving God. Both faiths share similar normative, social, and environmental ethics. Some of these similarities are described as under:

**Holy Scripture**

Scriptures are the texts, which various religions consider sacred or central to their religious tradition. Scriptures are used to evoke a deeper connection with the divine, convey spiritual truths, promote mystical experience, foster communal identity, and guide individual and collective spiritual practice. Both Sikhism and Islam have their holy scriptures. The sacred scripture of Muslims is The Holy Quran [5], and Sikhs have Sri Guru Granth Sahib [2]. Both Islam and Sikhism believe in the authority of their scriptures. These monotheistic faiths view their texts as the "Word of God" and divine revelation.

**Prophet or Guru - A Spiritual Mentor**

A mentor is a person who facilitates growth and development – professionally, spiritually or personally – in another person by the sharing of experiences, insights, and skills gained through the years of living and learning. Muslims and Sikhs both believe that their prophets or gurus were spiritual teachers/mentors. They both respect their spiritual mentors and follow their teachings, as they trust that these teachings have been revealed to them by God. However, they never worship them. Muslims pray to Allah and Sikhs to Waheguru, but not to their prophet or gurus.

**Proviso for the Best Religion**

Religion is a cultural system based on behaviours and practices, world views, sacred texts, holy places, ethics, and societal organization that relates humanity to "an order of existence." Islam encourages the practice of good deeds as an essential condition for the best religion. "Those who believe and do good deeds are the best of created beings." (HQ, 98:7).

Sikhism emphasizes that imbibing God's love in one's life and doing righteous actions are a sine qua non for a religion to be counted as the best religion. "Of all religions, the best religion is to chant the Name of the Lord (love of God) and to engage in pious deeds (righteous actions)." (Mehl 5, SGGS, p 266).

**Concept of God**

Sikhism and Islam, both are strictly monotheistic religions. God is conceived of as the Supreme Being and principal object of faith in monotheism. According to these religions, "God is one." Muslims call Him Allah. Sikhs call Him with many names, but Waheguru is used for meditating upon Him. In the Holy Qur'an (HQ), God is described as: "Say: He is God, the One and Only; God, the Eternal, Absolute; He begetteth not, nor is He begotten; And there is none like unto Him." (HQ, 112:1-4).

In Sri Guru Granth Sahib (SGGS), God is symbolized as "Ik Onkar" and is described as: "One Universal Creator God. Thy Name Is Truth. Creator. No Fear. No Enmity. Image of the Undying, Beyond Birth, Self-Existent, Enlightener, Bountiful". (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 1); "You are the One and only Lord and Master; there is no other." (Mehl 5, SGGS, p 563)

According to Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, God is beyond full comprehension by humans; has an endless number of virtues; takes on innumerable forms, but is formless, and can be called by an infinite number of names. "Your Names are many, and Your Forms are endless. No one can tell how many Glorious Virtues You have". (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 358)

The term Allah, meaning "God," is also used by Sikhs. In Sri Guru Granth Sahib, the word 'Allah' has been used 33 times in the hymns of Guru Nanak Dev, Guru Arjan Dev, Baba Sheikh Farid, and Saint Kabir. "O revered one! Lord Allah is Inaccessible and Infinite". (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 53); "He is Allah, the Unknowable, the Inaccessible, All-powerful and Merciful Creator." (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 64).

Khuda is the Persian word for "God" or "Lord." The term has been used 42 times by various saint poets of holy Sikh scripture in their hymns. "You are the Master of Your creation, the Lord of all the world, O Merciful Lord God (Khuda)." (Mehl 5, SGGS, p 724)

**Glory of God**

God's glory [9] is the essence of His nature. Glorifying God means acknowledging His greatness and giving Him honour by praising and worshiping Him. It is essentially as He, and He alone deserves to be worshipped, honoured and cherished. To glorify God is to extol His attributes such as His holiness, love, grace, mercy, majesty, sovereignty, power, and omniscience. By rehearsing God's attributes over and over in our minds and telling others about the singular nature of the salvation only He offers, we can exalt Him.

The Qur'an says that everything that is in the heavens and the earth praises God: "Glorify Him and there is not a thing but glorifies His praise. However, you understand not their glorification." (HQ, 17:44); "See thou not that to God bow down in worship all things that are in the heavens and on earth, - the sun, the moon, the stars; the hills, the trees, the animals; and a great number among Mankind" (HQ, 22:18); "And the herbs and the trees – both (alike) bow in adoration" (HQ, 55:6)

It is interesting to note that in Sikhism, also, it is a common perception that all beings and things meditate on God. Sikh Gurus opined their views in their hymns as; "Mortals, forests, blades of grass, animals, and birds all meditate on You." (Mehl 5, SGGS, p 455); "Wind, water and fire sing of You….The worlds, solar systems, and galaxies created and arranged by Your Hand, sing of You.…So many others sing of You…..." (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 8-9)

**Normative Ethics**

Normative ethics deals with ethical action by investigating the set of questions that arise when considering how one ought to act, morally speaking. Some of such ethics followed by both Islam and Sikhism are as follows.

**No Ordained Priesthood**: Priesthood is the power and authority of God given to man. It also includes the authority to perform ordinances and to act as a leader in the church. Ordination is how individuals are consecrated, set apart as clergy to perform various religious rites and ceremonies. In both Islam and Sikhism, anyone can perform any religious service as there is no ordained priesthood.

However, the position of women regarding the performance of religious services seems to be quite different. In Sikhism, Guru Amar Das, the third Sikh Guru, appointed 22 persons to act as preachers in 22 diocesan areas (manjis) of authority. Out of these 22 appointees, 8 were women. In Islam, women cannot perform azan (loud call to the devotees to prayer). Usually, women do not visit the mosque.

**Rejection of Incarnation of God and Avtarwaad**: Incarnation means embodied in flesh. It is referred to the conception and birth of a sentient being who is the material manifestation of an entity, god, or force whose original nature is immaterial. In the religious context, incarnation means the descent of a god or divine being in human/animal form from Heaven on earth. Avtarwaad colloquially refers to the appearance or incarnation of a deity on earth. Both Islam and Sikhism reject the incarnation of God and Avtarwaad. According to Islam, God does not take any form. "Say: He is God, the One and Only; God, the Eternal, Absolute; He begetteth not, nor is He begotten; And there is none like unto Him." (HQ, 112:1-4).

According to Sikhism, God is Nirankar (Formless) and Ajooni (Unborn, i.e., beyond the cycle of birth and death). "You are the Formless Lord, the Immaculate Lord, our Sovereign King." (Mehl 4, SGGS, p 301). "O Destroyer of pain, Priceless Treasure, Fearless, free of hate, Unfathomable, Immeasurable, Image of the Undying, Unborn, Self-illumined: remembering You in meditation, my mind is filled with a deep and profound peace." (Mehl 5, SGGS, p 99)

**No to Idolatry**: Idolatry is the worship of an idol or a physical object representing a deity or God. In Islam and Sikhism, both idolatry or idol worship is strongly forbidden. In Islam, shirk (Arabic: شرك‎‎ širk) is the sin of practicing idolatry or polytheism. Thus the deification or worship of anyone other than the singular God, i.e., Allah, is prohibited. Such a practice means ascribing or the establishment of "partners" placed beside God. It is the vice that is opposed to the virtue of Tawhid (monotheism) [10]. Those who practice shirk are termed mushrikun [11]. The Holy Quran says, "...You shall avoid the abomination of idol worship, and avoid bearing false witness." (HQ, 22:30)

Guru Ram Das, the fourth Sikh Guru, enunciated in his hymns that idol worship is a futile ritual. "The ignorant and the blind wander deluded by doubt; deluded and confused, they pick flowers to offer to their idols. They worship lifeless stones and serve the tombs of the dead; all their efforts are useless." (Mehl 4, SGGS, p 1264). Bhagat Kabir, a saint-poet of Sri Guru Granth Sahib, articulated the futility of idol worship in his hymns, as; "The sculptor carves the stone and fashions it into an idol, placing his feet upon its chest. If this stone god were true, it would devour the sculptor for this!" (Bhagat Kabir, SGGS, p 479)

Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Sikh Guru, emphasized the futility of idolatry in his hymns of "Thirty-three Swayyas" as; "Why do you worship stones? The Lord-God is not within those stones. You should only worship Him, whose adoration destroys myriad sins. With the love of the Lord, all suffering is removed. Ever meditate on that Lord, because the hollow religious rituals will not bear any fruit." (Patshahi 10, 33 Swayyas, Quartet 20)

**No to Monasticism and Mendicancy**: Monkhood or monasticism is a way of life in which one renounces worldly activities to devote oneself fully to spiritual work. Monastic life plays a vital role in many Christian churches, especially in the Catholic and Orthodox traditions and several Eastern religions, e.g., Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, etc. Both Sikhism and Islam deprecate monasticism and mendicancy and recommend family life. The Holy Quran articulates: "But monasticism they invented–we ordained it not for them–only seeking Allah's pleasure, and they observed it not with right reverence." (HQ, 57:27).

Sikh religion also spurns monasticism. Just like, Prophet Muhammad, the Sikh Gurus were also married and had children. Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Sikh Guru, emphasized in his hymns that the love of God is a sine qua non for one's emancipation rather than his state of being a householder or a renunciate. "O Nanak, if the Naam (Love of God), dwells within one's mind, one is approved and accepted, whether he is a householder or a renunciate." (Mehl 5, SGGS, p 108); "O Nanak, meeting the True Guru, a person comes to know a Perfect Way. While laughing, playing, dressing and eating (i.e., living a normal life), the person is liberated (achieves salvation)". (Mehl 5, SGGS, p 522)

**No to Grave Worship**: Islam and Sikhism are strictly against grave worship. Prophet Muhammad condemns [12] those who take the graves of the righteous as places of worship. Moreover, Prophet Muhammad strictly forbade his followers from facing graves while praying. Abu Marthad al-Ghanawi reported Allah's Messenger as saying: "Do not sit on the graves and do not pray facing them." (*Sahih Muslim*, Book 004, 2121-22). However, some sects of Muslims do visit the majhars of their renowned saints.

           Similarly, Sikhs are also forbidden to worship graves, as is articulated in Sri Guru Granth Sahib. "You fool! Visiting graves and cremation grounds is not yoga (the mystical union of the self with the Supreme Being)". (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 1190)

**Belief in Predestination (Qadar):**Qadar [13] means "predestination," "fate," or "divine preordainment." It is the belief in divine destiny, one of the six pillars of faith in Islam. These pillars denote the belief in Allah's Oneness, the Revealed Books, the Prophets of Islam, the Day of Resurrection and Angels. One of the aspects of aqidah is Qadar. Islam [13-14] believes in predestination or divine preordainment (*al-qadā wa l-qadar*), i.e., God has full knowledge and control over all that occurs. According to the Islamic tradition, all that God has decreed is written in *al-Lawh al-Mahfūz*, the "Preserved Tablet."

Sikhism [14] also believes in predestination, and what one does, speaks and hears is already preordained, and one has to follow the laid down path per God's fiat or Hukum. "Everyone is subject to His Command; no one is beyond His Command." (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 1).

**Devotional Music**: In Sikhism, Gurmat Sangeet (also called Kirtan) is a special kind of devotional music to sing God's praises. Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, was a great singer, and his lifelong companion, Bhai mardana, was a great Rababi. The Sikh Gurus themselves wrote hymns to be sung according to specific musical scores (ragas). Thirty-one different ragas have been used in the compositions of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. In a Gurdwara, musicians sing alone or request the Sangat to repeat the Gurbani hymns being sung by them.

In Islam, those kinds of singing are unequivocally permitted, which glorify Allah and praise the Prophet [15]. Prophet Dawood was accustomed to singing God's praises with a musical instrument and in the form of ragas. However, recent interpretations say that Music is not allowed in Islam, which is not acceptable to the whole Islamic world. Islamic music [16] is Muslim religious music, as sung or played in public services or private devotions. As Islam is a multi-ethnic religion, the musical expression of its adherents is vastly diverse. Nasheeds are moral or religious songs sung by some Muslims of today. These songs are either sung acapella or accompanied by percussion instruments such as the daf.

Singing good songs of this type without instrumentation is considered permissible (halal) by many Muslims. Sufi devotional services are often called dhikr or zikr. The Sufi reverence services best known in the West are the chanting and rhythmic dancing of Mevlevi Sufis of Turkey's whirling dervishes. In Turkey, concerts of sacred songs are called "Mehfil-e-Sama.' In South Asia, especially Pakistan and India, Sufi music's most widely known style is qawwali. Another traditional South Asian genre of Sufi music is the Haki, which is more meditative and involves solo singing.

**War of Righteousness:**Both Islam and Sikhism believe in war for righteousness. Sikhs call it Dharam Yudh (Holy War), and Muslims call it Jihad. The literal definition of the word jihad [17] is: striving to achieve a goal, while the Quranic meaning of the term is "striving with one's self and one's money in the cause of God." "The true believers are those who believe in God and His messenger, then attain the status of having no doubt whatsoever, and strive (jahadu) with their money and their lives in the cause of God. These are the truthful ones." (HQ, 49:15);

"Those who believe, emigrate, and strive (jahadu) in the cause of God with their money and lives, are far greater in rank in the sight of God. These are the winners" (HQ, 9:20). Islam allows war [18] in self-defence (HQ, 22:39), to defend Islam (rather than to spread it), to protect those who have been removed from their homes by force because they are Muslims (HQ, 22:40), and to protect the innocent who are being oppressed (HQ, 4:75).

Sikhism has a concept of the just war [19]. It is called Dharam Yudh, meaning war in defence of righteousness. It is of two types; one an internal war- war against vices or worldly desires and second against injustice, tyranny, and oppression. SGGS articulates: "O Nanak, he is a brave warrior who conquers and subdues his vicious inner ego." (Mehl 3, SGGS, p 86); "One who dies fighting against his stubborn mind finds God, and the desires of the mind are quieted." (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 353)

Sikhs are firmly in favour of action to promote human rights and harmony between religions and states, yet they are expected [19] to take military action against oppression. "He alone is a spiritual hero who fights in defence of righteousness (religious faith). He may be cut apart, piece by piece, but he never leaves the field of battle". (Bhagat Kabir, SGGS, p 1105). Guru Gobind Singh [20] made it clear that military action was to be the last resort but emphasized that it should not be avoided if it proved necessary: "When all the stratagem employed for (solving) an affair or problem are exhausted, (only) then taking your hand to the sword is legitimate." (Patshahi 10, Zafarnama, verse 22)

**Social Ethics**

Social ethics are the moral principles or "code of conduct" that govern what is acceptable or unacceptable. These principles also provide a framework for ensuring that all members of the community are cared for. There are several similar principles in Islam and Sikhism, which their disciples are expected to adhere to during their social interactions within their community or with other communities.

**Truthful Living:**Living a truthful life means living an authentic life. It requires a person to be accountable for his/her life without any excuses. It is a life where one is honest with oneself and others. For an individual to foster a truthful living, it is strongly recommended that:

1. Listen "for the truth in the words of others."
2. Speak the truth as one understand it with "cordiality, kindness, and love."
3. Avoid "gossip, tale-bearing, breaking confidences, or the disparagement of others."
4. Resist "temptations to falsehood, coercion, and abuse."

Islam [12] emphasizes the importance of truthful living as: "O you who believe, keep your duty to Allah, and be with the truthful people." (HQ, 9:119); "Be maintainers of justice and bearers of true witness for Allah, even if it (the truth) goes against yourselves or parents or relatives or someone rich or poor." (HQ, 4:135);

Sikhism also lays great emphasis on truthful living as it enunciates: "Truth is the highest virtue, but higher still is truthful living." (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 62); "By living a truthful life, true peace is obtained." (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 931). Guru Nanak points out the way to live a truthful lifestyle, in his hymns as; "Without the wisdom (Shabad), no one achieves a truthful living." (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 1285).

Islam rejects corruption and bribery as a part of truthful living. "Do not go near the property of an orphan, except in a goodly way, till he attains maturity. Moreover, fulfill the promise (you make) . . .. Give full measure when you measure out and weigh with a true balance." (HQ, 17:34-35); "Do not swallow up your property among yourselves by false means, nor offer it as a bribe to the officials so that you may swallow up other people's property unlawfully while you know." (HQ, 2:188)

Similarly, Sikhism condemns living by exploitation, bribery, and corruption. It asserts: "To deprive others of their rights ought to be avoided as scrupulously as the Muslims avoid the pork and the Hindus consider beef as a taboo." (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 141). Sikhism exhorts Sikhs to shun malpractices to lead a good and truthful life. SGGS articulates: "Greed is a dog; falsehood is a filthy street-sweeper. Cheating is eating a rotting carcass". (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 15)

**Good Deeds Encouraged**: One of the most incredible things we can do in life is to do good deeds for others. It can be either offering one's love and kindness or making an altruistic offering of one's service, time or money. There are several ways to bring sunshine into the lives of others. In the words of Shari Arison [21], "Doing good is a simple and universal vision. A vision to which every one of us can connect and contribute to its realization. A vision based on the belief that by doing good deeds, positive thinking, and affirmative choice of words, feelings, and actions, we can enhance goodness in the world". The importance of doing good deeds is well reflected in the teachings of Islam and Sikhism. The Holy Quran articulates, "You will receive rewards in proportion to the deeds you do." (HQ 6:161).

Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, elaborating on the need to imbibe the virtue of the goodness in our lives, has emphasized in his hymns that "If you yearn for goodness, then perform good deeds and be humble." (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 465). He asserted that; "We obtain the reward or punishment of as per our good or bad deeds." (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 470). Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Sikh Guru, emphasized the importance of doing good deeds in his hymns as; "One who practices the truth, righteous living, charity, and good deeds, has the supplies for God's Path. Worldly success shall not fail him". (Mehl 5, SGGS, p 743); "Without good deeds, salvation is not obtained." (Mehl 5, SGGS, p 201)

However, it is worth noting that this resemblance is limited to the operation of the universal law of cause and effect) only. When "reward and punishment" are used to accept or reject an ideology, Sikhism and Islam part company.

**On Chastity and Fidelity:**Chastity is a virtue concerning the state of purity of mind and body. It is an attitude and a way of life. Chastity includes abstinence from sexual intimacy for the unmarried and faithfulness to a marriage partner. Fidelity means being faithful to one's husband, wife, or sexual partner. Chastity, in Islam, is both a personal and social value. Extramarital sex is forbidden, and the Quran says: "Nor come near to adultery. ..for it is a shameful deed and an evil road (to other evils)." (HQ, 17:32). The Holy Quran emphasizes: "Those who invoke not with God any other god, nor slay such life as God has made sacred except for just cause, nor commit fornication: and any that does this (not only) meets punishment, but the penalty on the Day of Judgement will be doubled to him, and he will dwell therein in ignominy. Unless he repents, believes and works righteous deeds, for God will change the evil of such persons into good, and God is Oft-Forgiving Most-Merciful." (HQ, 25:68-70)

In Sikhism, the duties related to purity and fidelity are enjoined to regulate marital relations and ensure respect for family commitment and avoidance of adultery. SGGS proclaims; "To covet others' wives, to desire others' wealth, to have greed and egotism, is sinful; shun the evil passions, slander of others, lust and anger." (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 1255); "Lust and anger waste the body away." (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 932)

**Humility:** Humility [22-23], or being humble, means that one is modest, submissive and respectful, not proud and arrogant. In prayer, Muslims and Sikhs prostrate themselves to the ground, acknowledging human beings' lowliness and humility before the Lord of creation. The Holy Quran [5-6] urges all Muslims to be humble and emphasizes the importance of humility in one's life as: "And turn not your face away from men with pride, nor walk in insolence through the earth. Verily, God likes not, each arrogant boaster." (HQ, 31:18). "And the slaves of God are those who walk on the earth in humility and calmness, and when the foolish address them (with bad words), they reply with mild words of gentleness." (HQ, 25:63)

In Sikhism, humility is an essential characteristic of a God-conscious being and is the essence of virtues. Gurbani [2-3] encourages Sikhs to live a life of humility, leading to intuitive peace and divine bliss. Guru Nanak, in his hymns, emphasized the importance of being humble as; "Sweetness and humility, O Nanak, are the essence of virtues and goodness." (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 470); "If you yearn for goodness, then perform good deeds and be humble." (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 465). Guru Arjan Dev described humility in his hymns as an essential attribute of a God-Conscious person and its rewards as intuitive peace and divine bliss. "The God-conscious being is steeped in humility." (Mehl 5, SGGS, p 273); "The fruit of humility is intuitive peace and divine bliss." (Mehl 5, SGGS, p 235)

**Patience:** Patience (or forbearance) is the state of endurance under difficult circumstances. It means persevering in the face of provocation without acting in anger or exhibiting tolerance when under stress. It is also a character trait of being steadfast. Almost everyone recognizes a need for more patience at times. It is a fruit of God's grace and an essential key to better relationships with God and fellow man. Patience not only helps to protect our minds and emotions, but it can also guide us to think and view the struggle of life in a proper manner.

Ibnul Qayyim [24-25], a noted Islamic scholar, has opined that our happiness in the present life and our redemption in the Hereafter depends on patience. In Islam. The importance of patience by disciples is never underestimated. The Holy Quran says; "Verily! I have rewarded them this Day for their patience; they are indeed the successful ones." (HQ, 23:111); "...to be firm or patient in pain or suffering, and adversity, and throughout all periods of panic. Such are the people of truth, the God-fearing." (HQ, 2:177); "Allah surely loves those who are the Sabireen (patient)." (HQ, 3:146); "And be patient; indeed Allah is with the patient ones." (HQ, 8:46)

Similarly, in Sikhism, the significance of patience has been emphasized time and again. Describing the attributes of God-Conscious being, Guru Arjan Dev reports in his hymns. That such a person is ever in a state of steady patience and bliss. "The God-conscious being has steady patience." (Mehl 5, SGGS, p 272); "One whom He blesses with patience becomes blissful." (Mehl 5, SGGS, p 887). Shaikh Farid, a saint-poet of SGGS, stresses that one must imbibe patience in one's life to live it perfectly. "Let patience be your purpose in life; implant this within your being." (Shaikh Farid, SGGS, p 1384); "Make patience the arrow, the Creator will not let you miss the target." (Shaikh Farid, SGGS, p 1384)

**Charity:**Charity is an excellent quality by which we love God and our neighbours for the love of God. Thus it reflects the religious concept of unlimited love and kindness. The practise of charity means providing voluntary help to those in need as a humanitarian act. Charity is the eventual perfection of the human spirit because it glorifies and reflects God's nature. Charity [26-30] is an essential aspect of Islam and Sikhism, both.

The Holy Quran says; "You cannot attain to righteousness unless you spend (in charity) out of those things which you love." (HQ, 3:91). "They (the true believers) give food, out of love for Allah, to the poor, the orphan and the slave, saying: We feed you only for Allah's pleasure - we desire from you neither reward nor thanks." (HQ, 76:8-9) "Do no favour seeking gain." (HQ, 74:6)

Sikhism [29-30] encourages its adherents to earn their living by honest means and sharing their earnings with others. "One who earns his living by honest means, and shares it with others - O Nanak, he knows the True Path." (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 1245). Sikh Gurus, in their hymns, emphasized the importance of selfless voluntary service for all, as; "Doing selfless voluntary service in this world earns a place of honour in the Court of the Lord." (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 26); "Center your awareness on selfless voluntary service, and focus your consciousness on the Word (Shabad)." (Mehl 3, SGGS, p 110)

Daswandh (allocating one-tenth of one's earnings for religious or charitable purposes) is a Sikh tradition that receives mention in many authentic Sikh works that interpret the Guru's teachings regarding the Sikh way of life. In Sikhism, Langar is a world-renowned Sikh tradition. In Sikh Langar, everyone is served food without any discrimination or distinction. It is a training ground for doing selfless voluntary service. There is a similar tradition, to some extent, at the Dargahs of some Muslim Darveshes (mystics).

Zakat (HQ, 9:60) in Islam and Daswandh in Sikhism differ only in their application and modus operandi. The state collects zakat, but the daswandh depends on a donor's discretion. "The purpose of the zakat [26] is no other than to provide the state with means to fund its welfare projects". "Zakat [27] is paid by individuals to Islamic governments, who arrange for its proper distribution to deserving people."

**Service to Humanity:** Islam [31] states that service to humanity is a part of the faith. Muslims are expected to be actively engaged in social welfare and meet Muslims' medical and educational demands and the needs of all the communities they reside in. The Holy Quran states: **"**You are the best people raised for the good of mankind; you enjoin good and forbid evil and believe in Allah." (HQ, 3:111). Islam also teaches that Muslims must always be ready to serve humanity and have love and kindness for all of God's creation. Holy Quran states: "And worship Allah and associate naught with Him and show kindness to parents, and kindred, and orphans, and the needy, and to the neighbour that is a kinsman and the neighbour that is a stranger, and the companion by your side, and the wayfarer, and those whom your right hand possess (employees). Surely, Allah loves not the proud and the boastful". (HQ, 4:37)

Sikhism [29-30] emphasizes that the Sikhs must perform selfless voluntary service, which leads to intuitive peace and helps eliminate selfishness and conceit from human nature. "Center your awareness on selfless voluntary service-and focus your consciousness on the Word (Shabad)." (Mehl 3, SGGS, p 110); "One who performs selfless voluntary service, without thought of reward, shall attain his Lord and Master." (Mehl 5, SGGS, p 286); "You shall find peace, doing selfless voluntary service." (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 25); "This selfless service, meditation, and devotion are true if you eliminate selfishness and conceit from within." (Mehl 3, SGGS, p 246)

**Casteless Society**: Islam [32-33] and Sikhism [2,30] are both against the caste system. After shattering the false and unjust foundation of the hierarchical society of the Arabs by embracing people together under one faith, irrespective of their colour, race, gender, language, age, wealth, and status, Prophet Muhammad left a remarkable legacy for all those that came after him. Islam's egalitarian perspective is outlined in the Holy Quran when Allah says: "O Mankind, We created you from one man and one woman, and then divided you into nations and tribes so that you may recognize one another. Indeed, the most honourable among you in the sight of Allah is he who is the most pious of you. Surely Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise". (Surah 49:13); "The believers are but a single Brotherhood: so make peace and reconciliation between your brothers: And fear Allah that ye may receive Mercy." (Surah 49:10)

As laid down in SGGS [2-3], the egalitarian principle advocates all human beings' equality, irrespective of their birth, gender, race or creed. It disregards all distinctions of caste and colour. "God's Kingdom is steady, stable, and eternal. There is no second or third status; all are equal there". (Bhagat Ravidas, SGGS, p 345). SGGS rejects casteism totally and vehemently. Brushing aside misconceived arrogance of casteism, it proclaims: "Thou ignorant fool, do not indulge in caste vanity, it leads to much depravity." (Mehl 3, SGGS, p 1127-28); It emphasizes: "Recognize the Lord's Light within all, and do not consider social class or status; there are no classes or castes in the world hereafter." (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 349); "Pride in social status is empty; pride in personal glory is useless." (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 83)

In the egalitarian society as enunciated in SGGS, all are equal, the lowest to the highest, in the race as in creed, in political rights and religious hopes. In this system, women enjoy equal status with men. SGGS sought to release its adherents from the bondage of caste tyranny by emphasizing the unity of humankind. It is given an explicitly social character through a series of measures adopted by the Guru. The establishment of the institutions of Dharamsala (a place for public worship), Sangat (a corporate body of the devotees), Pangat (seating of the devotees in rows on the same level), Langar (community kitchen) and Kirtan (collective singing of hymns) has lead to a powerful movement to release people from the stranglehold of the ritualistic, caste-ridden, priest-dominated and a retrogressive social order.

Contrary to the Qur'anic worldview and Islamic teaching in general, some Muslim communities worldwide still apply a social stratification system with similarities to the caste systems [32-33]. Historical, socio-cultural and religious factors have helped define endogamous groups' bounds for Muslims worldwide. There is a tendency for endogamous marriages based on society's clan-oriented nature, which values and actively seeks similarities in social group identity based on several factors, including religious, sectarian, ethnic, and tribal/clan affiliation. This phenomenon, however, does not appear in many other Muslim regions like South East Asia.

Religious affiliation is multilayered and includes religious considerations other than being Muslim, such as sectarian identity (e.g., Shia or Sunni, etc.) and religious orientation within the sect (Ithna'ashariyyah, Ismaili). Both ethnic affiliation (e.g., Sindhi, Baloch, Punjabi, etc.) and membership of specific Biraderis (brotherhoods) of Jat/Quoms are additional integral components of social identity. Within the bounds of endogamy, close consanguineous unions are preferred. About 80% of the Indian Muslims were converted from Hinduism. Most of the Sikhs also trace their background to Hindu families. Both of these minority communities have been unsuccessful in rooting out the curse of the caste system completely.

**Universal Brotherhood:**Islam [34-35] prescribes "Universal Brotherhood." It spurns the thought that human beings have been created in castes or on different levels. In the Holy Qur'an, Allah describes the Islamic concept of Universal Brotherhood, as; 'O humankind! We created you from a single pair of a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other (not that you may despise each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the

sight of God is (he who is) the most righteous of you. Moreover, God has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things). (HQ, 49: 13).

Further, the Holy Qur'an states: "... among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, the variations in your languages, and your colours, Verily in that are signs for those who know." (HQ, 30:22). Thus, the Holy Qur'an indicates that the whole human race originated from a single pair of male and female. All humans have common ancestors. Moreover, the colour and language variations are not to create animosity or differences between groups of humans. Every language on Earth has its beauty and significance.

In Sikhism [2-3, 29-30] the ideal of the 'Universal Brotherhood of humankind' has been well proclaimed as; "There is only one breath; all are made of the same clay; the light within all is the same." (Mehl 4, SGGS, p 96) "One True Lord is the father of all, and we are His children." (Mehl Fifth, SGGS, p 611). Here God is not a tribal patriarch but the benign and benevolent God of the entire Creation, notwithstanding the climes, terrains and geographical or political divisions. Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Sikh Guru, elaborate on this concept in his hymns of "Akal Ustat" as; "Someone is Hindu and someone a Muslim, then someone is Shia, and someone a Sunni, but recognize whole human race as of one caste." (Patshahi 10, Akal Ustat, Quartet 15).

Gurbani encourages us to follow the concept of fraternity, assuring the dignity of the individuals and the unity of the nations. "All share in Your Grace; none are beyond You." (Mehl 5, SGGS, p 97). Sikhs are encouraged to follow a way of life full of loving conviction and goodwill for fellow human beings. With such a universal approach, Gurbani aims at forging common bonds in the human race without discrimination of caste, creed, sex or nationality. "Let us form a partnership, and share our virtues; let us abandon our faults, and walk on the Path." (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 766). The hymns of SGGS include the prayer for the well being of all creatures: "In Your Mercy, You care for all beings and creatures." (Mehl 5, SGGS, p 1251). Several essential attributes of universal brotherhood, such as service to humanity, equality of all, love and respect for all beings, and peace and harmony have been repeatedly emphasized in the Holy Granth.

**Peaceful Coexistence:** Coexistence is a state in which two or more groups live together while respecting their differences and resolving their conflicts non-violently. The Holy Quran speaks about One God and one human family. The Holy Quran [36] stresses that righteousness is not in precise observance of the rituals but acts of compassion and kindness. It says that the right belief and genuine worship leads to compassionate living. Every Friday Muslims, all over the world, are reminded to do justice and have goodwill and natural mutual affection as among the kins. "Indeed, Allah enjoins justice, and the doing of good to others and giving like kindred; and forbids indecency, manifesting evil, and wrongful transgression. He admonished you that you may take heed". (HQ, 16:91) "Indeed, Allah is with those who are righteous and those who do good." (HQ, 16:129). The Holy Quran [36] suggests compassion and kindness to be a recipe to turn one's enemies into bosom friends: "And good and evil are not alike. Repel evil with that which is best. And lo, he between whom and thyself was enmity will become as though he were a warm friend. But none is granted it save those who are steadfast, and none is granted it save those who possess a large share of good". (HQ, 41:35-36)

To foster peaceful co-existence in a family or a society, Gurbani [2, 29] encourages us to follow a life based on high ethics. It urges us to embellish ourselves with such highly valued attributes, e.g., truthful living, contentment, compassion, and care for all, honest earning, and selfless service. It also urges us to shun worldly evils, e.g., lust, anger, attachment, greed, and ego. Guru Arjan Dev emphasizes: "Embellish oneself with truth, contentment, compassion, and Dharmic faith." (Mehl 5, SGGS, p 812). Guru Amar Das articulates, "If the soul-bride adorns herself with compassion and forgiveness, God is pleased, and her mind is illumined with the lamp of the Guru's wisdom." (Mehl 4, SGGS, p 836). Sri Guru Granth Sahib encourages the Sikhs to live in peaceful co-existence with all. This message is significantly emphasized in the hymns of Sikh Gurus. Sikhs are recommended to live a life full of compassion and love for others. Guru Arjan Dev urges us to follow the dictum: "None is my enemy, and none is a stranger, I am in accord with everyone." (Mehl 5, SGGS, p 1299)

**Rejection of Slanderous behaviour:** Slandering, also called defamation or vilification, is the communication of a false statement that harms the reputation of a person, business, product, group, government, religion, or nation. Some common law jurisdictions recognize spoken defamation as slander and defamation in printed words or images as libel. A person who defames another may be called a "slanderer," "defamer," or "libeler." Islam and Sikhism both condemn slanderers. The Holy Quran says, "And do not find fault with each other, nor call one another by nicknames." (HQ 49:11-12).

Sri Guru Granth Sahib discourages the practice of slandering. It advises its adherents to shun this malpractice. Sikhs are counselled to lead a life of contentment and respect others' person, property, and dignity. Guru Nanak proclaims: "Slandering others is putting the filth of others into your mouth. The fire of anger is the outcaste who burns dead bodies at the crematorium". (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 15); Guru Arjan Dev declares: "The slanderers are treated as liars in God's court and punished appropriately." (Mehl 5, SGGS, p 323). "The slanderer loses his life in vain. He cannot succeed in anything, and in the world hereafter, he finds no place at all". (Mehl 5, SGGS, p 380)

**Rejection of the use of Intoxicants:** An intoxicant is something (e.g., alcoholic drink) that causes people to become excited or confused and less able to control what they say or do. There is broad acceptance in Muslim thought that the Quran categorically condemns the use of intoxicants [37]. The Holy Quran says: "They ask you about intoxicants and gambling: say, 'In them, there is a gross sin and some benefits for the people. However, their sinfulness far outweighs their benefit." (HQ, 2:219). "O you who believe, intoxicants, and gambling, and the altars of idols, and the games of chance are abominations of the devil; you shall avoid them, that you may succeed." (HQ, 5:90).

The Sikhs are forbidden from taking intoxicants and narcotics as SGGS2-3 warns about their usage's cause ill effects. Guru Nanak articulates, "Those who do not use intoxicants are true; they dwell in the Court of the Lord." (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 15). Guru Arjan Dev declares: "They who drink the wine of vice, their minds are turned." (Mehl 5, SGGS, p 399). Bhagat Kabir and Bhai Mardana point out the corrupting effects of sensual pleasures and intoxicants on human beings as; "Those who are deluded by sensual pleasures, who are tempted by sexual delights and enjoy wine are corrupt." (Bhagat Kabir, SGGS, p 335) "Drinking in this wine, O Nanak, one takes on countless sins and corruptions." (Bhai Mardana, SGGS, p 553)

**Environmental Ethics**

Environmental ethics concerns human beings' ethical relationship with the natural environment. In Islam and Sikhism, environmental ethics [38-40] incorporate Tawhid principles, balance, stewardship, trust, and justice.

GOD as Creator and Owner (Tawhid): Tawhid means that God is the Owner and Creator of everything in the universe. The Holy Quran articulates; "Allah is the Creator of all things, and He is the Guardian and Disposer of all affairs" (HQ, 39:62); "To God belongs all that is in the heavens and on earth" (HQ, 4:126)

In Sikhism, similar environmental ethics have been incorporated by its founders. In Gurbani, God is described as the Creator and Owner of all things and beings. Thus, the principle of Tawhid, as stated by the Sikh Gurus, is enshrined in the Sri Guru Granth Sahib as; "Everything is in Your Power, Lord; You are the all-powerful Creator. Your Name is the Holiest of the Holy". (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 464). "Everyone and everything belongs to the One who rules the Universe." (Mehl 3, SGGS, p 27). "You created the entire universe and having fashioned it, You shall destroy it all." (Mehl 4, SGGS, p11);

**Perfect Balance and Measure:** Islam and Sikhism, both religions, emphasize that God created the universe in perfect balance and measure, so human beings should not alter it. "Verily, all things have We created in proportion and measure" (HQ, 54:49).

Sikh philosophy also emphasizes that the Creator – God, keeps everything in perfect balance and measure through His command (Hukam). Guru Nanak Dev proclaims: "O Nanak, through the Command of His Will, He beholds and pervades the creation; He is unrivalled." (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 464). Guru Amar Das elaborates: "Without a visible scale, He keeps everything in balance." (Mehl 3, SGGS, p 110). Guru Ram Das enunciates: "God Himself is the balance scale, He is the weigher, and He weighs (our deeds) with the weights." (Mehl 4, SGGS, p 605)

**Steward:** The accountability of our role towards Nature entrusts us with the responsibility towards God's Creation for its preservation. Muslims firmly believe that while human beings are allowed to make use of natural resources, yet they do not have a right to exploit or destroy these, as these resources have been given to them in a trust (Amanah) by God. "Allah made subservient to you the sea … that you may seek of His grace, and that you may give thanks. And He has made subservient to you whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth." (HQ, 45:12-13)

In SGGS, it is explicitly pointed out that God has blessed humans with the highest level in the hierarchy of beings and things. Thereby it is expected that they play their role in preserving and conserving the creation with full responsibility. Guru Arjan Dev declares: "He installed you above the heads of all creatures." (Mehl 5, SGGS, p 913). "Out of all the 8.4 million species of beings, God blessed mankind with glory". (Mehl 5, SGGS, p 1075). "Other people may be your water-carriers; in this world, you may be a ruler." (Mehl 5, SGGS, p 374); However, it is explicitly pointed out in SGGS that in the ultimate plan of the things and occurrences, it the God who takes care of us all. Sikh Gurus proclaim: "O Nanak, having created the living beings, He cherishes them all." (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 467); "He cherishes all beings, O my soul, as the mother and father cherish their child." (Mehl 4, SGGS, p 541).

**Trust in Mankind:** As we know, trust is the confidence placed in a person by making that person the nominal owner of a property, to be held or used for the benefit of one or more others. Islam states that God has put His trust in humanity, as the Holy Quran [40] advises human beings not to disturb this balance (of Nature). "And the sky has He raised high, and has devised (for all things) a balance so that you might never transgress the balance: weigh, therefore (your deeds) with equity, and do not upset the balance" (HQ, 55:7-9).

SGGS advises the Sikhs to play God's Trustee's role with utmost care and responsibility towards His Creation. Guru Arjan Dev articulates: "Become His trustee, and you shall never again suffer sorrow." (Mehl 5, SGGS, p 1182). Guru Granth Sahib enunciates that God is all-pervading and all-permeating. Nature is His dwelling place. As God is all-pervading, humans are expected to revere the divinity of Nature. They are urged not to indulge in such acts that bring demit to them. Also, the actions of all beings are accounted for and evaluated by Him. Thus our actions, which are detrimental to the world and natural environment, will lead us to dire consequences. Guru Nanak says: "He created the Creative Power of the Universe, within which He dwells." (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 83). "He commands them. His Pen writes out the account of their actions". (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 1241). "By their deeds and their actions, they shall be judged." (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 7).

**Accountability:** Muslims believe that they have been entrusted to be God's stewards and are accountable for all actions, including their treatment of God's all creation. "And when your Lord said to the angels: Lo! I am about to place a caliph (vicegerent) on the earth..." (HQ, 2:30); "It is He that has made you caliph (vicegerent), over the earth." (HQ, 6:165)

Sikhism emphasizes that humans, being the highest in the hierarchy of beings, are responsible for all beings and things for their care and welfare. It is stressed that any undesired or detrimental activity to the cause should be shunned, as everyone is accountable to God for one's actions. Guru Amar Das proclaims: "You see all, and weigh (evaluate their actions) them on Your scale." (Mehl 3, SGGS, p 1051); "They are called to account for each instant and each moment. Every grain, every particle, is weighed and counted". (Mehl 3, SGGS, p 127); Guru Nanak enunciates: "We obtain the reward or punishment of as per our good or bad deeds." (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 470).

**Justice:** Muslims believe that all actions carry reward or punishment; thereby, human beings must own responsibility for their actions and be accountable for these. Islam teaches that on the Day of Judgment, humans will be questioned about their every action. "So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it." (HQ, 99:7-8); "Every soul will be (held) in pledge for its deeds" (HQ, 74:38)

In his hymns, Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, described that God had blessed our planet Earth with a wide variety of seasons, the cycles of days and nights, and the essential elements of life (air, water, fire and nether regions). He emphasized that our Earth has been created to establish a home for righteousness (Dharma). Guru Nanak has also pointed out that God judges the actions of all beings. "Nights, days, weeks, and seasons; wind, water, fire, and the nether regions - in the midst of these, He established the Earth as a home for righteousness. Upon it, He placed the various species of beings. Their names are numerous and countless. By their deeds and their actions, they shall be judged". (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 7). Guru Ram Das, the fourth Sikh Guru, articulated in his hymns that people are accountable for their actions and shall be judged by God accordingly. "O Siblings of Destiny, behold the justice of the True Creator; as people act, so they are rewarded." (Mehl 4, SGGS, p 308).

**Equality for All:** Islam articulates equal rights for all living beings, including animals and birds, and refers to these as communities. "The earth He has assigned to all living creatures" (HQ, 55:10). "There is not a moving (living) creature on earth, nor a bird that flies with its two wings, but are communities like you...then unto their Lord, they (all) shall be gathered" (HQ, 6:37). "And for women are rights over men similar to those of men over women." (HQ, 2:228). Muslims' central pillar of worship, Ibadah, is the prayer. The congregational prayer is performed in rows where all men stand before God as equals. There is no particular place for the rich or powerful; the meek and weak are not relegated to the back lines. Each man bows his head in humility, knowing that his brothers, on either side of him, are equally important in the sight of God.

Equality for all is also a fundamental premise in Gurbani. In Sri Guru Granth Sahib, it is emphasized that God's essence is present in all, so all be treated with equal reverence. Sikh Guru's provided this premise with a usable form by establishing the institutions of "Langar" and "Pangat." Guru Nanak expressed this view in his hymns as; "As Gurmukh, look upon all with the single eye of equality; in every heart, the Divine Light is contained." (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 599). The role of animals and birds and their importance have also been duly recognized and appreciated in Gurbani as; "Even beasts have value, as they eat grass and give milk." (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 489). Shaikh Farid, a saint-poet of SGGS, proclaims: "Farid, I am a sacrifice to those birds which live in the jungle. They peck at the roots and live on the ground, but they do not leave the Lord's side". (Shaikh Farid, SGGS, p 1383)

**Creation**

Creation [41] is the original bringing into existence of the universe by God. Both Islamic and Sikh theology provide fascinating insights into the manifestation of Creation.

**God and His Creation:** The Holy Quran [41-42] states that "Allah created the heavens and the earth, and all that is between them, in six days" (HQ, 7:54). After completing the Creation, the Holy Quran describes that Allah "settled Himself upon the Throne" (HQ, 57:4) to oversee His work. "We created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them in six days, nor did any sense of weariness touch Us" (HQ, 50:38).

In Sikhism, also, it is articulated that God, after His self-creation, fashioned the whole Creation. Seated within it, He cherishes His Creation. Guru Nanak enunciates: "He created Himself; He assumed His Name. Secondly, He fashioned the creation; seated within the creation, He beholds it with delight". (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 463)

Allah is never "done" with His work because the process of Creation is ongoing. Every new child born, every seed that sprouts into a sapling, every new species that appears on Earth, is part of Allah's Creation's ongoing process. "He is, Who created the heavens and the Earth in six days, then established Himself on the Throne. He knows, what enters within the heart of the Earth, what comes forth out of it, what comes down from heaven, and what mounts up it. And He is with you wherever you may be. And Allah sees well all that you do" (HQ, 57:4).

A similar viewpoint that God, the Creator, is ever creating the creation, watches over it and takes care of all is well documented in Sri Guru Granth Sahib. It articulates, "In the realm of Truth, the Formless Lord abides. Having created the creation, He watches over it. By His Glance of Grace, He bestows happiness". (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 8); "Having created the creation, He watches over it; He issues His Commands, and emancipates those, upon whom He casts His Glance of Grace." (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 433); "Having created the creation, He supports it and takes care of it." (Mehl 3, SGGS, p 37)

**Process of Creation:**  Describing the Creation of "heavens and earth," the Holy Quran does not dismiss the theory of a "Big Bang" and occurrence of explosion at the beginning of it all. It says, "the heavens and the earth were joined together as one unit before We clove them asunder" (HQ, 21:30). Following this big explosion, Allah "turned to the sky, and it had been (as) smoke. He said to it and the earth: 'Come together, willingly or unwillingly.' They said: 'We come (together) in willing obedience'" (HQ, 41:11). Thus the elements and the material, which was to become the planets and stars, began to cool. It came together and formed into shape, following the natural laws established by Allah.

It is interesting to note that similar to Islamic tradition, Gurbani also does not discount the process of the "Big Bang." In his composition 'T'hitee, Guru Nanak points out the process of Creation of the universe as: "The True Lord (Creator) created the universe, joining the elements together. Breaking the cosmic egg, he created the forces of attraction (union), and repulsion (separation). He made the Earth and the sky as the places to live. Created day and night, fear and love. The One, who created the Creation, also watches over it. There is no other Creator Lord". (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 839).

**Creation of Earth and Heavens (Sky):** The holy Quran further explains the process of Creation as; "...the heavens and the earth were joined together as one united piece, then We parted them? And We have made from water every living thing...." (HQ, 21:30)

           In Gurbani, a similar viewpoint has been reported as, "Separating the sky and the Earth, He has spread out His canopy. Without any pillars, He supports the sky through His command (the emblem of His Word). Creating the Sun and the Moon, He infused His Light into them. He created the night and the day; Wondrous are His miraculous plays". (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 1279). Guru Nanak also describes the Creation of all things (including Earth, sky, nether world, things, and beings) from water in his hymn of 'Sri Raag' as; "From the True Lord (ultimate reality) came the air, and from the air came water. From the water, the three worlds were created by Him. In every heart, his light is infused." (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 19)

**Creation of Sun, Moon and Other Planets:** The Holy Quran further states that Allah created the Sun, the moon, and the planets, each with their courses or orbits. "It is He Who created the night and the day, and the sun and the moon; all (the celestial bodies) swim along, each in its rounded course" (HQ, 21:33).

Gurbani describes that the Creator created the worldly manifestation and provided the Sun and Moon with light. "The Beloved (God) created the Universe. He made the light of the Sun and the Moon." (Mehl 4, SGGS, p 606). Expounding the realm of truth (Sach Khand), in Jap(u) bani, Guru Nanak proclaims the existence of countless planets, solar systems and universes. He says, "There are planets, solar systems, and universes. If one has to describe these, then one can only say that these are numerous. There are countless worlds in the Creation. As is ordained, so these exist". (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 8). Enunciating the Natural Laws and motion of the celestial bodies, Gurbani states: "In the Fear of God, the Sun shines, and in fear of God, the moon reflects. They travel millions of miles, endlessly". (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 464).

**Origin of Life from water:** The Holy Quran [42-43] tells us that human beings are created from an earthly essence, and more generally, every living being is created from water. Therefore, we have an ordinary physical existence with everything else on Earth. There is also a law of interdependence between all-natural elements, and if humans abuse one element, the whole natural world will suffer the direct consequences. "Allah created every [living] creature from water. Some of them go on their bellies, some of them on two legs, and some on four. Allah creates whatever He wills. Allah has power over all things". (HQ, 24:45); "……We made from water every living thing..." (HQ, 21:30)

The Creation of life from water has also been described similarly in the hymns of Gurbani. "From the True Lord came the air, and from the air came water. From the water, He created the three worlds; in every heart, He has infused His Light". (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 19). "First, there is life in the water, by which everything else is made green." (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 472); "From the union of air, water, and fire, the living being is made." (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 1026)

**Birth of Human Beings:** The Holy Quran [44] says*:* "He (Allah) has created man from a sperm-drop, and behold this same (man) becomes an open disputer!" (HQ,16:4); "It is He Who has created you from dust then from a sperm-drop, then from a leech-like clot; then does he get you out (into the light) as a child: then lets you (grow and) reach your age of full strength; then lets you become old - though of you there are some who die before; - and lets you reach a term appointed; in order that you may learn wisdom." (HQ, 40:67).

Similarly, Sikh theology reiterates human beings' origin from the union of an egg of a female and a sperm of a male. Guru Nanak Dev articulates, "Through the union of mother and father, the fetus is formed. The egg and sperm join together to make the body". (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 1013). Guru Arjan Dev enunciates; "From egg and sperm, you were conceived, and placed in the fire of the womb." (Mehl 5, SGGS, p 706); "Little sperm is planted in the body-field of a mother, and the human body, so difficult to obtain, is formed." (Mehl 5, SGGS, p 1387).

**Education**

Education is the activity by which society deliberately transmits its accumulated knowledge, skills, and values from one generation to another. It includes the development of skills and the achievement of one's physical, mental, and social development. In Islam [45], seeking education is obligatory, and that knowledge is considered the path towards greater closeness to Allah. The significance of education has been repeatedly emphasized in the Holy Qur'an. The following verse indicates that whatever we know is limited as we need to keep asking Allah to increase our knowledge. Therefore, a Muslim should continuously be seeking more knowledge. "My Lord! Increase me in knowledge." (HQ, 20:114). The Holy Qur'an treats knowledge as a means of reaching Iman (faith) for all Muslims, males, and females, to become true believers. The importance of education in the Holy Quran is explicit, as is evident from the following verses; "Allah grants wisdom to whom He pleases and to whom wisdom is granted indeed he receives an overflowing benefit." (HQ, 2:269); "Are those who know equal to those who do not know? Only they will remember (who are) people of understanding." (HQ, 39:9)

In Sri Guru Granth Sahib46, also, the importance of education is emphasized. It inspires a person to enlighten himself and help others in acquiring knowledge. Lack of knowledge is spiritual bondage. Without wisdom, a person cannot carry out all his duties (individual and social) successfully. In Gurbani, it is affirmed, "With Guru's Grace, contemplate spiritual Knowledge; and you shall be honoured." (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 1329). "Without spiritual wisdom, they babble and argue." (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 466). "Without spiritual wisdom, they understand nothing at all." (Mehl 3, SGGS, p 1044).

The principal aim of education is to lead an individual to self-realization, to realize his/her full potential. According to Guru Nanak, that education is excellent, which is used for the welfare of people. "Contemplate and reflect upon knowledge, and you will become a benefactor to others." (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 356); "Blessed is that mortal being, who shares the Teachings for the good of others." (Mehl 4, SGGS, p 311). The Gurbani encourages research in the vast domains of physical and spiritual worlds as it states, "As the spirit of inquiry grows, dogmas degenerate." (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 1255). "Continuously engaging in research in all possible manner, rationalize every opinion before accepting it." (Mehl 5, SGGS, p 714). "Searching and searching endlessly, seeking and deliberating, Nanak has realized the true essence of reality." (Mehl 5, SGGS, p 404). Thus, it encourages searching for the truth about the Ultimate Reality and in all spheres of the material world. All the Sikh Gurus have emphasized that mental and physical development through education, sports, and discipline are the essential characteristics of a Sikh.

**Purpose of Life**

Islam [47-48] describes the purpose of life as to worship Allah without associating partners with Him. It outlines that Muslims should live their lives in obedience to God, following the Holy Quran's moral code. This moral code includes being kind to your parents, relatives, neighbours, the poor, and the needy. It also means fulfilling the commands of God, whether it is to perform the five daily prayers, pay the Zakat (Charity), fast the month of Ramadan and perform the Hajj (Pilgrimage). The Holy Quran states that God created the human to be His trustee on Earth. Humanity's primary responsibility is to believe in and worship God. The Holy Quran states; "And I did not create the jinn and humankind except to worship Me" (HQ, 51:56-58); "…Who has created life and death so that He may try you which of you are best in deeds…" (HQ, 67:2)

Sikh theology [49] describes that the human soul is, itself, a part of God. However, human beings are, generally, unaware of the divine spark in themselves. According to Guru Nanak, the purpose of human life is to appreciate one's relationship with God and facilitate one's reunion with Him. By modelling one's life on God's perfection and living one's life following the Divine Will, one becomes capable of winning God's grace. Such a person is released from the cycles of births and deaths and is reunited with God. One can achieve this status by living one's life in an honest, humble, and pious way and meditating on God. Sri Guru Granth Sahib articulates, "This human body has been given to you. It is your chance to meet the Lord of the Universe. Nothing else will work. Join the Company of the Holy, and meditate on Him (God)". (Mehl 5, SGGS, p 12). Guru Arjan Dev proclaims, "I do not seek power, and I do not seek liberation. My mind is in love with Your Lotus Feet". (Mehl 5, SGGS, p 534). He asserts that "Twenty-four hours a day, sing the Glorious Praises of the Lord. It is the purpose of human life". (Mehl 5, SGGS, p 866); "Whatever happens, accept that as good. Shun your egotistical pride. Day and night, continually sing the Glorious Praises of the Lord. It is the whole purpose of human life". (Mehl 5, SGGS, p 895)

**Conclusion**

Although Sikhism and Islam are two distinct religions, yet they share several similarities. Both faiths believe in and propagate many similar attributes of God. Their views about God and His features are highly compatible. Their normative, social, and environmental ethics have strong concurrence. Both religions report several similar revelations about Creation. These commonalities in these two major religions of the world provide a solid foundation for the cultivation of good relations and establishing peaceful coexistence between their adherents precisely and the world in general.

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