CHAPTER IV

LIFE IN THE UNIVERSE
There is no general consensus among the scientists about the existence of life in the universe. Conflicting views have been put forward by them in this respect. A group of scientists believe that life is scattered throughout the universe; whereas others oppose this idea on the ground that there is no clear-cut evidence of existence of life anywhere else in the universe except our own earth. Even our solar system has been a matter of dispute. The issue whether life exists on other planets besides our own earth or not, has not been finally resolved. Views of some of the scientists who support or oppose the idea of existence of life throughout the universe are given below:

"In 1938, the Spanish astronomer E. Holmberg's investigations showed that there are many stars which like our own sun are surrounded by circulating planets. It seems, therefore, that our solar system is not unique. There can be no doubt that planets revolve around other stars too, and very many of these are comparable with our earth. There is, therefore, nothing
to hinder us from supposing that life exists on some of them, may be even on many of them.

Frenchman de Montlivault, H. Richter, Lord Kelvin in Britain, M. Nagner were also of the view that there are many worlds of life besides our own."

The scientists are generally of the view that life cannot exist on any other planet except the earth in our solar system. Mercury is so close to the sun that temperature on its sunlit side is estimated to reach nearly 500° C. Venus, though about twice as far from the sun as Mercury, probably has surface temperature of nearly 100° C. Liquids boil on these planets. Therefore, they are not considered suitable for any kind of life.

Of the planets farther than earth from the sun, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune and Pluto are all too cold that liquids freeze hard on these planets and their atmosphere contains poisonous gases such as hydrogen, helium, methane and ammonia. Therefore, these planets are too unsuitable for any kind of life.

It is believed that there is some form of life on Mars but this is yet to be decided finally.

1. The Origin of Life on Earth: p. 52
2. ibid: p. 54
The earth is the only member of our sun's family known to have living creatures on it. Alone among the planets in the solar system though not perhaps among those belonging to the millions of sun-like stars in the universe, the earth's composition and distance from the sun seem to have provided exactly the right conditions in which evolution of an advanced form of life could develop.

In view of the facts stated above, it may be inferred that the problem of existing of life in the universe except our own planet earth, still remains unsolved.
According to the Vedas/Upanishads, the earth is the only place in the universe where life exists. Earth is one of the two equal parts of the universe. The other part is 'the heaven' which is the abode of sun, moon, and stars. Life originated only on the earth. Before the origin of life, the earth was totally unfit for plant or animal life and was void of life. It was barren or bald:

"Earth was without hair (life) or bald." (1)

"And verily the earth was then barren and without hair (life)." (2)

Gradually, the earth became suitable for life. As to how and when the earth became suitable for life, the Vedas and Upanishads do not give any answer. It is perhaps beyond the mind's conception. A few only Vedic verses in support of existence of life on earth are given below:

"The Absolute Lord has created the earth for men." (3)

1. Aittireya Br. : 24/23 & Taittireya Sam. : 2/1/2
2. Kathak Sam. : 12/13
3. R. V. : 2.20.7 & 1.164.10
"It is the earth that nourisheth all life." (1)

Vedic seers treated earth as the mother and the heaven as the father. It is only the mother which gives birth to the living things. Hence, it is the earth on which life exists.

The above vedic facts fully affirm the idea that 'life exists only on the earth in the universe'.

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1. R. V. 2. 17. 5
2. R. V. 6. 51. 5
The Bible says that 'the heaven of heaven's is the Lord's but the earth had been given to the children of men'. It also states that the God created sea creatures, all plant life, birds and animals on earth for the benefit of man. This shows that all kinds of life exists only on earth. It may also be stated that there is no evidence available in the Bible about the existence of physical life anywhere else in the universe besides our own earth.

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1. Psalms: B. IV—115-116
According to Quran animal and plant life exists only on earth. The earth is the habitable place for men. For the benefit of man Allah has created all kinds of cattle and plants on earth.

A few verses of Quran in support of above ideas are given below:

"For you (men) there is in the earth a place of abode and provision for a time." (1)

"He has created horses, mules and donkeys that you may ride them." (2)

"Allah has made for you skins of the cattle, habitations which are easy for you to transport and easy to set up and He provides for you from them wool and furs, house-hold goods and articles for use over a period. Allah has made for you, of that which He has created, trees and other means of shade." (3)

"We produced for you thereby (on earth) gardens of date-palms and vineyards in which these are for you abundant fruits and of them you eat." (4)

Thus the above verses of Quran show that Allah has created every kind of living species only on the earth in the universe.

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1. The Quran : 2.37-39
2. ibid : 16.6
3. ibid : 16.81-82
4. ibid : 20.20-23
In contrast to the Vedic / Upanishadic, Biblical and Quranic view, Nanak Bani states that besides our own earth, life is scattered throughout the cosmos. According to Nanak Bani, there are countless worlds in the cosmos like our own. In our world, God has created earth as a place of meditation for its inhabitants. It is like a mother and in its lap, play of birth and death is going on. It is inhabited by all kinds of plant, bird and animal life. Nanak Bani says that similar is the position of other worlds in the cosmos where life exists. A few verses of Nanak Bani confirming the idea that life not only exists in our own world (earth) but it also exists in other worlds in the cosmos, are given below:

Existence of life on earth

1. In the midst of these (air, water, fire and nether lands) He (God) has established the earth as a home for meditation. Therein He placed beings of various types and colours. " (1)

2. To die and to live God has given us the earth." (2)

3. It is for the pious persons that the true Lord has created the earth. Therein He has set going the play of birth and death." (3)

2. ibid : p. 877
3. ibid : p. 941
Existence of life throughout the universe.

"The earth and the sky, He has made places for habitation." (1)

"As many as are the creatures and living beings in the ocean, land, underworld and sky or wheresoever they are, amongst them all thou O Lord art contained." (2)

"All the worlds (ours is one of them) all the continents and all the beings of the universe (cosmos), all of them, the Lord derives according to His will and His pen flows as are our deeds." (3)

"Thou alone art the true Lord of mine and other beings of numberless worlds." (4)

"There are beings in water, on land, in the world, in the universes and in the germs within the forms." (5)

The above verses of Nanak Bani clearly states that the life not only exists on earth but also exists throughout the cosmos.

1. G.G.S. : p. 839
2. ibid : p.1127
3. ibid : p.1241
4. ibid : p. 15
5. ibid : p. 466
The hypothesis put forward by some scientists that 'life is scattered throughout the universe' is neither based on laboratory tests nor on observational data. In fact, this problem is beyond the scope of laboratory tests unless some material from the outer space i.e. beyond our galaxy is brought here for tests. Under the present circumstances, it is not possible because of our voyage limitations in the space. Alternatively, this problem could be solved by observers in an observatory. However, the range of modern scientific observational instruments is so limited that nothing could be observed as to what lies beyond the Milky Way - our universe. The idea about existence or non-existence of a thing beyond the Milky Way could, therefore, be purely speculative. The basis of above mentioned hypothesis seems to be that 'as life exists in our world on earth, likewise it may exist in other worlds', can in no way be considered as scientific. That is why most of the scientists oppose this hypothesis due to lack of scientific evidence. In view of this, one must agree with the idea that 'scientific research has not been able to trace out any sign of life in
any place in the universe besides our own earth. However, it may be stated that signals received recently from some binary stars of other galaxies are believed to indicate the existence of life in other galaxies. But it will take time to arrive at a final conclusion.

So far as source of Nanak Bani about the existence of life throughout the cosmos is concerned, Guru Nanak has said in his Bani that:

"By truly believing in God's name, the knowledge of all spheres (in the universe) is acquired." (1)

"Imbued with the Name, the mortal gains the knowledge of the three worlds." (2)

He has also stated that even the true Lord can be seen through the Name as:

"The Lord has no form and colour and who is free from darkness and wordliness is recognised and seen through the Name, O Nanak." (3)

Guru Nanak was the blessed one who had met the true Lord:

"Meeting with the True Guru, I have obtained the Immaculate Lord and so shall not, again go round this dreadful world ocean." (4)

1. G.G.S. : p. 3
2. ibid : p. 941
3. ibid : p. 944
4. ibid : p. 1255
The above verses of Nanak Bani clearly show that Guru Nanak had not only the knowledge of the entire cosmos but he had also met the True Lord. Imbued with the Name of the true Lord, his soul could travel throughout the universe and observe all the things in its every nook and corner. Thus the assertion of Guru Nanak that 'besides our earth, life is scattered throughout the universe' is based on his soul's practical experience and is not merely speculative like that of the scientists supporting this hypothesis. It may be submitted here that anybody can observe the things in the cosmos like Guru Nanak by reaching his spiritual status. Even otherwise, if we consider the hypothesis of some scientists about the existence of life throughout the universe as authentic, then it can also very well be concluded that Guru Nanak was the first who with his intuitive knowledge made a statement about the existence of life throughout the universe much earlier than such scientists.