

The Concept of Soul in Guru Granth Sahib

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THE HIGHEST CONCEPTION OF Indian religious tradition is that of One Reality (*ekam sat*) which pervades in all the variety of existence: the philosophical analysis of the nature of the Self which we call the *atman*.

The etymology of this word is obscure. In the Rag Veda (x-16.3) it means breath or the vital essence. Later on it acquired the name SOUL or SELF. In the *Upanishads*, the dialogue between the teacher and pupil, we can see the definition of **self** in four stages:

(1) The physical self, (2) The empirical self, (3) The transcendental self, and (4) The Absolute Self.

This definition neither gives the psychological nor metaphysical perspective.

Nature of Self: The soul is free from sin, from old age, from death and grief, from hunger and thirst. It desires nothing, but what it desires we must try to understand. It is the subject which persists throughout the changes of:

(1) The waking state, (2) The dream state, (3) The sleeping state, (4) The terminal (death state), (5) The rebirth, and finally: (6) Deliverance.

Death does not touch the soul, nor vice dissolves it. Permanence, continuity, unity and eternal activity are the main characteristics of the soul. It is a microcosm in a macrocosm. It is complete in itself:

ਆਤਮਾ ਪਰਾਤਮਾ ਏਕੋ ਕਰੈ ॥ ਅੰਤਰ ਕੀ ਦੁਬਿਧਾ ਅੰਤਰਿ [SGGS: 661]

hir hir jn duie eyk hY]

It is the person that sees, not the object seen. It is not a bundle of qualities. It is a subject not the object. It needed the body which is born, grows up and decays and dies. Self is not the body. The body is a victim of suffering and imperfections. It is a material phenomenon of five elements. The body is the instrument of the soul. The empirical self is growing, changing and subject to the accidents of experience. Empirical self is not eternal.

In the wakefulness the self is conscious of the common world of external objects and it enjoys the gross things. Here the dependence on the body is predominant. In dreaming state the self enjoys subtle things, with its waking experience, fashions for itself a new world of forms with the materials. The spirit roams freely unfettered by the bonds of body. The self in the third sound sleep state has neither dreams nor desires. This state is also named *susupti*. The soul temporarily becomes one with the universal soul (Brahman) and enjoys bliss. In the deep sleep it is lifted above all desires and freed from the vexations of spirit. All oppositions lost in the pure objectless knowing state. Duality ends. The soul tastes absolute bliss totally cut off from the distracting world.

The Soul and God in essence is the same. But the difference is like ocean and its waves, sun and its rays, fire and its sparks. Gurbani says:

Soul being the part and parcel of Brahman
is itself Brahman. When ignorance vanishes
When the egg of illusion bursts forth soul
Brahman is merged in Brahman
none can separate.

The soul is divine in origin though clogged with the flesh. In sleep state it is said to be released from the shackles of the body.

The natural divinity which is the real nature of the soul reasserts itself when free from the tyranny of the flesh, all outer activities are then suppressed. But this is not the highest state. These three states though not non-existent yet the analysis proves and that these are unreal.

The fourth state is pure intuitional consciousness. There is no knowledge of objects. The Turiya state brings out the positive aspect. There is neither objective nor subjective consciousness. It is unseen, transcendent unthinkable, inapprehensible, indescribable, the soul-essence of the consciousness, complete of world ever peaceful, all blissful, the one unit. This indeed is Atman.

Brahman and soul (*jiva*):

Jiva is finite self where as Brahman is infinite. Brahman is Supreme Purusha (the creator of prakirti) and is not under its influence. Brahman and jiva are like the two birds sitting on the same tree one of them eats sweet fruit while the second looks on without eating.

There is no essential difference between Creator and his creatures in terms of reality. He is the only reality Guru Arjun explained the relation of *Brahman* and *jiva*:

He (Brahman) does not die I (jiva) have no fear.
He does not perish, I have no worry.
He is not poor, I am not hungry.
He is without sorrow, I am without grief.
He has no ties, I am not bound.
He does not toil, I do not sweat.
He is not impure, I am not tainted.
He is blissful, I am always ecstatic
He has no worry, I have no anxiety
He is influenced, I am without any effect
He is not hungry, I am not thirsty
When He is Pure, then I am deemed holy,
on meeting the Guru the illusion has been removed
He and I have become one
imbued with the same hue.

As already expressed that Atman is a portion of the Divine. Reality this itself partakes of the character of the Divine and seek to merge with its source.

ਅਚਰਜ ਕਥਾ ਮਹਾ ਅਨੂਪ ॥ ਪ੍ਰਾਤਮਾ ਪਾਰਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਕਾ ਰੂਪੁ ॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥ ਨਾ ਇਹੁ ਬੁਢਾ ਨਾ ਇਹੁ ਬਾਲਾ ॥
ਨਾ ਇਸੁ ਦੁਖੁ ਨਹੀ ਜਮ ਜਾਲਾ ॥ ਨਾ ਇਹੁ ਬਿਨਸੈ ਨਾ ਇਹੁ ਜਾਇ ॥ ਆਦਿ ਜੁਗਾਦੀ ਰਹਿਆ ਸਮਾਇ

॥੧॥ ਨਾ ਇਸੁ ਉਸਨੁ ਨਹੀ ਇਸੁ ਸੀਤੁ ॥ ਨਾ ਇਸੁ ਦੁਸਮਨੁ ਨਾ ਇਸੁ ਮੀਤੁ ॥ ਨਾ ਇਸੁ ਹਰਖੁ ਨਹੀ ਇਸੁ
ਸੋਗੁ ॥ ਸਭੁ ਕਿਛੁ ਇਸ ਕਾ ਇਹੁ ਕਰਨੈ ਜੋਗੁ ॥੨॥ [SGGS: 868]

There is a wonderful unique discourse.
The self is the image of the Supreme Being
It is neither old nor a child
It is not shattered nor dies
It feels not heat or cold
Neither friend nor foe it has
It feels not joy or sorrow
It neither has father nor mother
In each being ever lying awake

More characteristics of soul are given below -

ਨਾ ਇਹੁ ਮਾਨਸੁ ਨਾ ਇਹੁ ਦੇਉ ॥ ਨਾ ਇਹੁ ਜਤੀ ਕਹਾਵੈ ਸੇਉ ॥ ਨਾ ਇਹੁ ਜੋਗੀ ਨਾ ਅਵਧੂਤਾ ॥ ਨਾ ਇਸੁ
ਮਾਇ ਨ ਕਾਹੂ ਪੂਤਾ ॥੧॥ ਇਆ ਮੰਦਰ ਮਹਿ ਕੋਨ ਬਸਾਈ ॥ ਤਾ ਕਾ ਅੰਤੁ ਨ ਕੋਊ ਪਾਈ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥
ਨਾ ਇਹੁ ਗਿਰਗੀ ਨਾ ਓਦਾਸੀ ॥ ਨਾ ਇਹੁ ਰਾਜ ਨ ਭੀਖ ਮੰਗਾਸੀ ॥ ਨਾ ਇਸੁ ਪਿੰਡੁ ਨ ਰਕਤੁ ਰਾਤੀ ॥ ਨਾ
ਇਹੁ ਬ੍ਰਹਮਨੁ ਨਾ ਇਹੁ ਖਾਤੀ ॥੨॥ ਨਾ ਇਹੁ ਤਪਾ ਕਹਾਵੈ ਸੇਖੁ ॥ ਨਾ ਇਹੁ ਜੀਵੈ ਨ ਮਰਤਾ ਦੇਖੁ ॥ ਇਸੁ
ਮਰਤੇ ਕਉ ਜੇ ਕੋਊ ਰੋਵੈ ॥ ਜੋ ਰੋਵੈ ਸੋਈ ਪਤਿ ਖੋਵੈ ॥੩॥ [SGGS: 871]

Neither it is a human being nor god
Neither a ascetic, nor a shaivite, nor a yogi
Neither it has mother nor it has a son
Who lives in this body (temple)
No body knows its specifications
Neither a house holder nor an udasi
Neither a king nor a beggar
Neither it has body nor blood
Neither a Brahman nor a Kshatriya...
If any one weeps on its seeming death
He loses the grace of his personality.

Relation of Soul and Body:

The individual soul *jiv-atma* distinguishes from *paramatma*. Individual soul is identified with body and the victim of hunger and thirst, pain and pleasure, good and evil, under the effect of *maya*. It is limited in power and wisdom. It is entangled in *samsara* and seeks deliverance from this circle.

Religious theologians speak of two souls, as it were, dwelling side by side in a man. The real soul and the apparent soul. The contrast is made vivid in the following:

Two birds inseparable friends, cling to the same tree. One of them eats the sweet fruit the other looks on without eating

Atma does not lose its reality, even in the slightest degree, while *jiva* compelled by the good and bad fruits of deeds enters on a birth and death, follows upwards and down wards,

roams about overcome by the opposites, becomes bewildered - does not see the Creator abiding with in himself, under the waves of three Gunas his imagination darkened, fickle, crippled, full of desires, prey of defusion, he fancies. 'This is I, this is mine.' Gurbani interpret this idea as under:

Without the soul, the body is absolutely valueless, a mere corpse. The body is the resting place of the *prana*, the senses and the mind. It is the abode of Brahman. The soul is the controller of all, the Lord of all, the ruler to all. Body is considered the wife of *purusha* (soul) body requests the soul (household) to remain with her for ever, but the Purusha works under the will of God, as under:

ਉਨ ਕੈ ਸੰਗਿ ਤੂ ਕਰਤੀ ਕੇਲ ॥ ਉਨ ਕੈ ਸੰਗਿ ਹਮ ਤੁਮ ਸੰਗਿ ਮੇਲ ॥ ਉਨੁ ਕੈ ਸੰਗਿ ਤੁਮ ਸਭੁ ਕੋਊ ਲੋਰੈ
॥ ਓਸੁ ਬਿਨਾ ਕੋਊ ਮੁਖੁ ਨਹੀ ਜੋਰੈ ॥੧॥ ਤੇ ਬੈਰਾਗੀ ਕਹਾ ਸਮਾਏ ॥ ਤਿਸੁ ਬਿਨੁ ਤੁਹੀ ਦੁਹੇਰੀ ਰੀ ॥੧॥
ਰਹਾਉ [SGGS: 390]

In his company thou hast an individuality in all respects
without him thou art clay!
He is a *vairagi*, who lives for ever
and acts under the will of God
God brings both together and separate them
he knows his nature himself. (SGGS: 390)

The nature of the soul is clear. The soul like God is influenced by material aspect and does not love any particular form of body. From the root of word 'Atman' is is also clear the jot (roaming from one body to another, never stays at one place. But the significance of body is due to the presence of the soul.

qU vsdl qw vsq srlrw]

The wife (body) request (soul-husband), with folded hands, do not go away, my Lord live in my house. Do such a business within the house that the hunger and thirst may vanish. The Lord says, "I am under His (God's) will who is great and favours none. I shall live with you according to His will. Whenever He calls, I shall go away.
(SGGS: 1072-73).

God infused light of the soul into the human body then it takes birth. God formed the body out of five elements and put light (i.e. energy and life) into it. There are two constituents of the human being, one is subtle and the other is gross:

rkq Aqy bUMd

ਪੰਚ ਤਤੁ ਮਿਲਿ ਇਹੁ ਤਨੁ ਕੀਆ ॥ [SGGS: 1039]

There are five "elements" (or *kosh*) viz:

1. Annamaya kosh, sustained by body,
2. Pranmaya kosh, sustained by vital forces.
3. Mana maya kosh. It constitutes the functions of mind.
4. Vijnamaya kosh - depends upon the functions of intellect.
5. Anandmaya kosh, the essence of the soul.

Unless we transcend the above four *koshas*, the blissful or 'Andndmaya' state cannot be realized. The Self has to rise above waking, dream and deep sleep. The soul is the support

and the essence of life. It is life itself. It is inherently active. It is the resident of the body temple. We should keep it pure by thought, word and deed.

