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According to New Catholic Encyclopaedia, Theology is "Discourses about God either from the point of view of what can be known about Him from the created world by the natural power of reason or from the point of view of a revelation given by God and received by man in faith."¹

It is the methodological elaboration of the truths of the divine revelation through reason enlightened by faith. According to Christian theology, in revelation God speaks to man, personally inviting him to share His own divine life to protect humanity from sin and destruction. He enables His people to hear His revealing word, whom we call as prophets or seers. Further these enlightened souls transfer this revelation to the masses in the contemporary languages. Thus, scripture of every religious tradition remains the source of theology of that particular tradition. So theology serves the purpose of Hermeneutics of the scripture and it is pre-requisite of the theology that it must be a reinterpretation of the central symbols of a particular religious tradition for the contemporary world. Secondly, a new paradigm for theology must be so formulated that the interpretation of a tradition can no longer be grounded in older, classicist base, but must rely on new foundations that incorporate both past traditions and the present religious pluralism.
Thirdly a theologian must keep in mind emerging globalism and pluralistic world and be ready to answer the problems of upcoming societies on theological grounds because merely abstract, unambiguous or uncertain response would not satisfy the present scenario.\textsuperscript{2}

Theologian interprets the truth in the religious classics of a particular tradition for a new situation. Theology attempts to find out the answers to fundamental questions from some of religious dimension in the contemporary situation. Theologians are required to give solution by keeping in mind both the 'situation' and the 'tradition'.

A comparison can be made on the basis of theologies of different traditions which is termed as comparative theology and the proposed study is an effort to compare the theologies of two major religious traditions of Indian sub-continent i.e. Vedic tradition and Sikhism.

Ancient Indian lore is a vast ocean in which, it is held by many a scholar that all the concepts and doctrines under the sky are available and since then nothing new could be added in the socio-religious thought of the ancient thinkers. It is widely felt that Vedic thought and its off shoots Upanishads and Shastras are such a banyan tree of knowledge that all recent Indian religious ideologies and their respective literatures are nothing
but the branches and flowers of that old grand tree having nothing new in them.

However, while accepting the greatness of the medieval religious thought and literature one might feel surprised to think that if this was the factual position then why people could not join hands for fighting the socio-religious oppressions in the medieval period. Why ancient learning could not bind the people to push back the invaders and looters coming to India like a wave after wave. As follows, we will take up some of the relevant points here pertaining to this situation.

Vedas are considered to be the repository of the earliest philosophy of India. All the Upanishads and Shastras are extension of the Rig Vedic thought. Throughout Vedic works speculative philosophy about the absolute Brahman, higher and lower knowledge etc. are discussed but much emphasis is given upon cumbersome rituals of *yajnas* and sacrifices. *Brahmana* part of Vedas consists of elaborate system of sacrifices. Rituals and rites were made so rigorous that a single minor mistake in accent of the *mantra* throughout the process was enough to ruin the whole sacrificial activity. Hierarchy of gods and goddesses were set up and man in comparison to these so-called gods was deemed to be too weak to support his own existence. During *Brahmana* period, the scattered monistic ideas in the Rigveda were almost over looked.
The *Aranyaks* marked a shift from emphasis given on rituals to philosophic thought in the Vedas and remote places were suggested for meditation and cultivation of philosophical thinking which later on culminated in Upanishadic literature. Sacrifices got transferred to symbolic representation and now the sacrificial horse got transferred into mind and sun etc.

In the concluding portion of Upanishadic period the great Badarayan Vyas reconciled some contradictory passages in the Upanishads and his sutras are known as the Vedanta sutras or Brahm sutras comprising sum total of Upanishadic thought. However here also by and large, the disciples were chosen on class/caste basis relying upon one of the hymns in *Rigveda* where *brahmins* are created through the mouth of Purusha and so were at the apex of this creation and hence were only eligible people to get such higher knowledge.⁵

Now the knowledge about Brahman became centre of attraction and purpose of meditation. Various Upanishads including *Isha, Kena, Katha, Prashna, Mundak, Mandukya, Taittiriya, Aitareya, Chhandogya and Brahdaranyaka* etc. offered the vivid and detailed interpretations of doctrines of Vedic theology.

Shankaracharya is considered to be the most effective interpreter of Vedic thought. He not only denied duality between
Brahman and Atman but also rejected concept of Bhagati (devotion) and tried to prove that there is no need of Karma (action), as actions will produce samskars which will push jiva to take birth in the same world again and again. Advaitism (monism) of Shankara tends to prove Maya as the root cause of delusionary nature of this world and to get out of its dilemma Nivrtti Marga (asceticism) was prescribed by him. Only Sannyas and cultivation of knowledge was the aim of his philosophy. His commentary on the Gita also lays much emphasis on knowledge.

However, this was challenged by Bhagati reformers, whose chief exponent was Ramanuj who refuted the doctrines of Shankaracharya and established that devotion is the main aim of life.

Though the medieval period was a period of philosophical discussions about the Jiva, the nature of knowledge and Brahman, but most of the stalwarts of this period were strict adherents of varnashram dharma which further produced and deepened sectarian outlook of people and fragmentation of the society.

Simultaneously there were philosophies of Sankhya and Yoga which considered Prakriti as all powerful consisted of the three Gunas i.e. rajas, satva tamas, and declared Purusha almost incapable of doing anything while being in the clutches of prakriti. Renunciations of three gunas of Prakriti, and liberation of Purusha
from the clutches of *prakriti* were considered as the aims of human life. For this very purpose Patanjali’s *yoga sutra* catching hold of human psychology offered a down to earth line of yogic praxis known as *ashtang yoga* around which *mantra yoga, hathyoga* and *kundalini yoga* or *layayoga* also evolved dividing yogis into many sects and sub-sects. Now difficult yogic exercises were invented and remote places in jungles and caves were chosen. Twelve sects of yogis were operating in the medieval period in India. Such individualistic approach gave birth to irresponsible attitude towards society and the yogis though had emerged to fight the evils of caste hierarchy in India, themselves started thinking that they were more superior to all. However they were feared rather than respected.

Buddhism and Jainism belonging to Shramanic culture, were very potent critics of Vedic socio-religious patterns of life. Both revolted against brahmanical Vedic tradition of ritualism and the Supreme Reality. Buddhism considered life as suffering and offered the doctrine of four noble truths entailing the Ashtang Marga for shedding off all sufferings. Monks and Bhikshus, further got divided into Hinyanis and Mahayanis having different view points towards social life. Complete asceticism and extreme Ahimsa became the cause of the fall of Buddhism in India and Jainism also tended to relapse into ritualistic activities which were prevalent in the Vedic life and lore.
Historically seen this subcontinent was invaded at different times from all sides. In the end of fourteenth century before the advent of Sikhism, invaders had devastated India several times and just due to lack of sense of responsibility and togetherness, masses had become mere spectators and poor victims of destiny. To quote Dr. Jodh Singh,

"The story of Hindu butchery starts with the invasion of Sindh by Mohammad bin-Qasim (712 A.D.) who demolished the Hindu temples and put 6000 Hindus to sword at Rewar alone. According to Taj-Ud-Nassir, Qutab Din Aibak (1206-10) demolished 700 temples and replaced them by mosques at Meerut when he conquered that territory. At Banaras he destroyed nearly 1000 temples and raised mosques on their foundations. At Kaityar he put 1,32,000 Hindus to sword and sent 50,000 as captives to Ghajani."

However, no such arrangement was ever done in India to unite the people together and face temporal oppressions with moral as well as physically united force.

Guru Nanak travelled far and wide, saw this malady minutely and conceived the idea of a society in which people could come close to each other. He created many useful and altogether new socio-religious institutions like Sangat, Pangat, Seva and the ethical doctrines of the dignity of labour (kirat karna), sharing with others (vand chhakna) and remembrance of God (nam japna), to concretise the idea of equality among the so-called high strata people and low
castes. Says Guru Nanak - *Ghal khai kichha hathahu dei. Nanak rahu pachhanahi sei.* These institutions became pillars of Guru Nanak’s new theology and successor Gurus used them to create such a *halemi raj* (kingdom of gentleness) where every one made efforts together by combining both physical as well as spiritual energies for common purposes - *huni hukamu hoa miharvanu da. pai koi na kisai rajnanda. sabh sukhali vuthia ihu hoa halemi raju jiu.*

Eighteenth Century Misal period is the best example of these efforts of togetherness, where the new theology of Guru Nanak responded to the 'situation' according to the 'tradition' taught to the Sikhs. Sikhs during this period took guidance from their scripture and a new innovative theology emerged where the doctrines of Equality, Unity, Brotherhood, Justice took new shapes. Such were the reasons for which the shrinking boundaries of India could again be stretched up to Afghanistan during this time and especially during the reign of Sarkar-i-Khalsa of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

The Gurus lived at a time and in a society where life and liberty of masses was not safe and a multi-dimensional struggle for new society was needed. All the Gurus had shown themselves as model by living the practical life what they had taught to their followers. Guru Angad and Guru Ram Das put forth the power of service and devotion; Guru Arjan Dev and Guru Tegh Bahadur had set the example of how to die with dignity for a principle.
Guru Hargobind and Guru Gobind Singh asked this new emerging society to adopt weapons but to use them only if absolutely necessary for justice and righteous cause.

Every Guru extended and strengthened the theology of Guru Nanak. They created leaders and brave soldiers out of almost dead and powerless population of India. Their doors were open for all those who revolted against in-equality of caste system, female infanticide, practice of Suttee, untouchability etc. The creation and compilation of Sri Guru Granth Sahib was also a wondrous task accomplished by Guru Arjan Dev wherein to make people realise the oneness of all human beings irrespective of caste colour or creed, the Guru collected the voices of truth of Kabir, (a weaver) Ramanand (brahmin), Ravidas (a leather worker) and Namdev (a calico printer) et al. The followers were taught to develop maturity, judgement to realise the dignity of man and further the Gurus added temporal concerns to spiritual development so that the life of man could be a balanced life. The ultimate measure of one's divinity lies in one's humanitarian outlook and not in mere philosophisation of theology.

This work is an attempt to study the theologies of Indian traditions while being detached from personal convictions and is further done from the stand point of theological and philosophical value-judgement.
The study is divided into five chapters. In the first Chapter Introduction Vedic thought and other paradigm around are given, the second Chapter deals with the New Innovative Theology of Guru Nanak, its nature and formulations. In the third Chapter we have analysed the social expression of theology of Guru Nanak through practical implementation in the form of various Institutions. The fourth Chapter shows the effect of the practical implementation of New Theology of Guru Nanak.

Concluding this work through fifth Chapter we have tried to show that there is a marked distinction between the ancient religious thought and down to earth Innovative Theology of the Gurus expressed through the practical ideology of Sikhism.
References

4. Ibid., p.18.
5. Rigveda, X 90.
9. Ibid., p.5.
11. Ibid., p.74.

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