

If an all-loving God exists, why would he cause so much suffering? According to Sikhism, suffering is created by the consequences of our own actions (Karma), and is the mechanism by which we get back to God-consciousness. The Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, the Sikh Holy Scripture says, *"Suffering is the medicine, and pleasure the disease, because where there is pleasure, there is no desire for God"*. If there is no God, it would suggest that there is no way out of our suffering, and that suffering has no meaning. However, for most people, the model of meaningless suffering is too pessimistic and unsatisfactory.

Who Created God?

The classic question is given a very simple answer in the Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, the Sikh Holy Scripture. In the first hymn called the 'Mool Mantra' by Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the first Sikh Master says, *"God is Self-Created and Self-Existent"*. This suggests that God does not require the support of anything other than God and has no origin. For human beings to comprehend this, is the equivalent of an ant trying to understand the complexity of the human civilisation. Infinity cannot be understood until you merge with infinity.

God Of The Gaps

Some suggest that God is a concept that will soon become obsolete because science can explain everything, so therefore God exists only in the gaps that science has. Some argue that the universe is infinite, which leaves little room for God, because if we have always existed then we no longer need a Creator to create us. This is not a logical theory because whether the universe is infinite or finite, and whether science can explain everything or not would still not cancel out the idea that God could have created an infinite universe, and designed the system of nature to regulate everything. Although some religions may have a problem with evolution or the scientific theory of creation, the Sikh way of life goes hand-in-hand with modern scientific thought.

Nature Created the Universe

Some suggest that the universe came about naturally. However, this is an absurd suggestion, since natural laws did not exist prior to the universe. Therefore, if the cause of the universe was not natural, a personal agent must have made a choice to bring about the universe, which is God.

Evolution of Imagination

Some evolutionary scientists say that as our foresight developed as human beings, we realised we were going to die and therefore, the fantasy part of the human brain developed as an evolutionary advantage. This made God as a concept, to help us cope with the inevitability of our death. However, this suggestion is absurd, because the very evolutionary scientists that suggest the theory appear to be at ease with dying, and yet they are Atheists who do not believe in God. This suggests that God cannot be the result of evolution or fantasy, otherwise everyone would have no choice but to believe in God in order to survive. However, it is obvious we have the choice to believe in God or not, since not everyone is a Theist.

Alternative Explanations

Some philosophers suggest that most theories point to a Creator, but this does not necessarily have to be the God of Classical Theism who is all loving, all knowing and all powerful. There could be two Gods, or a team of Gods, or we may be the result of a junior God's experiment. However, in this instance we apply the rule of Occam's Razor which states 'all things being equal, the simplest explanation is usually the right one'. The simplest explanation is there is One God.

CONCLUSION

From a philosophical, scientific and objective point of view, the evidence for God appears to be more convincing than the evidence against God, which are not so concrete. The God of Classical Theism, who is all-powerful, all-loving and all-knowing, therefore appears to be the simplest explanation for the Creation of the universe.

Evidence of God

INTRODUCTION TO EVIDENCE OF GOD

One of the most divisive questions of all time has been, 'Does God exist?'. There is a lot of evidence both for and against the existence of an all-powerful, all-loving and all-knowing Creator. Since nothing can be proved, in order to help answer the question of whether God exists, a cumulative case must be constructed to help show that the simplest answer is that God must exist amongst the other possibilities. People who do not believe in God have questioned that, 'I do not believe in anything I can't see', 'If God exists, then who created God?' and also 'If God exists, how could an all-loving God allow God's creation to suffer?' Sikhism together with philosophy and logic has provided answers to these questions.

STANDPOINTS ON GOD

There are three main standpoints of where people stand in regards to a belief in God:

- Theist – Believers in God
- Agnostic – People who neither deny nor acknowledge God's existence
- Atheist – Do not believe in God

ARGUMENTS FOR GOD'S EXISTENCE

Emotions Cannot Be Proven

Some people say they do not wish to believe in anything until it is scientifically proven. If this is the case, then we must also apply the same rule for human emotions such as love, happiness or sadness, as these can not be proven scientifically. However, a 'portfolio-of-proof' can be built for the existence of human emotions by observing the physiological changes in a human being such as a smile, laughter, crying, a change in heart beat rate, change in body temperature and changes in brain activity. So the physiological changes in a human could be used to build a case for the existence of human emotions. A similar reasoning can be used for the existence of God, with the physical creation of the universe being like physical emotion, and God being the unseen and immeasurable aspect of human emotion.

Perfect Order of the Universe

Imagine that a standard deck of playing cards are shuffled at random. Now would you ever expect the playing cards to come out in the perfect order Ace to ten, Jack, Queen and King for all the four suites? It would be highly unusual. Also, if the cards did happen to come out in that perfect order, then it would be reasonable

to think that someone, like a magician, has purposely arranged the deck in that order.

Amazingly, this is exactly what happened with the universe, it came out ordered perfectly. Now there are only two possibilities with the creation of our universe either:

1. The universe came into existence through random events, or
2. The universe was chosen to be created by a Creator

If the universe came into being through random events, we would expect it to be random. Instead, the universe as we observe it, is perfectly ordered. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that a magician, which is God, chose the universe to come into existence.

A Perfectly Designed Universe

St. Thomas Aquinas formulated five Ways which provide evidence for God through observation of design: *First Way* - The Argument From Motion: The universe is constantly changing, but this means there also must be an Unmoved Mover who set the first motion, which is God. For example, a forest has the potentiality to burn, but it cannot burn until it is actualised by a spark. *Second Way* - Causation Of Existence: Nothing creates itself, everything has a previous cause to have been created, which means there must be an Uncaused First Cause who began the chain of existence for all things, which is God. For example, there is an arrow that is seen in flight. It is reasonable to assume that the arrow must have been fired by someone or something for it to be in flight.

Third Way - Contingent and Necessary Objects: A contingent being is an object that can not exist without a necessary being causing its existence. Aquinas believed that the existence of contingent beings would ultimately necessitate a being which must exist for all of the contingent beings to exist, which is God. Necessary beings have no cause other than themselves.

Fourth Way - The Argument From Degrees And Perfection: This Way analyses the quality of things. For example, someone may say that of two marble sculptures one is more beautiful than the other. So for these two objects, one has a greater degree of beauty than the next. referred to as degrees or gradation of a quality. From this fact Aquinas concluded that for any given quality like goodness, beauty and knowledge, there must be a perfect standard by which all such qualities are measured, which is God.

Fifth Way - The Argument From Intelligent Design: This Way analyses the universe and the order of nature.

Common sense tells us that the universe works with perfect physical laws, and a harmony of nature and life which requires an intelligent designer, which is God.

Science Leaves Space for God

The Big Bang theory is held by most of the modern scientific community as the theory of creation of our universe. Scientists agree that a quantum singularity existed which contained the four forces of gravity, electromagnetism, strong and weak nuclear forces. However, science does not answer the question of where the quantum singularity arose from, which leaves space for God. Therefore, science does not refute God's existence.

Near Death Experiences (NDEs)

NDEs, as researched by Raymond A. Moody, include people terminally ill, old and close to death, and also those who have died clinically and then been revived. Some of the patients have had experiences which provide evidence of an afterlife and the existence of God. Many of the subjects of NDE experiences have been observed as being clinically dead, which is defined as being the absence of heart activity and breathing activity. Classic NDE experiences include an Out of Body Experience (OBE) where the subject sees their own physical body, before coming across a tunnel with light at the end of it and a feeling of being in the presence of a Deity or God. Also, a feeling of unconditional love, ecstasy and total peace. Eventually, the subject comes to a point of no return or a barrier and must return to their body, which they do unwillingly. NDE subjects tend to have a lack of fear about death, because to them they seem sure there is something beyond the physical world. Many subjects of NDEs have had complete life changes, which is evidence enough to suggest that something major is occurring during the NDE.

The Ability of Appreciation

You see a beautiful tree, which makes you think 'wow' or you see the sunrise in the morning, which makes you think 'wonderful'. What purpose does the ability to appreciate serve? Appreciation does not have any physical, mental or evolutionary advantage, it is simply an in built functionality with seemingly no purpose. Many philosophers argue, that the existence of appreciation shows that it is in our very basic instinct of nature to praise God's creation, because God is our Creator.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST GOD'S EXISTENCE

Suffering Is Proof of No God