

ture or religion. To support this, the Sikh scripture says:

*"Amongst all is the Light-You are that Light."* (Guru Granth Sahib, p.13)

*"One who sees that Light within each and every heart understands the Essence of the Guru's Teachings."* (Guru Granth Sahib, p.20)

So we should not think of ourselves as Jew, Christian, Muslim, Palestinian, American, etc. But rather as a single humanity dwelling upon one world, calling upon the same universal God of all.

### GOD AS THE BUILDER OF DIVERSITY

God in Sikhism is considered the builder of the different spiritualities of the world even though they may teach contradictory teachings as in the case of the 6 Hindu schools of philosophy.

*"There are six schools of philosophy, six teachers, and six sets of teachings. But the Teacher of teachers is the One, who appears in so many forms."* (Guru Granth Sahib, p.12)

### UNITY THROUGH SCIENCE AND SPACE

As is evident from space, the Earth is but one home for people to work out their karma and achieve liberation.

From space, the human boundaries of nation and creed are not visible and to have this more holistic view of our place in the universe can be a good mechanism for propagating unity in diversity.

The Sikh scripture talks about the infinite nature of God's creation and the light of God which rests within everything.

*"Nanak is attuned to the Love of the Lord, whose Light pervades the entire*

*Universe."* (Guru Granth Sahib, p.42)

*"So many Indras, so many moons and suns, so many worlds and lands."* (Guru Granth Sahib, p.7)

*"Many millions are the moons, suns and stars. Many millions are the demi-gods, demons and Indras, under their regal canopies. He has strung the entire creation upon His thread."* (Guru Granth Sahib, p.275)

### MULTI-FAITH SERVICES

Guru Nanak Dev Ji was revolutionary in starting multi faith services which encouraged people from different backgrounds to e.g. make and eat food together, a concept known as Langar.

So team work based multi-faith services are an excellent method of creating unity among different communities.

### UNITY OF GOD

God is known by many different names in different religious traditions. However, they all refer to the same eternal being.

*"The Muslim God Allah and the Hindu God Paarbrahm are one and the same."* (Guru Granth Sahib, p.897)

### CONCLUSION

All the major world religions must grow to understand that humanity has become our unifying religion and we must all learn to accept each other's differences and to celebrate those differences, and then to find our similarities and use that to build bridges between each other—it is only then there can be peace on Earth.

# Major World Religions

## INTRODUCTION TO MAJOR WORLD RELIGIONS

Devotees of the most of the major world religions have tended to see themselves as having the one and only true religion, which is superior to all other religions. Some religions feel that they alone can offer a path to God (Spirit, the One, the Supreme). This kind of attitude makes many people feel that religion is outdated and not something they can relate to.

In most countries of the world we can find many new sects, and they are growing in their diversity every year. Also, the languages that people speak are becoming more diverse. So our current time requires a change of attitude that is open and accepting to this kind of diversity.

Sikhism is a spiritual lifestyle which teaches that people from all spiritual traditions can achieve Moksha or liberation so long as they practice humility and compassion in their lives. Sikhism was born in an environment which consisted of many diverse spiritualities including Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism and Christianity.

Sikhism provides a number of tools to help people in understanding and accepting the message of unity in diversity, which in turn will help humanity to raise its collective level of consciousness to understand that we are just human beings and that humanity is our only common religion.

## METAPHORS TO UNDERSTAND UNITY OF RELIGION

### The Ocean of God

God can be regarded as an Ocean and all the many different streams and rivers can be regarded as the spiritual traditions which eventually lead us back to the ocean of peace and tranquillity.

So we can look at the different spiritual traditions of the world as rivers leading back to the same source.

*"The True Guru is the Deep and Profound Ocean of Peace, the Destroyer of sin."* (Guru Granth Sahib, p.50)

*"The Guru is the ocean, and all His Teachings are the river. Bathing within it, glorious greatness is obtained."* (Guru Granth Sahib, p.150)

### The Tree of Religion

Nature is frequently used in Sikhism as a teacher of many noble truths. So in this next example we can consider the light of God as an eternal tree and the many different birds in the tree as the different races, religions and cultures which all share the same eternal home.

*"You are the Great Primal Lord, the infinite tree of life; I am a bird perched on Your branches."* (Guru Granth Sahib, p.505)

Another version of the above is to consider the tree trunk as the light of God and this light feeds each of the branches which represent the different religions and spiritualities in the world.

### The Garden of Diversity

A garden is a wonderful example of a place which looks beautiful due to the diversity of the different plants and trees which have been grown by a gardener.

The Sikh scripture also uses the analogy of God as a gardener who plants and cares for all the diverse plants and flowers. This is a wonderful analogy for unity in diversity.

*"This world is a garden, and my Lord God is the*

*Gardener."* (Guru Granth Sahib, p.118)

*"There is only one gardener who tends it. He takes care of every leaf and branch. ||2|| He brings all sorts of plants and plants them there. They all bear fruit - none is without fruit. ||3||"* (Guru Granth Sahib, p.385)

*"He Himself is the vast variety of Nature, and He Himself makes it bear fruit. He Himself is the Gardener, He Himself irrigates all the plants, and He Himself puts them in His mouth. He Himself is the Creator, and He Himself is the Enjoyer; He Himself gives, and causes others to give."* (Guru Granth Sahib, p.554)

### The Prism of Unity

Prisms are a great example of how one becomes many with white light splitting into a diverse array of colours. This is another positive way in understanding the diversity of the world's different racial, cultural and religious thoughts and their origin.

## RELIGIOUS IDENTITY

Science is showing that humanity is genetically a very closely related family. Mitochondrial DNA analysis from populations worldwide point to a common ancestor who lived 150 thousand years ago. Racial differences, such as the degree of skin pigmentation, all happened as mankind spread across the globe. As different environments were encountered adaptations over many thousands of years resulted in the variations of hue, height, hair, habits etc. that we see today.

When Guru Nanak Dev Ji started his mission of enlightenment his first message was *"There is no Hindu and there is no Muslim"*

The message of the master was for all human beings to consider themselves as one and to not divide each other based on race, caste, cul-