

## The Explaining and Critical Look at Eckankar's Theology According to the Islamic Doctrines

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**Abstract:** This study tries to criticize theology of Eckankar School according to Islamic teaching especially from the shiite viewpoint. Paul Twitchell, one of current remarkable founders of Eckankar School, claims that the Eckankar's God, is Allah, the Muslim's God. This claim is evaluated in three branches with regarding Islamic and Shiite viewpoint: Sugmad's names, attributes and activities, Sugmad's recognition possibility, Sugmad's recognition and reaching methods. The results illustrate that, there is a long distance and huge difference between Eckankar's theology and Islamic Shiite theology. The study's method is descriptive explaining, along with critical view that has reintegrated in three parts.

**Key words:** Allah, Paul Twitchell, Eckankar, Eck, key Sugmad, Mahanta

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### INTRODUCTION

**Preface:** Recklessness, alienation, materialism and irreligion are some of the features of people in postmodern society. Humanism and relying on human instead of God in such society may not lead to fulfill actual and exalted needs of people.

Reluctance, tired of the situation, lack of identity, loneliness, depression and gap between social classes are some problems of modern societies.

The modernism dilemmas and the human need to spirituality and accomplishment, make human to return to his divine nature, also they provide conditions for the wide activity of movements, new centers and spiritually oriented people.

Accordingly, all over the world, there is an unexpected welcome to the divine religions specially the obvious religion of Islam. However, in this popular wave, there is an increasing welcome to some groups and schools who claim spirituality and based on the recent statistic, they are >4000 schools.

As Hamilton writes: about 1000 spiritually oriented groups are in the USA and >2000 ones are in the Europe and small percentage of them are the same. Actually, about 4000 spiritual and mystical sects and schools are made in the western world during the last 40 years.

The subject of these spiritual groups are various from the mystic of the Abrahamic oriented religions to drug use and free sexual relationship. In fact, everything that

passes the framework of modern society and turning away from the materialistic and imperialistic civilization norms, are called spirituality.

Although, most of the activities of spiritually oriented groups seem to be responsible to the lack of spirituality of the current man. They are not a cure for the the ailment and distress of the human because the one not compatible with the divine prophet's goals and the real and innate needs of man. They are as a neutralizing phenomenon and a sooth for depression, alienation and nihilism.

The last point is the reason of increasing publicity of some authors such as Paulo Coelho, Carlos Castaneda, Paul Twitchell and etc. These spiritually oriented schools were successful to attract a lot of people from different classes.

One of the famous spiritually oriented authors who claim man's salvation is Paul Twitchell, the founder of Eckankar School. As he grew up and taught "Rebazar Tarz" and "Fubbi quantz", the ancient Eckankar masters of Tibet for 25 years, at 1965 AD, was introduced as a first alive deserved master from the USA, Minnesota, Chaska City. His special assignment was to present secret training to current man.

He introduces the healing prescription to the spiritual vacuum of current man and claims all the divine religions are made by the preaches and missionary to reach the worldly goals. Also this school has wide activity in Iran specially among the youth at universities. Almost 60 books have been published about this new-fangled school in Iran.

This fact is a warning to the real accommodators of human. In this study, the author critiques theological beliefs of Eckankar School to inform the audiences about the reality of this school.

### **THEOLOGY OF ECKANKAR**

Undoubtedly, the most critical subject in the discourse is theology. So, believing in the exalted origin is the most ancient epitome of human. This belief is mentioned in many resources and books of various schools and sects.

Specially Eckankar school tries hard to discuss about Sugmad in its holy book and texts. In the Paul Twitchell's view: Sugmad is "Allah" in Islam.

In dictionary of Eckankar about "Allah" is written: "Allah all"-lah Called the Merciful God of Islam; the Mahanta consciousness as the vehicle for the Sugmad as it was known to the Mohammedans (Eckankar dictionary, p.6).

Also he explains the Sugmad's names with details. These names are utilized to make tangible what are said about Sugmad.

Theology of Eckankar School is evaluated in three branches: Sugmad's names attributes and activities, the possibility of Sugmad's recognition, the ways of reach to Sugmad. These factors will be discussed and critiqued in the view of Islam to show the fault of Twitchell's viewpoint about "Allah".

**The names of Sugmad:** In Eckankar School the following names are mentioned for Sugmad: "Eckankar means the one oneness, the body of oneness, all or totality this is the secret name of God or the Sugmad which will be creeping into these talks between us as I go deeper into this philosophy. "Nirankar means without body or form. Advaita, Soami or Swami means the all-pervading Lord. "Akal means timeless. Nirala, peerless, having none like him; Anami, without name; Agam, inaccessible; Sat Purusha, true Lord, the real Lord, as distinguished from all hypothetical gods.... Sat means truth, reality, existence. Hence the fundamental idea of truth is existence.... Purusha implies being and being implies creative energy, the predominating and presiding Lord, the source of creative energy. Prabhu means Lord, having power and control". Prabhsuami means all-pervading Lord, having power.

Akashar means the Lord who has real power, the actual king of all, like Sat Purusha. This is used in contradistinction to Dharam Ray, the negative power, who controls the Three Worlds. It implies law and order. Remember the more law and order there is in a society, the

more negative it is the more it is under the control of the Dharam Ray. Dharam is law, order, system and it is used to also designate religion or any religious system. "Akashar is Sat Purusha or Akal Purusha while Dharam Ray is Kal\* Purusha or Kal or Brahm.

"The whole universe is considered as One, the true Eckankar. There is perfect oneness in the universe which is also co-existent with God, infinite, unlimited. Hence, the Sugmad is Nirankar, i.e., formless. "As such, he is without personality, without name. Kal means negative. He cannot be said to be anywhere, as he is everywhere. Since, he is everywhere, all and everything, he must be impersonal

"When the Sugmad limits itself to some extent, however slightly, IT becomes Agam Purusha. If a little more limited, Alakh Purusha and when IT takes a definite form for the purpose of administrating the affairs of the universe, the Sugmad becomes Sat Purusha or Sat Nam.

"Sat Nam is the first, definitely limited, manifestation of the Supreme Being. But IT is not limited, except to form only. Sat Nam, true name, is that which defines its individuality and points definitely to the first personal manifestation of the Infinite One.

Also Twitchell indicates that: The most virgin meaning for the word "Sugmad" at "AK" language is: freedom, will, liberty, independence, word and stand alone".

In the view of Twitchell: "The names of the Sugmad, in other languages than the Sanskrit and Hindi, are as many as are the ideas of IT. God is Anglo-Saxon adaptation of good. IT is the chief good or the sum total of God. Deus is the Latin name, signifying something like supreme emperor. Theos is the Greek appellation, meaning the chief of those august powers who sat upon Mount Olympus and ruled the world.

"Adonai or Elohim or Yahveh are some of the Hebrew names assigned to the god who was first a tribal deity of the Jews but later proclaimed lord over all gods and worlds. He was the supreme law-giver, the commander of all the armies of Israel. He was the majestic warrior whose wrath was so much to be feared. Love was not in his makeup until later. "We have others, for example, Allah, the Merciful of Islam. Varuna, the greatest of all ancient Hindu gods, outstanding in the Vedas. Brahm, Rama, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva and a host of others in the Indian sacred books.

**Sugmad's attributes and activities:** All of the religions and schools introduce their creator and god through attributes. Accordingly, they assign special activities to them which lead to deferent theologies. Undoubtedly, the best way of knowledge of God understands the God's

attributes and activities as much as this information is more and complete, it may lead to better and perfect knowledge of God.

Obviously, weak thought and the lack of certainty in divine attributes and activities not only make some theoretical and cognitive problems but also, it may have some practical effects on daily life of human.

Consequently, the more the knowledge of attributes and activities of God, the high statues the man would be reach in divine pleasure and peace and vice versa.

Some schools describe the Almighty God as a physical being such as Statue groups or some Assimilation sects among the Islamic dialectical theologian. On the other hand, some consider the Almighty God unspeakable such as: Plotinus (203-270 AD). He said: we cannot assign any attributes to God, because God is above all the perfections. Sometimes, these thoughts (unspeakable and assimilation) are accompanied in religious texts of a school.

Studying the Eckankar's texts are not useful to get some definite rules to know God's attributes and activities. Because, Sometime, it defines God as it is in the divine Abrahamic religions; however, some times Eckankar defines Sugmad as its attributes are opposite to attributes of God in divine Abrahamic religions. The following are the evidence for the attributes which are compatible with Abrahamic religions: The Sugmad which is the first cause of all things, is of a necessity and for this alone is unknowable to all but those who set out to find the answer to all life.

The Sugmad is omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient in all life and IT desires to have Atma share these qualities. He who listens and sees the living ECK will experience these Godlike qualities and may use each for the welfare of all concerned.

The Sugmad is love, wisdom and power. It is omnipresent, an pervading. The living ECK Master is the same, except that he has physical limitations. But spiritually he has complete freedom and is a replica of the Sugmad.

You don't find the Sugmad through religion. It's beyond religion of any nature and nobody is going to seek for it correctly when they know not where it is. "The Sugmad is beyond this world of senses, this world of eternal eating and drinking and talking nonsense, this world of false shadows and selfishness". It is beyond all books, beyond all creeds, beyond the vanities of the world. It is the realization of the Sugmad within oneself.

The Sugmad is what there is and all there is, so that no name can really be given IT except the poetic name of God. IT is neither old nor new, great nor small, shaped nor

shapeless. Having no opposite, it is what opposites have in common; it is the reason why there is no white without black and no form apart from emptiness.

In the beginning there was only the mighty Sugmad, the Lord of Lords, the Absolute of all Absolutes, the All Holy of Holies, the All Merciful of Mercies and the Omnipotent Omnipresence and Omniscient of all universes and worlds.

It has had thousands of names but each of them inapt. This reality has sometimes been called the good, beautiful and true, to name a few. Philosophers term it the Absolute or Ultimate Reality. Western mystics say it is the Godhead and in general know it as God. It is Brahma and Para Atma to the Hindus; the Beloved of the Sufis; the Tao or Way of the Chinese mystics. The Buddhists say it is Nirvana. But none are the True Reality of the Sugmad. This is the ultimate of All; the Realities. It is the ultimate so far above all things that few ever achieve it.

On the other hand, the following are the evidence for the attributes which are not compatible with Abrahamic religions:

The Sugmad is not born, for it could not be born save of its own like or of its contrary; two hypotheses of which the first is futile and the second absurd. One cannot call it infinite nor finite, for if infinite, having neither middle nor beginning nor end, it would be nothing at all and if finite it would be encompassed by limitations and would cease to be one. For like reasons it is neither at rest nor in movement. In short, one cannot attribute to it any characteristics.

"Of course, they enter into the land of Sat Desha and mingle freely with all the inhabitants there and go up as far as the ECK where dwells the first manifestation of the Lord. But they do not go any further than this.

"The Sat Desha or world of the Sugmad which I have previously called Anami Lok is the grand region of all creations and of immortality. It is unchangeable, perfect and deathless. It is forever untouched by dissolution or grand dissolution and so are its inhabitants.

"It may take millions of forms but it, itself, remains formless, impersonal, all pervading. It is universal spirit, universal life.

"The Sugmad is part of every Soul. It is the sacred faculty in men which is called the imagination. This is the divine spark in all Tuzas and it is that part which can draw the Sugmad down to earth or take Soul up to the Sugmad. "This is the great secret which I give you!" These leaders of men in the lower world wanted to know how it could walk among them and teach them. So, it gave them the divine quality, the imagination, by taking a little of itself and placing it within each man.

“The great Sugmad returned to its home in the Heavenly world when it had finished with its work and found to its disadvantage that it had given away so much of itself that little was left. Now it was a question of having it returned or it would not be able to exercise the full ability of creation which it possessed.

**The Islamic analysis and critique about Sugmad’s names and attributes:** Before discussing and criticizing the last part, it is necessary to clarify the meaning of name and attribute and the relation between them according to Islamic viewpoint. In the view of famous philologist, the attribute is describing the characteristics which are in a thing or person (Isfahani, 1995).

In the Islamic viewpoint, Name is the essence according to its attributes. Imam Reza (AS) the 8th Imam of the Shia, name is the mixing of the name with its attributes (Kashani, 1979).

Feiz Kashani interpreted the last definition: Name is the manifestation of the attribute. For example: al-Rahman (the Generous) is the essence that has generosity and al-Ghahhar (The Dominant) is the essence that is powerful (Kashani, 1983).

Mollasadra, the famous Islamic philosopher, said: The meaning of name what assigns to the essence and the attribute is what not assign to the essence is but it is called accident (Moteahhehin and Shirazi, 1983).

Hakim Sabzevari also stated: “The essence compound with name and attribute is the identity of thing and its certain existence. Have attributes of essence and accident which are assigned to them devotionally and they are called attributes (Sabzevari, 1983).

The knowledgeable philosopher and Shiit famous exegete, Tabatabae pointed out in Al-Mizan: there is no difference between name and attributes but attribute is the meaning which is the essence which her that was that essence or not and name is the essence which is accompanied with attribute (Tabatabae, 1996). This difference is mentioned in various theological, philosophical and Gnostic schools (Kashani, 1996).

Some scholars such Avicenna (949-1007AD) claimed that Almighty God’s attributes are the same and his opinion are opposed by some scholars such as Mollasadra, etc. (Sabzevari, 1983). In the view of Christian and Jewish scholars there is interconnection between name and attribute. Tomas Aquinas (1225-1274AD), Christian orator and philosopher, said: As we point to what is different from his essence, while the wisdom and intelligence of God its essence.

**The critique of Sugmad’s names:** Poul Twitchell states: Sugmad is Allah in Islam . The name of Allah is the proper noun and collect all of the most beautiful names and exulted attributes of God (Tabatabae, 1983).

Unlike what is in the Eckankar’s texts. For instance: in the interpretation of Sugmad purusha, the name of Sugmad, is written that Sugmad takes a definite form for the purpose of administrating the affairs of. Also it is written that sat name is the first definitely manifestation of Supreme Being.

It is clear that taking a definite form is the characteristic of the material and physical thing. Which have length, width and height? It means that all the materials are compound and this is necessitated. Opposite to the cause of cause nature of Sugmad the physical nature the following issues: First: it is compound and the compound things need some components and all the Muslim believe that the Almighty Allah is utterly self-sufficient and necessary being by itself (Helli, 1983). Second: it needs confinement which are opposite to self-sufficient nature of Allah. As Helli, the knowledgeable scholar, states that: if God with confinement will accompanied with accidental events, it names is created, so he would not be the creator (possible being) (Helli, 1983). Third: the physical being has direction. As the almighty Allah has no direction because He doesn’t have any place or body. As the holy Quran states: “To Allah belong the east and the west. Whichever way you turn, there is the face of Allah. He is the embracer, the knower. “He is with you wherever you are? Forth: the physical boy can be seen but it is impossible too (Helli, 1983). As the holy Quran States: “no eye can see him, though he sees all eyes. he is the subtle, the aware (Helli, 1983).

Fifth: Paul Twitchell indicates some contradictory words: such as the said or defeat form but in other chapter he states that one of the sugnad’s name is niranKar (i.e., without any form and body).

Tabatabae, the knowledgeable scholar, says that: all the names which indicate any defect or imperfection or need such as what are assigned to the materials, bad deals and null are not beautiful so they would not be assigned to the essence of Allah (Tabatabae, 1996). Actually, there is a huge difference between “Allah” in Islam and Sugmad in Eckankar.

Paul Twitchell in other book, under the word Allah says: “Allah ahl’-lah Called the Merciful God of Islam; the Mahanta consciousness as the vehicle for the Sugmad as it was known to the Mohammedans.”

First: this word has apparent contradiction with his last words. Second: according to what were said about the name of Allah in Islam, it is clear that Paul Twitchell does not have any information about this grand name among the Muslims.

Because in the view of Muslims, the divine Essence is self-sufficient and it is not only unacceptable that Allah is the means to reach Sugmad! But also, the Almighty Allah is the end and goal of all the Gnostics and eager, as Imam Ali Ibn Abitalib statues (Mafatih al-Jinan, Komeil prayer).

Some names of Sugmad are used as the manifestation of Sugmad. But this manifestation is not the same as what the Islamic philosophers believe. Because the Muslim philosopher believes that there are 2 kinds of manifestation: Essentially, Actual.

The essential manifestation is what is related to the divine essence and the actual manifestation is the Divine manifestation in the creators. But in Eckankar's texts these names are interpreted as if Sugmad has the physical body. About sat name is written that: "So when the Supreme Sugmad manifests itself as the ECK or Sat Nam, in Sach Khand, it becomes fully personified, embodied, individualized, for the first time and brings into manifestation all of the qualities of the deity.

The first of these planes is called Sach Khand or Sat Nam, meaning "true home" or "true name". The first of the manifestations of God is in charge of this plane and his name is Sat Nam. The spirit fluid flows out of the throne of God, down through the planes and comes into manifestation in the first being made in the image of that is, the nature and qualities of God.

It seems that Paul Twitchell finds out people imagine physical form and body for Sugmad, so he said the last word. This problem has not been solved yet. Twitchell quotes his master, Rebazar Tarz: "I have been asked many times if there is any difference between an ECK Master and the Sugmad. It is only that the ECK Master is the Sugmad's representative here on this plane and through the others. The spirit of the Supreme One is embodied within the ECK Master. Now the Master is still responsible to the ECK and the Silent Ones; however, he can travel directly into the highest plane and communicate with the Sugmad".

Consequently, believing in Embodiment (penetration or transmigration) is one of the principles of Eckmakar school and challenge this school. Because believing in Embodiment (penetration) is contradicted with believing in unique oneness in Eckamkar. As Eckamkar is one of the Sugmad's name and it means unique oneness.

Also, embodiment or penetration of Sugmad in other thing needs as place, though in all of the Eckomakar's texts Sugmad is called as the Lord of Lords, the universe coverage.

Also one of the Sugmad's names is Prabhoo. It means, the ruler and the powerful (ibid, 1988, p.28-30). oreover; it seems that Paul Twitchell forgot the real unity

and wrote that: "The living ECK Master has no limitations, being one with the Sugmad. Only the materials through which he works limit his actions; in like manner they limit the actions of the Supreme Being, itself. Can the Sugmad converse with you, as man with man, without first becoming man? The omniscience of the Sugmad may not be able to express itself through the physical brain of the traveler but the traveler may, in single moments, rise to the regions of the worlds far above the sphere of brain activity, where his consciousness automatically expands, even to the limitless. When he returns to this plane, he will remember just as much of it as can be brought within the compass of brain action.

This word shows the incapability of Sugmad in relation with his creatures. It is noteworthy that to pay attention to the word of Tabatabaee that people according to their rapture they are agree in believing in Allah's essence but their believes in Divine Names and attributes are various.

"First group believe in some Names and attributes which are desirable to the Almighty Allah. The second group assign some divine attributes such as feeding or reviving the dad to the after material such as idols or destination or time, etc. and the third group believe in Allah but they are deviated from the divine attributes, it means, they assign some indecency or defect. The first group is guided and reaches salvation but the second and third group will go to hell because of their ignorance about the Almighty God" (Tababtabee, 1996).

**The critique of Sugmad's attributes:** As it was mentioned, some attributes are assigned to Sugmad such as the cause of cause, the Absolute Mighty and the All-Knowing and the Absolute existence.

These last attributes are the attributes of the Almighty God in Abrahamic religions. On the other they believe some attributes which are opposite to God's attributes and are critiqued seriously: First: however, in some books, Sugmad is called, the Lord of Lords, the cause of cause and the origin life, in other books they called Sugmad nor limited nor unlimited and it is impossible logically. Moreover, we are more shocked when they mentioned that: in nobody may suppose Sugmad limited or unlimited. If it is unlimited it doesn't have any being, middle or end and it is nothing.

As if Paul Twitchell forgets that he introduced Sugmad in other texts unlimited, also he does not pay attention to the concepts of infinite and unlimited.

One cannot call it infinite nor finite, for if infinite, having neither middle nor beginning nor end, IT would be nothing at all. Second: believing in having place and housing necessitate material and physical body of

Sugmad. “Sugmad leaves in the upper world. Sat Wosha means the reality land, he enters the creatures and the place of the Almighty God. In the place of Sugmad just some people live.” Third: while introducing Sugmad we see some words which illustrate the contradictory among the Sugmad’s attributes. Such as: “The great Sugmad returned to its home in the Heavenly world when it had finished with its work and found to its disadvantage that it had given away so much of itself that little was left. Now it was a question of having it returned or it would not be able to exercise the full ability of creation which it possessed.”

“IT possessed this up until the time that it was divided among men and then it retired into the heavenly world of the Far Country, watching over all affairs of those creatures in every plane from this physical earth to ITS own.”

The unity of existence and the extant, considering all the creatures the God, is one of the fault of Eckankar school. Explaining the relationship between the Almighty God and the creatures is one of subject which the Islamic philosophers are attempted to. For example, Mollasadra while utilizing the logical rules believes that: “the simple essence is unlimited and it is the middle step for the unity of essence and makes it necessary. It means, the unlimited and infinite essence leave no place for the others” (Tabatabaee, 1983).

The last factor is one of the complex discussions among the Islamic philosophers, the unity of essence, which explained and critiqued very much. In the view of philosophers, the essence has a reality which takes some strong and weak levels. On the other hand, some Gnostics believe that the essence is the Real and the creatures are his manifestation.

The other groups deny the variety of essence and suppose all the creatures unreal and do not consider any status for the God except the essence of things. Sadr al-Motallehin critiqued these opinions as the ignorant opinion: some believe that there in nothing in the world but the Almighty God and the creatures are unreal and imaginary, as a result they deny all the religions, prophets and books.

This is the theory of unity of existence and creature that Eckankar school accept and believe that and Paul Twitchell support it; though, most of the Islamic great Gnostics and philosopher reject and critiqued it seriously. (Sabzvari *et al.*, 1983).

Forth: sometimes they utilize some attributes for Sugmad which make him degrade and humiliate him and sometimes they use some attribute as which show their ignorance and darkness. “The Sugmad is what there is and all there is, so that no name can really be given it

except the poetic name of God. It is neither old nor new, great nor small, shaped nor shapeless. Having no opposite, it is what opposites have in common; it is the reason why there is no white without black and no form apart from emptiness. However, the Sugmad, as we know it, has two parts an inside and an outside. The inside is called Nirguna which is to say that it has no qualities and nothing can be said or thought about it. The outside is called Saguna which is to say that it may be considered as eternal reality, consciousness and joy. This is the part that man knows and remembers after experiencing the God-Realization state”.

Perhaps someone suppose that Paul Twitchell wants to praise Sugmad through last words but there is difference between praise and ignorance about the God’s attributes.

In order to clarify the God’s attributes in comparability and praise, the word of Imam Ali (AS) is quoted: “The fore most in religion is the acknowledgement of him, the perfection of acknowledgement of it is to testify Him, the perfection of testifying him is to believe in it is oneness, the perfection of believing in it is oneness is to regard him pure and the perfection of his purity is to deny him attributes because every attribute is a proof that it is different from that which it is attributed and everything to which something is attributed is different from the attribute”.

Sadr al-Moteallehin interpreted the last words of Imam Ali (AS): through these words, Imam Ali (AS) denied all the attributes belong to the creatures, so all of the perfect attributes belong to the Almighty God such as: power, will, being Alive, Hearer and Seeing and all the creatures got those attributes from the Almighty God.

Also Sabzevari stated in Asrar al-Hekam: the words of Imam Ali (AS) about God denies the negative attributes and creature’s attributes from God, not that denies all the positive and perfect attributes of God. (Sabzevari, 1983).

### **THE POSSIBILITY OF RECOGNITION OF SUGMAD**

One of the most ancient concept and thought for the man is the concept of God and it is clear that the God’s cognition is possible and plausible among various religions and schools.

Otherwise, in Eckankar texts there is no trace and evidence about the God’s concept and cognition about the Sugmads deeds and attributes. On the other hand, there is some texts illustrate that Sugmad has a physical body and consider that as a praise to Sugmad.

Also, Paul Twitchell quotes from Fubbi Quantz, the Eckankar professor: This acceptance of the Sugmad is more clearly formulated by the ECK Master Fubbi Quantz in a statement to an audience interested in his words. "No one understands, no one ever will understand, the truth concerning the Sugmad and the things which I teach. If anyone did happen to come upon the absolute truth he would never be aware of the encounter. Nowhere do we find anything more than probability".

Also, he indicates the possibility of knowledge of Sugmad but through special method: "On the periphery of the circle, the beginning and the end are one. Divinity is itself the origin and the end of the individual life. Unity is divided into plurality and plurality is resolved into unity but unity and plurality are contemporaneous and the vibrations from the bosom of the divine is accomplished by the incessant return to divinity".

If all is God and necessarily immortal, it is none the less certain that men and things and worlds would disappear. From this moment one bids goodbye to the logical consequences of the great confession, of ignorance to enter into the labyrinth of theories which are no longer unassailable and which for that matter are not at the outset put before us as revelations but merely as metaphysical hypotheses, as speculations of great antiquity, born of the necessity of reconciling the facts with the too abstract and too rigid for deductions of human reason.

"The Sugmad which is the first cause of all things, is of a necessity and for this alone is unknowable to all but those who set out to find the answer to all life. None, however, are capable of doing so unless they have taken up the path of ECK. In the finality the true Deity would not be the Sugmad unless it understood itself, unless it were all things. Its infinity inevitably gives rise to pantheism, for if it is everything, everything partakes in it and it is not possible to imagine anything that can set bounds to it. The cause of life itself or the part of the cause, proceeds from the Sugmad. From this pantheism proceeds in its turn the belief in immortality and the ultimate hope, for the Sugmad being infinite in space and time, nothing that is a part of it or in it can be destroyed without destroying the Sugmad".

"No man can ever know the Sugmad, until he consciously becomes one with the divine Self. Anything short of this is more or less speculative, imaginary, visionary and imperfect.

**Analysis and critique:** It is crystal clear that worshipping the unknown extant is not logical and the relation with it is impossible. If someone claims that he praises god but

there is no way to know that god to make him desirable to worship, it will be the astray and misleading the follower and not a praise and incomparability.

Because, first: the incomparability should be apprehensive and intelligible to make him free from the limitations. Second: the big problem of Eckankar school is that there is no boundary between the cognition of reality of Sugmad and the cognition of his attributes and consider the absolute in comparability for Sugmad's essence, attributes and activities (Ashaari, 1983).

If we consider that the limited essence cannot know unlimited essence, it is wrong. Because the limited essence may, know unlimited essence through attributes and deeds of it.

Imam Reza (AS) stated that: people have three opinions in theology: believing in affirmation through assimilation, believing in deny, believing in affirmation without assimilation and the first two opinions are wrong (Sadoogh, 1935).

Most of the philosophers accept the last opinion. It means all the perfect attributes have some levels and the highest level belongs to the Almighty God (Sohravadi, 1994, 1987).

Third: The focus of Eckankar texts is on the status and responsibilities of Mahanta, the living Eckmaster: "The Mahanta, the Living ECK Master, has come into this.

World during the age of the Kali Yuga for the salvation of souls and to make known the mistakes and defects of all religions; while at the same time, to point to the straight path of liberation for all Souls. The masses will not believe the Mahanta but will believe the varied sacred scriptures, by hearing or reading them. ....

All true seekers of the Sugmad must find the Living ECK Master and surrender themselves to him because this is the only way of purifying the mind in this Kali Yuga age. So long as the mind is not purified there can be no liberation of Soul. Only the Mahanta, the Living ECK Master, is familiar with the Ocean of Love and Mercy and can take his disciples to this final region. No one else knows the supreme secrets of the path of ECK. Only by his grace is liberation attained. There is no other way into the worlds of God. The Mahanta, the Living ECK Master, is the only being who is eligible to make known the true path to God. All others mislead their followers because they themselves are misled. The blind who themselves have lost the way are misleading others, instead of serving them, as they pretend to do. How can the blind lead the blind? This is why it is so important that the Mahanta, the Living ECK Master, shall be sought out. So long as he is not found, the inner secret of the path of ECK cannot be known. The Mahanta is the one who is

devoted to the Word of God. He reveals the inner secret of the Word and shows the way for Soul's return to the heavenly worlds, where it is truly liberated."

The real followers of Sugmad should find Mahanta and refuge to him. It means, the cognition of Sugmad is possible through Mahanta, though the absolute in comparability bans the relationship between the creator and the creatures. Consequently, one of the Mahanta's responsibilities is to make Sugmad know.

Forth: although, Twitchell introduces Sugmad above cognition and interpretation, in other texts introduces his knowable through the unity of essence and the creatures and it is impossible and wrong as it was mentioned.

### **THE METHODS OF SUGMAD'S RECOGNITION**

The other important and basic factor in this regard is understanding and finding out the recognition methods of Sugmad. The following are these ways that are mentioned in Sugmad's texts.

The sense: although in divine religions and some schools of thought pay much attention to the sense to recognize the God, in Eckankar school there is a little attention to it.

They try to find out the God through the sense and it is wrong and not the way, they will lose the God and may not reach him. Also they believe that the theology scholars try to recognize God through the world organization are useless.

**Analysis and critique:** Although, argumentation of order did not mention in the last part, it is possible that the author's intention is the argumentation of order, as he used some expression such as material world or through sense. Consequently, he doubted one of the most prevalent and oldest theological reasoning and proofs. It seems that the argumentation order is the most famous argumentations among the East and west philosopher and orators, though their understandings from this argumentation are different (Helli, 1893; Jilson, 1996).

The argumentation of order consists of two prefaces and a result. As the first preface of that is the sensory observation of the world it is called the sensory way or experience. Paul Twitchell indicates the uselessness of sensory way in his book.

It seems that Paul Twitchell considers all the material worlds, the essence of God. It means that, God is just the manifestation of things and it was the opinion of some mystics and it is wrong and Batil.

The rational way: it means that, through some logical and rational principles people know God, theology. The

scholars, philosophers, effort to find some logical reasoning to recognize God are its evidence. Eckankar in this regard states that: "I sincerely believe that anything which has to be proved by long processes of logic is not worth proving. In other words, if the thing is not self-evident, it is of little use". If anything in theory or teaching has to be established by laborious processes of reasoning, this very fact shows that we are on the wrong track and should seek new methods of establishing the hypothesis.

"Therefore the method of proving the existence of the great Sugmad which is worth our time is the experimental method of the spiritual travelers. No other method has ever succeeded and none of them can ever succeed.

In other text he assimilates those who use logical argument as ones who go astray. But after all, any argument based upon logical premises is just as likely to lead us astray as do the dogmatic assertions of the theologians. Of course there is no lie like history, so it may be said that there is nothing more misleading than logic. The Supreme can never be made a reality to any man by mere logic or by books or by feelings.

Also he states that: "reason is a senseless sort of argument that everything works out from logic or deduction according to what the senses make of it. The definition of reason is that it's a statement offered as an explanation or justification of an act or procedure. It's a consideration, motive or judgment inducing or confirming a belief, influencing the will and leading to an action". ... This is reason. The very thing which Thomas Aquinas, the Catholic founder of Christian philosophy, used to deduct theological thought and start a medieval drive toward the worst piece of thinking in all history. Man has certainly suffered because of his reasoning which is based upon false premises.

"Today this fad has been split into two warring factions, the intellectuals versus the anti-intellectuals. The intellectuals, who are supposedly endowed with unusual mental capacity, versus the anti-intellectuals, who don't believe in intellectualism".

"Now the followers of intellectualism believe in the doctrine that knowledge is derived from pure reason; also, the doctrine that the ultimate principle of reality is reason. "The anti-intellectuals believe in the doctrine of anti-reason; opposing the intellectual theory, they believe in the doctrine of non-reason. This is a faith in the higher senses, the senses of Soul that make contact with the sound current and become a part of it. Actually, this school considers no need to logical reasoning for its followers".



**Analysis and critique:** Undoubtedly, one of the most important tools to understand and increase knowledge among the scientists and thinkers is logical philosophical thinking. The logical and proper thinking is rooted in human nature. Because certainly, there are some external realities separated from our behavior in their world. If we want to reach and understand them we should utilize the evident proposition, then through utilizing thought and thinking correctly in a sound and logic order we reach the target. The logic, scholars asserted that the logical and reasonable rules are rooted originated from the man's nature (Tabatabaee, 1996).

For example: in the first sentence, Paul Twitchell introduces the logic, reasoning and thinking, misleading and believes that reaching the Eckankar's targets is possible through the soul, though it is wrong. To reject philosophy by Paul Twitchell there are three possibilities; first possibility: perhaps he didn't pay attention to the philosophy's origin. It means, it is not deniable that the philosophy is originated from the man's curiosity.

Second possibility: in the view of Motahhari the Muslim Iranian grand philosopher, we need philosophy for two reason: one is the natural curiosity of man who likes realizing and understanding the realities; the second is the sciences need to philosophy all the sciences from mathematic to natural science regard the special thing a real extant and try to find out its characteristic, so it should exist before finding its features and just the philosophy ensures the existence of things (Motahhari, 2009).

Third philosophy: Paul Twichell tries to govern submission and following without thinking, instead of rational thinking and it is clear in all of the Eckankar's texts.

"Therefore the method of proving the existence of the great Sugmad which is worth our time, is the experimental method of the spiritual travelers. No other method has ever succeeded and none of them can ever succeed.

However, in the holy Quran, the worst extant: before the God is those who do not think. "When it is said to them: 'follow what Allah has sent down', they reply: 'we will follow that which we found our fathers upon', even though their fathers did not understand anything and they were not guided?"

"The worst beasts before Allah are those who are deaf, dumb and do not understand? The Almighty God never asks His servants to obey Him without thinking. In the view of the great scholar, Tabatabaee, the Almighty God states the reasons of His orders in the holy Quran, though man does not understand them (Tabatabaee, 1996).

"Say: 'this is my path. I call to Allah with sure knowledge, I and my followers. Exaltations are to Allah! I am not among the idolaters."

Moreover, the other critique to Eckankar School is that through denying the logical reasoning there is no way to prove and clarifying this school and introduces that school wrong and invalid one.

The innate way: it means that, man may realize the God without any training to reasoning, just through his inborn and natural characteristics.

"Man's first duty is to know himself", Rebazar Tarzs said, starting again. "The ancient sages pointed this out as man's first and primary duty. Worship the gods, if you must but let your first duty be to find out who and what you are yourself."

"ECK is the audible life stream, the essence of the Sugmad, the holy spirit and the science of God-Realization. It grows out of the experience of Soul Travel into the state of religious awareness which the subject gains at his own volition via the spiritual exercises of Eckankar. The latter is correlated only with the movement of the inner consciousness (Soul) in those spiritual regions above time and space.

"Rebazar Tarzs once said, "Let your faith, your inner trust and confidence stream forth, remove your inner obstacles and open yourself to truth". It is this kind of faith or inner awareness and open-mindedness which finds its spontaneous expression, its liberation from an overwhelming psychic pressure in the sacred sound of the HU. In this matric sound, all the positive and forward-pressing forces of the human which are trying to blow up its limitations and burst the fetters of ignorance are united and concentrated on the ECK, ilke an arrow point".

**Analysis and critique:** Although Eckankar focus on the innate and natural way to recognize God, it does no point out to any detail: It seems necessary to clarify some dimensions. Literary nature has two meaning:

- Cut the thing from its length
- Beginning and invention (Jouhari, 1983; Isfahani, 1995)

All the man has the nature that seeks God. Sometime man is misguided and mislead in finding and choosing God but when he is in disasters and dangers he gets that other gods such as Sugmad who has many defects and needs cannot help him. As Imam Ali (AS) indicates that; then Allah sent his Messengers and series of His prophets towards them to get them to fulfill the pledges of

His creation, to recall to them His bounties. Ibn Abi-Hadid indicated that: all the human being are exist according to divine nature.

Although, the man has divine nature, he needs the guidance of the prophets and divine Messengers. If Eckankar considers the innate desire of man to worship and finding out the reality to Sugmad and introduces Sugmad the Almighty Allah, there will be no critique. But as it was mentioned, most of the Sugmad's characteristic and attributes are different form and opposite to the Allah attributes. As a result, Sugmad is not Allah in Islam and the Eckankar School wants to mislead people.

### CONCLUSION

The main conclusion of this study is that, God of Eckankar school has numerous differences whit Muslim's God, though has some similarity whit Him in some cases.

Therefore, this claim of Twitchell that Eckankar's God is Allah, the Muslim's God, is rejected. According to the discussion of God's names, attributes and activities, the name of Allah is a proper noun and collect all of the most beautiful names and exalted attributes of God, unlike what is mentioned in Eckankar's texts. For instance, in the interpretation of sugmad purusha, the name of sugmad, is written that sugmad takes a definite form to administrate the affairs of people. The definite form of sugmad and the need to components and the direction are properties of physical being but Muslim's God is not a physical being according to God's attributes. As it was mentioned, some attributes assigned to sugmad such as the cause of cause are similar to Allah. On the other hand, some other attributes are opposite to god's attributes in Islam. For instance, sugmad is nor limited nor unlimited and nor infinite nor finite and so on.

Considering the possibility of recognition of sugmad, the world of sugmad is beyond explanation and knowledge but in Islam the recognition of God's essence is impossible, thought, recognition of God's attributes is possible. Finally, regarding methods of recognition of sugmad, the Echankar school emphasis on innate path

and escape from intellectual or rational arguments. But in the Islam, it is benefited from experience-reason-intuition method to prove the existence of God.

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