

**Fundamental Issues**  
in  
**Sikh Studies**

*Editors*

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## **GURU NANAK THE PROPHET OF A UNIQUE IDEOLOGY**

DALJEET SINGH

### *1. Introduction*

In this essay we shall attempt to outline that the religion of Guru Nanak is unique in many ways. For, Guru Nanak is the first man of God to break in India the dichotomy between the spiritual life and the empirical life of man and to establish a clear and integral combination between the two. His was not what is termed a salvation religion; in fact, in his religion he specifically linked the spiritual salvation of man with his social salvation. That is also why in its ideology and its doctrines Sikhism is radically different from all the earlier Eastern and contemporary Indian religions. This linkage is of immense and revolutionary importance, which many students of religion have failed to grasp. In this context, we shall explain (1) what is the spiritual experience of the Gurus and what is the kind of reality or God Guru Nanak proclaims, (2) what is unique about the spiritual system of Guru Nanak and what radical departures he makes from the other spiritual systems that had arisen in India, (3) why Guru Nanak chose the householder's life to be the forum of spiritual growth and what are its logical implications, (4) why Guru Nanak started the system of succession, why the system of succession was continued by the fifth Guru even after the Sikh scripture had been compiled and authenticated by him and why the tenth Guru stopped the institution of succession, and (5) why persons belonging to the pacifist religions find it difficult to understand the spiritual system and the historical role of the Sikh Gurus. For this reason, we shall state, as briefly as possible, only those aspects of Guru Nanak's system that are strictly relevant to our present discussion.

### *2. Idea of God and Spiritual Experience*

Guru Nanak is a monotheist; but to say that is to say very little about him because monotheism has a number of varieties, and the classification of his system merely as monotheism would only confuse the issues. First, it is necessary to know what is the nature of the spiritual experience of the Gurus. It is because of a significant variation in this religious experience that doctrinal

changes arise. For the Gurus “God is All Love and the rest He is ineffable.”<sup>1</sup> In other mystic systems as detailed by Stace, this religious experience is in the nature of blessedness, peace, holiness, universal-consciousness, etc.<sup>2</sup> In the Hindu systems too it is “Truth, Consciousness and Bliss”, (Sach Chit Anand). Secondly, it is important to know what is the kind of God Guru Nanak envisages and how he has tried to define his system and more especially to live it and carry out his mission. In fact, it is the lives of Guru Nanak and other Gurus that explain and illustrate the logic of his system, namely, Sikhism. For Guru Nanak God is both Transcendent and Immanent. “He that permeates all hearts is transcendent too.”<sup>3</sup> He mentions numerous aspects of God but in this essay we shall primarily be concerned with the Attributive, the Loving and the Creative aspects of God whom he calls the Ocean of virtues, Creative, Benevolent and Gracious. “In the realm of truth is the Sole one, Ever Creative, keeping a Benevolent and Gracious eye on the universe.”<sup>4</sup> This perception of the Guru about God has fundamental implications. Let us just mention five of them. The first inference is that the universe is real and meaningful. For, attributes of God could be expressed only in a real world. Because when God was by Himself the question of the expression of love and other attributes of God could not arise. Thus, this description of God gives both authenticity and spiritual significance to the world of man and his life. This inference is entirely opposed to the earlier Buddhist approach, which believes the world to be a place of suffering, involving consequential withdrawal from it to a monastic life. Even the Vedantic approach considers the world to be Mithya and world activity to be just illusory. In order to illustrate this point and the contrast between the approach of Sankra and that of Guru Nanak, let us just quote them. Guru Nanak sings:

“The sun and moon, O Lord, are Thy lamps; the firmament Thy salver; the orbs of the stars the pearls encased in it.

The perfume of the sandal is Thine incense, the wind is Thy fan, all the forests are Thy flowers, O Lord of light, what worship is this, ‘O Thou, Destroyer of birth?

Unbeaten strains of ecstasy are the trumpets of Thy worship.

Thou has a thousand eyes and yet not one eye;

Thou has a thousand forms and yet not one form;

Thou has a thousand stainless feet and yet not one foot;

Thou has a thousand organs of smell and yet not one organ.

I am fascinated by this play of Thine,

The light which is in everything is Thine, O Lord of light.

From its brilliance everything is brilliant;

By the Guru’s teaching the light becometh manifest.

What pleaseth Thee is the real worship.

O God, my mind is fascinated with Thy lotus feet as the bumble-bee with the Dower; night and day I thirst for them. Give the water of Thy favour to the Sarang (bird) Nanak, so that he may dwell in Thy name.”

Sankara writes:

“I am not a combination of the five perishable elements. I am neither body, the senses, nor what is in the body (antar-anga: i.e., the mind). I am not the ego-function; I am not the group of the vital breath-forces; I am not intuitive intelligence (buddhi). Far from wife and son am I, far from land and wealth and other notions of that kind. I am the witness, the Eternal, the Inner Self, the Blissful One (sivo-ham; suggesting also, ‘I am Siva’).”

“Owing to ignorance of the rope, the rope appears to be a snake; owing to ignorance of the Self the transient state arises of the individualized, limited, phenomenal aspect of the Self. The rope becomes a snake when the false impression disappears because of the statement of some credible person; because of the statement of my teacher I am not an individual life-monad (jivo-naham). I am the Blissful One (sivo-ham).

“I am not the born; how can there be either birth or death for me ?

“I am not the vital air; how can there be either hunger or thirst for me ?

“I am not the mind, the organ of thought and feeling; how can there be either sorrow or delusion for me ?

“I am not the doer; how can there be either bondage or release for me ?

“I am neither male nor female, nor am I sexless. I am the Peaceful One, whose form is self-effulgent, powerful radiance. I am neither a child, a Young man, nor an ancient; nor am I of any caste. I do not belong to one of the four life-stages. I am the Blessed-Peaceful One, who is the only Cause of the origin and dissolution of the world.”

While Guru Nanak is bewitched by the beauty of His creation and sees in the panorama of nature a lovely scene of the worshipful adoration of the Lord, Sankara in his hymn rejects the reality of the world and treats himself as the sole Reality. Zimmer feels that “Such holy megalomania goes past the bounds of sense. With Sankara, the grandeur of the supreme human experience becomes intellectualized and reveals its inhuman sterility.”<sup>5</sup>

According to the Guru the world is not only real but it is a meaningful place where alone God’s Creative and Attributive Will works. Secondly; and this is very important, it gives a clear direction as to the way the Attributive Will of God works. It sets the goal for man. Thirdly, God being riches to the poor, milk to the child and eyes to the blind,<sup>6</sup> the seeker has to follow the ethical path of values and virtues laid down by God and the Guru. This lays down the methodology and ethics for the spiritual path. Fourthly, it shows how intimate is God’s interest in the world and its progress. Not only is God the sustainer of life, but He also nurtures it with a loving care. God is described as the Enlightener or Guru. This gives great hope and confidence to man in his spiritual endeavours. Fifthly it lends a clear spiritual character to the ethical and moral life of man. Thus, in Sikhism moral life by itself gains spiritual colour and character.

Because, the world being a creation of God, and God being the Ocean of virtues, moral life is in line with the Attributive Will of God. In the Japuji, the Guru clearly lays down that the ideal life for man or the Sachara is to move and work in accordance with the Will of God.<sup>7</sup> Thus, in Sikhism the spiritual life and the empirical life are clearly and closely linked. The dichotomy between these two kinds of lives as it exists in most other traditions is emphatically removed. We shall amplify this point later.

In short, the attributive aspect of God logically generates an attitude of life - affirmation in the religious man. We shall now explain the major implications of this approach and see how widely contrasted these are with the features of other Indian religions.

*3. The Path of Love: A revolutionary system in which the dichotomy between the spiritual life and the empirical life of man was emphatically broken.*

It was Guru Nanak who laid and led the path of universal love and the emancipation of man without distinction of caste and creed. The call for this mission was given by him in unambiguous terms. "If you want to tread the path of love, come forward with your head on your palm."<sup>8</sup> And his mission, as mentioned earlier, was to ferry men across the turbulent sea of life. It is clear that in Guru Nanak's mission of love two objectives became logically uppermost and these he emphasized unambiguously in his Bani, namely, that he was to establish equality and fraternity among men, and that it was the duty and responsibility of the religious man and the religious society he was creating to resist oppression and safeguard human rights and values. It is in this context that the importance of Guru Nanak's criticism of the doctrine of Ahimsa should be understood. "Men discriminate not and quarrel over meat eating, they do not know what is flesh and what is non-flesh, or what is sin and what is not sin."<sup>9</sup> "Life he said was in every grain of corn or seed."<sup>10</sup> Again, it is in this background that we have to charter the course of Sikh history from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh. After Guru Nanak, the period of the next three Gurus relates mainly to the creation, expansion, and organisation of a cohesive society or Panth Guru Nanak had started. The next major landmark was the time of the fifth Guru, who not only compiled the scripture of the new society, thereby weaning it away from all earlier beliefs, sought confrontation with the empire and not only made the supreme sacrifice of his life and set the tradition of martyrdom but also created in his life time what Dr. Gupta calls "a state within a State." No wonder emperor Jahangir took note of this mounting challenge and attacked the Sikh society. For him the movement was of such importance and potentialities that he not only took personal note of it and ordered it to be demolished, but also

found this event to be of such great socio-political significance as to be mentioned in his autobiography.<sup>11</sup>

Guru Nanak brought about a complete reversal of the socio-religious life and values of his time. Against life negation and withdrawal from life, he recommended life-affirmation and complete social participation. Against monasticism and asceticism, he accepted a householder's life and full social responsibility. Against celibacy and a woman being sin-born, he gave religious sanctity to married life and equality to women. Against the rigidity of the Varan Ashram Dharma and the institution of caste and pollution, he, from the very first day of his mission, accepted and practised social equality and the brother-hood of man. This act of Guru Nanak after his enlightenment and his first words that "there is no Hindu nor Muslim" are extremely meaningful. At least, two points stand emphasized. First, that in his thesis and mission deed was of primary importance; and, second, that human equality and consequent social responsibility were to constitute the bedrock of his mission. Against the world being Mithya and a suffering, he found it to be real, beautiful and the realm for the spiritual growth of man. Against Tapas, ritualism and meditation alone, he accepted the primacy of work and one's religious assessment being based purely on man's deeds, i.e. moral deeds, in this world. As asceticism and Ahimsa are the fundamental features of all Indian religions. But, Guru Nanak rejected both of these doctrines. We do not think there were any traces of these elements of his system in the earlier traditions. And, considering the times in which he was born, nothing could be more radical or revolutionary. Because it is one of the few systems of the world in which the dichotomy between the spiritual life of the soul and the temporal life of the body has been broken and an inalienable link between the two established. In order

to distinguish such a system from a quietist religion, Hocking and Iqbal call it a Prophetic Religion. Otto calls such a system Activity Religion as distinguished from the Vedantic system of Sankara. Here the goal is to work in all walks of life as the instrument of God's Attributive Will and not to withdraw or isolate oneself from the world in order to merge in The Absolute, Void, or Godhead, or to achieve a blissful and tranquil union with God as an end in itself. For Plotinus or Sankara, after the final spiritual achievement, activity is a fall. Even in Mahayana Buddhism after Nirvana there is no return, much less moral activity or expression of compassion, which ends at the penultimate stage of Abhaya. But, for the Sachiara or the superman, even after being in tune with God, it is essential to carry out His Attributive Will. In fact, he prays not for Moksha but "for millions of hands to serve Him."<sup>12</sup>

*4. Householder's life to be the forum of spiritual growth*

In 'Guru Nanak's system, thus, ascetism, renunciation and withdrawal from life were completely rejected. Not only Guru Nanak, but all the Gurus, except Guru Har Kishan who died at an early age, were married householders. It is significant that after return from his missionary tours, Guru Nanak settled at Kartarpur as a peasant, sent for his wife, worked and preached there to the end of his days. Again, when he appointed Guru Angad to be his successor, he advised him to send for the members of his family and settle at Khadur Sahib and carry out the mission entrusted to him. In fact, when Guru Nanak later visited him and found him living a somewhat quietist life, he advised him to be active as he had to organise a community and fulfill the mission entrusted to him.<sup>13</sup> It was Guru Nanak who stated that "his mission was, with the help of other God-conscious persons to ferry everyone across the sea of life"<sup>14</sup> i.e. This aim was social salvation of the society as a whole and not the individual salvation of a few or a group only. It is in this light that we have to understand why the second and third Gurus, while they included anyone in their society, without distinction of class and caste, excluded recluses (ascetic celibates) from being members of the Sikh society, and that is also why the Guru condemned the Yogis for being idlers and their not being ashamed of begging for alms at the very doors of the householders whose life they spurned.<sup>15</sup> In fact, the Guru envisaged all problems of life to be religious problems to be solved in a righteous or truthful way. That is also why Guru Nanak says, "Truth is the highest of all but higher still is truthful living,"<sup>16</sup> and that is also why in Guru Nanak's system moral life is of the highest significance. For, he lays down that all assessment of man will be based on his deeds in this world and, it is by our deeds that we become near or away from God.<sup>17</sup> All these are, indeed, corollaries of the world-view of "despise not the world, it being the creation of God."<sup>18</sup>

It is in this context that we should understand why it is Guru Nanak who not only identified and commented upon all the social and political problems of his times but also laid down the principles of his ideology and the foundations of the Sikh society that was created to solve those problems.

We indicate here his comments and views on some of the major social issues of his times. Allied with the issue of life-affirmation is the matter of the status of women in the society. Before we record Guru Nanak's view on the subject, it would be relevant to state the position of women in the then contemporary world. The Digambara Jains believed that a woman could not attain Moksha or salvation and that she must first be incarnated as a male before she could reach, Kavalīya.<sup>19</sup> Buddha very reluctantly agreed to enroll



women as Bhikshus. Even after entry in the Bhikshu order, her status remained second rate. The woman Bhikshu even if she were an old entrant in the Bhikshu order was considered junior to a male Bhikshu who joined the order later than she had done.<sup>20</sup> The male monk was not supposed to rescue a drowning woman even if she were his own mother.<sup>21</sup> In the caste order of the Brahmins, a woman had been classed with the Shudras. For Sankara woman is the gateway to hell.<sup>22</sup> Even in the liberal Vaishnav order of Ramanuja or Shankradeva of Assam, women were not accepted as Vaishnavas. She was deemed to be basically a temptress or sin born. Shankradeva, a liberal saint of the later Bhakti movement, felt that "of all the terrible aspirations of the world, a woman's is the ugliest. A slight side-glance of hers captivates even the heart of celebrated sages. Her sight destroys, penance and meditation. Knowing this, the wise keep away from the company of women."<sup>23</sup> Nathism was another religious cult when Guru Nanak appeared on the religious scene. "A Nath had to take a vow not to marry and they did not even sit or dine with Nath women,"<sup>24</sup> It is also significant to record that the attitude of a saint like Bhagat Kabir towards women has been considered to be misogynist.<sup>25</sup> Even Christian missionaries had extended their organization to India the time of Guru Nanak. In Catholic Christianity women have not been ordained as priests even upto today. It was in this climate that Guru Nanak spoke "why call woman impure when without woman there would be none."<sup>26</sup> The contrasted position of women in the Sikh society was such that later when the third Guru created districts of religious administration, women were appointed to head some of them.<sup>27</sup>

Another major problem of the times was the social ideology of caste which had a triple limitation. First, it was basically hierarchical. Men were deemed unequal by birth, the Brahmin caste being at the top of the ladder and the Shudras being at the bottom of it. Apart from that, social intercourse between the Shudra castes and the upper three castes was virtually barred. In fact, the institutions of un-touchability and anti pollution were a fact of the social life of the times. Thirdly, apart from the fact that a person could take up only the profession of his caste or sub-caste, a change of profession was religiously barred. The Bhagavad Gita clearly laid down that it was religiously, more meritorious to do, even inefficiently, the duties of one's own caste or ancestral profession than to do efficiently the duties of another caste or profession.<sup>28</sup> In this background it is extremely significant that Guru Nanak's first statement after his enlightenment was that there was no Hindu or Musalman, meaning thereby that he saw only man everywhere, the distinction of caste and inequality being irreligious and an impediment in the path of spirituality. When Guru

Nanak started his missionary tours, his sole companion was a low caste Muslim. It was, thus, a categorical declaration that in his society or system no one who had any belief in caste prejudices or discriminations could have any place. And when he returned from his tours he established the institutions of Langar, Sangat and Pangat which meant that his disciples not only mixed and worked together, but also sat, and ate together without distinctions of caste i.e. had a kitchen for having common and free meals. In fact, even during his tours he had organised local Sangats (societies) on the above lines. The record of Bhai Gurdas about the caste constitution of the Sikhs shows that all kinds of castes, including low castes were members of the Sikh societies of those times. In the conditions of that period, nothing could be more revolutionary than to establish the brotherhood of man and to say that the Vedas had wrongly laid down the distinction of caste.”<sup>29</sup>

An important corollary of the approach of life-affirmation is the institution of work. It is very significant to find that Guru Nanak, after his return from his missionary tours, regularly worked as a peasant. And this practice of earning one's livelihood was followed by his successors as well. The Guru says, “the person incapable of earning his living gets his ears split and becomes a mendicant. He calls himself a Guru or saint. Do not look up to him, nor touch his feet. He knows the way who earns his living and shares his earning with others.”<sup>30</sup> A marked work-ethics in the Sikh society is the direct result of the teachings of and the precedents set by Guru Nanak and the other Gurus. For no society can thrive and flourish for long in health unless the dignity and necessity of work are accepted as a virtue and as a part of one's socio-religious responsibility. Consequently, there has, from the very start, been a clear rejection of the institutions of monasticism, asceticism, renunciation and other-Worldliness.

Lastly, we mention his criticism of the rulers and the invaders of the time. In the Babar Vani, he notably, condemns the oppression of the invaders and also the moral unpreparedness of the local rulers. It is important to understand that this was not just idle criticism; the Guru was very serious and meaningful about it. In his verses he even complains to God, as the Master of the human flock, for not protecting the weak and allowing them to be trampled upon by the strong.<sup>31</sup> This important criticism displays a fundamental feature of his spiritual thesis. It is, indeed, unfortunate that many of the scholars, and more especially those committed to pacifist doctrines, have completely missed the basic significance of this criticism by Guru Nanak. For when, he criticises even God for allowing oppression of the weak to take place, how could he preclude the god-man from accepting the

responsibility of resisting or undoing oppression or encroachment on the basic human rights of man. Guru Nanak's criticism, as we have seen, is loud and significant. It is not an empty rhetoric. Its meaning is clear. Since God is the 'Destroyer of the oppressor or the evil,' 'Slayer of the enemy,'<sup>31a</sup> and 'Helper of the Helpless,' this criticism naturally casts a clear responsibility on the god-man with an attitude of life-affirmation to create the wherewithal for resistance. In this connection the clarification given (in reply to a question by Sant Ram Das of Maharashtra) by the Sixth Guru that Guru Nanak had given up mammon and not the worldly life as such, and that his sword was for the destruction of the oppressor and the defence of the weak, is very significant and revealing of Guru Nanak's system and mission.<sup>32</sup> Further, it is important to understand that the doctrine of Miri and Piri is the natural and inevitable corollary of the path of love and the service of man, of the rejection of ascetism and monasticism, of the acceptance of the householder's life, and of securing justice, equality and freedom for all men. For once the householder's life becomes the forum of spiritual growth and activity, the man of religion has to accept total responsibility for repelling all attacks on the moral life and interests of man, from whatever quarters, whether social or political, those should emanate. It is for this reason that Guru Tegh Bahadur, who was considered by the state to be organising a rebellion against the Empire, spurned the offer of the Emperor that if he gave up his political activities and confined to only religious preachings, he would get imperial grants.<sup>32A</sup>

##### *5. The institution of succession and ten Masters*

This sense of social responsibility in the god-man clearly involves that he has to create institutions and a society with which he could, to an extent, solve the problems of oppression, aggression, discrimination, and conflict. The god-man does no miracles, but, as the instrument of God, he is obliged to create the necessary means and institutions for resisting political and social oppression and social or caste discrimination. But, sociopolitical oppression and injustice can be countered only by a committed and motivated society and not just by individuals, nor by mere preaching. Accordingly, new institutions had to be created and faulty institutions had to be supplanted. And, obviously, this great task could not be accomplished in one generation. A society with new motivations and ideals, and new cultural patterns, had to be created, wholly divorced from the hierarchical and the divisive caste society of the times. It is in the above context that we have to understand Guru Nanak's organisation of Sikh Sangats at all the places he visited and the appointment of a successor who was given a clear direction not to be a quietist but to organise a Panth or a society with the mission is mentioned above. An

important feature of Guru Nanak's mission is the appointment of a successor and the line of Ten Masters. If it were a question merely of communication of his spiritual thesis, the Bani of Guru Nanak completely embodied the same and no new fundamental was added to it in the Bani of the subsequent Gurus. Again, if it were merely the question of personal or individual salvation, or of creating a comprehensive scripture, the role of the last five Gurus cannot be understood. Because so far as the scripture was concerned, the same had been compiled and created by the fifth Guru. The entire objective of his mission becomes clear only if one accepts that Guru Nanak's ideal was equally the social salvation of man and the creation of a God-oriented society that was to resist and combat the evils he had enumerated. That society had to seek to solve the social problems he had identified in his Bani. In fact, Guru Nanak's mission would not have been unfulfilled, if he had not created the institution of succession in order to create and organise a society, or if the fifth Guru had stopped the succession after the compilation of the *Adi Granth*. For, without the appearance of the Tenth Master and the creation of the *Khalsa*, Guru Nanak's mission would have remained incomplete. Sainapat clearly records that the creation of the *Khalsa* was an important goal of the Guru which was revealed on the *Baisakhi* day of 1699 A.D.<sup>33</sup> It is only in the context of his socio-religious ideals that the role of each of the subsequent Gurus, particularly that of the Tenth Master to create the *Khalsa* Panth and stop the line of further Gurus, becomes clear. The emphatic point that emerges is that for Guru Nanak's religious thesis the creation of a Panth or a society motivated with Guru's religious ideals was essential. In pursuance of this mission the institution of succession and the logically integrated work of the nine succeeding masters culminating in the final creation of the *Khalsa* are parts of a clearly directed historical process. This is also evident from the doctrine of five freedoms (five *Nash*) gained by the Sikh when he was initiated into the *Khalsa* and given *Amrit* (baptised). Guru Gobind Singh clearly stressed the radical departure Guru Nanak's system had made from the earlier religious systems. The five freedoms were freedom from all the earlier religious traditions or systems, freedom from the shackles of the earlier practices and deeds, freedom from the influence of caste or family lineage, freedom from the stigma attached to any profession or the compulsion to follow a hereditary calling, and freedom from any earlier inhibition, prejudices or rituals.<sup>34</sup> The *Amrit* ceremony prominently signified a clear break with the earlier religious systems, customs or practices. Since human prejudices, conditionings, and fixations die hard, the new religious and cultural orientation of an entire society had to take a long time, especially when in most of its religious principles

and doctrines it had completely deviated from the path of the traditional systems.

Here it is necessary to mention the important episode of the first Baisakhi day (1699 A.D.). After Guru Gobind Singh selected the five Piaras (The beloved ones), baptised them, i.e., performed the Amrit ceremony, and created the Khalsa, he requested and insisted that the five baptised Sikhs, the select leaders of the Khalsa Panth, should formally baptise the Tenth Master as a Singh. This event is in many ways of a crucial and revealing significance. It happened when the sons of the Guru were still alive. It indicates as recorded by Sainapat, that the event epitomised the culminating act in the mission of Guru Nanak, that the socio-religious Sikh society had become mature enough to carry forward the mission of the Gurus now entrusted to them, that the line of personal Gurus to guide the Sikhs would end as no longer necessary, and that the Sikh society would be able to play its historical role. The lessons of this episode are too evident to be missed. Guru Nanak proclaimed that he had been charged with a mission. His spiritual thesis stands embodied in the authenticated scripture, Guru Granth Sahib, the doctrinal guide. The lives of the ten Gurus amply and completely illustrate how the spiritual thesis had to be implemented. Hence forward the Tenth Master closed the earlier chapter and placed the responsibility of future action squarely on the shoulders of the Khalsa, the 'Guru Panth'. 'Shabad' or Guru Granth became the scripture, or the thesis, and the Khalsa, the society created by the Guru, became the instrument.

In the light of the mission of Guru Nanak let us now see the role played by his society in the late seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. In its internal constitution and social intercourses and mobility, it was casteless, with complete fraternity amongst its members. Without a deep cohesion and commitment to its mission, it could never challenge the empire which was out to destroy it root and branch and had placed a price on the head of every Sikh. Significantly, it was a revolutionary religious society, constituted of a committed people, and led by persons who in the Brahmanical society were considered to be the lowest. Rangrettas, Kalals, Shudras were its generals and leaders. The marvel of this achievement can be gauged by the fact that in the Indian society in 1947, after India attained Independence, the Prime Minister of India and the Chief Ministers of practically all the States belonged to the Brahmin class. Even in the French Revolution which took place half a century later, the leadership of the revolutionary movement was always with the middle class and not with the peasants or the fourth estate.

Externally, the achievement of the society was the uprooting of the Mughal empire in the north-western India. What we wish to emphasize is the evident relation between the criticism by Guru Nanak in his Babar Vani and the achievements of his society in securing complete freedom not only from the Mughal yoke but once for all from the march of invading hordes that plagued the country for almost a thousand years. This explains the dictum that the steel of the sword of Guru Gobind Singh and the Khalsa was created and welded by Guru Nanak.

Basically, Guru Nanak was not only the prophet of the individual or personal salvation of man, but in his religious system the personal salvation of man and the social salvation of the community of men were intimately and inalienably linked. It is true, that as in the case of Neo-Platonism and Sufism, salvation religions and monasticism arise when cultures are in decay and weary, and men of religion, finding the challenges of life and society to be too great to deal with, seek refuge in renunciation, asceticism, stoicism, and Ahimsa. In fact, all such religious movements involve, by and large, withdrawal from life. But, on the other hand, a religion like that of Guru Nanak distinctly aims at the social salvation of man by the creation of new institutions and culture. A typical instance of the former is Neo-Platonism that arose when Greek culture and character were at its lowest ebb. As against it, we have referred to the system of Guru Nanak and the role of a society that brought about social freedom and salvation of man in north-western India. It is, thus, a religion that seeks to break the dichotomy between the spiritual life and the empirical life of man. It is in this light that we have to understand the natural and inevitable combination between the thesis of Guru Nanak and the role of the Tenth Master in the creation of the Khalsa and its historical operation and achievements.

Even today all misinterpretations of the Sikh religion and its history are partly due to the failure to understand the significance of the institution of succession of the Ten Masters, the creation of the Khalsa, and closing the line of succession by entrusting the Guruship to the Guru Granth. The need and the uniqueness of this institution become glaringly clear when the ideology and the mission of Guru Nanak are properly understood as laid down in his Bani. For that matter any interpretation of his thesis which fails to grasp these basic points is just naive.

#### *6. A Problem of Understanding*

It is Guru Nanak's radical break with all the earlier religious systems in India that has caused, among votaries of other religious or Cultural systems,

a problem of understanding Sikhism. Persons conditioned by quietist or pacifist traditions or thinking find it hard to grasp the inalienable unity of Guru Nanak-Guru Gobind Singh combination. This lack of understanding his system occurred first with the Nath Yogis who finding him in a householder's garb asked him why he was pouring acid into the pure milk of spirituality by leading an ordinary householder's life. The Guru's reply to the Nath was that it was they who did not understand even the elementaries of the spiritual life<sup>35</sup> because the Guru had in his hymns, unambiguously condemned withdrawal from life, asceticism and other -worldliness.<sup>36</sup> The same problem occurred with Sant Ramdas of Maharashtra when he found Guru Hargobind riding a horse fully armed. He questioned him by saying that being a successor of Guru Nanak how he reconciled his military attire and role with the piety and saintliness of Guru Nanak. The Guru's reply was clear and categorical. 'Guru Nanak had given up mammon and not the world; my sword is for the defence of the weak and the destruction of the tyrant.' In equally emphatic words Dasam Granth repeated the same concept :

"He (Nanak) established religion in the Kali age...  
 Nanak assumed the body of Angad...  
 Afterwards Nanak was called Amar Das,  
 As one lamp is lit from another...  
 And Amar Das became Ram Das,  
 The pious saw this, but not the fools,  
 Who thought them all distinct.

But some rare persons recognized that they were all one."<sup>36</sup>

Thus, the Gurus themselves have clarified and stressed the radical character and the unity of the Sikh thought and doctrines when some religious men of their times, because of their own education under earlier religions, failed to grasp the integrity of Sikhism. The difficulty of rising above the conditioning of one's own training and tradition is so great that even a historian like Toynbee, with a pacifist Christian background, fails to understand the philosophy of Islam and attacks the role of prophet Mohammad for his politico-military activities. Similarly, Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindra Nath Tagore, Jadu Nath Sirkar have violently criticized Guru Gobind Singh for his militancy and wars with the Moghul Empire. In contrast Pir Budhu Shah, a Muslim saint, was so bewitched and inspired by the spiritual stature of Guru Gobind Singh that he not only joined and aided his struggles but two of his sons also lost their lives while fighting in the forces of the Guru. History hardly records the like instance of a saint sacrificing the lives of his sons for the cause of a person of an opposing faith especially when his co-religionist should

be heading the Empire of the day. For Pir Budhu Shah, it was the cause of God that the Guru was fighting for. This unparalleled event that speaks volumes for the spiritual height of the tenth Master, the devotees of pacifist or salvation religions are unable to understand much less appreciate. Again it is a Muslim theologian and philosopher, Dr. Muhammad Iqbal, who in the entire panorama of Indian history finds only two tall spiritual personalities, namely, Gautam Buddha and Guru Nanak who have enriched Indian religious thought and life with their light, vision, and wisdom. He says:-

“The nation paid no heed to the message of Gautam;  
 It failed to appreciate the value of its resplendent jewel,  
 Ah! the ill-fated remained deaf to the Voice of Truth.  
 The tree is unaware of the sweetness of its own fruit;  
 He revealed to man the secret of life;  
 But, India remained intoxicated with its speculations in philosophy;  
 For, it was not a society the light of truth could illuminate;  
 God’s mercy rained, but the land was barren;  
 Ah! for the Sudra, Hindustan is the house of sorrow,  
 For its heart is devoid of the sap of compassion.  
 The Brahmin is still intoxicated with the wine of his ritualistic injunctions.  
 The flame of Gautam is alight but in alien societies.  
 After ages this house of false gods was illumined again;  
 And, the light of God (Ibrahim) again radiated in the house of man (Azhar);  
 Then, arose in Punjab the call for the Oneness of spirit (Tauheed).  
 And, the ideal man wakened India from its world of dreams.”<sup>37</sup>

James Lewis has also recorded the problem of Western scholars in viewing Sikhism in its proper perspective and light. He writes: “Nevertheless because of the resonances which the Nanak -Gobind Singh contrast elicited from the inner tensions of European Christians, trace of the degenerationist paradigm was retained in discussions, particularly academic discussions, of the development of the Sikh religion. In fact, the theme of supposed contradiction between the early and later Sikhism, often carrying with it the same undertone of moral censure that it originally carried, is repeated in western discourse about Sikhism to this very day, and will, undoubtedly continue to be present in such discourse as long as scholars from Christian background fail to come to terms with the contradiction in their own culture.”

38

A question arises why it is that neither Indian nor Western scholars are able to understand the philosophy of Guru Nanak-Guru Gobind Singh combination and its integrated unity and why only Muslim scholars and saints appreciate it. The reasons are obvious but doctrinal. In the Middle Eastern and the Western religions and culture, it is only Prophet Muhammad who



created a clear link between the spiritual and the empirical life of man. In the East it was only the Sikh Gurus who brought about this inalienable combination and did so despite the entire Indian tradition having been ascetic, monastic, other worldly, pacifist or caste ridden. Both these religions as a necessary corollary of their thesis accept the use of force for a righteous public cause where other means fail to redress the wrong. For the Gurus, reason and force are both neutral tools of man. They have both been used and mere often abused by them. But no life is possible without their discreet use for the good of the society. It is no accident that the story of Abu Ben Adam suggesting that those who love man are more dear to God than those who love Him is a product of the Muslim religious culture. The same idea is emphasized by Guru Nanak when he say\$ that "Truth is the Highest, but higher still is truthful conduct or living." The lesson of the parable of Abu Ben Adam and of Guru Nanak's basic statement quoted above is the same, namely, the religious primacy of the goal of service of man. And, this goal can materialize only if the spiritual level of man is raised and strengthened by the divine sap of God-consciousness, and his egoism is increasingly subdued or curbed in the socio-political life.

#### *7. Sikhism and Modernity*

A question arises how far is the system of Guru Nanak relevant to the problems of modern man? Scientism, evolutionism and materialism are the religions of the modern man. During the days of scientific euphoria in the second part of the 19th century and before the First World War, it was felt that the scientific outlook and progress would not only relieve man of his religious opiates and his sense of insecurity but these would also lead him to a future of hope and happiness. But the present day realities are far different, and even dismal, both in relation to his external and his internal environments. As to the external security and peace, the position is that apart from having two major world wars in the first half of this century we have, a decade before the closing of the century, fought over 50 bloody wars. In fact, man has killed, in the wars of the 20th century, more human beings than he did the world over in the earlier centuries. All this, and the colossal expenditure of about 1,000 billion dollars on armament each year, have, far from diminishing the danger of another war and increasing his sense of security, only added to his fears of the dreaded danger of a nuclear holocaust that might involve almost the death of life on this planet. The prospects of such an eventuality are so haunting that it has not only contributed to mental instability of the youth and to their lack of commitment or zest, but it has also given to them

a feeling of the very meaninglessness of life, leading in consequence to the erosion of values and to seeking satiation of the baser instincts of man. No wonder a modern scholar, writing about this approach to life that science and our culture have adopted says, "This philosophy can lead to dead-end, the annihilation of mythology, religion, all value systems, all hope." On the moral side all values have been dubbed as a mere defence mechanism or a reaction formation which appear, they say, in human culture as the result of the impact of the environment on the psyche of man. All this has further led to unbridled materialism and individualism and a serious questioning of the old value systems. For, we are told that all evolution and progress are due to a keen struggle of existence, involving the survival of the fittest. The result is a battered family system, a high rate of divorces, a rising number of mentally disturbed and insecure children, mutilated, lopsided and dwarfed personalities, and a mounting rate of drug-addiction and alcoholism. True, science has given us an amazingly equipped vehicle to drive. But, the tragedy is that the ape in man still continues to occupy the driver's seat.

It is in this context that, we believe, Guru Nanak's message is very relevant. For, he emphasizes that the problems of conflict and war, insecurity and frustration, and poverty and disease cannot be solved till man sheds his ego-centrism. Man, the Guru says, has both the opportunity and the destiny to be a superman i.e. to become God-centred instead of being ego-centred. His progress does not depend on the survival of a chance mutation but in his following the path of altruism; for, God's Will is altruistic. Instead of raising the dark spectacle of purposelessness and pessimism for the future of man, the Guru's message is of hope and meaningfulness. It is a message for God-consciousness, and for belief in both the transcendence and the immanence of God. The fundamental principle of Guru Nanak's religion is the establishment of a spiritual link between the individual salvation and the social salvation of man, and to emphasize that there can be no social salvation of man till his spiritual level is raised, and that there can be no spiritual salvation of man till it is integrated with his social salvation or till it is reflected in man's social field. Progress in the two fields is inseparable and mutually dependent or connected.

### *8. Conclusion*

The conclusion from our discussion is obvious. In the Indian and the Eastern context the thesis of an inalienable combination between the spiritual life of man and his empirical life was first enunciated, proclaimed and established by Guru Nanak. It is also equally evident that there was

nothing in the Indian historical context and the environmental forces that could give rise to such a thesis. This gift to both the prophets, Nanak and Mohammad, was God given. Hence the problem of some pacifists, materialists and pseudo-scientific scholars to understand the world-view of Sikhism. Because the Gurus believe not only in the spiritual dimension of Reality but also that the best periods of human history are those when the spiritual and the empirical or rational dimensions of Reality are combined to lift man to new heights. Collingwood stresses the point aptly, "The discovery of a relation is at once the discovery of my thought as reaching God and of God's thought as reaching me; an, indistinguishable from this, the performance of an act of mine by which I establish a relation with God and an act of God's by which he establishes a relation with me. To fancy that religion lives either below or above the limits of reflective thought is fatally to misconceive either the nature of religion or the nature of reflective thought. It would be nearer the truth to say that in religion the life of reflection is concentrated in its intensest form, and that the special problems of theoretical and practical life all take their special forms by segregation out of the body of the religious consciousness, and retain their vitality only so far as they preserve their connexion with it and with each other in it." <sup>39</sup> In Sikhism the ideal is the kingdom of God not in heaven but on earth, and in the creation of it man has to be the, humble instrument of God. The Gurus repeatedly address man to give up his egocentric activities and rise to be a superman. "Among eighty four lac of species man is assigned the supreme position, whosoever misses the opportunity suffers the pain of transmigration." <sup>40</sup> "You have obtained the privilege of human birth, now is your opportunity to meet God." <sup>41</sup> And the role of the superman or Gurumukh is to follow the path the Gurus treaded and led. For the seeker the path is to shed egoism by the practice of love and virtues and humbly to seek the grace of God to gain the perception of God-consciousness in order to be the instrument of God's Attributive Will. It is also important to understand that Sikhism is universal in its character and distinctly cooperative in its approach to other religions for the spiritual-social progress of man.

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## 2

**THE ROLE OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY IN SIKHISM**

AVTARSINGH

A new and vibrant moral philosophy is the distinctive characteristic of Sikhism. A comparative study of its development impresses one with the unmistakable conclusion that the theoretical bases of Sikhism are essentially moral in nature and content. These are found in its spiritual vision and moral action. The human kind is offered by it a moral theory, which is not only profound but also within the possibility of its higher human nature.

The Sikh Moral Philosophy is grounded in the spirit of freedom. This freedom has influenced its notions of social justice and equality. Sikhism, not only cherishes freedom, but also seeks it for others. The freedom is not viewed as Mukti at the transcendent level, or a goal after death. It is instead valued as the essential character of the individual and social life. It is grounded in the sensitivity that all the human beings are essentially equal.

The Sikh social philosophy and polity is greatly influenced by its moral philosophy. Guru Gobind Singh has, in the Vachiternatak upheld the fight for the right to be his goal. The wrong is rejected as it is described to be immoral. The history of the Sikh religion and the Sikh society is to be seen in this moral perspective. It continues to colour the individual and social group actions of the Sikhs.

The freedom, as a moral value, has also played an important role in shaping the Sikh sentiment for the virtue of courage. The moral philosophy of nirbhau and suraha inspire the seekers to continue the struggle regardless of the fruits of their actions.

The desire to withdraw from the social and to seek one's fulfilment in the ascetic seclusion is rejected by the Sikh moral philosophy. On the other hand, the spiritual leaders have returned from the contemplative state to the social participatory arena. This has shaped the course of the Sikh life on the earth.

**SIKHISM  
AN ORIGINAL DISTINCT  
REVEALED AND COMPLETE RELIGION**

**HARNAM SINGH SHAN**

The word 'Sikh', as we know, is the Punjabised form of the Sanskrit word 'Shishya', meaning a disciple or a learner, especially a seeker of truth. It came to be used for the disciples of Guru Nanak Dev and his nine spiritual successors who graced humanity from 1469 to 1708 AD. in the Indian subcontinent. Thus, their religion, called Sikhism, literally means the path of discipleship and the new way of life taught by them.

Their faith is the youngest and the most modern of the world's religions. It originated in Punjab, the land of Five Rivers, about five centuries ago, during the Muslim rule of Lodhis followed soon by that of the Mughals in India.

**II**

Soon after the passing away, in 1708, of its Tenth Master, Guru Gobind Singh, the Mughal Emperor, Bahadur Shah, issued an imperial ordinance on the 10th of December 1710 from Delhi to "kill and finish them (the Sikhs) wherever they were found"<sup>1</sup>, ordering thus their wholesale destruction. That royal proclamation, outlawing the Sikhs and seeking their complete annihilation, was repeated by Emperor Farrukh Siyar and it remained in force for three long years in all parts of the Mughal Empire. "According to it, every Sikh or Nanakpanthi wherever seen was to be immediately arrested. He was to be offered only one alternative, either Islam or sword. He was to be executed there and then without any hesitation or loss of time. A schedule of valuable rewards was proclaimed. For every Sikh head Rs. 25 were to be given, and for a Sikh captive a sum of Rs. 100 was to be awarded. Their pretty girls were to be reduced to concubines, and other were to be made maid-servants. When a Muslim died, his grave was to be dug



by the Sikhs or their Hindu sympathisers. For begar (unpaid labour) in place of cobblers, Sikhs were to be employed. The Emperor's orders were strictly obeyed. The Governors of Sar-hind, Lahore and Jammu tried to surpass one another in persecution of the Sikhs in order to win the goodwill of Farrukh Siyar."<sup>2</sup> Later, in 1746, according to Syed Mohammad Latif, "The Governor (of Pun-jab), Yahya Khan, issued a proclamation for a general massacre of all Sikhs, wherever they could be found. Death was to be punishment of all persons who invoked the name of Guru Gobind (Singh), and a reward was offered for the heads of Sikhs. Thousands were put to death daily and their heads brought before the Subedar of Lahore for reward."<sup>3</sup> It was reported, on three occasions, to the authorities that the Sikhs had been exterminated root-and-branch. The Afghan in-vader, Ahmad Shah Abdali, during his invasion of India in 1762 and his continued campaign of the Sikhs' extermination, killed about twenty five thousands of them<sup>4</sup> in a single day's battle.<sup>5</sup> Besides, he ransacked their capital (viz. Amritsar) blew up their Harmandar (i.e. the Temple of God, better known as Golden Temple), and desecrated its Sudhasar (i.e. sacred pool) with blood, bones and entrails of cows, etc., and had it filled up with the debris.<sup>6</sup>

With the establishment, in 1849, of the British rule in Panjab, Dr. Ernest Trumpp, a German missionary, appointed by Her Majesty's Government to translate sacred Sikh scriptures, asserted in 1877 that "Sikhism is a waning religion that will soon belong to history."<sup>7</sup> Joginder Nath Bhattacharya rather prophesied in 1896 that "Under British rule, Sikhism is fast losing its vitality and is drifting towards amalgamation with the Hindu faith. In the course of a few more generations, Sikhism is likely to be superseded by one of those forms of Vaishnavism which alone have the best chance of success among a subject nation in times of profound and undisturbable peace."<sup>8</sup> Max Arthur Macauliffe also apprehended such a danger of amalgamation or absorption when he observed firstly in his essays and papers (1881-1906)<sup>9</sup> and lastly in his magnum opus (1909): "Truly wonderful are the strength and vitality of Hinduism. It is like the boa constrictor of the Indian forests. When a petty enemy appears to worry it, it winds round its opponent, crushes it in its folds, and finally causes it to disappear in its capacious interior. In this way, many centuries ago, Hinduism on its own ground disposed of Buddhism which was largely a Hindu reformation; in this way, in a pre-historic period, it absorbed the religion of the Scythian invaders of Northern India; in this way, it has converted uneducated Islam in India into a semi-paganism; and in this way, it is disposing of the

reformed and once hopeful religion of Baba Nanak. Hinduism has embraced Sikhism in its folds; the still comparatively young religion is making a vigorous struggle for life, but its ultimate destruction is, it is apprehended, inevitable without state support.”<sup>10</sup> Gokul Chand Narang posing a self-prophesying question and answering it himself in a self-righteous manner, stated in 1912. “What is their (i.e. the Sikhs) future? It is anything but dark. However, it is apparent that the best days of the Khalsa are altogether behind.”<sup>11</sup>

During the all-out crusade of extermination started against its adherents (who are easily recognizable by their strikingly distinctive appearance sporting unshorn hair and colourful headgears) immediately before and after the partition of India and the creation of Pakistan on the 15th August 1947, thousands of them (the Sikhs) were killed at sight. The rest were uprooted, en masse, from their homes, lands and historic shrines; and were deprived of all other belongings in an unprecedented way.<sup>12</sup>

The horrendous holocaust reduced nearly half of their thriving community to a homeless, landless and seething refugee population. So much so that of all other persons, one of its own followers, Khushwant Singh, while prefacing his first book about them and their faith, observed in 1953: “The chief reason for my writing an account of my people is the melancholy thought that contemporary with my labours are being written the last chapters of the story of the Sikhs. By the end of the century, the Sikhs themselves will have passed into oblivion. Before that happens, it is proper that some estimate of their religion, history, traditions and political and cultural achievements should be made by someone identified with them by faith and association.”<sup>13</sup> Gokul Chand Narang, a staunch Arya-Samajist, came out in 1960 with another self-fulfilling statement asserting that the “Sikhs have no political future as an independent community.”<sup>14</sup> Fourteen years later, another highly learned Sikh, Kapur Singh, stated while concluding his speech on 7th of October 1974 at Vancouver: “While as Canadian citizens, the Sikhs may look forward to a hopeful and bright future; in India, their historic homeland, they now face the basic problems of their identity and existence, since the control of their own history has been snatched out of their own hands and their historical potential has been submerged and throttled. And I add, that the Sikhs, want to live, as all living things do not want to die.”<sup>15</sup>

Only ten years after that last pronouncement, the Sikhs had to face still another holocaust in 1984, only thirty-seven years after the

independence of India; for the attainment of which their sufferings, sacrifices and contribution far exceeded their numerical strength in their motherland.<sup>16</sup> This too involved not only a multi-pronged attack on their historic shrines and institutions<sup>17</sup> but also a genocidal campaign to slaughter thousands of innocent Sikhs, disgracing their women and burning their properties all over India, not accounted for to this date.<sup>18</sup>

But in spite of such recurrent persecution and treacherous onslaughts perpetrated on this religion by the rulers and the foreign invaders as well as the ongoing challenges and intimidating prophecies about its absorption, assimilation or disappearance, Sikhism has stood its ground and withstood all tests of the time. All nefarious efforts made, from time-to-time to suppress, subjugate or exterminate it, have gone up in smoke. All prophets of doom who predicted its extinction, had to bite the bullet and their prophecies have proven totally wrong. Even “the boa constrictor has failed to swallow it.”<sup>18a</sup> The fact remains that it has not only survived but is very much here to stay. Its followers are flourishing now in even larger numbers, not only in Panjab, its home-land, and in all other parts of India, but also in every part of the world. Despite various limitations, such as their unique appearance and ‘stateless status’ - the Sikhs have achieved a far greater success in all walks of life, contributing a lot to the progress of the communities they live in and wielding “an in-fluence much in excess of their numerical strength”<sup>19</sup> everywhere in the world. So much so that, according to the renowned historian Arnold Toynbee, “they are the burliest men on the face of the planet, tough and capable, and slightly grim. If human life survives the present chapter of man’s history, the Sikhs for sure, will still be on the map.”<sup>20</sup>

### III

This is so and shall remain thus; because the Sikhs, in spite of being about 2% of the population of India, their country of origin, profess one of the ‘higher religions’ of the World which is not only an original, distinct and independent faith; but is also an autonomous, complete and dynamic religion, born of a direct and definitive revelation like other major religions of the world. It is primary in its source and pure in its contents, as any other religion on the planet.

The authenticity of its dogmas, simplicity of its beliefs, exalted moral code, internal vigour, tenacity of purpose and sustained heroism together with the religious zeal, spiritual energy, unshakable faith and

indomitable spirit as well as the enterprising and self--sacrificing nature of its followers have kept it intact and firm on its ground in many such crisis, during its 500 plus year-old history, raising it up again with greater strength and better prospect after every attempt to annihilate it.

#### IV

Those who have not been able to study Sikhism properly or objectively or have been unable to understand rightly its nature, origin, essence, excellence, significance, psyche and spirit have often described it wrongly or misleadingly.

Some of them, like Estlin Carpenter, have considered it not an original and distinct but an eclectic and 'composed' religion, main-taining that "the movement of Nanak which culminated in the forma-tion of a kind of church nation, was fed from two sources and attempted to establish a religion combining the higher elements of Hinduism and Islam alike."<sup>21</sup> According to Rev. F. Heiler too, it is "a pure and elevated religion in which the best of Islam unite... Many elements of the Sikh religion...come very near the central truths of Christainity, though these glimpees of revelation are indeed blurred by the strong influence of Vedantic pantheism and Islamic fatalism. Above all, the element which robs the teaching of the Granth (i.e its sacred scripture, Guru Granth Sahib) of any creative power is its eclecticism, its continued oscillation between theism and pantheism."<sup>22</sup> In the words of Khushwant Singh, "Sikhism was born out of a wedlock between Hinduism and Islam."<sup>23</sup> It is "a synthesis' of these two faiths."<sup>24</sup> According to Bhattacharya, it may be described briefly as a Hinduized form of Mahomedanism or a Mahomedionized form of Hinduism,... is a mixture of Hinduism and Mohomedanism minus circumcision and cow-killing and plus faith in the Sikh Gurus. Even in outward appearance, a Sikh with his short trousers, flowing beard, forehead free from paint and neck without beads, looks more like a Mohomedan than a Hindu. The only visible sign by which he may be distinguished is the iron ring which he wears on the wrist."<sup>25</sup> The Time has recently described him as "a member of a casteless religion that combines elements of Hinduism and Islam but scorns the caste system of the Hindus and the historical expansionism of the Muslims."<sup>26</sup>

Some others, like Frederic Pincott, have also tried to identify Sikhism with Muhammadanism. According to him, "the religion of Nanak was really intended as a compromise between Hinduism and Muhammadanism, if it may not even be spoken of as the religion of a

Muhammadan.” Concluding his article on Sikhism, included in the Dictionary of Islam, he observed, “It is enough for the purpose of this article to have established the fact that Sikhism, in its inception, was intimately associated with Muhammadanism; and that it was intended as a means of bridging the gulf which separated the Hindus from the believers in the Prophet.”<sup>27</sup> Tara Chand has even gone to the extent of asserting that “Nanak took the Prophet of Islam as his model and his teaching was naturally deeply coloured by this fact.”<sup>28</sup>

Sri Rajagopalachari has described the Sikhs, as “no better than uncircumcized Mussalmans.”<sup>29-a</sup> Ascribing the theistical character of Sikhism to the influence of Islam, Monier Williams has stated, “Nanak was partially Islamised, to the extent at least of denouncing idolatry.”<sup>29</sup> G.T. Battany has also mentioned this religion “having been largely influenced by the growing Mohammedanism.”<sup>30</sup> But the Muslim writers, like Maulvi Insha Ullah Khan,<sup>31</sup> Maulvi Muhammad Ali,<sup>32</sup> Khwaja Hasan Nizami,<sup>33</sup> and Shaikh Muhammad Yusuf,<sup>34</sup> have gone a step further even by claiming Guru Nanak as a great Muslim Faqir who, according to them, taught a religion which in itself was a form of Muhammadanism.<sup>35</sup>

On the other hand, according to Ernst Trumpp, “Sikhism has only an accidental relationship with Muhammadanism. It is a mistake if Nanak is represented as having endeavoured to unite the Hindu and Muhammadan idea about God. Nanak remained a thorough Hindu according to all his views.”<sup>36</sup> “Although precipitated by Islam,” asserts Gokul Chand Narang, “Sikhism owes nothing to that religion. It is, on the other hand, a phase of Hindu religious revival and has in consequence retained all essential features of real Hinduism.”<sup>37</sup> Mahatma Gandhi has even claimed that the “Sikhs are a part of the Hindu community. The Granth Sahib is filled with the Hindu spirit and the Hindu legends, and millions of Hindus believe in Guru Nanak.”<sup>38</sup> Gandhi ji, tells Archer, “acknowledged that he had met some Sikhs who held themselves distinct from Hindus, but intimated that he would be pleased to find that the separate tendency is Confined to only a very few Sikhs and that the general body regard themselves as Hindus.”<sup>39</sup> thus paving the way for Sikhism to be labelled as an offshoot of Hinduism.

There are still others who, like Muhammad Akbar, have even denied the distinct identity and separate entity of Sikhism by asserting that “Guru Nanak did not enunciate any new religion, but only wanted to reform Hinduism.”<sup>40</sup> According to Guru Datt also, it is difficult to

say whether Sikhs have any separate or distinct religion of their own. The faith they profess is the basis of the present-day Arya-Samaj.<sup>41</sup> Nirad C. Chaudhuri has also identified Sikhism with Hinduism and has described it as one of its different forms.<sup>42</sup>

According to some others, like Marian Smith, Sikhism is a religious synthesis, she “finds a similarity between the reforms of Guru Nanak and those of Martin Luther. She calls Sikhism a religious synthesis, pointing out that Guru Nanak offered a doctrinal synthesis which answered the challenge of Islam and aimed at the foundations of the top-heavy Brahmanical social structure.”<sup>43</sup>

## V

But those who have studied Sikhism thoroughly and have understood its origin, growth and gospel dispassionately have proclaimed, in the words of Duncan Greenlees, the celebrated author of the World Gospel Series, that “Sikhism is no disguised Hindu sect, but an independent revelation of the Truth of all sects; it is no variant of Muslim teaching... It too is a distinct religion like the other great religions of the world... The Sikh is not a Hindu or a Muslim; he is the disciple of the one Eternal Guru.”<sup>44</sup> According to Edward Bitten-court, “Sikhism is a wholly new, original and genuinely monotheistic religion. It is an independent religion which naturally may be said to have a background of Hinduism and Islam much as Christianity has background of Judaism, and Judaism has a background of Akhnatonism and Zoroastrianism and previous Semitic Paganism.”<sup>45</sup> M.A Macauliffe who devoted thirty long years on its study and research and produced a six-volume monumental work about its prophets, scripture, tradition etc., had already stated while introduc-ing to the West this religion and its founder in the following words. “Guru Nanak was not a priest either by birth or education, but a man who soared to the loftiest heights of divine emotionalism, and exalted his mental vision to an ethical ideal beyond the conception of Hindu or Muhammadan. The illustrious author of Vie de Jesus asks whether great originality will again arise or the world would be content to follow the path opened by the daring creators of ancient ages. Now there is here presented a religion totally unaffected by Semitic or Christian influences. Based on the concept of the unity of God, it rejected Hindu formulations and adopted an independent ethical system, ritual, and standards which were totally opposed to theologi-cal beliefs of Guru Nanak’s age and country.”<sup>46</sup> Hence he asserted, “It would be difficult to point to a religion of greater

originality or to a more comprehensive ethical system.”<sup>47</sup> According to R.C. Majum-dar too, the founder of this new and distinct religion, “cut himself adrift from all associations with prevailing sectarian religions.”<sup>48</sup>

It even fell away from allegiance to their respective codes and developed its own, as observed by Sir Lepel Griffin in 1870: “The Sikhs had abandonth the Hindu faith, and with it the system of law which is the basis of that faith, and which was inseparable from it. For a hundered and fifty years they had been governed, as far as chief ships were concerned, by another code altogether, and it was as reasonable for them to refer to Manu and the shastras as the source of legal authority, as it would have been for Muhammadans who had embraced Sikhism to appeal to the Shara.”<sup>49</sup> So much so that, in the words of Prof. Indubhushan Banerjee, it “forged its own weapon, hedged itself behind newer forms and customs, in short developed individuality of its own.”<sup>50</sup>

And this is what Guru Arjan Dev, the holy compiler of its sacred scripture, Guru Granth Sahib, has himself stated, as under, in unambiguous terms as long back as in 1604 AD. :

I observe neither fasting (like a Hindu),  
 nor the month of austerity (like a Muslim).  
 For I serve God alone,  
 Who saves all at the last.  
 Gosain of the Hindus and Allah of the Muslim are one to me  
 I have broken free from Hindus as from Muslims.  
 Neither I go to Mecca to perform Hajj (like Muslims)  
 nor I perform worship at pilgrim-places of Hindus  
 I serve only the sole Lord (i.e. God) and no other.  
 I neither perform the Hindu worship,  
 nor say the Muslim prayer  
 I bow to the one Formless Lord in my heart.  
 We are neither Hindus nor Musalmans,  
 Our body and soul belong to the One Supreme Being  
 Who alone is both Ram and Allah for us.<sup>51</sup>

A contemporary historian Mobid Zulfiqar Ardistani (popular-ly known as Shaikh Mohsin Fani), who happened to stay with his son and successor, Guru Hargobind, at Kiratpur Sahib, and who had been the first non-sikh writer to record an account of the Sikhs and Sikhism of those days and that too based on first-hand information, has recorded

his statement in his famous work on comparative study of religions, entitled *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*, compiled in 1654 AD. Opening his chapter on the subject, Mohsin Fani observes: “the Nanak -Panthis who are known as the Sikhs of the Gurus have no faith in idols and temples of idols.”<sup>52</sup> Proceeding further, he states “They do not read the Mantras of the Hindus. They do not venerate their temples or idols, nor do they esteem their Avatars. They have no regard for the Sanskrit language which, according to the Hindus, is the speech of the angels.”<sup>53</sup> Indicating Guru Nanak’s own attitude towards Avatars and divinities, he tells that Guru Nanak did not believe in divinities and incarnations. “Just as he praised the Mohammadans, so has he praised the incarnations and the gods and goddesses of the Hindus. But he considered them all to be the created (makhlūq) and not the Creator (khalīq). He denied the doctrines of Halool (i.e. direct descent from or incarnation of God), and Ittihad (i.e. direct union of the All-pervading God with any particular body).”<sup>54</sup>

Bhai Gurdas, the amanuensis who wrote the Holy Granth at the dictation of Guru Arjan who himself was a great scholar and writer and whose ballads and couplets are regarded as the ‘key’ to an understanding of Sikh scriptures, tenets, practices, etc. has categorically stated :

The Guru’s Panth is distinct

And cannot be mixed with others.<sup>55</sup>

Basing his conclusion on numerous references and statements contained therein, Owen Cole has, therefore, observed, “Hinduism at all levels is rejected and replaced by the practices which have come to be the essential-part of Sikh ceremonial, use of the *Adi Granth* and celebration of the anniversaries of the Gurus (Gurpurbs).”<sup>56</sup>

Qazi Nur Muhammad who came to India from Baluchistan in the invader’s train to record the events of the seventh (dt. 1764) invasion of Ahmad Shah Abdali and who completed his “invaluable”<sup>57</sup> *Jang Namah* in 1765, has also expressed similar views which are based upon his personal observations and close contacts. Speaking of the religion of the Sikhs against whom the said expedition had been set in, Nur Muhammad tells us that religiously they were absolutely separate from Hindus:

“The Sikhs are the disciples of the Guru and that august Guru lived at Chak (Amritsar). The ways and manners of these people received their impetus from Nanak who showed those Sikhs a separate path (i.e. taught them a distinct religion). He was succeeded by Gobind



Singh from whom they received the title of 'Singh'. They are not from amongst the Hindus and have a separate religion of their own."<sup>58</sup>

J.D. Cunningham (1812-1851), who happened to be the first-ever Westerner to write and publish in 1849 the first full-fledged history of Sikhism, after fighting fierce and decisive battles with its followers, therefore observed in 1849: "The last apostle of the Sikhs did not live to see his own ends accomplished, but he effectually roused the dormant energies of a vanquished people, and filled them with a lofty although fit belonging for social freedom and national ascendancy, the proper adjuncts of that purity of worship which had been preached by Nanak. Gobind saw what was yet vital, and he resumed it with Promethean fire." The result of the miracle that the Tenth Master wrought is, tells Cunningham, that "A living Spirit possesses the whole Sikh people, and the impress of (Guru) Gobind (Singh) has not only elevated and altered the constitution of their minds, but has also operated materially and gives amplitude to their physical frames. The features and external form of a whole people have been modified, and a Sikh Chief is not more distinguishable by his stately person and free and manly bearing, than a minister of his faith is by a lofty thoughtfulness of look which marks the fervours of his soul, and his persuasion of the near presence of the Divinity." Asserting that the people marked by such high spirits and changed features belonged to a distinct faith, altogether different even from that of their other countrymen, Cunningham added: "Notwithstanding these changes, it has been usual to regard the Sikhs as essentially Hindus, and they doubtless are so in language and everyday customs, for Gobind (Singh) did not fetter his disciples with political systems or codes of municipal laws; yet in religious faith and worldly aspirations they are wholly different from other Indians, and they are bound together by a community of inward sentiment and outward object unknown elsewhere. But the misapprehension need not surprise the public nor condemn our scholars, when it is remembered that the learned Greece and Rome misunderstood the spirit of those humble men who obtained a new life by baptism. Tacitus and Suetonius regarded the early Christians as a mere Jewish sect, they failed to perceive the fundamental difference and to appreciate the latent, energy and real excellence of that doctrine which has added dignity and purity to modern civilization."<sup>59</sup> Sir Charles Elliot acclaimed it, therefore, as "a religion of special interest (to mankind), since it has created not only a political society, but also customs so distinctive that those who profess it, rank, in common

esteem, as a separate race.’<sup>60</sup> Guru Gobind Singh’s “ordinances”, he added, “were successful in.... creating a nation”<sup>61</sup>

Recognizing and acclaiming this amazing fact of history, the Sage-Scholar of Pondicherry, Sir Aurobindo, has similarly observed: “A more striking instance was the founding of the Sikh religion, its long line of Gurus and the novel direction and form given to it by Guru Gobind Singh in the democratic institution of Khalsa.”<sup>62</sup> Explaining it earlier, he has stated: “The Sikh Khalsa was an astonishingly original and novel creation, and its face was turned not to the past but to the future.”<sup>63</sup> Nirmal Kumar Jain has likewise asserted that those who consider this religion as an off-shoot of Islam “are as mistaken as those who think Sikhism to be an off-shoot of Hinduism. Like every original religion, it is born of a direct revelation. It is not based on any scripture. As it does not derive from any established creed, it does not fight any preceding religion.”<sup>64</sup> In the same vein, maintains Ishwari Prasad that “Guru Nanak declared that there was no Hindu or no Mussalman. He set aside the Vedas and the Quran and asked his followers to repeat the name of God.”<sup>65</sup> Hence said Dorothy Field, “Pure Sikhism is far above dependence on Hindu ritual. A reading of the Granth strongly suggests that Sikhism should be regarded as a new and separate world religion, rather than a reformed sect of the Hindus.”<sup>66</sup>

It is similarly not a sect or a form of Muhammadanism. It is neither a mixture of the both nor a compilation of good points selected from the Hindu and Muslim faiths. It has not been formed, as alleged above, by combining some rational and acceptable rituals, beliefs and dogmas of the Hindus and Muslims. “The teachings of Guru Nanak have,” says Geoffrey Parrinder, the eminent author of the *World Religions*, “commonly been represented as a syncretic blend of Hindu tradition and Muslim belief. This is a gross simplification, and when expressed in terms of a mixture of Hinduism and Islam, it must be totally rejected. The teachings of Guru Nanak do indeed represent a synthesis, but the elements which constitute the synthesis can never be defined, however, loosely, as Hinduism and Islam.”<sup>67</sup> Thus Sikhism can, in no way, be termed as an eclectic religion, composed of selections made from various systems, doctrines, Sources, etc.

The order of the Khalsa “from its very birth has claimed the status of a new Way of Life, the Third Panth, a separate community, and distinct people from the two Ways of Life, already known and largely practised by the peoples of East and West and the inhabitants

of India: the Way of the Aryans, represented by Hinduism and its heterodox forms, Buddhism and Jainism; and the Semitic Way of Life, represented primarily by the Christians and the Mussulmans.”<sup>68</sup> “That such was the unambiguous claim made for his new order of the Khalsa by the Guru (Gobind Singh) himself, cannot be in doubt, as the Guru’s own assertions on this point amply support the testimony of the contemporary non-sikh historians and writers.”<sup>69</sup>

This is also quite clear from the proclamation he made in the great gathering of the Sikhs at Anandpur Sahib, soon after baptising the first five members of the Order of the Khalsa, knighting them as Singhs and calling them his Beloved ones, OH the historic Baisakhi day of the 30th March 1699. “According to the Persian historian Ghulam Muhia-ul-Din, the newswriter of the period, sent the Emperor (Aurangzeb) a copy of the Guru’s address (which) is dated the first of Baisakh Sambat 1756 (Ad. 1699) and is as follows :”<sup>70</sup>

‘I wish you all to embrace one  
 creed and follow one path rising  
 above al differences of the religions  
 as now practised. Let the four  
 Hindu castes, who have different  
 rules laid down for them in the  
 Shastras abandon them altogether  
 and adopting the way of mutual  
 help and co-operation, mix freely with  
 one another. Let no one deem himself  
 superior to another. Do not  
 follow the old scriptures. Let none  
 pay heed to the Ganga and other places  
 of pilgrimage which are considered to be  
 holy in the Hindu religion, or worship  
 the Hindu deities such as Rama, Krishna,  
 Brahma and Durga; but all should cherish  
 faith in the teachings of Guru Nanak and  
 his successors. Let men of the four castes  
 receive my baptism (of the Double-edged Sword)  
 eat of the same vessel, and feel no aloofness  
 from or contempt for one another.”<sup>71</sup>

The newswriter of the Mughal Court who was present there on the occasion when for Warding this proclamation to his master, sub-mitted his own report: “When the guru had thus addressed the,

crowd, several Brahmins and Khattris stood up, and said that they accepted the religion of Guru Nanak and of the other Gurus. Others, on the contrary, said that they would never accept any religion which was opposed to the teachings of the Vedas and the Shastras, and that they would not renounce at the bidding of a boy the ancient faith which had descended to them from their ancestors. Thus, though several' refused to accept the Guru's religion, about twenty thousand men stood up and promised to obey him, as they had the fullest faith in his divine mission." <sup>72</sup> About eighty thousand men, tell Ahmad Shah Batalia and Bute Shah, received the Baptism of the Double-edged Sword and joined the Order of the Khalsa during the first few days. <sup>73</sup> Their names were changed and "they were given one family name 'Singh' for thenseforth their father was Gobind Singh (so renamed after his own baptism), their mother Sahib Devan, and their place of birth Anandpur. The baptism symbolised a rebirth, by which the initiated were considered as having renounced their previous occupations (kirt nas) for that of working for God; of having severed their family ties (kul nas) to become the family of Gobind; of having rejected their earlier creeds (dharma nas) for the creed of the Khalsa; of having given up all ritual (karm nas) save that sanctioned by the Sikh faith. Five emblems were prescribed for the Khalsa. They were to wear their hair and beard un-horn (kes); they were to carry a comb (kangha) in the hair to keep it tidy; they were always to wear a knee-length pair of breeches (kach), worn by soldiers of the tiples; they were to carry a steel bracelet (kara) on their right wrist; and they were to be ever armed with a sabre (kirpan). In addition to these five emblems, the converts were to observe four rules of conduct (rehat): not to cut any hair .on any part of their body; not to smoke or chew tobacco, or consume alcoholic drinks; not to eat an animal which had been slaughtered by being bled to death, as was customary with the Muslims, but eat only jhatka meat, where animal had been despatched with one blow, and not to molest the person of Muslim women. At the end of oath taking the Guru hailed the converts with a new form of greeting:" <sup>74</sup>

'Wahiguru ji ka Khalsa

Wahiguru ji ki Fateh'.

Hail the Khalsa who belongs to Lord God !

Hail the Lord God to Whom belongs the victory !

The very first ordinance issued by the Founder of the Khalsa to the Sikh congregations through out the subcontinent, Kabul and

Ghazni confirms the<sup>75</sup> above and his definition of the Khalsa cor-roborates all that further as under in his own words:

“He whose mind dwells, night and day,  
on the Ever-effulgent Light,  
and never swerves from the thought of one God;  
He Who is full of love for God and faith in Him,  
and believes not, even mistakenly,  
in fasting and worship of the graves of Muslims  
or sepulchres of Hindus;  
He who recognises the one God and not another,  
and does not believe in pilgrimages,  
customary charities, preservation of  
all forms of life, penances and austerities;  
And he whose heart is illumined when  
by the Light of the Perfect One,  
he is to be recognised then  
as a pure member of the Order of the Khalsa.”<sup>76</sup>

All that ushered in a complete break with the past of all those who joined the Order of such Khalsa. It also marked “the culmination which had crowned Guru Nanak’s revelation.”<sup>77</sup> It also pronounced the complete independence and distinctiveness of the Sikh religion. “That such has been the stou, belief and the basic impulse of the Sikhs and their history can be readily ascertained by any dispassionate person who would take pains to enquire with an open mind.”<sup>78</sup> He or she would surely come to a similar conclusion.

Further authentication to this stance has been duly provided by John Clark Archer who, after conducting a critical and comparative study of the Aryan and Semitic religions and recognizing the separate entity and identity of Sikhism, has maintained that “Indeed Sikhism in itself reveals something of what in the last analysis religion is...” It is “an independent and conspicuous order of its own, with a character worthy of comparison with that of Hinduism and Islam, and with Christianity in particular... The five centuries of Sikh history provide many lessons in human thought and action which are of more than passing value...:Sikhs may stand, therefore, as symbols and ex-amples of all who search for God and Truth They preserve among themselves a hardy tradition of religious and political activity and enjoy among Hindus, Moslems, Christians and other peoples an extraordinary prestige.”<sup>79</sup> The dispassionate ellquirer would also find like an American convert, Ralph Singh,’ that the followers of this distinct faith “have

their own Prophets who brought a new divine revelation to earth which is enshrined in their own sacred scripture, the Guru Granth Sahib, regarded as the living Word of God.”<sup>80</sup> But a biased enquirer, Like Hew McLeod, who has, according to Justice Gurdev Singh “attacked most of the Sikh traditions, institutions and beliefs, questioned their validity and striven to create doubts about others,”<sup>81</sup>, would, on the other hand, maintain on flimsy props and erroneous conclusions that “Sikhism does not deserve much con-sideration as it is only a rehash of a minor effete Hindu creed” and that Guru Nanak was not the founder of this religion “as he did not originate a new school of thought or set of teachings.” McLeod has even gone to the extent of choosing not to accept the aforesaid account of the birth of the Khalsa and the five emblems and rules of Conduct prescribed for it by Guru Gobind Singh himself on the Baisakhi of 1699, “not because he finds any evidence to falsify it but by simply refusing to believe it,” saying, “Our knowledge of this (18th) century is still limited. Traditions abound but so too do compulsive reasons for scepticism. What we do know, however, indicates that traditions relating to the period of Guru Gobind Singh must be, in some considerable measure, set aside. The slate must be wiped clean and must not be reinscribed until we have ascertained just what did take place’ during the eighteenth century.”<sup>82</sup>

## VI

But the history and tradition of a religion cannot and should not be “set aside,” discarded or “wiped clean” on the mere suspicions or unjustified scepticism of an ex-employee of a Christian Mission. Such scepticism is unwarranted particularly in the case of a religion, viz. Sikhism, which was born just about five centuries back and which has survived so gloriously through this eventful period of the modern world in full gaze of history. More so, when it has been duly recognised not only as an original and distinct but also as an independent and autonomous higher religion of the world.

Besides, as already stated, this is a prophetic religion. It is born of a direct and definitive revelation like all other great and ‘higher religions’ of the world, “Instead of drawing authority and inspiration from any revealed scripture, such as the Hindu Puranas and Smritis do, Guru Nanak depended on his own mystical experience.”<sup>83</sup> The revelation did not also come to him as an ‘external inspiration’ (called Wahi Zahir) which “was used for the production of Quran” during whose process “the mind of Muhammad was passive and message, an external one, was brought to him by Gabriel.”<sup>84</sup> On the other hand, “It

seems certain”, says Duncan Greenlees, “that his (Guru Nanak’s) views welled up from the deeps of inspiration in his own heart and owed little or nothing to what he received from others, either through books or through their words.”<sup>85</sup> Guru Nanak himself vouchsafed this fact and has himself recorded those experiences and revelations, received directly from God himself, in his own Bani or Word Revealed, preserved till today in its original and undefiled form, singling out his religion, thereby, “from, most other great theological systems as regards the authenticity of its dogmas.”<sup>86</sup> He has defined this as Khasam-ki-Banf (i.e. the “Word of the Lord”) in one hymn, and Eh Bani Mahan Purakh Ki (Le. “this word of the Supreme Being”) in another.<sup>87</sup>

The spiritual and religious truths which Guru Nanak preached had been revealed to him “through a direct encounter with God at some level of consciousness” and he preached what he had been told and taught by God himself. He conveyed only those words to the world which God had wished him to give forth as his divine message, as stated by him in verses such as the following:

“As the Lord’s Word descends to me So I express it, Lalo !”<sup>88</sup>

“I have uttered only what You, O’ Lord! Have inspired me to utter.”<sup>89</sup>

Guru Nanak has also mentioned in another hymn that he was an ordinary minstrel who was commissioned and blessed by God with his service. Describing his first audience with the Supreme Being the Guru sang aloud thus in words which read as under:

“I was an idle bard,

God assigned to me a rewarding task,

And commanded me to sing His praises night and day.

He summoned me to His Eternal Mansion,

bestowed on me the robe of holy laudation,

And feasted me on the holy Name ambrosial...

The Supreme Being is attained, say Nanak,

by laudation of the holy Eternal.”<sup>90</sup>

As is well known to the students of comparative religion, contents of a revealed religion are conveyed to the people by the Supreme Being through His special messengers either by calling them to His presence, as in the case of Moses, or by communicating His messages to them, as in the case of Prophet Muhammad. As regards Sikhism, God is stated to have been pleased to use direct ways to convey His Words, Laws and Commandments to its founder,<sup>91</sup> as stated above by the first Sikh Prophet, Guru Nanak, himself in his own words.

His successors in the Apostlic Lineage have not only endorsed this fact but have also recorded their own experiences and audiences, as under, in their respective writings, compiled in 1604 by the Fifth Master in the holy book. Guru Granth Sahib, and preserved intact to this day:

*I. By Communication:*

1. As stated by Guru Amar Das, the Third Master;
  - “God is Sole and Supreme,
  - none is His equal.
  - I speak as and when He makes me speak,
  - my utterance is directed by Him.”<sup>92</sup>
2. As confirmed by Guru Ram Das, the Fourth Master;
  - (i) “To Nanak the Truth was revealed by the Lord  
So he relates mysteries of the Divine Portal.”<sup>93</sup>
  - (ii) “Know the utterance of the holy Preceptor to be pure  
and true.

Disciples of thy Master:

For, the Lord-Creator Himself makes him utter by his mouth.”<sup>94</sup>

(iii) “The Lord has appointed me, the unsophisticated to His task.”<sup>95</sup>

3. As affirmed repeatedly by Guru Nanak Arjan Dev, the Fifth Master:

- (i) “Inaccessible, unperceivable, my eternal Lord,  
Nanak speaks as we inspire him to speak.”<sup>96</sup>
- (ii) “By myself I do not know what to say;  
I have stated all by his command.”<sup>97</sup>
- (iii) “This servant of the Lord while Conveying the Divine  
word,  
Speaks as the Lord directs him.”<sup>98</sup>
- (iv) “What can I utter? I know nothing to utter;  
As the Lord Wills so He makes me utter.”<sup>99</sup>

*II. By Audience:*

1. As stated by Guru Ram Das, the Fourth Master;
  - “I, a minstrel of the Lord-God,  
came to the Divine Portal.  
The Lord inside listened to my supplication,  
and called me into His Presence.  
Addressing me, He asked me,  
‘What brings you here, My Minstrel ?’



I prayed, 'Confer on me, O, Gracious Lord;  
the boon of ever abiding on your Name Divine.'  
The Bountiful Lord granted my prayer,  
conferred on me meditation on the Name  
and blessed me with a robe of honour."<sup>100</sup>

2. As affirmed by Guru Arjan Dev, the Fifth Master:

"As I have attained the Lord sought-after  
illumination and joy have filled me.....  
I have been fully blessed by the Perfect Lord  
who has come, in His grace; to His selVant."<sup>101</sup>

That is..... The Lord-God called me into His Mansion  
wherein I consumed nectar (of Immortality).<sup>102</sup>

Such important disclosures, solemn statements, persistent affirmations and firm conviction in the existence and beneficence of God prove beyond doubt that Sikhism is a revealed religion. It is so, because it has been directly revealed by God through a line of Ten Prophet-teachers who after receiving its contents directly from Him, presented it to mankind in word and deed. They reproduced it in exactly the same original form; and also recorded it in their sacred writings. It is so, because It still remains primary in its source and pure in its contents.' It is neither selective or elective in its nature; nor secondary in its source; nor adulterated in its content. Hence, says M. Mujeeb, "the revelation that came to Guru Nanak must have been as direct and immediate and as independent of history and social circumstances as the religious literature of the Sikhs show it to be."<sup>103</sup>

That being so, Sikhism can in no way be called an admixture or juxtaposition of various doctrines gathered from this religion or that theological system by its Prophet-teachers who were genuine messengers of God. Its tenets and teachings have been borrowed neither from Hinduism nor from Islam nor from any other such source as has been alleged by those who have not been able to study or understand its essentials properly or dispassionately. It is true, in the words of R.C. Majumdar, that "his was the first and also the last successful attempt to bring together the Hindus and Muslims in a common fold of spiritual and social brotherhood."<sup>104</sup> The first words he uttered when called to take up the mission of his life after the aforesaid Audience with God were:

"Nah ko Hindu Nah Mussalman."

"There is no Hindu, there is no Mussalman."<sup>105</sup>

On the face of it, this cryptic phrase was “a simple announcement and yet a significant one in the context of India of his day.<sup>106</sup> To a society torn by<sup>107</sup> conflict, he brought a vision of common humanity .....a vision which transcended all barriers of creed and caste, race and country. He reminded men of their essential oneness. The terms, ‘Hindu’ and ‘Mussalman’, included Jainas, Buddhists, Jews, Christians and so on. Guru Nanak was asking men of all faiths and denominations to look beyond external divisions and distinctions to the fundamental unity of mankind. In proclaiming the unity which lay beyond particularisms, Guru Nanak was not overruling any existing religious designation or tradition. His intention was more radical: “he wanted to point men beyond their accepted condition to a new possibility a human community with a true spirit of fellowship and justice, with that deep ethical and spiritual commitment which expresses itself in concern for fellowmen. Nor was he seeking a syncretistic union between Hinduism and Islam or striving to achieve in his teaching a judicious mixture of elements from both to be acceptable to all. His equal attention to Hindu and Muslim identities and use of some of their religious vocabulary have led some to depict him as the reconciler of the two faiths, and to see Sikhism as “a deliberate mingling of Hindu and Muslim practices. To do so will mean missing much of his individual genius and misinterpreting the historical development issuing from his revelation.”<sup>108</sup> The beginnings of the Sikh faith, in fact, go back to this revelation which Guru Nanak brought to light around 1469 AD soon after his enlightenment and just before his departure for his preaching odysseys in India and abroad.

## VII

Sikhism is, above all, a complete religion in all respect like all other original and revealed religions of the world. That is, like Islam for instance.

1. It is Ahl-al-maqam,<sup>109</sup> having its own spiritual and political Capital, viz. the holy city of Amritsar (as Mecca is for Islam), with its world-famous Harmandir (Golden Temple and Akal Takhat) which are its focal point and for its followers the highest seat of spiritual and temporal authority, besides being “the centre of a World-religion meeting-ground of the various facets of the human-spirit and a profound symbol of future confluence of the World-cultures into a universal culture for mankind.”<sup>110</sup>

2. It is Ahl-al-kitab,<sup>111</sup> possessing its own holy book, viz. Guru Granth Sahib (as Quran is for Islam), which is not only the Guru Eternal

of its adherents but is also unique among the world's sacred scriptures. It has been acclaimed as "the only non-denominational scripture,"<sup>112</sup> the "scripture of universal religion" and "part of mankind's common spiritual treasure," which, according to Amold Toynbee, "should be brought within the direct reach of as many people as possible" and which also "deserves close study from the rest of the world."<sup>113</sup>

3. It is Ahl-al-milla<sup>114</sup> being a true religion revealed by Guru Nanak and having its own fellowship of faith and a cohesive community, called Sangat and Panth. The Turkish and Persian connotations of the word will mean a 'nation', a 'people' and a 'state'.<sup>115</sup> Sikhs are a casteless democratic society, assuring equal status and respect for all. It is for this society that Guru Gobind Singh, while expressing his great love and respect for it, declared publicly that...

"Whatever is available in my house, my wealth,  
my body, my mind, even my head  
Are ever at the disposal of my people."<sup>116</sup>

Paying his tribute to their selfless services, contributions and achievements, he also stated without any reservation that: ---

"It is through their favour that  
I have won my battles,  
and gifts been bestowed.  
It is through their favour that  
I have overcome my troubles  
and my stores are filled.  
It is through their favour again that  
I have acquired knowledge  
and have smothered my enemies.  
It is also through their favour that  
I am exalted and have attained this position;  
Otherwise, there are millions of  
humble persons like myself going about."<sup>117</sup>

After administering Khande di Pahul<sup>118</sup> to the First Five, knighting them as Singhs<sup>119</sup> and proclaiming them as his Panj Piare<sup>120</sup> the inaugurator of that 'self-abnegating, martial and eastless' Fellowship of Faith, Guru Gobind Singh, himself besought to be baptized by them in the same way as he had baptised them. Having been initiated and admitted as such to their brotherhood, called Khalsa,<sup>121</sup> he later announced that he had created the Khalsa in his own image under the direct command of God, the Timeless Being:

"The Khalsa is my alter ego, my other self,

The Khalsa is my embodiment,  
 in it I have my being.  
 The Khalsa is my beloved ideal.”<sup>122</sup>

Hence there was to be no difference between him, the Guru and the Khalsa, as created and initiated by him, in his own image. All this is unheard of in the annals of the religious and spiritual history of the world.

4. It is AhI-i-kalam,<sup>123</sup> having firm faith in the doctrine of the ‘Shabad’<sup>124</sup> the holy word, and the ‘Shabad-Guru’, i.e. the Word is Guru and Guide.<sup>125</sup>

“God permeates the celestial music of the Word.”

“The Word is the essence of  
 all meditation and discipline.”<sup>126</sup>

“God’s Name is cherished in One’s heart  
 by means of the Word.

The supreme state, realization and Uberation is attained by means of the Word.”<sup>127</sup>

“The Word alone

can feny us across the Ocean of Existence.”<sup>128</sup>

“The holy Word is the true Preceptor  
 the Guide, the Mystery profound and inserutable.

And it is the Word the absence of which  
 results in spiritual confusion.”<sup>129</sup>

5. It is AhI-al-Zaban, having its own language, viz. Panjabi (as Arabic is for Islam), with its own specific script called Gurmukhi, in which its scripture, annals and chronicles, etc. stand recorded right from the beginning.

6. It is AhI-al-Nishan, having its own distinct flag or banner, called ‘Kesri Nishan Sahib’, with ‘Khanda’ (the Khalsa emblem) inscribed and or installed thereon (as the parcham, is for Islam). It keeps on waving over all Sikh temples, called Gurdwaras.

7. It is AhI-al-Shahad<sup>130</sup> cherishing a long and unique line of great martyrdoms like those of its two prophets (viz. the Fifth, viz. Guru Arjan Dev and the Ninth, viz. Guru Tegh Bahadur), the Sahib-zadas (e.g. Babas Ajit Singh, Fateh Singh, Zorawar Singh and Jhujar Singh) and their followers (such as Bhai Mati Das and Bhai Mani Singh).

8. It is AhI-al-Shamshir, possessing the ceremonial sword, called Kirpan, as a symbol of power sovereignty and weapon of defence and justifiable offence in time of need. This specific weapon is a significant

part of the required uniform of a member of the Khalsa Brotherhood, being one of the Five K's or symbols of the Sikh faith, obligatory for him to always keep on his body. "Since a member of the Khalsa Brotherhood is pledged not to accept any alien restrictions on his civic freedom, he is enjoined to insist on and struggle for his unrestricted right to wear and possess arms of offence and defence."<sup>131</sup> According to a quotation attributed to Guru Gobind Singh :

"The political power and the State rest on armaments.

And without political sovereignty,

the good way of life cannot securely prevail in society."<sup>132</sup>

As he created the Khalsa "to establish the ever-persisting community of saint-soldiers" who could assist in the fulfilment 'of Guru Nanak's revelation and Guru's mission, it was considered essential to equip them with an "instrument of offence and defence and as an emblem of power and dignity which India had lost and which Guru Gobind Singh wanted to restore."<sup>133</sup>

At same time, he approved and allowed recourse to the Sword as 'the last resort of a reasonable man for settling conflicts when all other means have failed in due course. In his letter to emperor Aurangzeb, he therefore made it quite clear by writing that

"When an affair is past every other remedy,

It is just and righteous to draw the Sword."<sup>134</sup>

It is obvious that the Creator of the Khalsa created this new metaphor of the Sword "to give a new orientation to the minds of men given to passivity."<sup>135</sup>

9. It is Ahl-al-Sunnah<sup>136</sup> as well, having its own usages, customs and a distinctive code of conduct recorded in its scripture, compositions of Bhai Gurdas and Bhai Nand Lal, various Rahitnamas<sup>137</sup> and Rahit-Maryada.<sup>138</sup>

Describing the Sikh way of life, these works cover not only the spiritual discipline and moral code but also the social behaviour of the community whose members "are required to observe a distinctive code of conduct, one which specifies normative behaviour, outward appearance, and social obligation."<sup>139</sup>

## VIII

Sikhism is, thus a complete and perfect religion, not only because of its having such prominent features, elements and essentials of a 'higher-religion', but also because it was established, as its Founder stated, to carry out a specific command of the Lord-God Who Himself

is, as also proclaimed by him in the following couplet, All perfection or Perfection-incarnate.

“All that the Perfect One;  
has made is pect.

There is nothing lacking or excessive in its making.”<sup>140</sup>

It is dynamic, stable and eternal too as, according to the holy compiler of its sacred scripture,

“The holy preceptor has laid  
the immutable foundation of the faith

That never and in no way shall shake.”<sup>141</sup>

*Rather, it becomes firmer and firmer with the passage of each day, as stated below:*

“The eternal foundation laid by Guru Nanak,  
Is ever ascendant.”<sup>142</sup>

According to the following assertion of the contemporary bards, Rai Balwand and Satta minstrel,

“Guru Nanak founded the True

Dominion of God.

He raised the citadel of Truth  
on firm foundations.”<sup>143</sup>

On these foundations was raised a glorious spiritual and temporal edifice by Guru Gobind Singh who imparted his “stern Olympian air” to the followers of his who are recognizable till today by their distinctive appearance and are distinguished by their ever. Present high spirits, particularly in a period of adversity and crisis. That is so because “His impress not only elevated and altered the constitution of their minds, but contrary to the experience of ethnological experts- it also operated materially and gave amplitude to their physical frames. They came to be regarded as models of physical beauty and stateliness of manner. A tremendous change was effected in the whole tone of their national character. Even those people who had been considered as dregs of humanity were changed, as if by magic, into something rich and strange. The sweepers” barbers and confectioners, who had never so much as touched the sword and whose whole generation had lived as grovelling slaves of the so-called higher classes, became, under the stimulating leadership of Guru Gobind Singh, doughty warriors who never shrank from fear and who were ready to rush into the jaws of death at the bidding of their Guru.”<sup>144</sup>

This revealed, distinct and complete religion of such self-sacrificing saint-soldiers is a universal world faith with all-embracing appeal and elevating message for all mankind. "It is the faith of the New Age," says Rev. Bradshaw, "It is the *summum bonum*<sup>145</sup> for the modern man. It completely supplants and fulfils all the former dispensations of older religions. The other religions contain Truth, but Sikhism contains the fullness of Truth. The older faiths were good in their day, but that day is now past; and we are living in the dispensation of Guru Nanak. Just as we appreciate the discovery of modern living and do not want to exchange our modern jet airlines, automobiles and electricity for the horse-drawn carriages and candles of the past, we do not want to exchange the New Age Faith of Guru Nanak for any of the old age systems and their antiquated philosophies. The Sikh faith is the universal religion for the present space age. The Sikh religion is truly the answer to the problems of the modern man.<sup>146</sup> And it "is the only living faith," according to Bittencourt, "that gives the healing outlook on life."<sup>147</sup>

. As regards its potential and prospects in the religious domain of the world, it was Macauliffe, who, while addressing the Quest Society in 1910 at London, stated: "The Sikh religion (as compared to other religions) presents no mysteries and embraces an ethical system such as has never been excelled, if indeed it has ever been equalled. It offers fewer points of attack than any other theological system, and if patronized and cherished as its religious and political importance deserves, by a powerful government, it might become one of the first religions on this planet."<sup>148</sup>

Dorothy Field observed as follows in 1914, "Sikhism is capable of a distinct position as a world-religion, so long as the Sikhs maintain their distinctiveness. The religion is also one which should appeal to the accidental mind. It is essentially a practical religion. If judged from the pragmatist stand-point, which is a favourable point of view in some quarters, it would rank almost first in the world. Of no other religion can it be said that it had made a nation in so short a time. The religion of the Sikhs is one of the most interesting at present existing in India, possibly indeed in the whole world. That it should have transformed the outcaste Indian—a notoriously indolent and unstable person—into a fine and loyal warrior is little short of a miracle."<sup>149</sup> It was Arnold Toynbee again who prophesied, therefore, as recently as in 1960: "Mankind's religious future may be obscure; yet one thing can be foreseen. The living higher religions are going to influence

each other more than ever before in the days of increasing communication between all parts of the world and all branches of the human race. In this coming religious debate, the Sikh religion, and its scripture the Adi Granth will have something of special value to say to the rest of the world.”<sup>150</sup>

This will indeed be so, because it will have the opportunity of sharing that sort of experience to which the Nobel-Iaureate Pearl S. Buck had gained when she observed, after going through 4-volume English translation (by Dr. Gopal Singh) of that Holy Book: “I have studied the scriptures of other great religions, but I do not find elsewhere the same power of appeal to the heart and mind as I find here in these volumes. They are compact in spite of their length, and are a revelation of the vast reach of the human heart, varying from the most noble concept of God to the recognition and indeed the insistence upon the practical needs of the human body. There is something strangely modern about these scriptures and this puzzled me until I learned that they are in fact comparatively modern, compiled as late as the 15th century, when explorers were beginning to discover that the globe, upon which we all live, is a single entity divided only by arbitrary lines of our own making. Perhaps this sense of unity is the source of power I find in these volumes. They speak to persons of any religion or of none. They speak for the human ‘heart and the searching mind.”<sup>151</sup> And they do speak in verses such as these which, indeed, indicate that unique concept of unity and universality:

“The One Lord is our Father,  
We all are children of that One.”<sup>152</sup>

“None is our enemy,  
Nor is anyone a stranger to us.  
We are in accord with all...

The one God is pervasive in all creation  
At the sight of which Nanak is in bloom of Joy.”<sup>153</sup>

These and many other hymns contained in the Holy Granth, clearly visualize and preach a religion which knows no ethnical, racial or regional limitations; recognizes no distinction on account of birth, sex, caste, creed or colour, embodies universal respect and concern for all, and regards all as equals. This is testified by its first and last prophets, Guru Nanak Dev and Guru Gobind Singh, in the following words:

“There is Light among all  
and that Light is God’s Own.



Which pervades and illuminates everyone.”<sup>154</sup>  
 “Some one by shaving his head  
 becomes a Sanyasi, another a Yogi,  
 and yet another passes for a monk or ascetic.  
 Some call themselves Hindus,  
 other claim to be Muslims;  
 among these some are Shias and some are Sunnis.  
 Recognise all as belonging to the one race of humanity  
 God as Creator (for the Hindus) and God as Good (for the Muslims)  
 God as Sustainer and God as Merciful  
 is all one and the same God.  
 Recognise not another even in error or in doubt.  
 Worship that One alone  
 as He is the Supreme Lord of us all.  
 It is only His form, His Light  
 that is diffused in one and all.”<sup>155</sup>  
 Hence the followers of this universal faith conclude their daily  
 prayers to that One God, in the name of their founder, Guru Nanak  
 Dev, with the following couplets:  
 May Your holy Name,  
 be ever in ascendant.  
 May peace and prosperity  
 come to all !!  
 In Your Will  
 By Your Grace;!!<sup>156</sup>

They, thereby, ask for God’s blessings in favour not only of their  
 own community but also of the entire humanity, for the maxi-mum  
 good of each and every creature in the world.

## X

Thus, apart from being such a distinct monotheistic faith, Sikhism  
 is also a social and fraternal religion, standing equally for the  
 Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man’, guaranteeing equal status  
 to all human beings and asserting that normal family life lived with  
 virtuous conduct and firm faith in God leads to the path of salvation.

“Contemplation of the True Lord  
 brings illumination  
 Which enables one to remain unattached  
 in the midst of evil.  
 Such is the greatness of the True Preceptor

(that through His grace and guidance)  
 one can attain fullness.  
 while living with one's wife and children."<sup>157</sup>

Hence it is the religion of our time, modern in outlook, scientific in analysis, rational in approach and practical in adaptability; suited to the needs, aspirations and conditions of the modern man and his social set-up. It is a religion which is concerned with the creation of a just social order and is committed to social equality and peaceful co-existence, as proclaimed by its Fifth prophet, Guru Arjun Dev, in the following verse:

The Gracious Lord has now promulgated His ordinance;  
 None shall dominate over others or cause pain;  
 All shall abide in peace and happiness.

As the governance shall be gentle and affectionate.<sup>158</sup>

Sikhism enjoins on its followers social responsibility involving both social service and social action.

"He who does dedicated service in the world  
 gets a place at His Portal"<sup>159</sup>

"They alone understand the right way  
 who eat the bread of their labour  
 and share it with others"<sup>160</sup>

The above directives of Guru Nanak, (couched in his own pithy aphorisms: Nam Japo, Kirt Karo, Vand Chhako) are indeed "the foundation of a spiritually oriented, dynamic social life."<sup>161</sup> His frequent exhortation to follow the under-mentioned six-sided discipline cultivates and follows the virtues associated with it and leads further to the enrichment and fulfilment of such an ideal life :

Nam : Devotion in the Divine Name.

Dan : Giving to others, particularly to the needy.

Isnan : Purity of mind, body and environment.<sup>162</sup>

Seva : Service of mankind.<sup>163</sup>

Simran : Contemplation and remembrance of God.<sup>164</sup>

Satsang: Fellowship or company of true believers: Association with holy men.<sup>165</sup>

## XI

Sikhism is thus based on humanistic and universal values of the purest form; human freedom and, dignity, self-realization and self-confidence, and service and sacrifice have been the essential elements of its ethos.

The history and heritage of this religion, whether in its principles, doctrines, and sacred pronouncements, or in the practical lives of its founders and followers, “has been one of exhortation to liberation from all kinds of degrading bondage, mental, spiritual and social. Long before the modern idea of social freedom was evolved in the West, Sikhism had brought to mankind the message of freedom. In its social aspects, it was a movement of freedom from feudalism and caste tyranny. While spiritually it brought to man liberation from feudalism and caste tyranny, spiritually it brought to man freedom from suppression and those false beliefs which enslaved man to a selfish or ignorant priest-craft whether the priest was called Brahmin, Yogi or Mullah.” The founder of the holiest Sikh shrine and the compiler of the Sikh Scripture, Guru Arjan Dev, has himself recorded the impact of this unique movement in the following verse:

“The egg-shell of doubt has shattered  
and the mind is illumined ;  
The Master has freed us from bondage  
by cutting off fellers from our feed.”<sup>166</sup>

This is the verse which Macauliffe while recognizing its lasting significance, reproduced on the title-page of each of the six volumes of his magnum opus, *The Sikh Religion*, published in 1909 by the Oxford University. This is also the verse on the basis of which Banerjee stated, seventy years later: “The fetters of ritualistic religion were cut-off and the captives were... freed; and the foundations of the Spiritual Empire were laid. On these foundations was raised an imposing structure of Temporal Empire, blessed by Guru Gobind Singh’s never-to-be forgotten utterance: ‘RAJ KAREGA KHALSA’.

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  88. *Guru Granth Sahib*, op. cit., Rag Tilang, M.I., p. 722.
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  91. This has been duly mentioned by the earliest chroniclers of Sikh religion; such as by Bhai Gurdas (1551-1629) in his var no. Ipauri no. 24; *Puratan Janamsakhi* (1634 c), pp. 17-18; Sodhi Meharban (1581-1640) in his *Sach khand Pothi* (dt.1620c.), pp. 88-89; Bhai Nand Lal (1633-1741) in his *Ganj Namah*, ch. I, verses 48-50.
  92. *Ibid.*, Rag Sri, M. 3, p. 39.
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  104. Surendra Nath Banerjee as quoted in *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. IX (ii), Bombay-1977, p.481.
  - 104 Majumdar, Prof. R.c., *Ibid.*, Vol. VI Bombay-1960; 2nd.ed.1967, p.569.

105. For a detailed account see *Guru Nanak: The World-Teacher (Jagat Gurubaba)*, Chandigarh-1979, pp. 30-32; and *Teachings of Guru Nanak*, Chandigarh-1984, pp. 31-32 - both by Dr. Harnam Singh Shan.
106. According to Dr. Mohan Singh, "No teacher of the populace had uttered words of that import and significance, since the time of Upanishads. Those forewords at one stroke felled the giant structures of caste, credal, sectional and religious differences." (cf. *Sri Guru Nanak Dev and Nation building*, Tarn Taran-1934, p.8.
107. Harbans Singh, Prof., *Berkeley Lectures on Sikhism*, New Delhi-1983, pp. 9-10: That terrible conflict grew from the fact that the "impact of Islam on north western India in the 11th century had been through military conquest and sword and this had created reactions in the proud and sensitive Hindu mind such as resulted in impassable barriers of hatred and prejudice between the two World Culture currents, and their mutual contacts have, therefore, left irritating and unfortunate monuments of bigotry and misunderstanding, spiritual and historical; that still mark the Indian scene. The Sikh Prophets, the Nanaks desired to level down these barriers with a view to discover and provide a common spiritual ground for the two, Hinduism and Islam, where Hinduism gets over its injured superiority and sense of exclusiveness, and Islam, its arrogance and self centricity born out of military superiority. The Nanak V declared: Let Muslims rediscover the truth that the true essence of religious practice is compassion and its goal, the purification of soul, and that political utilitarianism and expedience is not basic to Islam, as such, and let the Hindus concede that Islam, thus understood, is as respectable and ceremoniously pure as the flowers, the silk, the deerskin and the butter-fat." (*Guru Granth Sahib*, op. cit. *Rag Maru*, M. 5, p. 1084; *17<sup>th</sup> Golden Temple: Amritsar*, a paper read by S. Kapur Singh at Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, on 24 Oct. 1977, p.2).
108. Harbans Singh, Prof. Berlesey, *Lectures on Sikhism*, New Delhi-1983, pp.10.
109. *Ahl* in Arabic originally meaning those who occupy with one the same tent, thus family inmates. Therefore, *ahl-al-bait* means the household of the Prophet Muhammad, his descendants. But this word is often connected with other notions, meaning so much as sharing in a thing, belonging to it or owner of the same, etc. (see 183 *Encyclopaedic of Islam* ed. by M. Th. Houtsma & others, Leyden-1913, Vol. I, p.183. *Maqam* means place or glorious station. (see *Quran*, ch. 17, V. 81.)
110. *The Golden Temple: Amritsar*, op. cit., p. 3.
111. *Ahl-al-kitab* the people of the Book. Muhammad calls so the Jews and Christians, in distinction from the heathens, on account of their possessing divine books of revelation, (*Tawrat* = Torah; *Zabur* = Psalter; *Indjil* = Gospel)." See *Ibid*, p. 184, "According to T.P. Hughes, it is a term used in the *Quran* for Jews and Christians, as believers in a revealed religion." (See his *Dictionary of Islam*, London-1885, p. 12).
112. Khushwant Singh, *The Sikhs*, Varanasi-1984, p. 21.
113. Tyonbee, *Unesco's Selections from the Sacred Writings of the Sikhs*, op. cit., p. 9.
114. *Milia* in Arabic means religion, rite, "In, *Kur'an* the Prophet speaks of 'Abraham's *Milia*, by which he means the original revelation in its purity with the article, *ai-milia* means the true religion revealed by Muhammad and is occasionally used elliptically for *ahl-al-milla*, the followers of the Muhammadan religion." (See *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ed by HAR Gibb & IA. Kramers, Leiden-1953, p. 380). According to the [*jt*ab 't-Tarifat, "it is expressive of religion as it stands in relation to the Prophet, as distinguished from *Din*, which signifies religion as it stands in relation to God., from *Mazhab* which



- signifies religion with reference to learned doctors.” (See Dictionary of Islam, op. cit., pp. 348-349).
115. See Glasse, Cyril, *The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam*, Francisco-1989, p. 269.
  116. *Khalsa Mahima*, Swaiyya no. 3, p. 717
  117. *Ibid.*, Swaiyya no. 2, p. 716.
  118. That is, Baptism of the Double-edged Sword.
  119. That is, the lions, used as surname by all male followers of Sikhism.
  120. That is, the Five Beloved Ones, Three out of them belonged earlier to the so-called low-castes (viz. Muhkam Chand, washerman from Dwarka; Himmat; a cook from Jagannath; Sahib Chand, a barber from Bidar, the fourth (viz. Daya Ram, a Kshatriya or Khatri by caste, from Lahore), the fifth (viz. Dharam Das, a Jat from Delhi).
  121. ‘Khalsa’ means the pure baptised and initiated Sikhs; Sikh brotherhood. The aim of Guru Gobind Singh in founding the Khalsa was to build up a nation of the purified Ones who would be free from the evils of religion and society. (Teja Singh & Ganda Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, op. cit., p. 72).
  122. See Sarab Loh Granth, ch. Khalsa Parkask
  123. Kalam in Arabic means word; speech. “The first technical use of Kalam seems to have been in the phrase Kalam Allah meaning either the Kuran or Allah’s quality (Sifa) called speech.” (See *Short Encyclopaedia of Islam*, op. cit., p. 210 *Dictionary of Islam*, op. cit., p. 260).
  124. “The majesty of the mystic sabda (Shabad) which we come across in the Sikh scripture,” tells Dr. R.K. Arora, hardly finds any parallel in the fullness...It has been associated with God without attributes. As the Guru is the repository of all spiritual jewels, so in him enshrines the Sabda and he also imparts it to the devotee. Sabda is the means by which one gets wisdom and the knowledge of the Lord. ‘By the Sabda of the guru one recognises the abode of the Lord within’. (Guru Granth Sahib, p. 364) He is one with Nama and Sabda, the two most profound concepts in the Sikh faith.” (See *The Sacred Scripture: Symbol of Spiritual Synthesis*, New Delhi-1988, pp. 35,45,103,109).
  125. *Guru Granth Sahib*, op. cit., Raga Asa, M.1. p. 351.
  126. *Ibid.*, Raga Dhanasari M.1, p.661.
  127. *Ibid.*, Raga Parbhati M.1, p. 1342.
  128. *Ibid.*, Raga Ramkali M. 1, p.943.
  129. *Ibid.*, Raga Sorath M.1, p. 635.
  130. Shuhada in Arabic means testimony, evidence and martyrdom. The meaning martyr is not found for Shohid in the Koran. It is only later commentators that have tried to find it in the Sura iv. The development of the meaning of Shahid to martyr took place under Christian influence... The martyr who seals his belief with his death, fighting against the infidels Shahid through out the Hadith literature and the great privileges that await him in heaven is readily depicted in numerous hadiths... In the book of Shihad martyrdom is praised quite in the style of the hadith... The praise of Shahada (martyrdom) led to a real longing to meet a martyr’s death and even Muhammad and ‘Omar longed for it.’ (see *The Dictionary of Islam*, op. cit., p. 571; *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*, op. cit. p. 515; *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 259-60. Penrice, John, *A Dictionary and Glossary of the Quran*, New Delhi-1978, pp. 79-80).
  - 131 Kapur Singh, *Parasaroprasna*, op. cit., p. 108.
  - 132 As stated by Bhai Santolch Singh, in his *Gurpratap Suraj Granth*, Kaithal- 1844, anu

- 36; Parasarsprasna, op. cit., p. 41. -
- 133 Teja Singh, Prin., Sikhism: Its deals and Institutions, 322, Amritsar-1938, reprint-1978, p. 34, Essays in Sikhism, Lahore-1941; reprint-1988, p. 168.
- 134 Guru Gobind Singh, Zafarnamoh, Dina Kangar-1706, Verse Wo. 22.
- 135 Heritage of the Sikhs, op. cit., p. 90.
- 136 Sunna or Sunnah means "custom, use and wont, statuet." (See another Encyclopaedia of Islam. op. cit., p. 552)" According to H.P.T. Hughes, "lit a path or way; a manner of life. A term used in the religion of the Muslims to express the custom or manner of life. Hence the tradition which records either the sayings or doings of Muhammad. Consequently all traditional law is divided into (1) what Mohammad did; (2) or what Muhammad enjoined; (3) or that which was done or said in the presence of Muhammad and which was not forbidden by him." (see his Dictionary of Islam, op. cit., p. 622). -
- 137 By Ramt we mean the distinctive Sikh code of conduct or discipline which is "a feature of fundamental importance to the life of the Panth," that is the Sikh religion. The manuals in which this code is recorded are called Rahitnamas.
- 138 That is, the Sikh Code of Conduct compiled by a committee appointed in 1931 by the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee Amritsar, with Prin. Teja Singh as convener. It was approved by it in 1945 and has since been accepted as an authoritative manual and regarded as the standard guide for the whole community.
- 139 McLeod, Dr. W.H., Textual Sources for the Study of Sikhism, Manchester -1984, pp. 3, 73.
- 140 Guru Granth Sahib, op. cit., Slok Varan te Vadhik, M.I, no. 33, p. 1412.
- 141 Ibid., Raga Sarang, M.V, p. 1226.
- 142 Ibid., Raga Gujari, M.V., pp. 500-501.
- 143 Ibid., Ramkoli ki Var, Rai Balwand tatha Sattei Dum akhi st. 1, p. 966.
- 144 A Short History of the Sikhs, op. cit., pp. 71-72.
- 145 That is, the chief good, especially as the end on the ultimate determining principle in an ethical system.
- 146 Bradshaw, H.L, Sikhism, in the Sikh Review, Calcutta.
- 147 Bittencourt, The Sikh Way of Life, op. cil., p. vi.
- 148 Macauliffe, MA, The Sikh Religion :A Lecture, London-1910, p. 25.
- 149 Field, The Religion of the Sikhs, op. cit., p. 9, 34-55.
- 150 Toynbee, Unesco's Selections from the Sacred Writings of the Sikhs, 'Foreword', pp. 10. 11.
- 151 Buck, Mrs. Pearl. S., in her Opinion as published in Vol. I of Sri Guru Granth Sahib, English Version by Dr. Gopal Singh, Delhi-1960, p. xiv.
- 152 Guru Gramh Sahib, op. cit., Raga Sorath, M.V, p. 611.
- 153 Ibid., Raga Kanara, M.V, p. 1299.
154. Ibid., Raga Dhanasari, M.I, p. 663.
155. Guru Gobind Singh,Aka Ustal in Sri Dasam Granth, op. cit., Kabit no. 15/85.
156. See Ardas, that is the Sikh congregational prayer to God which is a basic religious activity in Sikh religion. Its version is available in various Gutkas (i.e. an- thologies of hymns meant for daily and occasional prayers etc.) and Sikh Rahit Maryada, q.v.
157. Guru Granth Sahib, op. cit., Raga Dhanasari, M.I, p. 661.
158. Guru Granth Sahib, op. cit., Rag Sri M.V., p. 74.
159. Ibid., M.I. Rag Sri, p. 26
160. Ibid., Rag Sarang, M.I, p. 1245

161. Mujeeb, Prof. M. in his 'Foreword' to Guru Nanak in His Own Words by Dr. Hamam Singh Shan, Amritsar-1969, p. xiii.
162. Guru Granth Sahib, op. cit., Rag Maru, M.5, p. 1002.
163. Ibid., Rag Asa, M.I, p. 419.
164. Ibid., Rag Asa, M.I, pp. 354, 468.
165. Ibid., Rag Asa M.I, p. 9, Rag Ramkali, p. 944.
166. Ibid., p. 72; Rag Sorath, p. 598.

## 4

**REVELATION AND REASON IN  
SRI GURU GRANTH SAHIB**

GURNAM KAUR

Revelation and reason constitute two important areas of human experience and knowledge. There is, however, great difference of opinion in respect of the nature and role of the revelation and reason. Some scholars have even classified world religions on the basis of belief in revelation. According to one such view, revelation is the basis of Christianity and Judaism. Such a division, however, is neither satisfactory nor, perhaps, true. We know that every religion considers itself to be based on one or the other type of revelation. For example, Hinduism accepts Sruti as unveiling or disclosing of that which was formally hidden. Prophet Mohammad got revelation through the angel. Generally three different sources of knowledge have been accepted in the Indian and Western thought. These are: sense experience, reason and intuition. As held by Dr. Radhakrishnan “while all varieties of cognitive experience result in a knowledge of the real, it is produced in three ways, which are sense experience, discursive reasoning and intuitive apprehension.”<sup>1</sup> Locke has observed, “Reason is natural revelation, whereby the eternal Father of Light, the Foundation of all knowledge, communicates to mankind that portion of truth which he has laid within the reach of their natural faculties. Revelation, is natural reason enlarged by a new set of discoveries communicated by God, immediately, which reason vouches the truth of, by the testimony and proofs it gives that they come from God. We can rely on revealed truth if we are sure that it ‘has indeed been revealed, and it is the function of reason to provide this assurance.’”<sup>2</sup> Now we are to see in this paper what are revelation and reason in Sri Guru Granth Sahib, and what is their relations with each other.

### *Revelation (Bani)*

Religion deals essentially with three subjects—the nature of Reality, the nature of man and his relation to this Reality, and the way to understand this Reality. The first two are the subject matter of philosophy proper and it is the third subject which brings the other two also into the domain of religion. As observed by a Sikh scholar, “as long as religion merely defines the nature of Reality and seeks to lay down the true values of human activity, it is no more than philosophy and ethics, but when, it seeks and promises to help human soul to take the truths to heart and to put them into action with the object of resolving the problem of suffering, which is inherent in the innermost core of man, the self-consciousness, then it becomes religion proper.”<sup>3</sup> Religion is the response of the whole person, not merely his rational faculties to what he finds of ultimate value in life. It is an acceptance and commitment to whatever he takes to be of ultimate value in existence. The movement from God to man through which the whole of a man is involved is called revelation. It is the disclosure of the Ultimate Truth, God making Himself known to man and in response to this knowledge we make a commitment to do something. How revelation takes place? There are different answers to this question.

According to Sikh thought, man can have the direct communion with God through His nam. The idea of revelation in Sikhism is a unique one. It is in the form of the bani (the word). The Guru does not claim himself to be an incarnation of God (the theory of incarnation has been rejected by the Sikh Gurus), but the knowledge contained in the bani (the word) is stated to be given by God. The revelation of Truth, (the insight of the Guru, is referred to by the Guru himself. The Guru had the direct experience of Truth and then expressed this experience in his own language. Whatever truth the Guru received from communion with God has been recorded in Sri Guru Granth Sahib. According to the Gurus, the bani is the way of His manifestation. God Himself is the source of the bani, the Primal Word. The Gurus did not attach much importance to their corporeal form. They value most their statements about communion with God. So there is no difference between the Guru and the bani. We shall discuss this feature of revelation in Sri Guru Granth Sahib in detail. I think revelation can be the appropriate word to be used for bani.

The word bani is the Punjabi version of the word vani in Sanskrit language. In Sanskrit language, the word vani has been

defined as “sound, voice, music, speech, language, words, diction” and “the goddess of speech.”<sup>4</sup> The idea that bani comes directly from God has clearly been conveyed by the Gurus.

According to Sri Guru Nanak Dev, God Himself is the source of revelation (bani), the Primal Word. The bani is the way of His manifestation.<sup>5</sup> While describing the stages of spiritual attainment in our long journey to God in Japuji, Sri Guru Nanak Dev holds that at the level or region of the inward orientation (saram khand)<sup>6</sup>, He reveals Himself in forms (rup). Here the Reality is revealed as the harmonious whole. In the region of grace (karam khand)<sup>7</sup> the revelation is as power, force, that is Reality is revealed as such, that there is no ‘other’, all is He Himself. He is revealed to the seeker in His completeness.

Sri Guru Nanak Dev further holds<sup>8</sup> that whosoever drinks at the fountain of revelation i.e. bani, becomes acceptable in the Court of God. After having been blessed by the revealed word, he seeks the vision of Reality and values it more than the desires for heaven or deliverance. Sri Guru Nanak Dev affirms<sup>9</sup> in Rag Tilang that he does not say anything on his own. Whatever he says has been revealed to him by God. He is conveying that knowledge which he has received from the Lord. He conveys this truth to Bhai Lalo at the time of Babur’s sinful plunder of India and his forceful occupation of this land.

Sri Guru Angad Dev<sup>10</sup> has made distinction between the truth conveyed in the Vedas and the Truth revealed through bani. According to Sri Guru Angad Dev, the Vedas have related the myths which make man to reflect upon values like good and evil only and they taught men that one ‘takes’ what one ‘gives’ and according to this “give and take” man goes into heaven or hell. The Vedas have created in man the illusions of high and low and of caste and colour. But the bani is concerned only with the attributes of God. It is uttered by the Gurmukhs, i.e. God-oriented persons, who by the grace of God contemplate upon it in their consciousness.

In Anand in Rag Ramkali,<sup>11</sup> first of all he calls the seekers of the Truth, which are the beloved ones of the Guru, to get together and contemplate on the True Revelation, which is attained by the Guru and is sublime. Only those who have the Grace of God can enshrine His revelation in their minds. That revelation (bani) which has not been revealed by the true preceptor (Satiguru) is false. Not only this; those who utter false revelation (bani) are the false ones; false are the listeners and false are the reciters of that revelation (bani).

The creators of false revelation (bani) utter God's Name but not from their inner self because their mind is lured by illusion (the maya). They utter the Name in a routine manner without realizing its true spirit.

The fourth Guru, Sri Ramdas though he does not make use of words true (sachi) and false (kachci) bani like Guru Amardas, but he makes a distinction between the embodiment of truth (sat-sarup bani) which is uttered by the Satguru and false prattle (kach- pich) which is uttered by others in imitation.<sup>12</sup> Such people are not the ones who have an enlightened self. The fourth Guru says that the revelation (bani) of the true Preceptor (Satiguru) is perfectly true because God, the Creator Himself makes the true Preceptor (Satiguru) to speak it out<sup>13</sup>. Sri Guru Ramdas has bestowed the status of Guru on the bani. According to him, there is no difference between the Guru and the revelation (bani). They are one. The Guru's revelation (bani) is the embodiment of the Guru and the Guru resides in the revelation (bani); and in it is contained the Nectar which is the giver of spiritual life.<sup>14</sup> The Guru holds that the revelation (bani) and God's Name are one. It is the unique feature of Sikhism that the Guru is accepted as perfect and permanent in the form of revelation (bani) not in his corporeal form because corporeal form is ephemeral and his revelation (bani) is eternal. The tenth Guru, Sri Gobind Singh formally bestowed this status on Sri Guru Granth Sahib which contains the revelation in the form of bani.

The fifth Guru, Sri Arjan Dev, has also stressed the point that the revelation (bani) has directly come from God. The Guru says that whatever he conveys, has been ordained by God.<sup>15</sup> Sri Guru Arjan Dev concludes that God in the form of bani is all pervasive. The Guru himself heard it from God and has conveyed it to others.<sup>16</sup>

#### *Rejection of Incarnation (avtarvad)*

The idea of God taking human form or any form has been clearly denied in Sri Guru Granth Sahib. The Guru did not question the divinity of the incarnations (avtaras) but they question their being worshipped as God. They see nothing wrong in their coming on earth for the restoration of Dharma, but they object to their worship as God.

Avatarana is a noun in Sanskrit language. Its root is in am and the meaning implied by it is descending, alighting. Avatara 's root is in as which means descent.<sup>17</sup> This word has been used in general and specific senses. In the general sense it is used for the appearance of any deity upon earth but in the specific sense it is used for the

incarnations of Vishnu in ten principal forms. In the third sense any distinguished person is out of respect, called an avatara or incarnation of deity. It is believed by the Hindus that although God is all-pervading, omnipresent, and is always there, He appears from time to time on earth in special forms through His Yog Maya. God, who is also called Vishnu, has ten major incarnations.<sup>18</sup>

In Sri Guru Granth Sahib the theory of incarnation (avtarvad) has not been accepted. Only God has been accepted as the one ultimate Reality. All others are His creation; incarnations (avtaras) also form part of His creation. The names of Ishar, Gorakh, Brahma and Parvati have been mentioned in the Japuji<sup>19</sup> by Sri Guru Nanak Dev as the creation of God. The three deities of Hindu Trinity Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva are generally considered independent forces in Hinduism. But Sri Guru Nanak Dev does not at all consider them independent forces, because every thing is the creation of God and is under Him. Only God has been conceived as the Supreme force by Sri Guru Nanak Dev.<sup>20</sup>

According to Sri Guru Arjan Dev, to say that God was born on the eighth day of moon (the birthday of Krishna) is utter nonsense. It is illogical to say that God takes birth and dies. Body is fallible, and a fallible thing cannot be perfect. To offer sweets to a stone-god is a mistake. He feels that cursed is the statement that God comes in the cycle of birth and death.<sup>21</sup>

#### *Divine Manifestation*

It is clear that the Hindu view of incarnation (avtarvada) has been totally rejected. However, the Gurus were commissioned by God. They considered themselves to be the servants of God. A question arises what is the nature of divine manifestation according to Sri Guru Granth Sahib and what is the status of the Gurus?

The Sikh Gurus were the messengers of God. They never claimed themselves to be God. They were commissioned by God to preach and practise the Truth. They told whatsoever was revealed to them by God. We have many references to this effect in Sri Guru Granth Sahib itself, as also in Janam Sakhis, in Dasam Granth and the writings of Bhai Gurdas. It is recorded that Sri Guru Nanak Dev had been meditating on the highest Truth from the very beginning of his life. But he got the actual vision at the Vein stream. It is stated that the Guru sat in meditation (Smadhi) on the bank of the river at Sultanpur. We are told in the Janam Sakhis how the Guru was lost in



meditation. It is recorded poetically that the Guru “had ascended to the plane of Truth and appeared before the True One. On the third day, he appeared with a luminous halo around his face. Crowds gathered around him.”<sup>22</sup> The Guru uttered his first article of faith. He declared that “there is no Hindu, there is no Muslim.”<sup>23</sup> Bhai Gurdas has given a mystical account of this in his Vars. He has stated that Sri Guru Nanak Dev received the grace of God. On reaching the region of Truth, he was conferred the nine-fold treasure of “Nam” and was graced with humility. In his contemplation, the Guru had the vision of the world being consumed by passion, ignorance, fear, and hatred. It was confusion all around because there was none to give proper guidance to humanity that was wallowing in misery. For this very reason, the Guru put on a mendicant’s garb and started for his mission to lead the people out of this suffering.<sup>24</sup>

Guru Nanak says that he, the worthless bard (*Dhadi*) was, blessed with His service. He was ordered to serve Him day and night. He received the robe of honour (sachi siphat sloh), to sing His praises. He gave him the everlasting food of Nectar, Name. Whosoever has taken his food (of Name) through Guru’s wisdom is satiated forever and is in peace. The bard dwells on God’s Name and sings His word (Shabad). Nanak says that by dwelling on the true God, one attains Him.<sup>25</sup>

In Sri Guru Granth Sahib divine manifestation is expressed in the concept of light (Joti)<sup>26</sup>, and not in the form of birth as a human being. It is the realization of divine light, the word (shabad), which is to provide the status of the perfect Preceptor (Puran Gur). The way through which this divine light is to be realized is the Gumzati way. Owing to this concepts of light (Joti) and the word (Shabad) all the Gurus treated themselves as one Nanak. So according to Sri Guru Granth Sahib, the divine manifestation is in the form of Bani, it is the Guru, the guide. Sri Guru Nanak Dev says that he is a sacrifice to his Guru who makes angels out of men.<sup>27</sup> As far as the use of the word avtar (incarnation) is concerned, it has mainly been used to connote the birth of a person. Use of this word may merely indicate the reverential attitude of a person towards the saints. It is just expressive of the devotion of the follower, or the narrator, towards the saint. It does not indicate any acceptance of the doctrine of God’s birth in human form.

In Sikhism, one is not cut off from society, one lives in the society and moves towards the higher order. Revelation is something natural,

not super-natural. Sri Guru Granth Sahib rejected miracles. Revelation is a gradual evolution from the lower to the higher, from the matter to the spiritual. The revelation in Sri Guru Granth Sahib is not an intermittent or a time process but it is a continuous expression of the direct experience. It is ascendance towards God. It is the knowledge of the universe, the divine knowledge which is the result of God's grace.

So far as the position of the Sikh Gurus is concerned, we should keep in view their relationship with God and the Sikh. The Gurus describe that their position vis-a-vis a Sikh is that of a boat (which ferries them across the ocean of life), brother friend, philosopher, guide, the giver of Nam, and the Sacha Patishah (true Emperor),<sup>27</sup> etc. A unique feature of Sikh thought in this context is of the followers becoming the Guru and, the Guru becoming the follower (ape gur-chela).

#### *Phenomenal Creation / Manifestation (Qudrat)*

According to Sri Guru Granth Sahib, God creates through His power the Qudrat and manifests Himself through His Divine Reason (hukam). The concept of Qudrat implies the whole existence from the material level to the level of the most rational and conscious being. Hukam means the causal relationship, the orderliness which makes the universe a cosmos.

Qudrat (an Arabic word) means "to be able, power, ability, potency, vigour, force, authority, universe, nature, etc."<sup>28</sup> Steingass has given some additional meanings of the word Qudrat and has defined Qudrat as "being, potency, omnipotence, providence, preserve, the creation, destiny."<sup>29</sup> Qudrat has been used in Sri Guru Granth Sahib in the sense of the power of God and a means through which he manifests Himself. God (Karta Purakh) is the originator of this world, the qudrat,. This expression of qudrat, moves from the lower level to the higher level, from the gross matter to organisms, from the rational being to the highest spiritual level. It leads from the phenomenal to the noumenal.

Siri Guru Nanak Dev holds the view that the manifest world sprang forth from the act of His willing. From His one word 'be' the world came into existence. From that one word, the whole inorganic universe came forth (*lakh dariao*). His creation cannot be comprehended. It is so wonderful and amazing.<sup>30</sup> He observes that the

world, the universe and the regions created by Him through His qudrat are true.<sup>31</sup> He denounces the idea of nature being an illusion.

His creation is not fortulteus or accidental, It is rational In nature, everything is happening under His hukam. He Himself is residing everywhere.<sup>32</sup> He is ingrained in every body as the Word (Shabad). So He is to be known through His Word (Shabad).<sup>33</sup> Guru Nanak has used the words pasaou, Kare, pasa dhali, Saji, Sajio, Vasia in relation to qudrat. They indicate that His creation is well planned (pasa dhali), beautiful and orderly (Saji, Sajio) and is permeated by Him (Vasia).

From the above discussion, we can say that the concept of Qudrat in Sri Guru Granth Sahib is different from the concept of Prakriti in Indian philosophy. Here in Sikhism God (the qadar) is the Creator of nature (qudrat). Nature (Qudrat) is not absolute or self--existent as in Samkhya. It is not only the created one, but God resides in His creation (Qudrat). The Absolute is immanent in nature and in every part of creation there is the light of the Absolute. In the whole of the manifestation, man is the highest kind because he has the capacity to realize God.

### *Pantheism Examined*

To analyse the nature of relationship between the Creator and His creation we are to see whether creation is dependent upon Him and is determined by Him or He is also dependent upon His creation.

Other questions are: whether He is transcendent or im-manent, He is wholly immanent or He is transcendent as well as immanent?

In Mul Mantra, it is held that He is the One universal Being, the Real, the Spirit. He is the Creator, the Controller, beyond restraint, the Spontaneous, beyond any internal antagonism, the Harmonious. He is Timeless, yet He does not come into birth and death. He is Self-existent. We can attune to Him through Guru's Grace.<sup>34</sup> God is the only one Reality who is our Creator, Our Lord, according to Sri Guru Granth Sahib. All other things are the creation; and being created, they are subject to the laws of nature, and hence perishable. All these attributes indicate His transcendence, His distinctness from His creation.

Guru Nanak while talking about the Creator compares him-self, the creature, to a fish and God, the Creator, to a river. God is just like a river which is full of wisdom and the creature is a fish in that river. As the fish cannot measure the expanse of the river, similarly man cannot apprehend his Creator. Whatsoever man sees is the

creation of God and while man cannot live without Him, still he cannot know Him fully.<sup>35</sup>

Guru Nanak further holds that He is immanent as well as transcendent. He states that all the eyes are that of God but He has none; the myriad forms are His, yet He has no form. He has thousands of fragrances yet He has none.<sup>36</sup> This brings out very lucidly both the transcendence and the immanence of God.

In Islam also we find the concept of God as transcendent as well as immanent. But in Sikhism, the relation of the creator and the created is quite different from that in Islam. While Creator and creation are separate a relation between man and God is possible because He permeates His creation. According to Sri Guru Ramdas, as the light of the Sun pervades the rays of the Sun, similarly, God permeates His beings.<sup>37</sup> It is important to understand that because of the inadequacy of human language, it is not easy to describe God who is unknowable. And similies and metaphors used can only be half true, and could even be misunderstood. But two things are stressed, name-ly, Creator and Creature relation between God and man and His immanence. The Guru says that He that permeates all hearts is Unmanifest too.<sup>38</sup>

The seeker after attaining to the Reality becomes like the ray that has emerged from the Sun. The light in man joins the source of light, God, and he fulfills himself. After that, whatever he sees, he sees God in it, whatever he listens, he listens to God. He feels so because God Himself is in His creation.

The Sikh Gurus hold the view that creation embodies spirit and has meaning only in reference to the ultimate Reality as their destination.

(a) *Bibek (discriminative knowledge) :*

Vivek is a Sanskrit word and its Punjabi form is Bibek. Dis-criminative knowledge (*bibek*) is the consciousness of the union of the human with the Absolute, that person has discriminative knowledge (*bibek*) who apprehends the Reality which permeates him. Discriminative knowledge (*Bibek*) is not ordinary knowledge. It is a distinctive kind of knowledge. According to the Gurus only such persons attain the knowledge of Reality who are Guru-oriented (Gurmukhs). He is the purest of pure and the man of highest reflection.<sup>39</sup> Such a person is emancipated and helps others in that direction. He emancipates others also. The seeker to whom the Reality has been revealed sees One God everywhere. He sees none else.<sup>40</sup> According

to Shri Guru Amardas, man transcends his desires and attains the bibek budhi and through Guru (Purakhat), knows the Absolute (Purakhu).<sup>41</sup> This knowledge dawns only when man gets rid of ego (haumai) and has the grace of God. Discriminative knowledge (Bibek) is the purest of pure knowledge according to the Sikh Gurus. Such a person has been called Brahmngiani in Sukhmani Sahib and he works for the well-being of the other human beings with zeal.<sup>42</sup>

*(b) Nature of Reason in Sri Guru Granth Sahib.*

The Sikh Gurus have recognized the important role of reason in the worldly and the spiritual life of man. A person bereft of reason will be a victim of superstition, and therefore, not fit to undertake the journey of spiritual realization. The role of mannan (manne in the Japuji of Guru Nanak)<sup>43</sup> is central to the task of spiritual transformation. An irrational person will fail to perceive the coherence of the universe and also fail to comprehend the communicated revelation. The Gurus have thus emphasized the need to cultivate reason or the affairs of the world as well as for the spiritual progress.

The founders of the Sikh religion have drawn our attention to the fruitful and the perverse applications of reason. The former is a character of the true seeker (khoji), but the latter signifies a mere polemicist (vadi), such exercise is fruitless. The Gurus have extolled the former and advised the seeker to refrain from the latter.

We also come across the use of other words, such as thinking (soch), reflection (vichar), reason (aql) and wisdom (sianap) for reason or reasoning in the Guru Granth Sahib. Although these words, in a general sense, refer to reason, yet these are occasionally also used to emphasize some particular form of it. We shall refer to these words in their proper context.

A rational person has to proceed in his search of truth in the spirit of a seeker (khoji). We are reminded by the Gurus that the seeker (khoji) may reach the correct conclusion or true knowledge. The polemicist (vadi) would merely waste his time. We shall, therefore, begin our study of reason in Sri Guru Granth Sahib by determining and analysing the nature of the seeker (Khoji) in contradistinction to one indulging in polemics (vadi). Later we shall examine and analyze briefly the other aspects of reason in Sri Guru Granth Sahib.

One of the important functions of reason is to lead to the knowledge of the truth and to search for it. The Gurus have called it the seeking (khoj) and the person who follows this path is called the seeker (khoji). As opposed to a khoji, is the person, who seeks to

establish his own view, and strays from truth by all possible arguments. He is referred to by the Gurus as the polemicist (badi). The vad (futile discussion) is, therefore, a free use of syllogistic reasoning but its validity may sometimes be vitiated on account of the falsehood of one of the premises. The wrong statement of improper interpretation may be due to a desire to infer a particular conclusion.

The futile discussion (bad) has the negative as well as the positive applications. The futile discussion (bad) as a method of (futile) reasoning, is criticised and rejected by the Gurus. In Indian philosophy vad is also discussion that “proceeds by means of the free use of syllogism and aims at the ascertainment of truth. But it often degenerates into mere wrangling (jalpa) which aims at effect, or victory and cavil (vitanda), which delights in criticism for its own sake. Such a futile discussion can be put an end to by convincing the opponent of his error and forcing him to accept defeat.”<sup>44</sup>

The word Vad (often also written as Bad) and similarly, vadi, (written as badi in Punjabi language) is traceable to the word vad of the Sanskrit language the word means ‘to discuss.’<sup>45</sup> Logical reason, is generally, classified as deductive and inductive. The deductive reasoning when mediate, may assume the form of a syllogistic argument. Here the person proceeds from the premises to the conclusion.

The premises are the major premise and the minor premise. The major premise is a general proposition. The minor premise refers to the particular instance falling under the general proposition. The two premises, taken together, lead to the conclusion. According to Sri Guru Nanak Dev, this process of reasoning may assume the form of futile discussion (vad or bad).<sup>46</sup> It is wastage and may not lead to any constructive results.<sup>47</sup>

According to the third Guru, Sri Amardas, this type of reasoning is unable to lead a man to any knowledge, though one may claim himself to be a great scholar and interpreter of the scripture.<sup>48</sup> This may lead a person to confusion and not to knowledge.<sup>49</sup>

The polemicist (badi), according to Sri Guru Nanak Dev, merely misconstrues an issue without leading to any fruitful culmination of thought.<sup>50</sup> The destructive engagement of the polemicist (badi) is highlighted by Guru Nanak. He has described the polemicist (badi) as a possessor of false knowledge (mat jhutha) which is destructive (binse). The root of binse is the Sanskrit word vinash. This word means destructive, hidden and destroyed.<sup>51</sup> Futile discussion (Bad) is ego-based, narrow and subjective.<sup>52</sup>

The seeker (khoji): The word khoji (seeker) has formed from the Sanskrit root shodh (shudha + ghan). The word means purification, cleaning, correction, setting right. And the word shodhkarā means purificatory, purifier, corrective. Furthermore, the word shodhana, which in Punjabi language is khojana, means also refining, investigation, examination.<sup>53</sup> As is clear from its implication, the word khoj is the positive aspect of this seeking. It is an investigation into the truth. So the seeker (khoji) is the seeker of true knowledge. Sri Guru Nanak Dev has described the seeker (khoji) as a seeker of self-realization (atamchin).<sup>54</sup> While discussing these two aspects of seeking Guru Nanak regards the seeker (khoji) as a creative being (khoji upjai). Upjai means addition and to grow. In Mahan Kosh Upjai means to win, to be successful, to generate, to recreate, to grow.<sup>55</sup> Upjai used in Sri Guru Granth Sahib is closer to the meaning 'to be produced' or 'to be added'. It may be said that the context of the seeker (khoji) is not an individual one. Rather it is a cosmic urge for fulfillment. The seeker has also been described as the Guru oriented (gurmukh) by the Gurus. The ideal for the gurmukh, is held to be the seeking of knowledge and reflection (gian vichar). The seeker (khoji) also shares his knowledge with others and thus performs acts of social service. The service in this case is not an externally imposed duty but is rather an outcome of the inward realization in the spiritual field. The seeker (khoji) is actively engaged in the fashioning of his insight, concentration (sural) through the word (shabad). This type of seeking is fruitful. This is rational and proper seeking.

Now we will refer briefly to the other concepts used for reason, to encourage the fruitful culmination of thought. After the fruitful culmination of thought which is the result of the seeking (khoj) man enters into the second stage of reason i.e. thinking (soch). Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha<sup>56</sup> has given two different meanings of thinking (soch). Thinking (soch) has two levels. At the lower level, it (the soch) leads to the discovery of new ideas. Its second level, which is a higher one, is to understand the truth described by the Gurus. It is to apprehend the Word (shabad) through thinking. The destination for man is to reach the Lord's Name by the combination of concentration (sural) and the thinking (soch). This is the real way to reach that destination.<sup>57</sup>

Reflection (Vichar) : The revealed knowledge becomes part of the seeker's personality through pondering on the word (shabad) and what he knows from the Bani. Any knowledge, even if it be revealed

one, does not become the part of human personality unless one reflects upon it. In Shri Guru Granth Sahib it is held that to achieve the goal of his life, i.e. to realize the essence of his self, the seeker needs reflection (Vichar) on the word (Shabad) or Gur-shabad.<sup>58</sup>

Reason (aql) : The aql has been used in Sri Guru Granth Sahib in two senses. We are concerned here with the use of the word which has its origin in Arabic language, wherein the word aql is used for Reason.<sup>59</sup> The man who is devoid of reason (aql) is called blind and self-willed. Such a person cannot attain the higher knowledge of the word (shabad) and cannot thus understand, the essence of human birth.<sup>60</sup>

Wisdom (sianap) : Wisdom (sianap) is the higher stage of reason acquired along with reflection (vichar), thinking (soch) and intellect (aql). The wise (siana) is a person who is knowledgeable, and intelligent. The wise (siana) uses his reason on two levels. On one level he tries to understand the world around him through reason. Another aspect of a wise man (siana)<sup>61</sup> is that he understands the truth as expressed by the Guru, through reflection (vichar). Though this form of reason is an applied, one, but in spirit it is related with revelation. This is the higher level of wisdom (sianap).

Superstitious-Rational: The function of reason on the theoretical level is the discovery of truth, as we have seen it. It is to make us understand nam, which is the manifestation of ultimate Truth. On the practical level, its ideal is to direct our conduct, to guide us how to live in the world. Practice is the manifestation of theory. So, in Sri Guru Granth Sahib the use of reason is to take away man from the irrational, the superstitious and to make him rational.

We group together as superstitions a number of beliefs, habits and fancies, tribal and individual, which we regard as not being founded on reasonable conceptions of the world and of human life, necessities and obligations.<sup>62</sup> Owing to superstition, normal phenomena are ascribed to the agency of supernatural forces. These forces are personified into gods, devtas, semi gods and goddesses, devis. These complete or fragmentary personalities are considered accessible by prayer and sacrifice. Some sort of magic is also performed to win their favour. Such superstitious beliefs are not accepted in Sri Guru Granth Sahib. Superstition is considered doubt (bharam).

In Sri Guru Granth Sahib, it is said that first God created His light and then from it was created the whole universe. Man should not be misled by any doubt. All the universe is filled by Him.<sup>63</sup> Doubt



(bharam) and fear (bhai) are the causes of superstition. When man, makes himself free from both, he becomes rational.

The above explanation is deeply related with reason. Without using it as a medium it is difficult to make man free from all false bonds. In Sri Guru Granth Sahib efforts have been made to free man from superstitions and make him rational in his behaviour and conduct.

*Unity of Reason and revelation in Sikhism*

We have seen that reason and revelation are not contradictory to each other. It is through reason that man becomes able to understand the revelation. It is through reason that man differentiates between the true revelation and the false one, and between good and bad. Man is to shed his contradictions and superstitions through reason. Only then he is able to attain the highest truth and understand revelation. Reason comes first, and through reason man becomes able to move higher to understand the essence of revelation. In Sikhism, reason and revelation go together and their synthesis has been accepted. Sri Guru Granth Sahib is the religious scripture of the Sikhs which, contains the revelation conveyed by the Gurus. The fifth Guru, Arjan Dev has very beautifully expressed the importance of the Holy Granth in the epilogue given at its end. This epilogue describes the importance of rational reflection to understand the revelation contained in Sri Guru Granth Sahib. The Guru says that three things are placed on the platter. They are truth contentment and rational reflection. That person attains these things who imbibes the nam of God. Nam being the support of all, the seeker who tastes it; and he who relishes it is fulfilled. The Guru proclaims that the one who understands and assimilates the essence of this revelation shall be saved. The Guru has ordained that this bani or revelation is to be kept in mind with devotion. Through this, man swims across the dark sea of existence and understands that all that seems is the creation of God.

So along with the reverential place of revelation, reason has a very important place in Sikhism; reason co-exists with revelation because it is the medium for the rational being to understand what has been conveyed to him by the highest Reality through revelation. Knowledge and right orientation fashion the conduct of a man. It is said in the last stanza of Japuji that chastity is the smithy and patience is the goldsmith. Rationality of the mind is the anvil and knowledge is the hammer (knowledge means highest knowledge) which beats the

gold of life into shape. The bellow pipes are the discipline and the fire is the training. In this true mint is coined the Shabad, but only those on whom is His grace conduct themselves in this way. Only those attain Bliss upon whom the gracious God bestows His favour. So discernment and rational understanding are necessary along with divine knowledge. Thus, reason and revelation are synthesized in *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*.

### *Conclusion*

From our study three points are very clear. First, that the Sikh thought is independent and unique in its nature. It is not the continuation of the previous Vedic or Hindu Revelation. The revelation contained in the Vedas has not been accepted in Sikhism. Second, that Sikh thought is not an amalgam of Hinduism and Islam. While studying Revelation and reason we have seen that its concepts are totally different from those of Islam or of Hinduism. As far as the language is concerned, the Gurus conveyed the message of revelation in the common language of the people. So it was natural to pick up the popular usage of the language prevalent at that time. Third, that the thought contained in Sri Guru Granth Sahib is not the product of the environment, nor were the Gurus compelled by the circumstances, the conditions of that period to say whatever they have said. There was nothing new in the environment to bring about the revolutionary changes in thought made by Guru Nanak. Revelation can never be the product of the circumstances or environment. It is the direct experience of Truth. The Sikh thought produced history, it is not the product of history. The thought which has got the capacity to transform man, to change the circumstances, cannot be the product of environment.

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anhad bani paiai haumai hoi binasu
9. Ibid., M. 1, pp. 722-23.  
jaisi mai avai khasam ki bani taisra karin giyan ve Lalo.
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Katha kahani bedin ani papu punnu bicharu;  
Tehi thei laina lai lai thena naraki suragi avtar;  
Uttam madhim jatin jinsi bharami bhavai sansaru;  
Amrit bani tatu vakhani giyan dhiyan vichi yai;  
Gurmukhi akhi gurmukhi jati surati karam dhiyaei
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bani ta gavahu guru keru baniyan siri bani...;  
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satiguru'ki bani sati sarup hai gurbani baniyai
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khasami bulaya. Sachi Sifti salahi kaprha paya. Sacha amrit namu  
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## MYSTICISM AND SIKH RELIGION

BALJIT SINGH BAGGA

### *Introduction*

Mysticism is a vital part of the perennial philosophy. In all the major and minor world religious traditions, mysticism has a definite place. The mystical quest is an integral part of Indian religious tradition. In Sikhism, which was founded by Guru Nanak in fifteenth century, it has an important place. The study of mysticism has a long historical background.

The traits of mysticism, found from the Sikh scripture, Guru Granth Sahib, are distinct in nature, essence, discipline and goal from those of eastern and western origin. The practical aspect and social role of Sikh religion associated with mystic quest has a great relevance in the present context. Basically, the secular and spiritual aspect of life have been combined to bring social change and salvation. Sikh mystical approach is fundamentally based on the axis of Nam, inculcation of virtues, truthful living and spiritual emancipation while discharging social responsibility. In Sikh mysticism, the importance of the Guru, Grace of God, collective worship, social concern and family-life are essential features. Here the goal is not that of individual liberation but that of collective redemption.

Man becomes a pulsating centre of action by submission of his will to the Supreme Reality. Following the Divine Will is the key concept of Sikhism and has been commended both as the first great step on the path of spiritual quest and the final achievement of a life of devotion. The message of Sikh Gurus is valid for all those who have an urge to break open their ego-shell and unite themselves with that Consciousness, which is like a shoreless ocean. This indeed is the essence of Sikh mysticism.

The scope of the paper will be limited to the following aspects of mysticism and Sikh religion :

1. Mysticism, its meaning and definition.
2. Comparative mysticism in world religions.
3. Sikh religion and mystical experience.  
Mysticism of Sikh Gurus.
4. Historical development of Sikh mysticism.
5. Distinctive features of Sikh mysticism.
6. Life style of a Sikh mystic.
7. Conclusion and new direction.

(1) Now let us try to analyse the various aspects and distinctive features of mysticism starting with its meaning and definition:

*Mysticism* is religion in its most concentrated and exclusive form. It is actually the main motive force in religion. The establishment of a direct bond and union between man and God is possible only in a developed and heightened mystical state. Mysticism is a fundamental concept; it is the perennial source of spiritual and religious inspiration. Mysticism is the intuitive experience of man. It is the surest and greatest source of personal rapport between man and God just like between a child and his father. Mysticism is, in fact, a quest for the unknown, a direct apprehension of the Real through immediate experience and inner contact.

Dr. Paul Brunton has described Mysticism as a mode of life which claims to bring us nearer to God than do ordinary religious methods. It is a technique which seeks to establish direct communication with God through interior contemplation.

Evelyn Underhill writes "Mysticism is the art of union with Reality. The mystic is a person who has attained that union in a greater or lesser degree or who aims at and believes in such attainment."

It has been the eternal quest of mankind to find the one Ultimate Truth, that final synthesis in which all partial truths are resolved. It may be that mystic has had a glimpse of this synthesis. In the true mystic there is an extension of normal consciousness, a release of latent powers, and a widening of vision, so that aspects of truth unplumbed by the rational intellect are revealed to him. In the religious mystic there is a direct experience of the Presence of God, e.g. "Gurmere sang sad a hai nale, simar simar Prabh sada samale" (GGS.). Though he may not be able to describe it in words, though he may not be able logically to demonstrate its validity, to the mystic his experience is fully and absolutely true and brings complete certainty to him. He has been "there", he has "seen" and he "knows."

Not only mystics have been found in all ages, in all parts of the world and in all religious systems, but also mysticism has generally manifested itself in similar forms wherever the mystical consciousness has been present. Because of this it has sometimes been called the Perennial Philosophy. Out of their experience and their reflection on it' have come following assertions:

- (1) This phenomenal world of matter and individual consciousness is only a partial reality and is the manifestation or creation of a Divine Ground in which all partial realities have their being.
- (2) It is of the nature of man that not only can he have knowledge of this Divine Ground by inference, but also he can realize it by direct intuition. Superior to discursive reason is the knowledge, which the knower gets by this experience of union or contact between knower and the known.
- (3) The nature of man is not a single but a dual one. He has not one but two selves, the phenomenal ego, of which he is chiefly conscious and which he tends to regard as his true self, and a non-phenomenal, eternal self, an inner man, the spirit, the spark of divinity within him, which is the true self. It is possible for a man, if he so desires and is prepared to make, the necessary effort, to identify himself with his true self and so with the Divine Ground.
- (4) It is the chief aim of man's earthly existence to discover and identify himself with his true self. By so doing, he will come to an intuitive knowledge of the Divine Ground and so apprehend Truth, as it really is, and not as it appears to our limited human perception. Not only that, he will enter into a state of being which has been given different names, eternal life, salvation, enlightenment, etc.

The essence of mysticism is summed up by Dr. Dewan Singh: "Mysticism is an intuitive feeling or insight, having as its source and basis an immediate awareness of the one spiritual principle underlying all life and the universe, which as a result of direct experience of union with the Divine Being, brings about a complete reversal of values and a re-awakening of the whole self and personality of the mystic into a supreme blissful fulfilment."

(2) *Comparative mysticism in world religions:*

Religion and mysticism are virtually synonymous. The attainment of mystic consciousness is the goal of religion. This consciousness is the light that guides man. Religion is the art of true living. It leads us onto the road of real existence where there is harmony between reality and us. Mystical experience in various mystical systems is, generally speaking, identical and similar because the fundamental truths experienced by mystics in different times and places are the same.

Certain collective tenets of mysticism are not confined to any one faith or religion and are roughly universal. Mystics hold that:



- (a) God is not to be located in any particular place, church or temple, but that his spirit is everywhere present in Nature and that Nature everywhere abides in it “Aapene Aap Sajw Aapine Rachio Nau, Dui Kudrat Sajiai Asan ditha thao” (GGS, pp. 463)
- (b) God abides inside the heart of every man as the sun abides in all its myriad rays. “Jaise puhop me bas hai, Kasturi mrigmahi TaisehiHariman basat hai... (Ibid..)
- (c) It is perfectly possible for any man, who will submit to the prerequistic discipline to enter into direct communion by contemplation or medita-tion. Silent aspiration (ajapa jap) thus replaces the mechanical recita-tion. “Vm boleyan sab kuchh janda.. (Ibid..)
- (d) Mystic practices ultimately lead to the deVelopment of supernormal faculties and extraordinary mental powers or even strange physical ones, as the gift of God’s grace “Prabh ke simran ridh-sidh nou-nidh, prabh ke simran gian dhian tat-budh.” (Sukhmani)

The practical justification of religion is its advocacy of the good life, philosophy, knowledge, confidence which give better life, but the practical justification of mysticism is its advocacy of the best life. (Sada Vi gas, Bliss, progression). As against the discursive philosopher, the mystic lives more intensely, feels more deeply, acts more forcefully, realizes more profoundly, suffers more patiently and loves more passionately. The mystic does not merely conceive but also realizes, in sentiment and action, the unity of life. This is the distinc-tion between philosophy and mysticism. Bertrand Russell coined a new term “mystical metaphysics” which exalts mysticism above science, religion, philosophy and metaphysics.

### *(3) Sikh religion and mystical experience:*

Mystical experience according to Robert S. Ellwood is an experience in a religious context. It is immediately or subsequently interpreted by the experience as an encounter with the ultimate Divine Reality in a direct, non-rational way which engenders a deep sense of unity, and of having lived during the experience on a level of being other than the ordinary. The mystic is a person completely changed. By this experience he gets a new and higher life. In the opening lines of Asa di Var, Guru Nanak says “Balihari Gur Apne deohari sad var, Jin manas te devte kiye karat na lagi var” (countless times a day hail unto the Guru, whose transmutational spirit has changed mortals into God-like saints). The inner experience of a mystic changes his whole attitude of life. The mystic speaks as if he were being dictated by some hidden source. Guru Nanak says, “Jaisi mai avai khasam ke bani taisra kari gian ve Lalo” (just as the Lord’s Word comes to me, the same I reveal).

All spiritual knowledge is a becoming, a shaping and a transformation. Knowledge of God is limited by our capacity to receive Him. We must be in love if we are to know what love is : we have to be a musician to know what music is; similarly we must be God-like, if we are to know what God is. The best expression of belief and faith is the divine love. A question was asked to the Guru and the reply was: “Mile sakhian pucche kaho kant nishani; ras prem bhari kuchh bol na jani” (you ask me what is the mark of Lord. He is all Love, the rest he is ineffable). The mystic’s love spontaneously acquires an ethical attitude. On the spiritual level, it is ecstasy, vision, rapture and trance e.g. “Nam khumari Nanka Chari rahedin rat” (the intoxication of Nam continues day and night) and on the ethical level it is compassion, charity, humility and “Garibi” i.e., self-abnegation. (Nam bij Santokh Suhaga rakh Garibi ves) Make Name of God thy seed, contentment thy leveller and humility thy garment. (Adi Granth, 595).

Every mystical experience is something unique in itself. At the same time it is universal in quality. Mystical states have certain marked characteristics. The mystical experience, in its most essential nature, is a profound realization by the experient spirit of the utmost nearness of the Divine Being or Divine Presence, a proximity bordering on the ineffable feeling of unity and oneness of Godhead permeating all beings and non-beings, existence and non-existence. The final stage of mystical experience is ineffable. It certainly hides something as in the words of “Be-khudi be-sabab to nahin Ghalib Kuchh to hai jis ki pardadan hai” (O Ghalib ! this ecstasy is not without cause. There is something in it which it reveals not).

#### *Mysticism of Sikh Gurus:*

The focal point that needs emphasis is the Sikh Guru’s personal experience of the Divine. It is this experience that leads to the extinction of all worldly desires. It takes one beyond the realm of time and space and all its attendant limitations. Negatively, it gives one release from sorrow and suffering, release from ignorance and doubt. Positively, it produces bliss, beatitude and external peace. Since it is a state of timelessness, it is a state that has no beginning, no end, no growth, no decay. And since this consciousness transcends time, of a necessity it also rises above the level of cause and effect for these terms signify nothing but events that occur earlier and later in time.

This personal experience of the Divine, often called “religious experience” is what philosophers call “mystic experience.” In Sikh mysticism, communion with God is the hallmark of the mystic or

Gurmukh. The Gurus have made emphatic statements that their mission is God-ordained.

Guru Nanak and other Gurus have clearly stated that what they utter is the Word of God and not their own. They also emphasize that God can never be comprehended by the method of rational thought. Hymns of Guru Granth clearly show Guru's sense of deepest love and devotion to God, a continuous search and prayer for the Grace of God and His "Wholly Other" character.

The hymns in the Guru Granth lay down a strictly monotheistic system and show that God and mystic are two distinct and separate entities; In their hymns, the Gurus describe God in numerous ways, referring to many of His social, political, aesthetic, metaphysical, ethics and other attributes. But there are seven significant aspects of God in Sikhism.

- (1) God is the Creator.
- (2) God is both Transcendent and Immanent.
- (3) God is Ocean of Attributes, Values and Virtues.
- (4) God has a Will. Everything is governed by His Will.
- (5) God does not Incarnate.
- (6) God is Gracious, Enlightener.
- (7) God is Spirit, Pure, Fathomless and Limitless.

Sikhism has often been called the "Naam Marga" or "Wismad Marga." It is communion with God, not with Nature, but through nature by means of intuition. "Naam" may be called the immanent or qualitative aspect of God. Accordingly "Naam" is the Creative and Dynamic Immanence of God, the Reality sustaining, working and directing the manifest cosmos.

"The Self-Existent God manifested Himself into Naam. Then came the creation of the universe. He permeates it and revels in His Creation." The world being real, creative work and virtuous deeds are of fundamental importance. The Guru contemplates God by word, thought and deed. Human birth is a precious privilege. Earth is the true field for the practice of righteousness.

Having explained the ideas about God and the reality of world and life, the Gurus have described:

- (a) the existing state of man and the causes of his pain and problems.
- (b) the right path for his spiritual progress and the solution of his difficulties.
- (c) the goal of man and the characteristics of the ideal life.

The word "Manmukh" (self-centred person) indicates the normal state of man in which his self-will and animal propensities dominate, and "Gurmukh" (God-centred or mystic) describes the Ideal man or the highest level of mystic achievement and conscious-

ness. The progress from “Manmukh” to “Gurmukh,” constitutes, in away, the entire story of Sikh Mysticism.

*(4) Historical development of Sikh mysticism:*

Guru Nanak’s very first doctrinal declaration was “There is no Hindu and no Mussalman” which was a polite way of saying that religious distinctions had no meaning or validity. He thus created a new faith, a new dispensation, a new religion. Time was quite ripe for such a mystical tour-de-force. He had a direct rapport with the Supreme Being and the Truth was intuitively revealed to him as a divine grace which descends upon only a few “chosen ones.”

Guru Nanak did not follow any mystic tradition. In fact, mysticism has no tradition. There is no historical continuity in the sphere of mystic thought. It is always new and fresh whenever and wherever it appears. It is always a new phenomenon or revelation. Therefore Sikhism is not only an Original, Distinct and Independent faith but also an Autonomous, Complete, Dynamic and Revealed Religion.

Some of the mystical concepts of Guru Nanak such as the Sabad, the Nam, the Guru, and the Hukam, according to McLeod, are concepts originally evolved and explicitly developed by Guru Nanak. The greatest religious achievement of Guru Nanak and his chief merit as a prophet and founder of the most modern religion is his unique organisational and nation-building quality. Cunningham emphasizes:

“It was reserved for Nanak to perceive the true principle of reform and to lay those broad foundations which enabled his successor Gobind Singh to fire the minds of his countrymen with a new nationality, and to give practical effects to the doctrine that the lowest is equal with the highest, in race as creed, in political rights as in religious hopes.”

All the Sikh Gurus from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh were unique mystics, world teachers and saviours, with a remarkable capacity of laying broad foundations and everlasting institutions. We find unique mystical concepts in Japuji Sahib, Asa di war, Sidh Goshti, Sukhmani Sahib, Anand Sahib, Maru rag solhe, Salokas M 9, Jaap Sahib and other Bani.

*(5) Distinctive features of Sikh Mysticism*

The concept and doctrines which prescribe the human goal according to Sikhism are as follows :

- (a) Righteous deeds alone basis of assessment.
- (b) Higher than Truth is Truthful Living.
- (c) Harmony With the Will of God.
- (d) God-conscious man’s link With Naam.

In Sikhism the goal is of creative and moral activity and therefore spiritual life and moral life are virtually synonymous and coextensive. All training for spiritual life or for seeking God's Grace is through moral life. The highest attainment in Sikhism, is to become God's instrument in making every human being God-centred. It is the creative state from which altruistic activities start. Service of mankind both precedes and succeeds the mystic achievement.

The ideal of Sikh mysticism is not merger in God but only a link or union between the mystic (Gurmukh) and the Creative Immanence of God (Naam).

The salient characteristics and role of a Gurmukh or mystic are as follows :

- (a) He is godly, the ocean of all virtues, pure and truthful.
- (b) He carries out His Will.
- (c) He is the servant of God and man.
- (d) He partakes actively in all fields of life. .
- (e) He aims to make all others God-centred.

The Gurus have prescribed three principle modes of discipline which are laid down as a code of conduct to be practised throughout the course of mystic's life.

- (1) Company of God-centred persons. (sadh-sangat)
- (2) Moral life or service of mankind. (sewa)
- (3) Prayer and remembrance of God. (simran)

The spiritual practice recommended by Sikh Gurus is called "Surat Shabad Marg" and "Naam Marg" or Sehaj Marg. Surat, meaning consciousness is the integrated awareness in which the three components have merged their identity, namely:

- (a) The instinctive subliminal perception,
- (b) The sensory intellectual consciousness,
- (c) The super-sensuous mystical intuition.

All the Sikh Gurus have given us insight into the nature of the Ultimate Reality, vision of the Supreme Being and depth of knowledge through their mystic consciousness. The Sikh ideal for a man is spiritual enlightenment, the way to which passes through definite stages of consciousness and activity on various levels. These stages are indicated by Guru Nanak in Japji

First stage: The plane of Righteousness (Dharam Khand) is that of natural consciousness.

Second stage: The plane of Divine Knowledge (Gyan Khand) is that of intellectual consciousness.

Third stage: The plane of spiritual Effort (Saram Khand) is that of volitional consciousness.

Fourth stage: The plane of Grace (Karam Khand) is that of moral activity an action which owing to its intrinsic goodness as a value, is, for the self-will, irresistible.

Fifth stage: The plane of Truth (Sach Khand) is that of spiritual realization or union;

The spiritual life of a Sikh gains, after a steady discipline, contemplation and negation of self-hood, the true consciousness of reality and he lives in the temporal world just as the lotus flower lives in a swampy pond.

*“Jaise jal me karnal niralam, murgai naisane  
Surat sabad bhov sagar tariye, Nanak Nam vakhane  
Rahe ekant eka man vasiya, asa mahi niraso  
Agam agochar tkkh dikhaye, Nanak tanka daso” (Ibid., p. 938.)*

(As the lotus thrusts upward and does not drown in water, as the duck swims and does not become wet while swimming, so can we cross, safely and unaffectedly, the ocean of existence by attuning our minds to the word of Guru and the holy Name of God)

He suffers an utter transmutation of self, yet, self-realisation (apachina) is not the goal of a Sikh. It is only the beginning of his mystic life. A Sikh mystic leaves rapture and ecstasy far behind, to reach the goal which is identification of the human will with the Divine Will. In this sublime state, God is there and the soul is in God.

Mystery is no more. Problems vanish. Darkness is dispelled and everything is flooded with Divine Light. The soul becomes in thought and feeling, absorbed in God.

#### 6. Life style of a Sikh Mystic:

The most prominent and essential Divine attributes are contained in the Sikh basic creed, “Mul Mantra”, which constitutes seven aspects that are also applicable to Brahatllgyani’s living. These seven aspects are:

(1) Ek Onkar	Unity
(2) Sat-nam	Truth
(3) Karta-purkh	Creation
(4) Nirbhau-Nirvairo	Equality
(5) Akal-murat	Beauty
(6) Ajooni-saibhang	Freedom
(7) Gur-Prasad	Grace-Culture

These seven are the values dear to a Gurmukh and he promotes the same in his living.

- 1.Unity: A Gurmukh inculcates the attitude of non-duality, a manifestation of the Divine spirit or Reality.
- 2.Truth: He acts truthfully in thought, word and deed.
- 3.Creativeness: His approach to life in all matters and walks of life is constructive.

4. Equality: All men are equal to him, all pleasure and pains are same to him. He does not change or waiver under their impacts.
5. Beauty: He always displays undying and eternal beauty of mind and spirit, in behaviour and attitudes and in his idealism.
6. Freedom: He is never a slave to anybody. He is virtuous and creative.
7. Culture: He is undersanding but is humble, graceful balanced and sweet.

The above seven-unity, truth, creation, equality, beauty, freedom, and culture, are the idealistic aspects of the activity or “Karma” of the Gurmukh in the worldly life. The Guru Granth aims at producing a Sikh, Khalsa or a saint-soldier of the concept of the Mul-Mantra which is possible to develop through the path and discipline of Naam.

#### *7. Conclusion - The New Direction:*

As a result, some general conclusions about mysticism and Sikhism become apparent. Religion and mysticism are virtually synonymous. Religion, at its highest level is mysticism.

Sikhism being a religion of spirit envisions not only a new dynamic relationship amongst men, but also a new kinship between man and God. Guru Nanak evolved his own distinctive approach which may be termed as spiritualist-secular mode of thought. Sikh Gurus as prophet-mystics have a life-affirming and ethical attitude towards the world. They were emphatic in asserting love as the primary element in their mysticism. The Creator is basically and primarily a God of Will, Love and Grace. In Sikhism mystical state is not transient but a permanent state of bliss, beautitude and joy.

*Nanak bhagta sada vigas - Japji 8-11*

*Naam khumari Nanka charhi rahe din raat (Ibid.,)*

The prophetic or activistic mystic’s experience is fundamental-ly dynamic. His realisation of Truth is by living Truth. This realisation directs him to live a creative existence. He becomes a creative wire for the creative flow of energy and love. The prophetic mystic insists on the elimination of egoism as the crucial step for gaining mystical experience.

Guru Nanak creates a new way of life known as “NaamMarg.” Sikhism is a gospel which the Gurus have conveyed and illustrated through their own lives. Their message is not an idea but an ideal realised, not a static thought but a dynamic and creative activity, not mere words and wishes explained but deeds done, not a precept but a practice, not a myth or parable but a truth lived in flesh and blood.

There is nothing like knowing God because in the case of Ever-Creative God, to do His Will is the only way to know Him. In Japji Guru Nanak asks the question “How can one be a truthful being ? or How may one get enlightened ?” and replies “Through following the Divine Will.” This is the essence of Sikhism.

The mystic knows His will and carries it out the ideal is to establish the kingdom of God on earth and make everyone God-Conscious. This ideal is central to the mystic system of the Gurus.

*(Aap Mukat, mukat kare sansar)*

*One who is liberated, liberates others*

*(Nanak te mukh ujle keti chhuti naal - Japji)*

*Their faces shine with Divine Light and they liberate several others.*

Prayer and the mystic experience are the two modes of com-munion with Him. This communication is as natural as for a child to talk to his father. It can take the form of an inner dialogue The elan of love and life that flows in the veins of a prophetic mystic gives rise to the blood of martyrs, to the steel of the sword of the soldiers, to the deep devotion of the saint, to the service of the suffering and to the divine embrace that soothes, heals and redeems all men within a single fold. Every Sikh prayer ends ‘with the words “Sarbat da bhala” (May God bless the entire humanity). This is the prophetic mysticism of the Sikh Gurus, the religion of God’s Will leading to an integrated life of creative love and freedom on a global level. Finally man becomes a pulsating centre of action by the submission of his Will to the Supreme Reality. Following the Divine will is the key concept of Sikhism and has been commended both as the first great step on the path of spiritual quest and the final achievement of a life of devotion. The message of Sikh Gurus is valid for all those who have an urge to break their ego-shell, and link themselves with the Universal Con-sciousness, which is a shoreless Ocean; This indeed is the essence of Sikh Mysticism. “Nanak leen Bhayo Gobind sion Jion Pani sang Pani.”



## THE CONCEPT OF CHARHDI KALA IN SIKHISM

BALJIT SINGH BAGGA

### *Abstract:*

The Sikhs are a unique spirit-born people believing in Guru Nanak's basic concepts of "Work, Worship and Charity" and "Gur-mukh, Naam, Daan, Ishnan." Naam refers to the Power, the Energy, the Universal Cosmic Life Force and the vibrant manifestation of God in creation.

Charhdi Kala indicates the elation or high spirits of Sikhism. Charhdi Kala, meaning "the waxing mood" is an equivalence of a mind that never despairs, never admits defeat and refuses to be crushed by adversities. It is the cherished ideal mood which the Gurus have preached and for which a Sikh daily prays in his Ardas (Prayer). "NanakNaam Charhdi Kala, tere bhane'sarbat ka Bhala"

Naam is the Power, the Energy that is always unlimited and never diminishes, no matter how much one partakes of it. In Gurbani Naam is also referred to as the Holy Life Force, as the Entity which is immanent and yet transcendent. As the Guru oranth tells us, "Says Nanak: Eternal is the foundation that the Guru has laid for my house and it becomes firmer with the passage of each day." (Sri GunJ Granth Sahib, pp.500-501).

Charhdi Kala is the superior and glorious state of mind in which there is no fear, jealousy or enmity and there is a constant celestial bliss of self-dignity, self-abundance and grandeur of soul. Charhdi Kala is the indicator of a Sikh's absolute faith in One Akal-Purakh. The five K's of Khalsa, a gift from the Guru; are indicative of dignity and power. They are outer indications of the inner spirit that knows of no reverse or disappointment; of tht personality that is unconquerable in its hopes, of its spiritual radiance that is always a fountain of inspiration to others.

The life of the Spirit-born people imbibed in Naam makes the Khalsa noble, bold and free, self-less, flower-like and sun-like. They represent moral influence, radiating peace, good-will, friendship, fellowship, life, and vigour. They live in perpetual blossom like a flower with joy ever-lasting, and remain in a state of eternal bliss, not after death in some unknown region, but even now, here in this very life. This is the central truth embodied in Sri Guru Granth Sahib, the universal scripture of mankind capable of dispelling the mist of ignorance and prejudice and propagating the light of Truth.

This Truth is the metaphysical Reality, Beauty and Goodness that contributes to happiness. Man must not run away from the worldly life. The worlds of science and art co-exist and one can enjoy them by identifying himself with the Will of God, and by complete and unconditional acceptance of the direction of the Divine Will, he attains to the highest summit of spiritual bliss.

The paper will analyse the concept of Charhdi Kala and include the following aspects:

1. Basic principles of Sikhism regarding the Creation, the Creator and the object of human life.
2. Philosophy of optimism and doctrines of Naam Amrit.
3. Attributes of Sikh practising the principle of Bhana.
4. -Sikh history: how Sikhs remained calm, contented, courageous, control- led, cheerful and in Charhdi Kala.
5. Sikh Ardas : aspects of feeling of humility, faith, self- surrender and universal optimism.
6. The discipline of Sikh gurus.
7. Dynamic transvaluation of materialism of modern times to impart comfort, peace of mind and happiness.
8. Society for Victory of God.

### *(1) Basic Principles of Sikhism*

Now let us try to analyse how this state of Charhdi Kala or dynamic optimism is developed. To understand it we must review the basic principles of Sikhism.

Sikhism is the most modern religion and there are great dif-ferences between the ideals and objectives preached by Sikhism and those by other religions of the world. Sikhism is original in character and the Sikh Gurus adopted in pursuance of their spiritual experience whatever they found practical, good and useful for humanity, They rejected ritualism, formalism, parochialism and prejudices. They worked out morality and spiritualism for the well-being of humanity as a whole.

Man has always had the mystical urge to know the unknown. When and how this world was created? Who is the Creator? What is the form of Creator? What is the purpose of human life? What is life, death, transmigration, reincarnation?

Firstly, about the Creation, the Sikh Gurus have not given a definite theory but left the question open and offered some scientific concepts, e.g.,

“There are infinite skies and infinite underworlds :  
Only He knows who created the Universe: (Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 5)  
There was darkness for countless years, there was  
no earth or sky, no sun or moon, no day or night, (Ibid., p. 1035)  
only Divine Will prevailed. From the holy Creator  
has come air, from air water and with water are the  
three worlds created, and Divine Light in all  
beings is pervasive : (Ibid., p. 19)  
“Even if I know I can’t describe it because He is ineffable”(Ibid., p. 2)  
“God created His own Self and the Cosmic Life Force,  
He then created the universe and peVaded Himself in it(Ibid., p. 463)  
All beings are sustained by the Divine force and  
all continents and universes are also sustained  
by this universal Cosmic Force. (Ibid., p. 284)

In summary the theory of creation is that everything was created by Him and only He knows about it.

Secondly, about the Creator, Sikh Gurus have presented original principles which are an expression of their mystical ex-perience and are expressed through poetic symbolism. The basic logic of Sikh ism derives from the revelation and we have to see what that revelation is. A question was asked and the reply was:

You ask me what is the mark of the Lord. He is all Love, the rest He is ineffable. (Ibid., P.459)

Now God is Love and Love is a dynamic force, it has direction and it is the mother of all virtues. God has been called the ocean of virtues. To know God, we must become God-like by imbibing virtues and being in love with Him.

Thirdly, the question is about the objective of existence. In Sikhism the world is real and values and virtues can be expressed in the world. Human life is the supreme state of creation. Man has the capacity to apprehend the Divine, but his ego blocks his vision. The purpose of human life is to seek Him, the Ultimate Reality, and be reunited with Him. Gurbani proclaims:

You have obtained the privilege of human birth, now is our opportunity to meet God. (Ibid., p. 378)

Gurbani encourages us to look at the

bright side of life rather than the dark side:

O, man, you have a spiritual spark, know thyself. (Ibid., p. 441)

The attainment of Sikh's goal is Jivan-Mukat (live-liberation) or achievement of union with God while still alive, and in the service of humanity.

## (2) *Philosophy of Optimism and NaamAmrit*

It is not possible to deal in this short paper with the major concepts of Sikhism with regard to God, Guru, Naam, Shabad, World, Maya, Haumai, Shubh Karam and Allied topics. The entire Sikh philosophy can be divided into five attributes viz. Sewa, Sadachar, Sadh-sangat, Sangeet and Simran (service, ethical conduct, company of the holy, hymn singing and remembrance of God or contemplation.)

While in union with God, the God-conscious lives constantly in eternal bliss. Naam keeps the mind charged with spiritual strength, so Charhdi Kala is a charged state of mind which is in cosmic equilibrium (Sahej).

The combination of the attributes of a higher level of consciousness, perception, morality and spirituality makes for a personality whose object is not physical enjoyment, but to do good deeds.

This is called the state of Sahej, Turiya, Super consciousness, Universal consciousness. He lives in dynamic optimism, always seeking blessings for all mankind.

According to Guru Arjan this world is a garden, there are many shady trees yielding the fruits of "nectar Naam". He, who receives the Nectar-fruit of Naam from the Guru, crosses the sea of Maya.

- a. The world is a garden of flowers and fruits.  
Goodness as an ideology will triumph ultimately.
- b. There is development of man towards perfection.  
There is evolutionary progress towards spirituality and perfection. This gives hope and optimism to man.
- c. The presence of evil teaches us to choose the good  
by striving through suffering and achieving the  
Nectar, which is within the reach of all.

Again, Guru Nanak says that the motive force for the creation of man is unquestionably to change him from man to an angel or a Gurmukh and to give him the opportunity and capability of achieving perfection. Ibid., p. 462

Man's body is subjected to the laws and limitations of the phenomenal world. But spiritually we can be free and in tune with the Will of God.

### (3) *Principle of Bhana*

The state of Sahej is achieved by following the “Divine Will.” He who follows God and carries out His will with joy, cometh not to harm or grief:

All his activities, duties and efforts are dedicated to  
God and at the time of crisis he feels that God is  
functioning through his body, mind, intellect and speech.  
His consciousness is merged in the super-consciousness,  
He does whatever pleases God.

(Ibid., p. 726)

According to Guru Arjan, the Gurmukh, who follows His Will possesses these characteristics, keeping him always in Charhdi Kala:

He acts imbued with the love of God.  
For ever he abideth with Lord.  
He does every thing with spontaneous cohesion.  
He works according to the Creator’s vision.  
To the devotee all the Lord does is sweet,  
He merges in Lord, who is his Source.  
Repository of joy, such is his unique force.  
In honouring him, He-honours His own excellence.  
For Nanak, God and His devotees are identical in essence.

(Ibid., p. 282)

### (4) *Sikh History and Charhdi Kala*

The Sikh history is full of examples of the optimism (Charhdi Kala) of Sikhs under difficult circumstances. They remained calm, contented, courageous, cheerful, controlled and in full charhdi kala. Those who lead an optimistic type of life are never afraid of hostilities, opposition and even death. They regard obstacles and hardships as the beauty of life and consider difficulties to be the secret of success and progress in life. As Sir Mohammad Iqbal said:

“Tundiye bade mukhalif se na ghabrae akab  
ye to chalti hain tujh ko llur uncha urane ke Liye”  
(O’ Eagle, do not be afraid of the swift and hostile  
winds, because they are there to make you fly even higher)

A Gurmukh always lives in high spirits and in an exalted state, leading a divine life. Guru Nanak proclaims, “Liberation and supreme bliss come by contemplation and meditation. A God--directed person never faces defeat.”

Ibid., p.942

### (5) *Sikh Daily Prayer or Ardas*

Charhdi Kala has a direct relationship with the ceremonial Sikh prayer or Ardas. The Sikh prays for a humble mind and sound intellect (man nivan mat uchi), victory of the Khalsa Panth, and the betterment of the humanity. The Sikh Ardas demands complete obedience to Divine Will.

To understand the feeling and objective of the prayer, let us consider a hymn from Gurbani. "All that happens is in the Lord's Will. We would do (a thing) only if we could. All that one wants to do, one cannot; O Lord, keep me in Thy Will. O' my God, all Thy Beings are under Thy Sway. We, Thy Creatures, are powerless: So Bless us Thou as Thou Wiliest Ibid., p. 736

This hymn represents an intense feeling of prayer which dis-closes three main aspects:

- (a) Intense feeling of human helplessness, humility and ignorance.
- (b) Deep faith in the greatness, strength, and gratuity and excellence of Lord,
- (c) Intense yearning for his gratuity after submitting to His Will.

The entire approach and the faith of the seeker create a feeling of optimism.

#### (6) *Discipline of Sikh Gurus*

According to the Sikh Gurus, the first step towards God-realisation is self-realisation. A self-realised person also known as a Gurmukh, Panch, Sachiar, Jivan-mukt or mystic, is a man who is above lust, anger, vanity, enmity, etc. He has the virtues of truth, love, continence, sweetness, contentment, self-control, modesty, straight-forwardness; compassion, fearlessness, purity, moderation, faith, generosity and humility.

In Sikhism the reality of the world the significance of poise and balance in life and the ethics of creative activism have been stressed. There is equal stress on the physical and spiritual well-being of the individual and society and a balanced combination of knowledge, action and devotion.

A Gurmukh lives truthfully and has no ego. For in Sikhism truthful living is considered to be the highest virtue.

The consummation towards which the spiritual life of a Sikh moves after a steady discipline, contemplation and negation of self-hood is the consciousness of reality, living in the temporal world at the universal level, just as the lotus flower lives in a swampy pond.

As the lotus thrusts upward and does not drown in water, as the duck swims and does not become wet while swimming, so can we cross, safely and unaffectedly, the ocean of existence by attuning our minds to the word of Guru and repeating the holy Name of God (Ibid., p. 938)

#### (7) *Dynamic Transvaluation and Ideal Person*

Guru Nanak was a creator and an innovator whose incisive mind and revolutionary trans valuation of values made him a link between the past and future of human destiny. He projected his

wisdom into the stream of consciousness of other faiths. He emphasized his ethics of Creative Enlightenment and Activism, in which he demanded that every enlightened person should cease to live for himself and work for the betterment of society. The discipline enunciated by the Sikh Gurus is a universal discipline and requires the disciple to perform his worldly duties along with his spiritual responsibilities. He has to remain alert on the three planes i.e. physical, mental and spiritual.

The Sikh Ethics in practice brings before us an ideal person thoroughly balanced in physical, mental and spiritual attributes. In him we find a whole-life combination of action, knowledge and devotion (saint-soldier), which keep him in Charhdi Kala. Guru Nanak says: "The Gurmukhs or Ideal Persons are always cheerful and in Charhdi Kala and moving forward." Ibid., p. 2

#### *(8) Society for Victory of God*

Keeping in view the definition of Khalsa and the services rendered and sacrifices made by it for the cause of humanity, it can rightly be said that the Sikh is not a religious fanatic, but he is a seeker of truth and spiritual living. It may be said that it is Guru Nanak who gave us the concept of "Khalsa" and a Sikh Society with a socio-religious role.

It is here that we can say that the foundation of a pure society was laid down by Guru Nanak. It reached its culmination in the form of Khalsa in 1699. Guru Gobind Singh's Khalsa, the brotherhood of the pure does not belong to one community but it belongs to the whole humanity. It is in this context that the Sikhs in their daily prayer beseech the well being of the whole humanity and hopefully desire that the Khalsa should live and work truthfully and optimistically. Also since Khalsa is the army belonging to God, it has always to struggle and strive for the victory of righteousness and of God. This is a concept of the victory of virtue over evil.

Sikhism is a dynamic religion. Its objective is not only the spiritual development of the individual but also the progress and uplift of mankind as a whole. Professor Arnold Toynbee called Sikhism "a higher religion" because it aims at the creation of a new society. Its belief in a moral, just and benevolent world-order "Halimi Raaj" makes it a forward-looking religion. It lays stress on an egalitarian and moral society.

## 7

**SIKH WOMEN**

KANWALJIT KAUR

The Sikh Gurus advocated equal status for women with men in all spheres of life. They honoured women as the symbol of domestic harmony and happiness, social cohesion and unity, a helping hand to man in the achievement of salvation. The Guru says :

In a woman, man is conceived,  
 From a woman he is born,  
 With a woman he is betrothed and married,  
 With a woman he contracts friendship,  
 why denounce her, the one from whom even Kings are born ?  
 From a woman a woman is born,  
 None may exist without a woman

(Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 73)

The position of women in Indian society before the times of the Sikh Gurus was very demeaning, derogatory and continually deteriorating. Their presence in religious, political, social, cultural and economic affairs was almost non-existent. No religion or sect in India had ever taken any steps towards emancipation of women, constituting nearly half of the adult population. A woman was never considered fit for independence at any stage of her life. As a daughter, she was kept under the strict supervision of her father, as a wife under the surveillance of the husband, and as a widow under care of her son.

A woman was referred to as man's shoe, the root of all evil, a snare, a temptress, and having her intelligence in her heels. It was said that one who heeds the advice of a woman would be reduced to beggary. In the male-dominated society, the only contribution required of women was to perpetuate the race, do the household work and serve male members of society.

The plight of women was made even more miserable by the invaders who took women away as slaves and sold them as cattle in foreign markets or raped and ravaged them and made them work as prostitutes in their home country. A very popular song, still sung by



Punjabi women, depicts a woman being forcibly abducted by the, invaders under the very nose of her husband, father and brother. In utter helplessness she cries for help from an unknown warrior:

O passing knight, none but you can help me.  
 My father has fallen, my husband has laughed  
 me away, saying he can remany.  
 O passing knight, I beseech you,  
 Rescue me from these god clutches.

Indian women were also tightly tied down in the shackles of cruel, inhuman and callous social customs. The leaders of society had woven around woman a rigid cocoon of restrictions, which had be-come the obsession of all. A woman has encouraged and sometimes forced to become Sati (to immolate herself on her husband's funeral pyre), which showed the insignificance of a woman's life and role. She was a nonentity, whose only purpose for living was to serve her husband. Widowhood was a curse and the remarriage of widows was taboo.

Purdah or wearing of the veil was thought to be a shield for her, a protection against man's lustful eyes. But it had disastrous psychological effects. It made her 'abla' (helpless creature) who was not able to defend herself. Again, the birth of a son was welcome as one would clear the way for the father's salvation, whereas the birth of a girl was anathema to the parents. She was contemptuously called a misfortune and female infanticide was commonly practised, espe-cially by the higher classes of society.

The religions of the day debarred woman from taking an active part in religious affairs. She was thought to be a hindrance to man aspiring for communion with God. She was to accept her husband as her Lord and was not to have any personal religion or spiritual responsibility. She was not to receive education and not allowed to listen to scriptures. Guru Nanak condemned this man-made notion of the inferiority of woman and protested against her long subjection. He challenged the unjust custom and practice prevalent and his message was like a breath of fresh air for the suffering woman. He felt the need to rehabilitate woman to a place of honour, if Indian society as a whole was to be saved'. He asserted that men and women shared the grace of God equally and were responsible for their deeds before Him.

The Sikh Gurus admitted women into the Sangat (congrega-tion) without any restriction or reservation and their message was meant as much for women as for men. Now, Sikh women not only

attend services but they also lead and conduct services on equal terms with men. They work side by side with men in the Langar (common kitchen) and all other religious, social and cultural activities of the Gurdwaras. In a way, the Guru advocated and allowed much more equality for women in the 15th century than the freedom and equality which has existed for women in the twentieth century. The Guru wanted to build a nation of self-respecting men and women with equal dignity; he considered that without the active participation of woman in all walks of life, the social structure would not only be weak but incomplete also.

Guru Nanak repudiated the prevalent notion that women were inherently evil and a temptation. By denouncing celibacy and renunciation of the world and by advocating family life, and by his own example the Guru put woman on a par with man. Woman was not a hindrance if man needed to serve God but a helping hand in the achievement of salvation.. The Guru says :

Living within family life,

one obtains salvation.

(Guru Granth Sahib, p.661)

The Sikh Gurus advocated marriage of two equal partners. The third Guru, Guru Amar Das, described the ideal marriage:

Only they are truly wedded who have one spirit in two bodies.

(Guru Granth Sahib, p. 788)

The Gurus redefined celibacy in the framework of chastity-he is celibate, who is married to one wife-and taught their disciples, male and female alike, the value of conjugal fidelity.

Guru Amar Das condemned the cruel custom of Sati, Purdah and female infanticide and advocated the remarriage of widows. He persuaded his Sikhs to abstain completely from the practice of Sati and wrote:

They are not Satis, who bum themselves with  
their dead husbands.

Rather they are Satis, who die with mere  
shock of separation from their husbands.

And they are Satis too, who abide in modesty  
and contentment.

(Guru Granth Sahib, p.787)

He persuaded Emperor Akbar to issue a directive to stop the callous practice. Guru Amar Das also raised his voice against Purdah and did not allow the queen of Haripur to come into the congregation wearing a veil. He forbade his Sikhs to deal with anyone indulging in female infanticide. In Rehat Maryada (the code or way of Sikh life) the Sikh is asked to take a vow, not to have any social dealings with any such person.

Whereas a woman had been contemptuously called a child-bearing machine, the Guru respected her for her creativity and said:

Blessed is the woman who creates life. (Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 32)

Out of 22 Manjis established by the Guru for the preaching of Sikhism four were held by women. He also appointed 52 women missionaries to educate women in the three R's and also to spread the message of Sikhism.

The sixth Guru, Guru Hargobind, respected woman by saying: "Woman is the conscience of man." Guru Gobind Singh, the 10th Guru, gave Amrit (Sikh initiation) to men and women alike. There is no distinction made as to the injunctions about the maintenance of the five K's - the symbols of Sikh faith. At the time of Amrit a man is given the name Singh, meaning Lion, the woman is given the name Kaur, meaning Princess, to enhance the position of woman. A Sikh woman is an individual in her own right; she does not have to take husband's name and is Kaur till her death.

On Baisakhi Day in the year 1699, when Guru Gobind Singh was preparing Amrit (the nectar used for initiation) with his double-edged sword, his wife added sugar crystals to sweeten the water. The Guru accepted her contribution gratefully and remarked that his Sikhs would not only be strong but sweet as well. Had there not been the teachings of the Gurus, according to the then prevalent rites, she would have been considered to have polluted and defiled the whole ceremony. He also forbade Sikhs to exercise any proprietary rights over women captured in battle. Infact, Sikh armies treated women better than do modern armies.

These views of the Gurus and the steps they took to accord equality to women revolutionized the tradition of society, which was steeped in prejudice against them. Woman was not only equal with man in social and religious affairs but an equal partner in the political matters of war and peace: she was at liberty to join the army to fight for national defence. As a result of the Gurus' teachings, men began to realise the worth of women as equal partners and women began to receive the respect and honour they deserved. Relieved from unnecessary and unreasonable customs, taboos and practices, Sikh woman-hood played a momentous role in various walks of life in consonance with the rise and nature of the Sikh movement.

In the early period of the movement, the role of Sikh women was confined, by and large, to religious and social affairs of the Sikh community. But with the changing character of the community's needs, Sikh women did not show themselves wanting in qualities of

courage, bravery and sacrifice. In the eighteenth century when the Sikhs after an epic struggle and heroic sacrifices, succeeded in creating their independent principalities in various parts of the Punjab, numerous Sikh women distinguished themselves as warriors, administrators, advisers, regents and rulers. Many Sikh women led forces with courage and bravery against their enemies and won laurels. Whenever and wherever a Sikh ruler happened to be weak or wanting, his mother, sister or wife would come forward to manage his affairs efficiently.

During the period of the Gurus, we find that the women connected with their families played a very important role directly or indirectly in the progress of the community and in the preachings of the Gurus' message. Bebe Nanki, the elder sister of Guru Nanak was the first admirer of the Guru's greatness and gave him much needed encouragement to tread on the great spiritual path he had chosen. Mata Khivi, the wife of the second Guru excelled in the domain of Seva (selfless service). She, imbued with the spirit of Seva, took upon herself the onerous responsibility of the management of the affairs of the Langar. Thus she helped the Guru in establishing the infant Sikh community on a stronger footing.

The name of Mata Gujri, the wife of Guru Tegh Bahadur and mother of Guru Gobind Singh, will inspire many women. She was a great educationist: she taught her family and everyone around her the teachings of the Gurus and infused in them the spirit of courage for their convictions, ready to lay down their life for principles. After the Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur in 1675, the responsibility of looking after the education of the nine-year-old Guru Gobind Singh and the leadership of the Sikh community at that crucial and dangerous time, fell on the shoulders of Mata Gujri. She discharged her duties superbly and showed remarkable astuteness and far-sightedness in dealing with external and internal dangers to the Sikh community. She showed great courage in dealing with dishonest Masands (who were supposed to collect the offerings from the congregation and send them to Guru). It was Mata Gujri's teachings of courage, of conviction and steadfastness that infused the spirit of sacrifice in the younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh. They accepted death and sacrificed themselves on the altar of their faith. Mata Gujri holds an unenviable position as wife of a martyr, mother of a martyr, grandmother of martyrs and herself a martyr.

Mata Sundri, the widow of Guru Gobind Singh continually provided leadership in the most dangerous time in the history of Sikhs, she dealt with the pretenders and aspirers of Gurudom very strictly and maintained the Guruship given to Guru Granth Sahib in 1708 by Guru Gobind Singh, the 10th Guru. Sikh women exercised checks and restraints on the weakness of their men folk. Mai Bhago bravely helped forty Sikh deserters to keep on the right path, when the latter had signed a disclaimer renouncing their allegiance to Guru Gobind Singh. She admonished them for leaving the Guru and herself led them back to the Guru and fought bravely to defend themselves from the Moghul troops.

During this period of history (1720-1760) when the male Sikhs were persecuted and there were rewards for the capture or killing of Sikhs, Sikh women not only showed undaunted courage in warfare, but also shouldered family responsibilities. They had to work to earn money to keep the family from starvation and to look to the religious and educational needs of the children. They had to teach the children the principles of Sikhism and inculcate courage in facing persecution. During Mir Mannu's governorship (1748-1753) of Punjab, hundreds of women were caught, put into prison and were forced to grind corn. They were made to wear wreaths round their necks made from the flesh of their slain children. These women were tortured, starved and speared alive. They bore all this but did not falter from their religious beliefs.

George Thomas, who was the Raja of a small state in Punjab, writes in his memoirs that "Instances indeed have not infrequently occurred in which they (Sikh women) have actually taken up arms to defend their inhabitants from the desolatory attacks of the enemy and throughout the contest behaved themselves with the intrepidity of spirit highly praiseworthy." When the Sikhs came out of the period of persecution and had a chance of establishing Sikh rule, Sikh women as and when the occasion arose, took charge of state administration and their contributions, as rulers were creditable. One such great woman was the Rani of Patiala State, Rani Sahib Kaur. She proved to be the saviour of Patiala state more than once. She often commanded armies in the battlefield and inflicted severe defeats on the invaders. She was an enlightened organiser, a brilliant administrator and a superb commander of her force.

Rani Sada Kaur, mother-in-law of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, was the chief architect of his empire. She headed the army many times to

assist the Maharaja. The Maharaja was only eleven years old when his father died and it was Rani Sada Kaur who set him on the road to power and glory. Rani Jind Kaur, the wife of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and the mother of Maharaja Dalip Singh, exerted her influence to keep the state of Punjab independent from the British Imperialism. But her efforts were foiled by the British politicians and she had to suffer imprisonment. She made persistent efforts to free Punjab and restore the legitimate authority of her son, but all in vain.

In the late nineteenth and twentieth century Sikh women played an active part in the Indian Independence movement and many women like Bibi Gulab Kaur, Mata Kishan Kaur Kanke, Bibi Amar Kaur, Bibi Harnam Kaur, Bibi Dalip Kaur and many more played an active and brave role. Today many Sikh women are serving the community in various spheres. They are performing important tasks as eminent administrators, doctors, educationists, business-women, religious leaders, politicians and artists. They have proved their mettle in whatever sphere they choose to serve. Even as a housewife, the authority of the Sikh women among rich and poor, is extensive. She usually controls the purse strings and decides what that family shall eat and how much her husband would spend. Social events, such as marriage or birthday celebrations, are usually settled by women and the man merely gives consent. The Sikh woman has enjoyed superior status as compared to her counterparts in other communities. She has earned this by showing the ability to stand by the side of her husband in difficult times.

Sikh women have come in the forefront and have shown their ability and stamina to work outside Punjab. In 1966 in Smethwick (Midlands) a serious dispute arose between the two parties of the Gurdwara Management Committee. The women took charge of the Gurdwara affairs and for a whole year, very successfully conducted the affairs till the men cooled down and got ready to work together.

Bibi Balwant Kaur in Birmingham has contributed greatly to the social and religious welfare of Sikh women by establishing Bebe Nanaki Gurudwara in Birmingham, where mostly women manage all the affairs of the Gurdwara. In Kenya, she helped widows to become self-supporting by giving them tailoring techniques and providing sewing machines. For the recent famine in Ethiopia, she collected funds and personally visited the famine stricken areas.

Many women have and are currently occupying positions of residents, or secretaries of Gurdwaras and other similar Sikh or-

ganisations. In almost every Gurdwara, women are seen organising functions to collect money for charities. In spite of her active participation in all religious, political, social, and cultural affairs, the position of Sikh woman is far from satisfactory. Her status in life is still lower than that of man. The birth of a female is still less welcome than the birth of a male child. There still exists the dreaded dowry system that puts the woman a few pegs lower than the man. The Sikh man will quite happily cook, clean and serve food in the Langar in the Gurdwara but would still think those very jobs belonging to woman, as he believes that household chores are low and need less intelligence.

Despite the Gurus' teachings of full equality, the Sikh woman still suffers from some prejudices. No woman has even been elected as the president of Shromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (the Central Management Committee to manage the affairs of the Gurdwaras in Punjab); no woman has been appointed Jathedar (head) of any of the five Takhats (the thrones of authority); and the number of women, who have been the members, secretaries or presidents of gurdwara management committees is very small. Clearly this somewhat subservient role of Sikh women can be attributed to the following factors:

Sikhs have been the minority community and have been ruled by either Hindu or Muslim traditions or by the British and have been ruled according to their respective religious or political views. Islam did not visualise equality of women with men to the same extent as the Sikh Gurus. The Hindu Rajas and Maharajas indulged in all the ill practices like Sati, Purdah and female infanticide and influenced the Sikh gentry who tried to imitate them. Even during the British Raj, when Sikhs got the control of Sikh Gurdwaras (1924), for the election of the Managing Committee, only the Sikh men were given the right to vote. In spite of the Sikh leaders, explanations and pleading that the Sikh women enjoy equality with men and they share all the duties in the Gurdwaras equally with men, the British Government in India refused to give Sikh women the right to vote, (Incidentally, when India became independent Sikh women got the same rights as Sikh men, in running the affairs of the Gurdwaras).

The other major contributory factor is the unwillingness of Sikh males to surrender their dominant role. They enjoy the privileges and will carry on, perhaps till the Sikh women stand up and refuse to let go the equality, given to them 500 years ago by the Gurus. The

moment the Sikh men would turn to their Gurus' teachings, they would understand the truth of equality.

Sikh history has been written by men only, who either chose to disregard women's contributions or did not think their contributions worthy of note. Whatever the reason, women's contributions have been kept off the record and as a result Sikh women could not transmit their achievement to the next generation so that the next generation could have positive images to look upon and emulate.

I think to an extent the fault also lies with Sikh women them-selves. They have collaborated with men in stereotyping the role of women. Sikh women should teach equality of the sexes within the family unit by welcoming the birth of a daughter and celebrating this on the same scale as those of sons and providing equal opportunities for their higher education and challenging careers.

The custom of dowry can soon be eradicated, in fact can be finished almost overnight, if women-as sons' mothers-refuse to accept it. There should be women's organisations to mobilise public opinion against this cancerous growth of the dowry system.

Although it is good that Sikh women have never had to struggle for their basic rights of equality with men, yet it has generated a degree of complacency and lack of zeal to rise to greater heights. There is no reason why half the number of Sikh leaders, educationists, organisers and spiritual teachers could not be women. Sikh women through seva and dedication must try to achieve the status given to them by the Sikh Gurus. They have a glorious past and they must work for a brighter future.



## THE SIKH IDENTITY

DALJEET SINGH

### *Introductory*

In order to understand the sovereignty and independence of the Sikh religion we shall discuss the subject under the following heads: (1) Spiritual experience and concept of God, (2) Ideology, (3) Class, (4) Scripture, and (5) *Panth* and Its Institutions. Since the subject of Sikh identity is very wide, only a brief reference to the various elements mentioned above, will be made.

### *Spiritual Experience and the Concept of God*

It is significant that Guru Nanak clearly claims that he has a mission as ordained by God, "O Lalo, I say what the Lord commands me to convey."<sup>1</sup> This statement about their prophethood and mission has been made by the other Gurus as well, of course, the mission is the same as proclaimed by Guru Nanak. In describing the spiritual experience, the Gurus have unambiguously asserted the existence of the Fundamental Spiritual Reality, and its ineffability. Yet, they have described profusely the various attributes of God, social, political, ethical, metaphysical, etc. Three things they have repeatedly emphasized, first, that He is Unknowable, second, that He is the Source and Ocean of all values and virtues, and third, that He is All-Love: "Friends ask me; what is the mark of the Lord. He is All-Love; the rest He is ineffable."<sup>2</sup> These important characteristics described by the Gurus, stress the dynamic and creative character of God. Seen in the light of the Indian definition of *Sat-Chit-Anand*, and the characteristics tabulated by Stace<sup>3</sup> and William James, this definition is clearly different in the sense that whereas the Guru's spiritual experience, the others indicate a sense of tranquility, blissfulness and passivity. It is not suggested that the Gurus deny the experience of blissfulness, but they

highlight the dynamic aspect of that experience. In fact, the significant activities of the lives of the Gurus and the Sikh religion clearly bear the stamp of that spiritual experience. In this respect the Gurus also stress four aspects of their concept of God. First, that apart from being transcendent, He is also immanent; and being immanent, He is Creative and Directive, i.e., He has a Will. The second quality emphasized is that He is the Ruler, Protector and Sovereign (*Rakba*). The third attribute is His being the source of all values and virtues. And the fourth aspect emphasized is His interest in life and the universe. It is these principal attributes of God and the spiritual experience of the Gurus that give a new shape and identity to Sikhism and its life i.e., its dynamism and ethical activities.

### *Ideology*

The chief elements of the Sikh ideology are based on the spiritual experience of the Gurus, as indicated above, and their definition of God. The subject may be dealt with under the following heads :

(a) *Reality of World*: The Gurus have repeatedly stressed the reality of the world. In fact, the very concept of God being Immanent in the world means the profound importance of the world and life. The Guru says: ‘God created the world and permeated it with His Light.’<sup>4</sup> Evidently, the universe in which God is immanent and is working with His Light, could neither be unreal, Mithya or a suffering. So that is an important departure which Sikhism has made from the then existing Indian religions.

(b) *Goal*: The Gurus have already defined that God has a Will with which He works the world. This being so, Guru Nanak clearly lays down that the goal of life is to work in line with God’s Altruistic Will. He rejects the path of ascetic silence and states that the human goal is to carry out or move according to the Will of God. Guru Nanak puts the question as to how to become a ‘*sachara*’ or True Man, and how to break the wall of falsehood (obstructing our vision)? Then he gives the answer, saying that the goal or the true path is to carry out the Will of God.<sup>5</sup> This is also a very important departure from the goal prescribed in Indian religions, which is generally of merger in Brahman or extinction in the ocean of Nirvana or Brahman. This very important departure from the goal in Indian systems, has great implications. For that reason, while it rejects the path of withdrawal and asceticism, it clearly prescribes a life of dynamic activity in accordance with the Attributive Will of God. It is because of this goal that the entire system of Sikhism is different from the other Indian religious systems, in which

monasticism, celibacy, Ahimsa are accepted institutions. It is this contrast in goals that makes for the Sikh way of life being entirely different from the paths prescribed in other religions. The goal is so different that the Gurus have used the Semitic words 'hukm' and 'raza' to express their concept of this ideal. .

(c) Methodology: The world being real, and the goal being to carry out the attributive Will of God, naturally this leads to a life of altruistic activities for the seeker. The Guru says that it is by our deeds that we are assessed by God.<sup>6</sup> "It is by our deeds that we become away from or near to God."<sup>7</sup> "Good, righteousness, virtues and the giving up of vice are the ways to realize the essence of God."<sup>8</sup> Love, contentment, truth, humility and virtues enable the seed of *Naam* to sprout."<sup>9</sup>

"Everything is lower than truth; Higher is truthful living or conduct."<sup>10</sup>

In short, in Sikhism, according to the Gurus, it is by one's deeds and this character that one is judged by God.

(d) *Gurmukh* or the Ideal Man: We have already indicated the goal in Sikhism. Naturally, the ideal man is the one who lives God in life, and always carries out His Altruistic Will. In this regard the Gurus have indicated two concepts, one of *manmukh* and the other of *gurmukh*. *Manmukh* is the egoistic man who being unconscious of the universal Will of God, lives and works egoistically. The Gurus have clearly stated that man's problems and maladies, all arise from his egoism and selfish living. Clash, conflicts and wars in life arise, because at the present level of consciousness or our existence, we neither comprehend nor accept the universal character of life and the brotherhood of man. It is this egoistic living that brings us into conflict with other beings. The Gurus do not accept or assume any concept of fall, evil or Satan in life. They only state that at the present stage of development man is egoistic and for that matter imperfect. They prescribe the methodology, as mentioned above, of altruistic deeds, that alone can make for his spiritual progress. They clearly lay down a message of hope, right effort and progress; "O man you are superior in God's creation; now is your opportunity. You may fulfil or not fulfil your destiny."<sup>11</sup> "You have obtained the privilege of human birth; now is your opportunity to meet God."<sup>12</sup> "God created first Himself, then Haumain (sense of individuation), third, Maya. (multifarious beings and entities), and the fourth higher stage is of *gurmukh* who always lives truthfully."<sup>13</sup>

This concept of *manmukh* and *gurmukh* is fundamental to the understanding of Sikh theology. The Gurus have emphasized

three things. First, that at the present stage of development man is egoistic and all his problems of conflict, clash and suffering are due to his ignorant and egoistic living. But they, on that account, neither curse man nor life, rather they hold out hope for man saying that by living a life of virtuous deeds and accepting the universal character of God they can not only alleviate their suffering, but also make for spiritual progress towards their destiny. The third important thing is that the fourth stage of *gurmukh* is not of a man who merges in God, but it is of a *gurmukh* who always lives truthfully. Hence the fourth stage of *gurmukh* is of one who continuously carries out the altruistic Will of God. And God being the Protector of the weak, the Destroyer of the evil-doers<sup>14</sup> and the demonical<sup>15</sup>, the *Sachiara*, or the *gurmukh* always participates fully in life and accepts total social responsibility. His sphere of functioning is as wide as the domain of God and no aspect of life is taboo for him. In short, he accepts all challenges of life, and seeks to solve them altruistically. Therefore, the Gurus prescribed for the *gurmukh* an ideal of *Sant-Sipahi*. This concept follows clearly and logically from the spiritual experience of the Gurus, their definition of God and their theology as mentioned above. As God is the Protector of the weak, Just (*Adli*) and Destroyer of the evil-doer, and this being His Will, acting and directing in the universe, the *gurmukh* as the instrument of God must inevitably follow that spiritual course. Hence this ideal of *Sant-Sipahi*, while in perfect consonance with the thesis of the Gurus, is entirely different, and in certain respects, diametrically opposed to some of the principal elements of the earlier religious systems. Accordingly, in no manner can the independent character of Guru Nanak's ideology be doubted or confused with any other identity or religious system.

#### *Class*

As following from the spiritual experience of the Gurus and their theology, is determined the class or category of Guru Nanak's system. Broadly, we may classify religious systems into four classes. First is the category of Indian systems which are dichotomous in the sense that logically the spiritual path is different from the empirical path. Therefore, in dichotomous systems monasticism, asceticism, *Sanyas* and withdrawal are prescribed as a part of their religious methodology. The second corollary of these systems or *Sanyasa* is that involvement in the world is a distraction and virtually a fall. The third corollary is that celibacy is a virtue and for that matter householder's life is generally discarded and woman is considered to be a temptress. The fourth

corollary is that Ahimsa or pacificism is an integral virtue. It is because of this dichotomy between the spiritual and the empirical lives, we believe, that the highly discriminatory and unfair system of caste, untouchability and pollution has continued to be a part of the Indian empirical life. The second category of systems includes Judaism and Islam, which are whole-life systems, because in these, spiritual life and empirical life are combined. But both these systems have two other features. One, they are both exclusive in their character. Second, in both of them in the later part of their history, monasticism and asceticism have appeared and been accepted. This happens in the form of Essenes, Kabbalists, etc. in the case of Judaism, and various sects of Sufism in the case of Islam. To the third category of systems belongs Christianity, which although it accepts involvement in life, strictly prescribes non-resistance to evil, and pacificism. Probably on this account, in Christianity, which was originally a householder's religion, later appeared monasteries and nunneries. It is for the same reason that later still the institutions of secularism and communism have arisen in the Western life, involving thereby a virtual dichotomy between the religious life and the empirical life.

To the fourth class of religious systems, belongs Sikhism. While like Judaism and Islam, it is a whole-life system, it is free from their other two features, namely, of exclusiveness and of accepting monasticism and withdrawal as a part of their religious system. In Sikhism, on the other hand, both these features have been rejected. Sikhism discards monasticism, asceticism and withdrawal. This rejection was made clear both by Guru Nanak in not allowing Baba Sri Chand to be his successor, and by the subsequent Gurus by excluding Sanyasis and ascetics from the Sikh fold. Obviously, a whole-life system with the concept of *Miri* and *Piri* and the ideal of *Sant-Sipahi*, could not in any manner countenance the presence of recluses and Sanyasis as a part of their flock. For the same reasons, both celibacy and the downgrading of women, were emphatically rejected. Nor could a *Miri-Piri* system accept Ahimsa as a virtue or a part of its religious ethics. Further, the importance of work and sustaining life was clearly recommended, and yogic aloofness condemned. For similar reasons caste ideology was rejected since it militated against the Gurus' basic principle of fairness and brotherhood of man. Lastly, in order to give a clear and visible shape to his new ideology, the Sixth Master created the institution of Akal Takhat at the same place as Harmandir Sahib with separate flags representing *Miri* and *Piri*. An important feature

signifying this combination is that the Sixth Master wore two *kirpans* meaning thereby an integral unity of spiritual and empirical life in the Sikh system. Because *Piri* was represented by a Kirpan as much as *Miri* was done. It is significant that in Nathism, which was a very old system, quite alive in the Punjab, the Nath had to take vows for remaining celibate, for not doing any work or business, and for strictly observing Ahimsa.<sup>16</sup> Although these recluses did to an extent accept the validity of the caste system and the Hindu gods, Guru Nanak categorically rejected all these features, and organised a whole-life system of householders participating” in all walks of life and remaining socially responsible.

Another important fact which generally goes unnoticed is that the Tenth Master in prescribing the wearing of Kirpan for the Sikhs clearly reminds him of his duty against aggression and tyranny, and warns him against any relapse into a monastic or ascetic system of withdrawal from life. Hence in every respect and in the essentials of its theology, Sikhism belongs to a class of systems quite apart and independent in its ideology. For, Guru Nanak and the succeeding Nine Masters dearly demonstrated in their lives what Sikhism stood for and how it was to be lived in a manner emphatically different from not only the Indian systems but also from the three Semitic systems, current in his times. In fact, dear direction was given to see that features that had appeared in some of the earlier whole-life systems did not creep in Sikhism at some later stage. All this shows how clear were the Sikh Gurus in their vision and about the independence and sovereignty of their system and the mission they were to pursue.

#### *Scripture*

*Guru Granth Sahib*, the Sikh Scripture, is the most emphatic pronouncement about the distinct and independent identity of Sikhism. Apart from being the embodiment of the words or *Shabad* of the Gurus, and for that matter of the commandments of God and the Sikh doctrines, and being final in every respect, it is the living guide of the Sikhs and has been so apothecated by the Tenth Master. The phenomenon of Sikh Scripture is unique in the annals of religious history of man. In the case of every other religion its scripture was compiled decades, and mostly centuries, after the prophet had left the physical scene. In all these cases numerous problems of authenticity, textual accuracy and advertant additions and interpolations, have arisen, thereby creating many controversies, both among the faithful and the scholars. In fact scholarly debate has arisen in Christianity as to whether

or not Christ wanted to initiate a new religion or intended only to reform Judaism. But the step taken by the Fifth Master makes it absolutely clear that the Gurus had a new thesis to give, entirely different from the earlier ones, and for that matter, it required a separate and authentic compilation. By this important measure, the Master eliminated all possibilities of attendant controversies that had arisen in the Case of other religions. Secondly, it made it equally explicit that in its message the Scripture was final and complete. And the Tenth Master, while stopping the line of human succession to the Guruship, made it clear what the position of the *Guru Granth* is in the Sikh religion. The Gurus thus created a tradition that not a word could be altered nor any line added to the *Guru Granth*. The story about Ram Rai, Guru's own son, and other similar incidents make it clear how particular the Gurus were in maintaining and securing the authenticity of the *Bani (Shabad)* and how sacred they felt to be its character as the vehicle of Truth.

In this context, one fact is very significant. In the presence of the existing position on the *Guru Granth* neither can there be an alteration in the Sikh thesis, nor can any saint or person, while claiming to be a Sikh, attempt to create any deviation or schism in the Sikh society. It is in this background that one can understand the activities and writings of two writers of long association with a Christian Mission in Punjab, in making unfounded and misleading statements about the authenticity of the Kartarpuri Bir. The surprising part of such statements, in fact, some misstatements<sup>17</sup>, is that those have been made or repeated without a proper study or examination of the Bir or the authentic literature that existed long before these persons raised unwarranted doubts. And the very fact that some of those statements or the intentions behind making them, is being now denied, shows the fishy nature of such attempts. All we wish to emphasize is the great and unprecedented vision of the Sikh Gurus in authenticating the Sikh Scripture, thereby eliminating for the future the possibility of any such controversy. This shows both the clear identity of the Sikh thesis and the intention of the Gurus to secure its purity for all times to come. The Sikh Gurus were fully aware of numerous scriptures in India and outside, and it is in that background that they took the monumental step of authenticating the *Guru Granth Sahib*. The implications of this step about Sikh identity are indeed profound and emphatic.

### *Panth and Its Institutions*

We have already indicated Guru Nanak's system was a whole-life or *Miri-Piri* system, and for that matter, it envisaged the creation of a society or *Panth*. For, it was not a salvation religion for the guidance or benefit of a few. In this matter Sikhism is entirely different from the Bhakti religions or the other Indian religions. This intention of Guru Nanak is clear from the very start. For, wherever he went, he created and organised Sikh societies with a place for the regular or periodical socio-religious meetings of his groups. And after the close of his travels, he organised such a centre at Kartarpur. It is clear that his purpose was not of merely giving a new thesis, but he also wanted to organise a society that should live the ideals laid down by him. It is for that purpose that he started the institution of succession, since he knew that although the thesis had been clearly expounded in his *Bani*, the society he had initiated, had still to be nurtured; motivated and developed. Of course, Guru Nanak had laid down the lines on which his society was to work, and the targets it was to achieve. His being a *Miri-Piri* system, it was he who had rejected the doctrine of Ahimsa. Apart from that, the institution of *Langar* was also initiated by him; it was something which was wholly revolutionary in his times. For, not only Shudras, but Muslims also participated and sat at the same platform. In the work and lives of the subsequent Gurus, we can see a clear development and ascent in the organisation of the Sikh *Panth*. Separate centres of the Sikh societies were created, which were all linked to the central place where the Gurus worked and where periodical meetings of the entire Sikh *Sangats* were held. Apart from that, the institution of *Daswandh* was created. It is significant that both the field centres and the place of the Guru dealt with social as well as religious problems of the Sikh society. The primary object of all this was, on the one hand, to knit together the Sikhs as a separate *Panth* or People, and, on the other hand, to wean them away from the other religions and cults, which were numerous in the country. The Sixth Master, in pursuance of the instructions of his father, started militarisation of the Sikh society, and raised the institution of the Akal Takhat side by side with the Harmandir Sahib. Almost since the time of the Fifth Master the Sikh society started growing as a parallel socio-political organisation. As it was also militarised, the tension between the Sikh society and the state naturally grew, ultimately leading to open clashes. The Seventh Master promised aid to Dara and the event was evidently not



forgotten by the Delhi Emperor. Similarly, the organisation of a Millat, a people, by the Ninth Master came to the notice of Emperor Aurangzeb, who offered<sup>18</sup> to give grant to the Guru, if the latter gave up his political and what he felt to be somewhat rebellious activities. The Guru declined the offer. The intentions of the Gurus became clear and open, when finally the Tenth Master formally organised the institution of *Sant-Sipahis* or the Khalsa with *Amrit* ceremony. What is very significant is that as an essential component of the Sikh thesis, he prescribed the wearing of *Kirpan*, which indicated that the Sikhs had neither to abandon or relax in regard to their responsibility of reaction against injustice and oppression, nor had this society to relapse into a group of *Sants* unconcerned with the problems of the empirical life and their responsibility to solve them.

The broad indication of the development of the Sikh society from the time of Guru Nanak to the Tenth Master, makes it clear that from the very start the Gurus were aiming at the creation of a people imbued with the ideals of *Sant-Sipahi*, based on the *Miri-Piri* or whole-life doctrine of Guru Nanak. For, Sainapat records that on the Baisakhi day 1699 was revealed the plan, which, till then, was in the mind of the Master.<sup>19</sup> The question is not of what an arm-chair scholar might feel today, but the important fact is what was the perception of the state during the period from the mid-sixteenth century to the end of the seventeenth century. The martyrdom of the Fifth and the Ninth Masters and the open military clashes between the armies of the state and the Sikhs showed that the Delhi Empire always took the Sikh society to be an unwanted political entity, which had to be curbed and destroyed. Hence the conflict between the Sikhs and the Mughal state and the ultimate triumph of the Sikh society is not a phenomenon subsequent to the Guru period, but a continuing war of socio-political interests between two societies of which both sides were fully conscious and working for the success of their respective objectives. So far as the Gurus were concerned, we have already stated that they were developing a society or a people inspired with the values of the *Miri-Piri* thesis of Guru Nanak. Hence the identity of the society was unquestioned by the political rulers of the day, and is, for that matter, unquestionable, both in the field of religion and that of social growth. The institution of the *Panth* started by Guru Nanak, the system of succession and the Ten Masters who nurtured and matured the Sikh society, the institution of *Langar*, brotherhood and equality, coupled with the institution of work and production, can

be explained only on the assumption that Guru Nanak had a separate thesis which was calculatedly sought to be implemented. Similarly, the institution of *Daswandh*, the history of martyrdoms and extreme sacrifice by the Gurus themselves, and the institution of *Amrit* and the Five *Kakars* equally highlight how this society was welded into a people with new motivations and ideals. In fact, this uniqueness is also evident from the failures of some scholars, drawn from pacifist or dichotomous religions to understand the logical unity and integrity of the Sikh thesis. Because according to the logic of their systems the development of the Sikh society from the seventeenth century does not appear to them to be congruous with the doctrines of their pacifist or dichotomous religions. On the other hand, seen in the light of the whole-life thesis of Guru Nanak, the entire history and institutions of the Sikh society appear so natural, logical, necessary, and understandable.

### *Conclusion*

We have discussed the Sikh identity under the five heads mentioned earlier. The spiritual experience of the Gurus being different from that in the case of other systems, their ideology is equally new and different; since, instead of being dichotomous or pacifist, it is a whole-life system that considers the development of a socio-religious society to be essential. But that society has not in any manner to be exclusive, nor the struggle for justice only for a narrow cause. In fact, its history shows that the approach of the Sikh society has always been universal. For, it was the Sikh society which for the first time brought a sense of equality among the different castes and creeds in India. An equally important fact is that although the Sikhs had a long history of struggle with the Muslim state, they, while in power, never tried to convert Hindus or Muslims to the Sikh faith. In fact, both the communities flourished because of respectful regard for their faiths. The treatment the Sikh armies gave to their vanquished adversaries or to the civil populations, can bear comparison with the conduct of any army, contemporary or modern.

It is significant that it was Guru Nanak's call for playing the game of love and sacrifice, which the Tenth Master repeated at the time of the *Amrit* ceremony. For, just as Guru Nanak wanted a total commitment for the cause of the faith, the same total commitment was desired by the Tenth Master in response to which the Five *Piyaras* offered their heads. And the important fact is that this commitment to the faith was led and sanctified by the Gurus themselves with their

own blood. Apart from the five factors mentioned above, the Tenth Master himself emphasized this identity by the introduction of the *Nash Doctrine*,<sup>20</sup> while administering *Amrit* to the Five *Piyaras*. For, he said that break with the earlier religious traditions, with the earlier superstitions, rituals and taboos, with the earlier ancestry or lineage, with the earlier deeds and professions or their immobility, was complete. By this *Nash Doctrine* the Tenth Master endowed the Sikh society with Five Freedoms or Liberations from all earlier traditions and taboos. What we seek to emphasize is that Sikh identity is not in any manner artificial, it is the one that was clearly created and proclaimed by the Gurus themselves.

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## **KHALSA: THE SAINT SOLDIER**

KHARAK SINGH

### *1. The Background*

To grasp the significance of the ideal of 'Saint Soldier' it would be helpful briefly to refer to two most prominent features of the religious tradition of India before Guru Nanak. These are:

- a. Dichotomy between spiritual and empirical lives, and
- b. The Caste system.

While the former was common to practically all systems of religious thought, the latter constituted the very foundation of the diversity of faiths included in Hinduism.

**Dichotomy between Spiritual and Empirical Life:** In a monistic system like Sankra's Vedanta, the world is unreal or mithya. In Dualistic systems like Yoga, Sankhya and Jainism, two kinds of Reality are assumed - spiritual and material. And man is a combination of both. In Buddhism the world is a place of suffering in the endless cycle of birth, life and death. Goals vary from a realisation of the self to deliverance from transmigration, or nirvana or mukti or merger with the Ultimate Reality. The effort of the individual is directed towards a selfish end of personal salvation with little or no regard for, or even at the cost of the society and fellowmen. Worldly activities were considered incompatible with, and a hindrance to spiritual progress. Renunciation or withdrawal from the world; asceticism celibacy, and ahimsa were essential components of the spiritual discipline prescribed. There was little scope or need for altruism or moral deeds. Dichotomy between spiritual and empirical lives was complete. In Nathism, which was the predominant faith at the time of Guru Nanak, the initiate had to take vowsof following no occupation, living on alms, celibacy and ahimsa. Although living as a parasite on society, the Naths looked doWn upon householders and any concern with the society was considered irreligious and

beneath the dignity of a religious man. Some of the practices endowed with religious merit have been recounted by Guru Arjun Dev :

“Despite recitation of holy texts, study of Vedas and praxis of bowels and the Kundalini. From the five agents has not come parting of company,  
And more and more in egoistic thinking is one bound, Cherished One, by such devices comes  
not union -

Innumerable are the means I have adopted.

Tired of all such, at the Lord’s Portal I threw myself.

Praying, ‘Grant me discriminating understanding’.

Vows of silence I observed; on my bare hands received food,

And unclad in forests wandered. Wandered overwater-edges and holy spots over the earth.

Still has duality not dropped off.

At holy water-edges I resided where the desires are fulfilled.

Had the saw placed over my head;

Yet thus is not impurity of mind washed off, despite a million devies.

Cold, maids, horses, elephants - thus charities of various kinds I dispensed ;

Gave away grain, clothing, land -

Still found I not the Lord’s Portal.

To offering before deities, sprinkling sandal-wood paste, folding of hands,

Lying prostrate, and to the six ritual acts have I remained devoted.

Still, by egoism in bonds am fallen.

Not by these devies is the Lord met.

Eighty four poses of Yoga-praxis too to exhaustion I performed;      Lived to a great age,  
yet not found union with the Lord,

And into transmigration fell.

Royal display of glory, the pomp of kingship I had,

And exercised absolute, authority;

Lay in elegant couch, applied to my limbs

sandalwood and attar - all these are gateway to terrible hell.

Divine laudation in holy company is the supreme act of piety.

Saith Nanak: This to such comes as by primal writ are thus destined to receive.

In such joy of devotion is thy servant absorbed.

By grace of the shatterer of suffering of the humble,

To Divine laudation is my mind devoted.

**Caste System:** The Indian caste system is a unique institution evolved by the Hindu society, and has no parallel anywhere in the history of the world. The fundamental assumption of the caste ideology is that, Men were not - as for classical Confucianism - in principle equal, but forever unequal. They were so by birth, and ‘were as unlike as man and animal’ The whole society is divided into four major castes: Brahmins, Kshatris, Vishyas and Sudras. The number of sub-castes, however, exceeds 3,000, all of which are meticulously arranged in a hierarchical social pyramid in which the social grade of each group was fixed permanently by birth. Each layer in this social

pyramid was superior in caste status (i.e. virtually in social status) to all layers below it, and lower in caste status to all the others above it, irrespective of their political or economic position. The privileges, disabilities, obligations and duties, i.e. practically all aspects of social, behaviour, of each sub-caste were regulated by fixed rules and codes. At the top were the Brahmins enjoying every conceivable privilege, and at the bottom were the Sudras, mostly untouchables, doomed to perpetual serfdom doing all the dirty and disagreeable jobs required of them, with no hope of ever moving up along the social ladder. The system had religious sanction of the Vedas, and was confirmed by the Avatars of Vishnu, incarnated as Lord Rama and Krishna. One was born as Sudra as a punishment for sins of one's previous birth, and nobody could, therefore, change it. Every Varna could perform only the specific functions allotted to it. Only Brahmins could preside over religious ceremonies. Wearing and use of arms was the monopoly of Kshatria. Vaisyas could not do anything except farming and trading. It was a grave offence for a Sudra to attempt anything other than his menial jobs. Lord Rama, known as Maryada Purshotam, is said to have cut off the head of a Sudra for the sole crime of indulging in religious rites not allowed to his caste. Lord Krishna was supposed to have asserted that he was the creator of Chaturvarnya.

It is obvious that religious requirements or creeds of different castes were different. Guru Nanak draws attention to this anomaly:

<sup>3</sup> "The Yogi's creed in seeking enlightenment is expressed.

The Brahmin's in following the Vedas,

The Kshatras creed is heroism; the Sudra's service of others."

The Guru, however, does not approve of this. He goes on:

"Should one, however, realise this secret,

One creed all should inspire.

Nanak is a slave to one with such realisation.

In him is manifest the immaculate Lord."

## *II The Consequences*

Rigid enforcement of the caste system ensured internal stability of the society and control of the Brahmins for almost three thousand years. The life-negating pacifist religious beliefs also helped in this. But an unjust and exploitative system cannot sustain itself indefinitely. The vast majority of the population had been deprived of education, and had been disarmed. The shabby and cruel treatment meted out to the Sudras and even the Vaisyas did not inspire or encourage any feelings of sympathy or loyalty to the higher castes. So when the Muslim invaders started their attacks from the

North and West, they met no formidable resistance. Mahmud Ghaz-navi is known for his seventeen invasions on India. It was almost a sport with him. He would corhe any time he liked and return with as much loot as troops could carry. He desecrated temples, killed people by the thousands and took men and women as slaves. His official reporter records that while his troops were plundering the famous Temple at Somnath and breaking the idols, people from the sur-rounding 300 village collected and sat chanting mantras, and did not offer any resistance. Bakhtiar Khilji is believed to have crossed into India with only 300 horsemen, and trampling vast territories, reached as far as Nalanda, where he demolished the famous University, killing 1,000 teachers and about ten thousand students, besides destroying over 100,000 valuable manuscripts. Such examples of wanton destruction by invaders could be cited by hundreds from the Indian history. Muslim invaders were able to establish their empires in India without much difficulty. Indian pacificism was no match for the life-affirming approach of the outside armies. The Muslim rule in India lasted for almost a thousand years, only to be replaced by another foreign power, the British.

Guru Nanak was himself a witness to the attack of the founder of the Mughal Empire in India. In his famous composition, Babar-vani, he gives a very vivid account of the atrocities committed by his armies on innocent people, including women and children. He calls Babur's army as a 'horde of sin'. At the same time he takes to task the local rulers for their unpreparedness. He points out the need for contemplation beforehand to escape chastisement, as well as the futility of spells for dealing with the Moghal invaders, or any other aggressor.

### *III. The Concept of Saint Solider*

We have seen that religious thought of the pre-Guru period, was oriented towards development of the individual, in respect of some selected traits or qualities, rather than his entire personality and the society. The popular couplet 'Janani jane to bhagat jan, kai data kai sur' indicates the prevalent values of the times. The ideals sought were bhakti or charity or heroism. One of these was considered enough. It never occurred to religious leaders that emphasis on a single quality would lead to lop-sided development of the individual, and emaciate the society. Guru Nanak, on the other hand, wanted balanced and fullest development of the individual, covering every aspect of his life, physical, temporal, moral and spiritual. Himself perfect, he set

out to create a perfect society of perfect individuals, basing his philosophy on the unity of God, the Sole Loving Creator. This is amply testified by Dr. Mohammad Iqbal in his reference to Guru Nanak thus:

“Phir uthi Tauhid ki awaz ik Punjab se,  
Mard-i-kamal ne jagaya Hind ko phir khwab se.”<sup>4</sup>

Guru Nanak’s religion derives its origin from his mystic communion with the ‘Sole Loving Creator.’ And he wanted all human beings to develop in His image to carry out the Lord’s Altruistic Will. Guru ArJun furnishes some hints on that image as follows:

“Among kings art Thou reputed as the Supreme King;  
Among possessors of land also Supreme.”<sup>5</sup>

...

Lord Creator, what can we utter of Thy praise ?

In wonder are we beholding all.

Supreme Bestower among those that bestow gifts.

Among masters of glory art Thou all glorious;

Among hedonists the Supreme Hedonist.

Among heroes art Thou Supreme Hero; among enjoyers of leisures prominent.

Among householders art Thou Supreme Householder;

Among doers art Thou Supreme Creator; among yogis the Supreme Yogi.”

The Guru’s system differs radically from earlier religious traditions in its goals. The Guru did not approve of any selfish goal of personal salvation through asceticism and withdrawal from life, flourishing on parasitism. The Guru saw God as All Love. He loves, His creation, and has a Will that is Altruistic. So the goal for the Guru’s ideal man or ‘gurmukh’ is to carry out the Altruistic Will of God. The devotion of the Guru’s disciple expresses itself as love for His creation in the form of service and sacrifice. For, love without sacrifice is meaningless. In fact love and sacrifice are closely linked complementary qualities. Love of a cause inevitably leads to sacrifice or heroism. The Guru’s religion, therefore, rejects pacificism of the earlier salvation systems, and prepares the seeker to be saint as well as a soldier, and not a saint or a soldier. He says:

“Shouldest thou seek to engage in the game of love,

Step into my street with thy head placed on thy palm.

While on to this stepping, ungrudgingly sacrifice your head.”<sup>6</sup>

Guru Arjun repeated the same thing, when he said:

“Accept first death as inevitable, and attachment to life discard; Turn dust of feet of all - thereafter to us come.”<sup>7</sup>

Sikhism is a whole-life system combining spiritual life with empirical life. The ‘Saint-Sipahi’ ideal is thus logically and morally



essential. For, love of one's fellowmen becomes meaningless, and even hypocritical, if one is not willing to sacrifice and secure for them sustenance, equality, safety and justice in all spheres of life. Hence in Guru Nanak's system the ideal of 'Sant-Sipahi' is spiritually and naturally a necessary culmination. It is, therefore, neither incidental nor accidental that out of the Ten Gurus, while the first four organised, motivated and developed the Sikh society, and Guru Arjun created a state within a state, the later five Gurus maintained a regular army and wielded the sword, when necessary.

It must be emphasized that while a Sikh is expected to acquire the skills of a soldier, he is permitted to use his sword only for a noble cause, to resist oppression and tyranny, and to secure justice and equality for humanity. Guru Gobind Singh gave a clear sanction to the use of force, when he said:

"When all other means (to secure justice) fail,  
It is righteous to take the sword in hand."

On the other hand, fighting for selfish ends, self-aggrandisement and lust for power, is condemned in clear terms. The Guru says:

"Call not those heroes that in pride die and bear sufferings :  
Blind, not realising the self, in duality are they absorbed.  
In extreme of wrath they wage battles.  
In this life and the next sufferings.  
Declare the scriptures, pride pleases not the Lord.  
Those dying in pride, of liberation shall be deprived  
And in the cycle of death and birth shall ever move."<sup>8</sup>

Guru Nanak condemned the invasion of Babur in strongest words, since his exploits were not only devoid of saintliness, but were actually opposed to it. Dr. Iqbal expresses similar sentiments, when he says:

"Be it the pomp of monarchy,  
Or the show of democracy,  
Separate (nobility of) religion from politics,  
What remains is the sheer tyranny of Jenghese."<sup>9</sup>

Guru Arjun stressed the need for saintliness in heroes, when he said:

"In this age such alone are designated as true heroes,  
As in the love of Lord are dyed."<sup>10</sup>

In numerous hymns the Gurus have urged upon the heroes to inculcate saintly qualities. Using metaphor of wrestling, the Guru refers to the fight with the evil forces thus:

"I am the wrestler of the Lord;  
With Lord's blessing holding my tassel high.  
The assemblage has gathered,

And the Lord Himself is witnessing,  
 Trumpets and drums playing;  
 The wrestlers in the arena are moving around.  
 The five wrestlers' have I overthrown,  
 The Master has stroked my back.”<sup>11</sup>

The ideal of Saint Soldier is the practical expression of the whole-life approach preached by the Gurus, who categorically rejected renunciation which is usually associated with saintliness. Guru Ariun says:

“Saith Nanak : By contact with the Master is the true device of living perfected.  
 In a life of smiling playfulness, enjoyment of wear and food,  
 Is attained liberation.”<sup>12</sup>  
 “My self, in joy abide by endeavouring and working in the way of God.  
 By meditation obtain union with the Lord;  
 Thus, sayeth Nanak, shall thy anxiety be removed.”<sup>13</sup>

#### *IV. Founding A Society of Saint-Soliders*

Guru Nanak was not content to merely state his doctrines. He knew that, in the background of long Indian tradition, these would be forgotten, unless he could create a motivated and well-knit society, wedded to his principles and willing to fight for them. With this idea in mind he had been organising Sangats, wherever he went. Towards the end of his tours he created the nucleus of a Sikh society and Centte at Kartarpur, in the form of a colony, in which everybody including the Guru himself, worked and ate together, attended the daily con-gregations, and imbibed the spirit of the Master and his religion. The members of this community were the humble and the lowly people who had suffered for centuries under the Draconian Varna Dharma and the tyrannical rule of the foreign invaders. The infant society had to be nurtured, until it grew in size and conviction, and developed a full consciousness of the strength of their cause and potentialities. All this could not be achieved overnight or even in one generation. So the Guru introduced the institution of succession, passing on the torch to his worthiest disciple, Lehna, giving him the title of Angad, Le., a part of his own self. This succession continued, until it reached the Tenth Master, Guru Gobind Singh. Each Guru made rich contribution to the cause of advancing towards the goal of an organised society of saint-soldiers. The first five Gurus created the necessary infrastructure like the institution of Sangat and Pangat, creation of headquarters at Amritsar, compiling of the Scripture, organisation of districts for efficient administration, starting the institution of Das-wandh (one tenth of income as contribution towards common socio-religious

development of the society), developing physical strength of the individual and the society as a whole, etc.

The Sixth Master, under instructions of his great father, took the next step to implement the doctrine of Mir-Piri by doning two swords at the time of his coronation. He took up in real earnest the training of his followers in the military skills and warfare. It needs to be noted that the symbol for Piri or spiritualism was also a sword, and not a rosary, signifying that even spiritual obligations cannot be discharged fully without shakti or sword. In the initial stages even mercenaries were employed to impart training. For, the earlier disciples of the Guru, thoroughly grounded in the Sikh doctrines, required training in the arts of soldiery. The goal was to create a society of saint soldiers, properly trained, equipped and willing to fulfil their social responsibilities and fight and die for the cause of justice and defence of the poor and oppressed. History records that the army of Guru Hargobind fought four pitched battles with the forces of the local Mughal Chiefs, and won. The following three Gurus also maintained armies, approximately thirty thousand strong, and continued preparing their followers for the ensuing struggle. The Ninth Master, Guru Tegh Bahadur, who died a martyr for resisting the forcible conversion of Hindus to Islam, championing the cause of freedom of faith, is also famous for his slogan of saint-soldierly concept.

“Frighten not; fear nol.”<sup>14</sup>

The first part shows a saint, and the second a soldier.

#### *V. The Epitome*

The revolutionary movement launched by Guru Nanak, culminated in the creation of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh on the Baisakhi day of 1699, when he dramatically selected the Five Piyaras, the most devoted of his Sikhs or disciples, who had offered their heads to the Guru for the saintly cause, to form the nucleus of the Khalsa Panth. Around this nucleus under the inspiring leadership of the Guru and the example of his unparalleled sacrifices, grew a society of saint-soldiers, with strong convictions of the spiritual realities of life, wedded to the highest moral values trained in the arts of soldiering, and ever willing and prepared to fight for the cause of justice, in the defence of the poor, the oppressed and the down-trodden. The exploits of the Khalsa are too well-known to need mention in this brief paper. Suffice it to say that it was this organisation of saint-soldiers, that stemmed the spate of invasions from the North West that had plagued India for nearly a thousand years, and introduced an era of

peace, stability, freedom and human dignity after centuries of tyranny, destruction, slavery, humiliation and human indignity.

#### *VI. The Saint-Soldier In History*

The history of Sikhs after creation of the Khalsa is the story of an unending series of martyrs and saint-soldiers, who staked their lives for the cause of justice and resistance to oppression and exploitation. It is beyond the scope of this paper to go into details of such heroic deeds and near miracles performed by the Khalsa. One of the numerous examples, recorded by Rattan Singh Bhangoo in his *Panth Parkash*, is the attack on Kasur, on the complaint of a Brahmin whose wife had been forcibly taken away by the Pathans. The attack was undertaken against heavy odds, with a meagre 24,000 soldiers against an enemy over a lac strong, involving tremendous risk. With conviction of the righteousness of the cause, and with faith in the Lord, the attack was launched, because the Khalsa could not resist the call to duty as saint soldiers. A mere saint of earlier traditions, would have paid little attention to the Brahmin's request, and would have advised him to accept it as the will of Providence. And a mere soldier would see no need or justification for such a risky operation. But the saint-soldiers of the Guru did not shirk their responsibility, and succeeded in rescuing the Brahmin's wife, at a heavy cost in terms of loss of life.

“Every page of Sikh history burns with a hundred star-like names; one name is enough to thrill a whole life in us with the noblest spirit of heroism. The names of Guru Arjun Dev, Guru Tegh Bahadur, Guru Gobind Singh, his Four Sons, the five Beloved Disciples, and the Sikh Martyrs and devotees, the heroes of war and peace, provide the Sikh with an inexhaustible and intense past which few races in history can provide in its life-giving death-defying powers of inspiration to serve the Master and his ideals.”<sup>15</sup> Among the count-less heroes mention may also be made of the Forty Muktas, Baba Banda Singh Bahadur, Baba Dip Singh, Bhai Mani Singh, Bhai Taru Singh, Bhai Bota Singh, Bhai Mehtab Singh, Bhai Sukha Singh, Nawab Kapur Singh, Maharaja Jassa Singh, Akali Phula Singh and others. Outstanding among the more recent saint-soldiers are the names of Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh and Baba Waisakha Singh, who spent their lives in jail for resisting the oppression of the British Rule in India in response to the inner call for action as disciples of the Guru.

The spirit of saint-soldiers lives and will live forever. The Akali Movement of the early twenties furnished ample evidence of this spirit. Professor Puran Singh makes a touching reference to this as follows:

“The awe-inspiring scenes of the “Akalis” in their present somewhat confused struggle, however misled and misguided from certain points of view—ourting death like moths, the Sikh women coming and garlanding their husbands before the Akal Takht to go and bare their breasts to bullets, if need be, in the name of the Guru; mothers and fathers putting with their own hands the flaming crown of martyrdom on their young sons’ heads and praying that the Guru may grant them the honour of death in His Name; people laying themselves down on railroads before the rushing railway engines, carrying a trainful of their brethren as prisoners as an appeal for stopping the train to let them who are out of prison to feast those who are going in; thousands dressed in yellow and black, vying with each other to be the first to form the group of five hundred or a thousand martyrs that are sent to face prison, torture and even death in the name of the Guru; and the universal diffusion of this one feeling of service and sacrifice throughout the Sikh masses—these make one wonder if one is living in an age of rank materialism as the present one, or in the age when under the direct inspiration of the Tenth Guru, the Sikhs were taking the vows of absolute self-surrender to the Ideals of the Khalsa.<sup>16</sup>

## *VI. Conclusion*

The concept of Saint-Soldier is clearly traceable to Guru Nanak, who made a radical departure from the earlier pacifist and personal salvation-oriented religious thought. Guru Nanak preached a positive approach to the world, and a whole-life religion, with emphasis on altruistic activity and righteous deeds, based on the highest moral values. He wanted balanced development of the individual to create a perfect man or ‘the man in all men’ that he himself was.

The Guru’s vision went far beyond the individual. He wanted to create a perfect society, and took positive steps towards that end. He envisaged a society of godmen living as householders in the midst of the social milieu, engaged in pursuits of daily life, discharging with a sense of responsibility their social and political functions, committed to carrying out the Altruistic Will of the Loving Creator, and willing and ever prepared to resist oppression and fight injustice. That was his concept of the Ideal Man combining spiritual and empirical values, the saint-soldier, and a perfect society of such individuals. Under his successors the idea flourished and advanced towards the most fitting epitome of the creation of the Khalsa under Guru Gobind Singh. That was indeed the final event, on the Baisakhi of 1699, the

greatest day in the history of mankind. For, the socio- spiritual ideal of ‘Saint-Soldier’ is the highest ideal that has ever been given to mankind.

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## 10

**THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF SIKH STUDIES**

GOBIND SINGH MANSUKHANI

In the beginning, let me make a few general observations on Sikh Studies. The Gurus travelled a lot and established sangats (con-gregations) over a period of over 200 years, and they did put into writing some of their doctrines in the Scripture. Sikh theology and way of life can be discovered in the holy text of the Gurus. It needs intuitive exploration of the basic concepts even though different expositions of Gurbani are available. Most of the old writings of Sikhs deal either with the lives of the Gurus or the scenes of persecution and torture. Later Sikh history is dominated by the achievements of the Sikh Raj under Maharaja Ranjit Singh, mostly written in Panjabi, Persian and Urdu.

Sikh studies in its modern sense means creative literature on Sikh history, philosophy, religion and culture. The British conquest of the Panjab in 1849 evoked western interest in Sikh religion. The works of the British administrators in English, like James Browne and John Malcolm, about the Sikhs are elementary in character but practical in their approach and application for the smooth working of government machinery. They have hardly any significance in the modern context. However, after the Indian Mutiny of 1857, British interest in the welfare of Panjab gathered momentum.

The British admired the hard-working and valourous Sikhs and desired to study their religion and culture. The India Office, London, commissioned a German missionary and linguist - Dr. Ernest Trumpp - to prepare an English translation of the Sikh Scripture. In 1877, Trumpp published parts of the holy text under the title *The Adi Granth*. This work dates the origin of Sikh Studies. Dr. Trumpp was unfamiliar with medieval Panjabi language and Indian religious thought and, as such, failed to interpret through his translation the

core of Sikh philosophy and Sikh ethos. His work, to say the least, was crude and therefore unacceptable to the Sikhs. Moreover, he lacked patience and perseverance. In his Introduction to the Adi Granth, he wrote: "The Granth is a very big volume, but I have noted incoherent and shallow in the extreme, couched at the same time in dark and perplexing language. It is for us Occident lists a most painful and almost stupefying task to read even a single raga."<sup>1</sup> Again he complained: that the "Adi Granth was perhaps the most shallow and empty book that exists in proportion to its size."<sup>2</sup> No wonder, Maharaja Ripudaman Singh of Nabha protested to the Viceroy of India about the inaccuracy and "pejorative tone" of Trumpp's work.<sup>3</sup> The first decade of the twentieth century marks the early stage of Sikh Studies. Durin & this period the approach of the writers was historical and biographical. Their main aim was to educate the English-knowing public on the lives of the Gurus and their teachings. The Sikh religion was under dual attack of the Hindus and Christians, as such the nature of Sikh publications was polemical. Bawa Chhaju Singh published *The Ten Gurus and their Teachings* in 1903. A year later appeared Sewa Ram Singh's book *A Critical Study of the life and Teachings of Sri Guru Nanak Dev*.

The next writer - Max Arther Macauliffe - British Ad-ministrator posted in Amritsar made a comprehensive study of the lives and writings of the Sikh Gurus. He published his monumental work in six volumes entitled *The Sikh Religion, Its Gurus, Sacred Writings and Authors* in 1909. He called Trumpp's Adi Granth "highly inaccurate and unidiomatic." He made amends for Trumpp's failings, for he understood the distinctive principles of Sikh religion. He summed them as follows: "It prohibits idolatry, hypocrisy, caste exclusiveness, the concremation of widows, the immurement of women, the use of wine and other intoxicants, tobacco-smoking, infanticide, slander, pilgrimage to sacred rivers and tanks of Hindus, and it inculcates. loyalty, gratitude for all favours received, philanthropy, justice, impartiality, truth, honesty and all the moral and domestic virtues known to the holiest citizens of any country."<sup>4</sup> Macauliffe's work serves even today as an authentic reference book to the lives of the, Sikh Gurus and their doctrines and to some sacred compositions.

The above publication was followed by an important work of Khazan Singh on *The History of Sikh Religion* in 1915. Khazan Singh offers a philosophical exposition of Sikh concepts on God, Guru,



Soul, Karma, Khalsa, etc. In the same year appeared a sympathetic study by a British lady - Dorothy Field - under the-title The Religion of the Sikhs. This is in the tradition of Macauliffe who showed both understanding and appreciation of Sikhs for she had personal contact with many Sikhs.

Prof. Teja Singh's early works are booklets on Guru Nanak and His Mission (1918), The Sword and Religion (1918), but they introduce academic interest in Sikhism. His more important works came later: Essays in Sikhism (1944), Growth of Responsibility in Sikhism (1948), and Sikhism, its Ideals and Institutions (1951). The reason for these later publications was that the third and fourth decades of this century were full of struggles for Gurdwara reform and non-cooperation with the government for limitation on political rights.

However, in 1944 appeared an important publication by Sher Singh entitled Philosophy of Sikhism. It was the result of his research for the Ph.D. degree. This scholarly work became a pacesetter for later researchers in Sikhism. Sher Singh's exposition of ideological identity and of Sikh philosophical concepts like *Wl.wrad* was quite remarkable. Duncan Greenlees' *The Gospel of Guru Granth Sahib* (1952) contains a simple exposition of theological tenets of Sikhism. The present writer's *Quintessence of Sikhism* published by the Shromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar, in 1958 deals not only with the lives of the Gurus, but also later history and the culture of the Sikhs.

Another important work of this period was Prof. Kapur Singh's *Parasharprasan OR The Baisakhi of Guru Gobind Singh* (1959). This book contains a valuable exposition of the Khalsa Panth and the rationale of its distinctive features and symbols. After the Independence of India, Sikh Studies tended to be more critical than philosophical. Teachers and Professors started writing on Sikh themes from an academic angle and professional competence. Ganda Singh, Bhai Jodh Singh, Trilochan Singh and others began depth-re-search in specific Sikh themes. Dr. S.S.Kohli's *A Critical Study of the Adi Granth* (1961) may be called a land-mark in Sikh Studies of this period.

The second phase of Sikh Studies consists of, what may be labelled as "Centenary Scholarship." With the establishments of the Guru Gobind Singh Foundation in Chandigarh and the Guru Nanak Foundation in Delhi in 1965, Sikh Studies gathered momentum. Moreover, the later establishment of Departments of Sikh Studies in the universities at Chandigarh, Patiala, Benares, Jadavpur and

Amritsar provided an impetus to the younger generation to undertake many other areas of Sikh Studies for exploration. First came the Tercentenary of Guru Gobind Singh's Birthday in 1966. Guru Gobind Singh Foundation published a number of books on the Tenth Guru, of which the major ones are Harbans Singh's biography of Guru Gobind Singh, R.S. Ahluwalia's *The Founder of the Khalsa*, and G.S. Talib's *Impact of Guru Gobind Singh on Indian Society*. Many other scholars published books on different aspects of the Guru's life, work and personality.

In 1969, the Quincentenary celebrations of Guru Nanak's Birthday took place all over the world. The Punjabi University, Patiala, held an international Seminar on "The Life and Teachings of Guru Nanak" from September 3 to 5, 1969, where world-renowned scholars read papers on Guru Nanak dealing with topics like the Founder of Sikhism, and the Guru as a social reformer and religious leader, etc. This contributed a lot to inter-religious understanding and social harmony. Later these 54 papers were published by the university under the title *Perspectives on Guru Nanak*. It is difficult to indicate the wide spectrum of approaches discussed in this remarkable volume, Panjab University, Chandigarh, published a number of books on Guru Nanak like *Life of Guru Nanak* by S.S. Bal, *Philosophy of Guru Nanak* by S.S. Kohli and some other books. The Guru Nanak Foundation, Delhi, published in 1969 a volume of essays entitled *Guru Nanak, His Life, Time and Teachings* edited by Gurmukh Nihal Singh. The present writer's *Life of Guru Nanak* was also published by the Foundation.

Similarly, the Chief Khalsa Diwan, Amritsar, brought out two books on Guru Nanak, one by Narain Singh and the other by H.S. Shan. Other scholars like Prof. Harbans Singh, Khushwant Singh, G.S. Talib and others published a number of books on Guru Nanak. Special issues on Guru Nanak were brought out by Journals like *The Panjab Past and Present*, *The Journal of Religious Studies* (Patiala), and the *Sikh Review* on this occasion.

Then came the Tercentenary of Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom in 1975. During the celebrations, a number of books were published, of which *Guru Tegh Bahadur, Martyr and Teacher* by Fauja Singh and G.S. Talib, *Biography of Guru Tegh Bahadur* by Trilochan Singh. *Guru Tegh Bahadur Commemoration Volume* by

Satbir Singh, Amritsar, and Ranbir Singh's work on the Ninth Guru deserve a deep study.

The 400th Foundation celebrations of the city of Amritsar in 1977 included a number of books on Amritsar, the Golden Temple and Guru Ramdas. This author's volume entitled *1 Guru Ramdas – His Life, Work and Philosophy* was however published in 1979.

The Quincentenary celebrations of Guru Amardas' birthday in 1979 included a number of publications of which Narain Singh's *Life Sketch of Guru Amardas*, Fauja Singh's *Perspectives on Guru Amardas* and G.S. Talib's *Bani of Guru Amardas* deserve commendation.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh's 200th Birthday celebrations in 1980 produced a number of good books on the life and achievements of the Lion of the Panjab. The important are Fauja Singh's *Maharaja Ranjit Singh - Political Society Economics* and J.S. Grewal's *Maharaja Ranjit Singh and His Times*. Being a humane and non-communal ruler, he won the respect of all communities and even his enemies.

The third phase of Sikh Studies consists of papers and publications of special seminars held by universities, Foundations and other organisations. Seminars held by the Guru Nanak Dev University resulted in the publications of special studies on Guru Nanak and Amritsar. Some of the major works are *The Concept of the Divine* edited by Pritam Singh, *Guru Nanak and His Teachings* by Madanjit Kaur. The latter contains 11 papers in English and 6 in Panjabi. It critically examines Guru Nanak's contribution to Indian religious thought and the universalism of his teachings. Similarly, the seminars held by the Punjabi University, Patiala, resulted in the publication of *Guru Teg Bahadur* edited by G.S. Talib, *Perspectives on Guru Amardas*, edited by Fauja Singh and yet another volume entitled *Religious Situation in the Present-day, World* edited by Taran Singh (1980).

Some controversies were started by H. McLeod in his books on Sikh themes like *The Evolution of the Sikh Community and Early Sikh Tradition*. Many scholars met his challenge, and exposed his distortions. Gurdev Singh's *Perspectives on the Sikh Tradition* (1986), Daljeet Singh's (1979) *Sikhism*, *The Sikh Ideology* (1984) and a later book entitled *Advanced Studies in Sikhism* edited by J.S. Mann and H.S. Saraon (1989) effectively rebutted the conclusions of McLeod.

Perhaps, the main difficulty with many western studies of Sikhism is the ignorance of foreign scholars about the sources and critique on Sikhism published in Panjabi and the lack of understanding the depth

of Sikh scriptural texts. The English translations available do not carry the spirit of the original. As such, their work suffers from superficiality and sometimes distortion of the Sikh tradition and ethics. Secondly, the background of their own religion directly or indirectly moulds their perception and prevents their proper appreciation of Sikh values and ethos. Often, they fall back on biased sources and as such there is an inherent flaw in their interpretation of a certain event or approach to a Sikh practice. On the other hand, some Indian scholars who have a proper understanding of religious texts are unable to convey the spirit of the original while writing in a foreign language like English. Some time they follow the band-wagon of Western scholars and express their agreement with their views, little realising the harm they cause to the spirit and purity of the Sikh doctrine and in the process hurting the psyche of practising Sikhs. The so-called "analytical method" has its own weakness, because religion founded on Revelation is beyond the realm of ordinary occurrences. How can one scientifically measure the intensity and depth of inner spiritual experience?

A number of International Sikh Conferences have been organised during 1990-91 in UK, Canada and USA, which apart from breaking new ground on the methodology of Sikh Studies, concentrate on contemporary issues like Sikh identity, Sikh struggle for human rights and problems of Sikhs settled in foreign countries. Some of these topics have been earlier discussed in western publications like Juergensmeyer & Barrier's *Sikh Studies* (Berkeley 1979), *Sikh Religion and History in the Twentieth Century* (Toronto 1988), *Michigan University Papers on Sikh & Diaspora* by Barrier and Dussen-bury (1989).

#### *Gaps in Sikh Studies*

Undoubtedly, the Guru period has received considerable attention at the hands of scholars. The post-Guru period of the 18th and 19th century has been neglected except for the reign of Ranjit Singh. The persecution of Sikhs continued after Banda Singh's death for about 50 years at the hands of local governors and Afghan invaders. Only three writers, B.S. Nijjar (*Punjab Under the Great Mughals*), H.R. Gupta (*Studies in Later Sikh History*), and three volumes of *History of the Sikhs* (numbers 2,3 and 4) and Bhagat Singh (*Sikh Polity*) deal with the period. Bhagat Singh concentrates on the political problems and the rise of the Sikh Misals. Their guerilla tactics against the Afgha

marauders and the rescue of Hindu and Sikh women from foreign mercenaries are a store-house of heroic tales revealing their fearlessness and extraordinary valour.

Books on Punjab under British rule were frequently written by English officers and therefore do not give an impartial picture. The Singh Sabha Movement has however received considerable attention but the sufferings of the Sikhs in the Freedom movement in this century have not been adequately evaluated. Recent history of the Sikhs after the Independence of India has been equally painful and this is also a comparatively fresh field of study. Some scholars argue that true history can only be properly handled after the dust of the storm has settled down, and passions and prejudices subsided.

Another area which needs exploration is the Sikh Institutions, and specially the working of the Takhts and the Gurmata. For example, in the current situation, the position and status of the Jathedar of the Akal Takht is being questioned by the Shromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (Amritsar) which would treat him as an employee. Similarly, the powers and the status of the so-called "High Priests" (in journalistic jargon) are under challenge. Hukamnamas are being issued by different groups and religious organisations. What is the forum of final decision of the Khalsa Panth?

There are very few books on Sikh Theology. Recently, Sikh concepts like Guru, Hukam, Sabad, Nam, Sahaj, Haumai, and others have been taken up as topics of research for Ph.D. degrees in India. I learn that Prof. S.S.Kohli's Conceptual Dictionary of Sikhism is ready awaiting publication. Similarly, a lot of research needs to be done on the Granthian music. This author published his first ever book on the theme of Kirtan, entitled Indian Classical Music and Sikh Kirtan in 1982. Further research on topics like Ghar, Partal, Dhuni, composite ragas and Ragnzala should be our first priority.

Another area which deserves notice is the non-existence of suitable translations of the Sikh Scripture in different languages, eastern and western. Sikhism is now recognised as a world religion. So we need translations of Guru Granth Sahib in German, French, Spanish, Russian, Malay, Thai, Chinese and Japanese, to name a few languages.

The problems facing development of Sikh Studies are many but not insoluble. Firstly, the commercial publishers feel diffident in undertaking publications on account of the high cost, low sales and lack of readership. Secondly, university authorities, literary organisations

and charitable institutions give low priority to publications of research theses on account of limited funds and problems of marketing. We need a global Sikh organisation for publications like other religious literature publishing Trusts to subsidise some of the prestigious theses and manuscripts, which are still gathering dust on University shelves. Individual writers who can afford to publish their works: their own cost should be encouraged by individual Sikhs and Gurdwaras for their libraries.

### *The Future*

In India, we have some religious and charitable organisations like the Guru Nanak Foundation, Delhi, Guru Gobind Singh Foundation, Chandigarh, Bhai Vir Singh Sahitya Sadan, Delhi, Chief Khalsa Diwan, Amritsar, Central Gurmat Parchar Board, Lucknow, which promote books on Sikh Studies. In the United Kingdom, The Sikh Missionary Society, Southall, The Sikh Education Council, Hitchin, the British Sikh Education Council, Southall, have started publications of books and pamphlets on Sikhism for the common reader. Perhaps, it is time these organisations took up research publications for the benefit of the intelligentsia. I know similar organisations exist in Singapore, for example, the Guru Nanak Satsang Sabha, and in Kenya, the Sikh Students Federation, Nairobi, and in the USA and Canada.<sup>5</sup> With the growing interest in Sikh Studies among the educated youth in foreign lands, the demand of such books is likely to gather momentum in the coming years. The growth of Gurdwara libraries and the establishment of New Sikh Centres throughout the western world may hopefully encourage scholarly studies of Sikhism.

As I began to think of the future of Sikh studies, a thought came to my mind that the universal love and service of humanity of the Gurus could never be confined to a few countries in the west, where the Sikhs have settled in sizeable numbers. The Gurus' message can now be carried to the people in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union which have recently witnessed the downfall of communism and rejection of dialectical materialism. This offers a new domain for the development of Sikh Studies. Perhaps that day is not far off when Sikhism and Sikh Studies will be known to the erstwhile anti-God and atheist communities, and they will then bear witness to the unique power of love, benevolence and inner peace which are the core of Gurmat. The latest challenge opens up new avenues and approaches

in Sikh Studies. I have a vision that such Conferences on Sikh Studies will be held in Warsaw, Budapest, Belgrade, Prague, Kiev. Moscow and eastern Siberia in the not too distant future.

Let me end with the verse of Prof. Puran Singh:  
 “The harvests shall come and harvests shall pass,  
 But the seed is of God and is growing!”

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## 11

**SIKH IDEOLOGY  
FUNDAMENTALISM AND PUNJAB PROBLEM**

DR KHARAK SINGH

In a paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion, Anaheim, November 1989, Harjot Oberoi, department of Asian Studies, University of British Columbia, Van-couver, RC, says that fundamentalism among the Sikhs today is apparently the basic cause of the current political unrest in the Punjab. <sup>1</sup> Without giving any evidence in support of this contention, he proceeds to describe it as 'primarily a movement of resistance' and 'a universe that is characterised by incoherence and disorder.' And then 'as a social scientist' he seeks to provide 'meaning and shape to what appears to be chaotic and meaningless' or to discover 'what may be termed as theory and practice of Sikh fundamentalist,' although on the authority of Jurgen Habermas, quoted by him in the epigram, he maintains that 'Meanings can be made accessible *only from the inside.*' Readers would like to know whether he is interpreting the movement as an insider or outsider.

The author points out that 'Sikh fundamentalists have not succeeded in articulating their vision of world in any great detail'. He attributes this 'lack of an elaborate model' to the 'social origins of Sikh activists.' He says, 'A great majority of them come from the countryside and would be classified as peasants by social anthropologists. Historically, peasants have not been known to come up with grand paradigms of social transformation. Peasant societies are by definition made up of little communities and their cosmos is invariably parochial rather than universal.' This is his favourite theory which can explain all major questions relating to Sikhs and Sikhism. In an earlier paper read at Berkeley<sup>2</sup>, the author wrote: 'if there is any such thing as a key to his10rical problems, in case of the Sikh tradition it is to be found in its social constituency. Sikh religion is first and foremost a peasant faith. Sociologists have often spoken of how Islam



is an urban religion. Sikhism may be spoken of as rural religion. When dealing with beliefs, rituals and practices of the Sikhs - be they religious or political - it is always worthwhile to constantly remind ourselves that we are fundamentally dealing with the peasantry.'

The above explanation is obviously unsatisfactory and inadequate. So, the author also looks at 'correlations between Punjab's political economy and the nature of dissent in Sikh society, the demand for a new personal law for the Sikhs and finally the famous Anandpur Sahib Resolution, a document that may be considered as the 'Magna Carta' of Sikhs.

The discussion of political economy revolves around the size of holdings, which is not of much help, since their distribution and size are not significantly different from those in other states. Green Revolution is also prominently mentioned, particularly its social costs and the 'polarisation of Punjabi Society over the last two decades.' Some of the inferences are difficult to accept. For example, it has been stated that small holdings, ranging from 2 to 5 hectares have become increasingly less viable. Green Revolution entails adoption of high yielding varieties and modern farming techniques, which raise the productivity per unit of land. So, if at all, the Green Revolution should make small holdings more viable than before. This enabled even the subsistence farmer to spare something for the market after meeting his family requirements. Also, the author has not explained why the Green Revolution occurred only in the Punjab, while the two major requirements, viz., better varieties and modern techniques of farming, were available in all the countries of South Asia, including other states of India. Is it not due to the more progressive attitude of the Sikh peasants of Punjab towards modern methods of farming? However, in the author's judgement, using Weber's litmus test for modernity, Sikh fundamentalists 'badly fail.'

In the entire discussion of the political economy and the Green Revolution, the author has not suggested anything with fundamentalist connotations on the part of the Sikhs. Nor has he been able to point out any such thing while dealing subsequently with the other two major topics that fill the body of his paper, viz., the demand for Sikh personal Law and the Anandpur Sahib Resolution. Hindus have a personal law. So have the Muslims. They are not dubbed as fundamentalists on that score. Then how could Sikhs turn fundamentalists by merely making such a demand? The suggestion that the Sikhs do not have a uniform code at the present moment, is no

disqualification for making such a demand. Similarly, in the Anandpur Sahib Resolution the author himself does not find anything wrong, which is no more than a demand for greater provincial autonomy, already voiced in several other states. The author himself concedes that it is, like 'an election manifesto of a political party' in India or any other country.

The author's own discussion lends little support to his thesis of Sikh fundamentalism. He is, however, determined to put this tag on the Sikh struggle. Therefore, in the conclusion he formulates three new 'arguments', which convince nobody except himself. These are: First, "in the Punjabi word 'moolvad' Sikhs possess a term that exactly corresponds to fundamentalism." Is it an argument? Second, "many orthodox Sikhs have no patience for textual analysis of Sikh scriptures." The statement is baseless. But even if it were correct, how could views of a few orthodox Sikhs expressed today, impart a fundamental character to a demand made over 40 years ago? Third, "the current Sikh movement manifests many tendencies like millenarianism, a prophetic vision, revivalism and puritanism, trends that are commonly associated with fundamentalism." No evidence is given in support of this contention. The statement appears to be a product of the author's own 'prophetic vision.'

In the quest for material to support his unsustainable thesis, the author (who is probably an anthropologist) has wandered into areas of religion and politics where he does not belong. That is why he has wasted his scholarship on matters which are completely irrelevant to the Sikh struggle. He has missed the real issues.

Normally we should have been reluctant to take up current issues for academic discussion. But as Oberoi and some other scholars have ventured to make uncalled for and ignorant observations concerning the Punjab problem, it appears necessary to give a perspective historical account of the major issues underlying the current crisis. In this paper we shall mainly confine ourselves to the paper of Harjot Oberoi read at Anaheim. In his paper there appears an evident attempt to camouflage the realities of the situation by introducing unrelated matters like Sikh ideology, the Miri Piri concept, modernity, Sikh pluralism, secularism, the Nirankari issue, Turner's theory of social structure, etc..

For our discussion we shall first take up the Punjab Problem and its genesis, which the author has carefully avoided and then discuss

his observations to show their irrelevance, except as an attempted cover to hide the realities in Punjab.

### *Punjab Problem*

#### *Commitments With Sikhs Before 1947*

In 1929, when Shri Jawahar Lal Nehru was the President, a formal resolution was passed by the Indian National Congress at Lahore, that no constitution of India would be finalised, until it was acceptable to the Sikhs<sup>3</sup> The second assurance was the clear statement of Nehru in 1946 that there was nothing objectionable in the Sikhs having an area demarcated in the North West of India, where they could enjoy the ‘glow of freedom.’<sup>4</sup> It was a significant statement, since it was given in the context of Jinnah’s offering to the Sikhs constitutional guarantees in a separate state in the Eastern part of the contemplated Pakistan.<sup>5</sup>

Third, there was the statement of Mahatma Gandhi<sup>6</sup> saying that his words should be accepted and that the Congress would never betray anyone, and that if they did the Sikhs knew how to use their Kirpan. Finally there was the statement of Nehru<sup>7</sup> in the Constituent Assembly in December 1946. While proposing a federal system with autonomous states, he moved the executive resolution, which envisaged “The Indian Union as an independent sovereign republic comprising autonomous units with residuary powers, wherein the ideals of social, political and economic democracy would be guaranteed to all sections of the people, and adequate safeguards would be provided for minorities, backward communities and areas.” Nehru described the resolution as a “Declaration, a pledge and an undertaking before the world, a contract of millions of Indians, ‘and therefore in the nature of an oath which we want to keep.” These were some of the commitments regarding an autonomous area in a federal system, which the Congress had solemnly given to the Sikhs, on the basis of which they had agreed to throw their lot with India.

#### *Commitments Violated*

Unfortunately, after 1947 the Congress completely changed its views and stand. The Sikhs were aghast, when the draft of the proposed Indian Constitution was circulated to the State Assemblies in 1949, because, instead of autonomous states and a federal constitution, the draft was for a purely unitary type of structure. Unanimously, all the Sikhs of the Punjab Assembly, objected to the draft and wrote as follows:<sup>8</sup> “It has been the declared policy of the Congress that In a is to be a union of autonomous states, and each unit is to develop in its

own way, linguistically, culturally and socially. Of course, Defence Communications and Foreign Affairs must remain the Central Sub-jects. To change the basic policy now, is to run counter to the oft- repeated creed of the Congress.” “In the considered opinion of the Akali Dal the residuary powers should be with the states.” “The list distributing legislative powers should be based on the principle that the Centre or the Union Parliament should be limited to Defence, Communications and Foreign Affairs only.” But in 1950 the Congress, violating the earlier assurances and policies, framed a constitution, leaning heavily towards a unitary form of government. In protest the Akali members declined to sign it. It is evident that the Anandpur Sahib Resolution of 1978<sup>9</sup> is just a reiteration of Nehru’ s commitments in the Constituent Assembly in 1946 and of the reminder the Sikh Legis-lators unanimously gave in 1949 to the Central Government, that it was violating its repeated assurances. Hence it is sheer ignorance on part of the author to suggest that “The Federal views, in it are a document of secession.” Neither was Nehru secessionist, nor would he or the Congress have made a commitment that could be detrimental to the interests of the country. Is the function of a scholar just to be the mouthpiece of the Establishment and echo its voice, or to detail and examine the problem? The latter the author has failed to do either out of ignorance or design. In fact, while the Sikhs in 1949 suggested three subjects for the Centre, the Anandpur Sahib Resolution proposed Currency, too, to be a Central subject. Thus, factually, it is the Congress and the Central Government who have shifted their stand, and not that the Sikhs are asking for anything new and unreasonable.

### *A Diametric Change*

It was soon after Independence that the Sikhs felt that the Centre or the Congress had diametrically deviated in their approach and policy towards them. The major indication was its framing a unitary form of constitution, with Sikhs to be kept a permanent minority in the State. A very significant indication of the Central approach to the Sikhs is what Patel conveyed to Tara Singh, when he wanted a Punjabi Suba to be carved out. No less a ‘person than the Prime Minister Charan Singh, has described it thus:<sup>10</sup> “When Master Tara Singh was there, he was talking of Punjabi Suba. Then he had a talk with Sardar Patel. Sardar Patel said: I am ready to concede it. But you will have only that much land that falls to your share on grounds of population. So Punjab area

will: be halved. Now you form 17% of the Army. They will have to be dismissed. Are you prepared for it?"

The above made it plain what would thereafter be the Central approach towards the Sikhs.

The Sikhs are known for their love and struggle for freedom. This new policy, the Sikhs feel, is aptly described by Machiavelli's observations, <sup>11</sup> "Those states which have been acquired or accustomed to live at liberty under their own laws, there are three ways of holding them. The first is to despoil them; the second is to go and live there in person; the third is to allow them to live under their own laws, taking tribute of them, and creating within the country a government com-posed of a few who will keep it friendly to you. Because this govern-ment, being created by-the Prince, knows that it cannot exist without his friendship and protection, will do all it can to keep them." We shall see if the events of the subsequent years, justify the feelings and apprehensions of the Sikhs.

### *The Struggle Starts*

Following this complete change in the Central policy and disregard of its commitments, the Sikhs started an agitation for crea-tion of a Punjabi speaking linguistic state in the North West. The Congress had been committed to creating homogenous linguistic states in the country and reorganising provincial boundaries. Accordingly, a States Reorganisation Commission was set up to propose boundaries of new linguistic states. But strangely enough, while it recommended the formation of other linguistic states it specifically suggested that Punjabi linguistic state should not be formed. Another indication of Central policy was that in 1956, instead of forming a Punjabi linguistic state, as in other areas, it merged the Pepsu State, in which the Sikhs were in a majority, in Eastern Punjab, thereby reducing the Sikhs to a minority in the new state. The struggle for Punjabi speaking linguistic state continued for over a decade. In 1965 the war with Pakistan broke out, and against all apprehensions, the Sikhs suspended their agitation and whole-heartedly supported the war effort. This they did in the national interest, merely on a promise of the Prime Minister that their demand would be considered later on. The Sikh contribution to the War was so impressive, both by the people and the soldiers, that after the War, the Prime Minister appointed a Parliamentary Committee to report regarding the formation of a Punjabi speaking state. At the same time the Congress

Party also resolved that a linguistic Punjabi speaking state should be carved out of the then Punjab. But it is very interesting and revealing to know of the mind of Mrs. Indira Gandhi, then Information Minister, and Sh. Gulzari Lal Nanda, the then Home Minister to the Government of India, who was at the government level to give effect to the proposal of the Parliamentary Committee. Hukam Singh, <sup>12</sup>then Speaker of the Lok Sabha writes:

“The Prime Minister was reported to have observed on November 26, 1982, when releasing some books published by the Delhi Gurdwara Committee (HT. Nov.27), that ‘When the Punjabi speaking State was formed the suggestion made by the committee headed by S. Hukam Singh had been accepted.’ This was not so according to her statements in “My Truth” (p.117), “Unfortunately, Mr. Shastri had made Hukam Singh, the Speaker of the Lower House, Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Punjabi Suba, although he was very biased in favour of Punjabi Suba .....

“I went to Mr. Chavan and said, I had heard that S. Hukam Singh was going to give a report in favour of Punjabi Suba, and that he should be stopped .....

“Once the Prime Minister’s appointee had declared himself in favour of Punjabi Suba, how could we get out of it”.

“Mrs Gandhi along with Mr. Chavan, could see Mr. Shastri with much difficulty and when they did, Mr. Shastri just said, he was fully in touch with the situation and we need not bother. (p. 118). “But I was very bothered and I went around seeing everybody. Of course, once the report came, it was too late to change it.”

“Lal Bahadur Shastri continued the policy of Jawahar Lal Nehru and was as dead against the demand of Punjabi Suba as was Nehru. So, when he was urged upon by Mrs. Gandhi to stop Hukam Singh, he did not waste any time. Mr Shastri called Mr. Gulzari Lal Nanda, then Home Minister, to his residence, and conveyed to him the concern about the feared report. I was contacted on the telephone. Mr. Shastri disclosed that Mr. Nanda was with him, and had complained that he had suggested my name (Hukam Singh) for the Chairmanship of the parliamentary committee under the mistaken impression, which he had formed during a casual talk with me, that I believed that Punjabi Suba would not be of any advantage to the Sikhs ultimately, but that now I appeared determined to make a report in its favour.”

### *Government's Intention*

"I answered that the facts were only partly true. I had told M Nanda that Punjabi Suba would not ultimately be of much advantage to the Sikhs. But I had also added that the issue had by then become one of sentiment and had roused emotions. Therefore, it was not possible to argue with, much less to convince, any Sikh about the advantages or disadvantages of Punjabi Suba. Every Sikh considered the denial as discrimination. I further enquired from Mr. Shastri, whether I had not expressed the same opinion to him and his answer was in the affirmative. I myself offered to confront Mr. Nanda by immediately rushing to Mr. Shastri's residence, but he said there was no need. This disillusioned me. The intention of the Govt. then was to use me against my community, secure an adverse report, and then reject the demand."

"The Govt. has never seen merit in any Sikh demand. The Das Commission in 1948 recommended postponement of reorganisation on the plea, inter alia, that if once begun in the South, it might intensify the demand by Sikhs in the North. The J.V.P. Committee (Jawaharlal, Vallabhbhai Patel and Pattabhi Sitaramayya) when reviewing the Das report gratuitously remarked that no question of rectification of boundaries in the provinces of Northern India should be raised at the present moment, whatever the merit of such a proposal might be."

"And this became the future policy. Nehru stuck to it Shastri continued the same, and Indra Gandhi has made no departure."

"Every effort was made by Mrs. Gandhi, Mr. Shastri, and Mr. Nanda to stop me from making my report"

Why the government had been so strongly against the parliamentary committee making a report in favour of Punjabi Suba and why Mrs. Gandhi had felt bothered and ran about seeing everybody to stop Hukam Singh, has been explained by Mrs. Gandhi herself. "The Congress found itself in a dilemma, to concede the Akali demand would mean abandoning a position to which it was firmly committed and letting down its Hindu supporters in the Punjabi Suba (p. 117, My Truth)." The government has always been very particular about not "letting down its Hindu supporters." The Congress could not depend upon Sikh voters and out of political considerations could not suffer losing Hindu votes also. Therefore the Congress failed to do justice to the Sikhs.

“The first schedule of the Regional Committee Order 1957 contained Ropar, Morinda and Chandigarh assembly constituencies in Ambala district in the Punjab region.”

“The subsequent reference to the Shah Commission was loaded heavily against Punjab. Making the 1961 census as the basis and the tehsil as the unit was a deliberate design to punish the Sikhs. The language return in the 1961 census were on communal lines.

Therefore, the demarcation had to be on a communal rather than on a linguistic basis.”

“Consequently merit was again ignored and justice denied. Naturally tensions between the two communities increased. If the Sachar formula, worked out in 1949, had been accepted there would not have been any further conflict, if the Regional Formula had been allowed to be implemented, there would not have been any further discontent And if Punjabi Suba had been demarcated simply on a linguistic basis, and not on false returns in 1961, there would not have been any extremist movement”

It clearly shows that the demand for a linguistic state, a policy which was an old one with the Congress and which had been implemented in the rest of India, was to be denied in the Punjab, because Sikhs would become a majority there, and come in power under the democratic process. Hence forward, it would seem that the Central Government has been following the three pronged policy of despoiling Punjab, ruling it by stooge governments, and imposing the President’s rule, if and when, by the democratic process, a non-Congress government came into power in the state. The subsequent history of the Punjab has been just a struggle between the Sikhs, historically known for their love of liberty, and the Centre pursuing the above policy. Both Mrs. Indira Gandhi and Shri Nanda were concerned and worried about the proposal for a Punjabi Suba, having been accepted by the Congress. The proposal had been conceded after over fifty thousand Sikhs had courted arrest, and scores had died during the peaceful agitation.

### *A Sub-state Created*

The Parliamentary Committee having recommended the creation of a Punjabi Suba, the Home Minister got passed an Act, the Punjab Reorganisation Act, 1966, which in its implication was not only a denial to Punjab of a status equal to that of other states in the country, but also involved a permanent ceiling on the economic,



social and political growth of the state and its people. The Act had the following crippling provisions and limitations:

1. For the development of every state in India two things are basic namely, water and energy. As it is, Punjab, because of its rivers and very great hydel power potential is fortunate. Under the Constitution of India, and everywhere under international law and practice, Irrigation and Power are state subjects (Item 17 of the State List read with Article 246 of the Constitution). These are under the exclusive executive and legislative jurisdiction of the states. But by the provision of Section 78 to 80 of the Reorganisation Act, the Centre unconstitutionally kept the power of control, maintenance and development of the waters and hydel power of the Punjab rivers. This was a clear violation of the Constitution. In other words, Punjab became a state which could do nothing for the control and development of its rivers, utilisation of their waters and exploitation of their hydel power potential. Thus, Punjab became administratively and legislatively an ineffective and inferior state, which could do nothing for the economic development of its people. The question of political growth could not arise, because it had permanently been reduced to a sub state without scope for regaining control of its waters and hydel power. Hence, progress towards autonomy became out of question.

2. The second limitation concerned the territorial boundaries of the state. In 1949, under the known Sachar Formula, the state government indicated, upto a village, the boundaries of Punjabi speaking and Hindi speaking areas. Later, under an Act of Parliament, known as the Regional Formula, Punjabi speaking and Hindi speaking areas of the old Punjab were demarcated and separate legislative Committees representing the two areas were constituted. The Sachar Formula and the Regional Formula had been accepted and worked without any objection from the people, legislators or Ministers of the areas concerned, until 1966. Instead of accepting the settled boundaries, as had been recommended by the Parliamentary Committee proposing the formation of the Punjabi Suba, Government appointed a Commission to redetermine the boundaries, reopen and make controversial a settled issue. In fact, areas which were Punjabi speaking or were under the functional control of Punjab, were excluded from the Punjabi Suba, and the Commission excluded not only settled Punjabi speaking contiguous areas, but also the State capital from the Suba, even though it had been constituted by acquiring Punjabi speaking villages, and in every other reorganised state the capital had

remained with the parent state. An area almost equal to half of the present Himachal Pradesh, was transferred from the Punjab to Himachal Pradesh, including known Punjabi speaking areas. Even the site of Bhakhra Dam which was constructed solely by the Punjab Government and had always been under its functional control, was kept out of Punjab, although the area is Punjabi speaking and even though Simla and other hill stations were transferred to Himachal Pradesh.

#### DEMANDS AFTER 1966

The new state being basically handicapped, an agitation for redressal of the grievances started soon after 1966, because it was anticipated that its future under the created discriminations would be ruinous for the people. The salient demands of this agitation were as follows:

(a) Satluj, Ravi and Beas, being purely Punjab rivers, and their waters and hydel power being very essential for the economy of the State, no water or hydel power should be allotted to non-riparian states like Rajasthan, Haryana or Delhi, because such an allocation would be unconstitutional. The issue could, therefore, be referred to the Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court. In no other state at the time of reorganisation, the provisions of the Constitution had been violated to deprive it of its wealth of water and hydel power as in Punjab.

(b) The boundaries that had been accepted by all concerned including the people and the legislators, should not be disturbed to deprive the new state of known Punjabi speaking areas, through Centrally-appointed Commissions.

(c) The Central Government order that recruitment to Defence Services should be based on the population of a state, was unconstitutional, being violative of Articles 15 and 16 of the Indian Constitution, which state that in the matter of recruitment to Public Services no distinction could be made on the basis of place of birth of an individual. The object of this order could evidently be to reduce the strength of the Sikhs, which was originally 20%, to about 2% which was to be the share of Punjab on the basis of its population during future recruitment to Defence Forces. Actually the strength of the Sikhs in the Defence Forces had already been reduced to about 8%, and the Sikhs apprehended that the new policy would further reduce their strength to 2% or less. This unconstitutional policy of the Government

has been a major cause for distress in the rural areas of the Punjab. As lakhs of families were dependent on the profession of soldiery for their livelihood, and since the percent-age of the Sikh soldiers in the Army became increasingly reduced, this caused serious economic dissatisfaction among the youth in rural areas of Punjab, especially when they found that in other states candidates with lower physical fitness stand-ards were accepted. As this policy related only to the Defence Services, where Sikhs, because of their tradition, aptitude and fitness were eminently suitable of selection, it created a serious sense of discrimination against the policy of the Central Government. (d) Even before Independence, the keeping of Kirpan (sword) was accepted as a religiously prescribed wear for the Sikhs. Its wear by a Sikh has been guaranteed under the Law and Indian Constitution. During British days there had been a specific agitation for this freedom. But now the Central Government issued an order placing restrictions on the carrying of Kirpan in certain situations. This order was considered violative of the Indian Constitution. Hence, the demand was for withdrawal of the unconstitutional restrictions.

Apart from the Anandpur Sahib Resolution, which will be discussed separately, the above were the four major demands of the Sikhs after 1966. These demands were reasonable and legitimate, and since the Constitution provides a specific forum for their solution, the Government, if it intended, could have lawfully settled them without the least objection from any party or State. No one could say that the constitutional issues should not be referred to the Constitutional Bench of the Supreme Court, which was the body to give a verdict on them, and once the decision had been made, no party could raise any objection. So far as the territorial matter was concerned, the demand was equally valid, because it required that the borders that stood settled and accepted by the people of the areas, and the decision embodied in an Act of Parliament, should not be arbitrarily altered through a Commission. But what could be settled in one day, has been made to linger on for decades, and the Central Government has consistently failed to follow the constitutional path or to maintain the status quo on a settled issue. Instead of giving the long history of the Akali agitation over the last about quarter of a century, we shall, for the sake of brevity, continue our discussion mainly to the two issues of rivers waters and the Anandpur Sahib Resolution.

## RIVER WATERS AND HYDEL POWER ISSUES

After independence, roughly 38 MAF of river waters fell to the share of East Punjab in India. Of these, about 32 MAF were carried by the three Punjab rivers, Satluj, Beas and Ravi, and the remaining 5.6 MAF were carried by the Jamuna in Haryana area or the Jamuna Basin. Excluding 5.6 MAF of Jamuna (only part of which was utilised in Haryana area of erstwhile Punjab), of the remaining over 32 MAF about 9 MAF were being utilised in the Punjabi Suba area, and one MAF was used in the Gang Canal for the Bikaner State, which had an agreement with Punjab for a limited period, on payment of royalty to Punjab for the use of that water. In short, about 22 MAF of Punjab waters were still available for use of the State. Actually, considerable part of the 22 MAF was being used in Pakistan area, before 1947. But after partition these waters fell to the share of Indian Punjab.

The second essential point is that Punjab is short of water as Dr. Lowdermilk<sup>13</sup> has pointed out that sweet water is going to be scarce commodity and a limiting factor in the development of an area or state in the coming century. Agricultural experts have estimated that 5 to 6 acre feet of water are the annual requirements of an acre for growing two crops like wheat and paddy, the recommended rotation in the state. The cultivable area in Punjab being 105 lakh acres, the annual requirements of surface water come to about 52.5 MAF. But the available waters are only 32 MAF, of which about 0.6 MAF have to go to the co-riparian Jammu and Kashmir. In sum, Punjab is woefully deficient in the availability of river waters to meet the requirements of its cultivated area. Here we should like to state two points:

First, we cannot, for want of space, give the entire history of the allotment of the river waters. We shall record only the result of the decisions made by the Central Government. Second, we shall give only approximate figures, because these have been marginally changed by different assessments and are still under controversy. The figures given will be the accepted data during the period before 1970.

The Reorganisation Act has a provision that in case of any dispute between Punjab and Haryana regarding the Beas Project, the Centre would be the arbitrator. Apart from the provision being considered violative of the Constitution, it was really unnecessary, because the Beas Project had been framed and finalised long before 1966, and envisaged the allotment of only about 0.9 MAF to the Haryana area. Such projects are always drawn in great detail, including plans for

utilisation of water, channels, commanded area, and water to be supplied to each channel, distributory or water course. As such, the very provision in the Act was superfluous, except as a lever for its unwar-ranted use, as has been revealed later. After 1966 Haryana drew up a project, Satluj Yamuna Link Canal, which is supposed to carry 5 MAF of water from Punjab rivers. The Central Government approved of it. Punjab did not accept its validity, being a post- Reorganisation project and not a part of the Beas Project. Because of the dispute the Centre gave an award, and the final result broadly is that out of the 22 MAF, only about 5 MAF have been allotted to the Punjab, while 8 MAF go to Rajasthan and the remaining to Haryana. In short after 1947, about three fourths of the available waters have been allotted to non-riparian areas of Haryana, Rajasthan and Delhi. We shall briefly mention the three stages of this long controversy. The first stage is the arbitration award by the Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, in 1976 allotting, excluding flow of Satluj waters of the Bhakra Project, 3.5 MAF each to Punjab and Haryana, 0.2 MAF to Delhi, leaving the remaining for Rajasthan which had been earlier earmarked under an executive order of the Centre. Following the defeat of Mrs. Indira Gandhi in the 1977 elections, an Akali-cum- Jan Sangh Ministry was formed in the Punjab. After obtaining expert legal advice, they filed a case in the Supreme Court questioning the award of the Prime Minister and the Vires of the Punjab Reorganisation Act of 1966. The third stage is that soon after Indira Gandhi returned to power at the Centre, she dismissed the Akali Ministry in Punjab, and later called a meeting of the three Congress Chief Ministers of Rajasthan, Haryana, and Punjab who signed an agreement virtually endorsing the earlier award. It gave 8.6 MAF to Rajasthan, 3.5 MAF to Haryana, 0.2 to Delhi and 4.2 MAF only to riparian Punjab. Following the agreement, the case pending before the Supreme Court was withdrawn by the Punjab Government, and the Prime Minister Mrs. Gandhi laid the foundation of the SYL Canal. Thus a constitutional attempt to have a decision of the Supreme Court on the fundamental constitutional issue was frustrated, following ex-ecutive agreements. The conclusion is incontrovertible that the diver-sion of Punjab's water and hydel power resources to non-riparian states, has been done by the Centre by resort to extra-judicial measures and by frustrating the constitutional process, which the Akali Ministry had sought to follow. It only shows that all through, the Centre was aware that the allotment was not

constitutional and the Supreme Court would not endorse the validity of the unconstitutional provisions of the Reorganisation Act, 1966, and what it had decided regarding the allotment of Punjab waters and hydel power to non-riparian states.

Here, two other points need to be mentioned. There is a provision in the Reorganisation Act, that hydel power from Punjab rivers will go to Haryana in proportion to the allotment of water. Second, the agreement of 1981 among the three states only related to water of Punjab rivers. The constitutional issue about the provision concerning hydel power of these rivers was outside the scope of that agreement. Accordingly, it was still open 'to a future Punjab Government to raise before the Supreme Court the constitutional issue about the validity of the Reorganisation Act concerning hydel power. As such the entire Reorganisation Act could be got declared unconstitutional, thereby upsetting the apple cart of all allotments of water and hydel power to non-riparian states. The Centre's consciousness about its unconstitutional course appears evident from the fact that in May 1984, during the President's Rule, the Punjab Governor entered into the extra judicial agreement with Haryana and Rajasthan, providing that future disputes, if any, among them shall not be referred to the Supreme Court, but shall be decided through a nominee or a Tribunal appointed by the Central Government.

Without going into the history of such decisions regarding the Narmada and other rivers waters in India, we shall quote only one decision made by a California Court<sup>14</sup> in February 1988. The case related to a petition by the Federal Government that its lands situated in California be allowed some irrigation from a stream in South California. Until then the private land owners on the basis of their riparian rights were not allowing the use of the river water to even government lands in the state. The Court decided that while the Federal lands might be allowed waters, the water use for state lands would be subordinated to the needs of the current water users in the State. This is to emphasize that not to speak of allowing water to nonriparian states, the priority of private water users is so strong and universal that until Feb. 1988 the private land owners were not allowing water to even government lands. This priority is evidently based on the Principle that since for centuries on end, it is the people of a state that suffer loss in property, land and life from the floods and vagaries of rivers, they alone in equity have the corresponding right of having benefits from the waters or hydel power of those streams.

In no democratic country in Europe, America or India is there a decision contrary to the riparian principle which is also embodied in the Indian Constitution. One fact alone will show the equity of the riparian law. In 1988, the Punjab floods caused a havoc. The loss in erosion and silting of the land, damage to crops, houses, property and cattle, apart from the loss of scores of human lives, was estimated at over a billion Dollars<sup>15</sup> in that single year. Neither Rajasthan, nor Haryana, nor Delhi suffered even a penny worth of loss or damage from Punjab rivers of which they had been made the principal beneficiaries. The above highlights the contradiction and evident injustice that while riparian Punjab continues to suffer such damages, the non- riparian states reap each year benefits and production of over a billion dollars.

In India too there is clear cut decision in the Narmada waters case<sup>16</sup>, saying that Rajasthan being a non-riparian state has no rights in its waters whatsoever. In that case Rajasthan itself pleaded that even though non-riparian, it was getting Punjab waters, and on that analogy it should be allowed waters from the Narmada. But it was held that Rajasthan was non-riparian vis-a-vis Punjab rivers, and Punjab's com-ittment to Rajasthan was that it would supply water, only if it was surplus to its needs. This is to stress that knowing full well all this and other judicial decisions and rulings of the Indian Courts on the subject, the Central Government has consciously violated the riparian prin-ciple, and when challenged, avoided a judicial verdict on this constitu-tional issue.

#### *Disastrous Effect Of Drain Of Punjab Waters And Power*

The ruinous and despoiling effects of Central decisions are large-scale both in the fields of agriculture and industry. At present out of 105 lakh acres of cultivated land in the Punjab about 92 lakhs are irrigated including about 37 lakhs by canals and the rest by tubewells. This indicates that the major part of irrigation and Punjab prosperity and production are due to private effort and enterprise. First, the capital cost and maintenance and running costs of these over 8 lakh tubewells are a heavy burden on the production costs of crops in the state. Current cost of tubewell irrigation is 3 to 10 times more expensive than canal irrigation, depending upon the source of power. Apart from the fact that uninterrupted supply of power from diesel or electricity is hardly assured, the heavy overdrawal of subsoil water exceeds the annual recharge by rains, seepage, etc. This is lowering the water table each year from one to

ten feet. The present position of tubewell irrigation is that between 80 to 90 percent of the Community Blocks in the state have been branded as unsuitable for irrigation by tubewells. The clear warning given is that by the close of the century majority of these tubewells would become non-functional because of the continuous fall of water table. The second point is that available estimates suggest that ten lakh acres of existing canal irrigated areas especially from the Sirhind Canal area, would lose facility of canal water because water at present used in the state will have to be diverted to Haryana and Rajasthan under the present decision. In short, because of the lowering water table and diversion of canal waters about 60% of the area or about 50 lakhs acres would become barani or unirrigated. Under the present cropping system the question of dry farming does not arise. The holdings of small farmers being what they are, the resultant misery of a major part of the rural population can well be imagined. Its very serious effects on economic and social conditions in the state and their disturbing influence on the political life should be obvious. The annual loss of agricultural production would be of the order of 1.2 billion dollars. The loss in consequential industrial production and in the diversion of hydel power to other states would be still greater. The unfortunate part is that whereas hydel power from Punjab is being allotted to other states, thermal power plants are being installed in Punjab. Those being dependent on coal from distant states, the electricity generated by them is obviously several times more expensive than hydel power.

#### *Anandpur Sahib Resolution*

As explained, the basis of Anandpur Sahib Resolution is not any snap decision or secessionist trend in Punjab politics, but it follows the assurances given by the Central leadership before 1947. Since 1949, the Akalis have been pressing the Central Government to give effect to their earlier policies and assurances. Since then the following additional factors have arisen to make it necessary that the state should have autonomous powers:

A In 1971, the Tamil Nadu Assembly adopted the Rajmanner Report which requires that the Centre should have only four subjects as in the Anandpur Sahib resolution, and in addition, there should be a consultative Committee of Chief Ministers of states presided over by the Prime Minister to advise the Centre regarding the four Central subjects. Such views have also been expressed by West Bengal and other non-Congress Ministries.



B In the preceding 40 years, the Centre has amended the Constitution a number of times to make it more centralised. For example, Education, Administration of Justice, Constitution of Courts, have been made either concurrent or Central subjects. The percentage of discretionary grants to be given to the states from the Central revenue has been raised very considerably, thereby enabling the Centre to favour or punish any state it may like to do.

C The Centre has created non-statutory or extra-constitutional bodies like the Planning Commission, the Water and Power Commission, the University Grants Commission, etc. which have great power not only to make financial allocations, but also have unfettered discretion to approve or disapprove state schemes which fall exclusively within the sphere of state functioning. By this method, the Centre could completely throttle all development in the state, should it choose to do so. A classic case is the construction of the Punjab Project of Thein Dam which was to cost originally only 70 crores, but Punjab failed to receive final approval even though in the mean time its cost has risen to over 800 crores.

D Another factor is the frequent Central intrusion in state affairs by creating instability in a state and introducing President's rule. For example, whenever a non-congress Ministry was constitutionally formed in the Punjab, it was destabilised, followed by the President's rule.<sup>8</sup> This was felt to be a negation of the democratic will to the people.

E As the disastrous shackle of the Punjab Reorganisation Act makes Punjab a sub-state, the only way to promote socio-political progress in the state was to have full autonomy in the sphere of all development, planning and administration including control of water and hydel power of Punjab rivers.

F Under the existing political set-up, as in the Punjab Reorganisation Act, the Centre has insisted on the construction of the Rajasthan Canal, despite all expert advice to the contrary. International experts from the World Bank and other institutions clearly emphasized that the Project was economically unjustifiable and wasteful, and that, at far less expense, the use of Punjab river waters could be far more productive if utilised within the state. It shows that the Central decision neither served the national interests nor those of the Punjab.

G Economic exploitation of Punjab in other fields has also been going on. Over 75% of the savings in Punjab Banks are diverted

outside the state in order to develop other areas. Industrial licensing and approval of projects being in Central hands, it has not allowed more than 2% of the cotton produced in the Punjab to be processed within the state. Similarly, while Punjab is a major sugar cane producing area, large scale imports of sugar still take place from other states. Another way of serious curtailment of the wealth of rural Punjab, which sustain about 80% of the population, is by low pricing and monopoly procurement of wheat and rice which are in Central hands. Punjab suffers the most because about 60% of wheat and a considerable part of rice are procured from Punjab by the Centre for distribution in deficient or urban areas in other states.

We have indicated above some of the Central measures that have seriously curtailed Punjab's agricultural and industrial growth. In fact, the Reorganisation act has put a permanent ceiling on the economic, social and political development of the state. It is in this context that the demand contained in assurances of the Congress leaders, and the Akali demand of 1949, was revived in 1973 because it became evident that in the existing set-up, the economic and social growth of the people of the Punjab stood completely arrested. Hence the need of autonomy in the field of development and administrative subjects, as envisaged in the Anandpur Sahib Resolution, became inevitable.

Evidently, it is sheer bias on the part of a scholar to make a complete black-out of the context, the steps taken by the Centre and the political events in the Punjab and other states that have given rise to the Anandpur Sahib Resolution demanding state autonomy, and approvingly to endorse that Anandpur Sahib Resolution is viewed 'as a document of succession.' In the current political thinking, both in the world and in India, it looks so incongruous for even a journalist, much less for a scholar to brand a simple demand for autonomy as secessionist. We give below by way of a sample a recent statement of a Central Minister, George Fernandes, who observed at a seminar on Indian nationalism, Problems and Challenges, that<sup>17</sup> "The growing militancy by the youth was a clear indication that the politicians had failed to solve the problems of the country. The only answer was to have a new constitution, providing a genuine decentralised state with development activity being the responsibility of the people." "If the country had adopted decentralisation instead of going in for centralised

planning, there would not have been a single village in the country with a drinking water problem.”

The author has unnecessarily and illogically raised the issue of Sikh Personal Law, and tried to relate it to so-called Sikh fundamentalism. First, there is nothing fundamentalist in making a political demand. Second, Sikhs have undoubtedly a separate religion, a separate scripture and a separate socio-political identity and world-view. Accordingly, there is nothing abnormal or irrational, if the Sikhs, like the Muslims or the Hindus, want to have a separate personal law; it is the right of every ethnic community to make such a demand. It is just ridiculous for anyone to suggest, as has been done by Oberoi, that after the grant of autonomy, the Sikhs would ban tobacco, drugs or alcohol. Nothing of this sort was done by Ranjit Singh even in the nineteenth century. The Punjab Assembly has Power even today to ban tobacco or alcohol, but nothing of the kind has happened, although some other states have introduced prohibition. It appears hardly rational to raise such a bogey. It reminds one of the fears expressed by some politicians that hens would stop laying eggs, if the steam locomotive invented by Stephenson were introduced. As explained earlier, the real object of Oberoi appears to be political, and the aim seems to be to misrepresent the justification and political necessity of the demand for state autonomy. For, otherwise it is difficult to accept that he is absolutely unaware of the basic importance of water and hydel power, territorial, recruitment and other issues in reference to Punjab, and the demand for autonomy in many parts of the country.

### *Sikh Ideology*

Now we shall take up issues concerning fundamentalism, Sikh pluralism, Miri-piri concept, Nirankaris, modernity, secularism and agrarian situation, which Oberoi has irrelevantly introduced in order to sidetrack the main issues of the Punjab problem.

First, we take up the alleged fundamentalism. From the point of view of academic studies, the point is completely irrelevant to the subject under consideration, because fundamentalism is related only to the literal acceptance of many of the stories and assertions in the Bible, which under modern conditions are not accepted by many. For example, it has been stated that the world is only a few thousand years old. There is nothing in the Sikh scripture or the Sikh ideology, which appears in any way illogical to modern thought. In fact, it is the modernity that is its basic feature and is the reason for its departure

from the earlier Indian religions. It is not our intention to give offence to any old religion, but we all know that they have their statements which are questioned even by men of the faith. Hence, it appears necessary to give the Sikh world-view, so that Oberoi's contentions could be assessed in the correct ideological perspective.

Sikhism is free from any historical or mythical assumptions. It is a monotheistic faith with the belief that the basic Force or God is Love, and He is both transcendent and immanent in His creation. Love being dynamic, the mother of all values, and directive, God is deeply interested in His creation, and operates through His altruistic Will. As such, the seeker's goal is to carry out His Will. This makes for the reality of the world, instead of its being an illusion (*mithya*) or a suffering, as it is considered by some other religions. Hence, Guru Nanak emphasizes four things: First, that in life the spiritual dimension must be combined with the empirical dimension in order to live a full and fruitful life. This forms the basis of the *Miri- Piri* doctrine laid down by him. Second, that the ideal of man is not salvation or merger in Brahman, but working in tune with the altruistic Will of God. Our present malady is that we live an egoistic life and remain alienated from the real force of Love, that is operative in the world and forms the base of all moral life. Third, in pursuance of the above logic, Guru Nanak rejected the system of monasticism, asceticism, other-worldliness, caste ideology and pollution, and woman being considered a temptress. No prophet in the world has made such radical changes in religious thought as did Guru Nanak. Fourth, he prescribed that man's assessment would purely be made on his deeds alone. It is in this context that he stated that "Truth is higher than everything, but truthful living is higher still." A major corollary of his system of truthful living which is its central element, is man's duty to participate in social life and accept total social responsibility. For that end he suggested that for the religious man, work, production and equitable distribution are essential, as also the responsibility of confronting or resisting injustice and oppression. Because he calls God to be the Destroyer of evildoers and the demonical. In order to enable the religious man to discharge the responsibility of resisting oppression, he rejected the doctrine of *Ahim-sa* or pacificism, which had been an integral part of all Indian religions. And it is in this context that he gave the call that his system, being a game of love, whoever wanted to join his society, should be willing to sacrifice his all. For that end he organised a society, and created the institution of succession to enable his successors to develop

and mature the Panth. Finally, it is that society which the Tenth Master created as the Khalsa, again giving the call for total sacrifice, and breaking completely from the earlier religious systems, traditions, customs, etc. Hence it is sheer ignorance about Guru Granth and its system to relate it to something of the kind of Christian fundamentalism, in order to create a prejudice in the minds of those who have no knowledge of Sikhism. The Guru Granth or its ideology can be summed up as was done by Guru Nanak thus: Give up egoism and live a life of love, virtue, equality and justice. Accordingly, there is no obscurantism or pluralism in the ideology of Guru Nanak. As to the Miri-Piri doctrine, it is the fundamental of Guru Nanak's thesis to combine the empirical life with the spiritual life of man. It is the same principle as was accepted by Moses and Prophet Mohammad, both of whom were simultaneously religious and political leaders.

As to the Nirankaris, he has again completely misrepresented the position either out of ignorance or otherwise. The Nirankaris are neither a Sikh sect nor a break-away group, nor do the Nirankaris themselves make any claim to be Sikhs. The clash between the Nirankaris and the Bhindranwale group might well have been a created problem in order to sidetrack the Sikh political struggle for its rights. In any case, such a conflict could be between the two ideologies. Further, it is a misstatement that the death of Gurbachan Singh was followed by mass killings in the Punjab. Nothing of the kind happened, and Oberoi has not given any evidence to support this unfounded statement. In any case, the alleged clash has nothing to do with the political problems of Punjab and the issues involved therein. A minor clash between two communities can hardly be a relevant reason either for denying autonomy to a state or for sidetracking the real issues of injustice we have discussed above.

Oberoi has also incongruously introduced the point of Green Revolution, which is chronologically a baseless assertion. The Sikh agitation for Punjabi Suba and autonomous status, is a political issue of pre-Independence days and even the demand of Punjabi Suba and its autonomy arose in the life of Sardar Patel. Long before the Green Revolution, the agitation for the Suba had started. Over fifty thousand went to jail and suffered imprisonment and other hardships. All this happened before the onset of the Green Revolution. As even a student of Punjab agriculture is aware, the first import of high yielding seeds from Mexico took place in 1966, and the impact of the Green

Revolution was not felt before the mid-seventies. By that time, the agitation for Sikh demands including the fasts of Sant Fateh Singh and Darshan Singh Pheruman, as also the death of the latter, had taken place. Second, the occurrence of the Green Revolution in Punjab is an accomplished fact. But the important question is why it took place in the North West corner of India among the rural Sikhs and not anywhere else in India or Asia, which had been deficient in food. It is the life-affirming ideology of Sikhism that is the sole explanation for it as has been explained by Upinderjit Kaur in her publication. Oberoi's difficulty appears to be his complete ignorance of the spirituo-empirical life combination or the Miri- Piri system of the Guru Granth. That is why he seems to be unnecessarily beating about the bush. As to the subdivision of holdings, he has again made an irrelevant contradiction; subdivision is a natural consequence of the system of succession. The Green Revolution has not in any way accentuated it, but it has made small holdings more productive and life sustaining than before. Higher yields and greater production have relieved the economic situation, and this is supported by no less a person than Subramaniam, the Agriculture Minister of India.

Oberoi has harped a lot on modernity and secularism, and has only displayed an ignorance of the broad forces that are involved in the current century. It is Toynbee who laments that for the last three hundred years, religion has been driven out of the cultural life of man, and instead parochialism of the worship of the national state as a goddess has started. He also laments that the Western technologist has lost his self-confidence and is in confusion, whether the technological genii which he has released would not destroy all human culture and "whether his "professional success may not have been a social and moral disaster." For him "the great world religions have been replaced in modern times by three post-Christian ideologies, nationalism, communism and individualism. All three are equally impersonal and dehumanising." Similarly, Pierard believes "Secularism in the nineteenth century, aided by Marxism, Darwinism and Positivism chipped away the Christian underpinning of Western thought." This thinking considers that secularism and nationalism eventually give rise to militarism, imperialism, racism and despotism. The history of the current century hardly seems to suggest that secularism leads to cultural or moral progress. In fact, the indications, both historical and current, seem to be quite different. For, in Europe and the USSR millions were destroyed by Hitler and Stalin both

of whom were secularists without any belief in religion. It is in this context that the American Churches have raised the voice that Secularism is a major danger to life and that Christianity should cooperate with other religions in order to avoid the present decline in moral values of the culture. It is doubtful, whether Hegel, as Oberoi suggests, can be associated with the thinking of divorce between religion and politics. But whatever be his belief, he is certainly associated with German militarism and is considered to be the precursor of Kaiser, Hitler and despotism. In fact, it is the post-modern thinking of men like Huston Smith<sup>18</sup> that suggests the recognition of the role of religion against the limitation and potential harm that is contained in the power-over-nature approach to life that governs much of our modern culture. This philosophy appears to lead towards “only a dead end; annihilation of mythology, religion, all value systems, all hope.”

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## **GURU TEGH BAHADUR - THE NINTH NANAK (1621 - 1675)**

**SURINDER SINGH KOHLI**

As recorded in the Var of Satta and Balwand and in the rust Var of Bhai Gurdas, the spirit of Guru Nanak Dev worked through all the succeeding Gurus. Whatever they did or said, bears the stamp of the founder Guru. There had been no deviation from the path set forth by Guru Nanak. Guru Gobind Singh has also emphasized the identity of all the Sikh Gurus. According to him, "the people on the whole considered them as separate ones, but there were a few, who recognised them as one and the same." Some of the events in the life of Guru Tegh Bahadur have been erroneously described in such a way that the ninth Guru's work does not seem to be in consonance with the spirit of the first Guru. While Guru Nanak Dev wanted his devotees to be active in the service of the world. Guru Tegh Bahadur is said to be a pessimist and inclined towards the enunciation of world. Whereas Guru Nanak Dev and his early successors made the free kitchen (langer) as the special feature in the House of Nanak, Guru Tegh Bahadur is said to have resorted to forcible exactions. Such like misrepresentations occur only when we have not closely studied the compositions of the Guru. *Short Sketch of the Life of Guru Tegh Bahadur:*

Tegh Bahadur was the youngest son of the sixth Guru, Guru Hargobind. He was born on April 1, 1621 at Guru ka Mahal, Amritsar. The warrior father, who wielded two swords of miri and piri as emblem of temporal and spiritual authority, respectively, had before his birth constructed a fort named Lohgarh (the fort of steel). The Tegh (sword) was very high in his mind, therefore he named the newly-born as Tegh Bahadur. Bhai Gurdas described the sixth Guru as the "warrior Guru and conqueror of the armies." Just before the birth of Tegh Bahadur, the Guru had issued a general proclamation for his disciples that he



would be highly pleased to receive the arms and necessary military equipment from them. This was a turning point in the history of the Sikhs.

Tegh Bahadur was married with Gujri Bai, the daughter of Sri Lal Chand, at Kartarpur, where her father had shifted from Amritsar.

The first battle between the armed Sikhs of Guru Hargobind and the Mughal forces was fought at Amritsar in 1628, when Tegh Bahadur was only seven. Another battle was fought at Gobindpur (near Har-gobindpur). The third battle was fought at Mehraj in 1631, when Tegh Bahadur was only ten. He had been listening to the stories of war, told in the gatherings of the Sikhs, held at frequent intervals and also enjoyed the recitation of the heroic poetry by the bards, in the court of his father. During this period, he received military training and was waiting for the time when he would be able to participate actively in the battles. The fourth battle of Guru Hargobind was fought with the Mughals in 1634 near Kartarpur, when Tegh Bahadur was nearly fourteen years old. It is recorded in Sikh chronicles that the young Tegh Bahadur participated in this battle and fought very bravely along with his eldest brother Baba Gurditta. He wielded the sword like a spirited warrior and fought valiantly. He proved worthy of his name.

After the battle of Kartarpur, the sixth Guru shifted to Kirat-pur with his family and settled there till his expiry in 1644. During these ten years, Tegh Bahadur remained with his father at Kartarpur. His eldest brother Baba Gurditta passed away in 1638. The passing away of such a worthy son was a big loss for the Guru's family. The next son Suraj Mal and his son Deep Chand were world-minded. The next two sons of the sixth Guru Atal Rai and Ani Rai had passed away at a very tender age. The only person considered suitable at that time was Har Rai, the younger son of Baba Gurditta. Therefore, considering his earthly existence nearing an end Guru Hargobind bestowed the Guruship on him on March 9, 1644.

It is recorded in Sikh chronicles that Nanaki, the mother of Tegh Bahadur, approached her husband, the sixth Guru, after the bestowal of Guruship on Har Rai, and asked his blessings for the future of her son. The Guru, giving her a sword and some other articles, said, "Everything ripens at the proper moment. When the time of maturity comes, the proper material gathers together from all directions. Similarly, when the time of the manifestation of the divine greatness of your son comes, all the appropriate circumstances will concur. Your son will shine as a great saint and

perceptor, therefore have patience. And when the time comes, all these articles be given to your son." No son of the great warrior Guru, except Tegh Bahadur, was destined to pass on the steel-sword to another great warrior Guru.

When the sixth Guru passed away, his wife Nanaki left Kirat-pur with her son, Tegh Bahadur, and daughter-in-law, Gujri, and settled at Bakala, the home-town of her parents. For the next twenty years till 1664, Tegh Bahadur lived there. Some say that he led a life of self-mortification and penance in those years. This is far from truth. Undoubtedly he was pursuing closely the discipline of the Nam enunciated by Guru Nanak Dev. His Name-intoxication can be described in the following words of Guru Nanak: "It is in his pleasure that they laugh or weep or keep silence. They do not care for anyone else except the True Lord" (Var Asa M.l. p. 4473). The Guru's own verses confirm that, He says: "O mother, let some one give instruction to the erring mind. It does not remember the Lord for a moment, even after listening to the Vedasand Puranas about the discipline adopted by saints" (Gauri M.9. pp. 219-20). He says again: "The life is passing away, passing away uselessly. Listening to the Puranas day and night ignorant man you do not understand that death has arrived, where will You run away?" (Jai Jaivanti M.9.p.1353). Having been born in the family of Divine Masters and being a follower of Gllru Nanak Dev, we can think of Tegh Bahadur absorbed in deep meditation and also being engaged in some useful tasks. According to Guru Nanak, one must work for a living (Var Sarang M.l.p.1245). The exact nature of the worldly life of Tegh Bahadur at that time was "viche graha udas" like the lotus in water (Ramkali M.l. Siddh Goshta, p. 938). He also undertook journeys to several places far and near.

When the eighth Guru Har Krishan announced "Baba" of Bakala as his successor, Tegh Bahadur was the only Baba or the male grandparent living at that time at Bakala. Though this fact was known to some of the Sikhs, closest to the House of the Guru, yet most of the Sikhs could not grasp the real connotation of the announcement of the eighth Guru. They could be easily beguiled by the self-centred and power-hungry Sodhis. The confusion was deepened by the emergence of twenty-two Sodhi claimants for Guruship, the prominent among them being Dhirmal, the nephew of Tegh Bahadur and the elder son of Baba Gurditta. The riddle of Guruship was ultimately solved by Makhan Shah, a Lubana trader from Gujarat. His merchant-vessel had been saved in a sea-storm by the grace of the Guru, for which he came to present his offerings personally. He visited all the claimants, but none

could satisfy him. Ultimately he came to the house of the nod-claimant, Tegh Bahadur, who reminded him of his distress during the sea-storm. It is said that Makhan Shah, in his great enthusiasm, ran to the roof of the dwelling of the newly- discovered Guru and shouted at the top of his voice: “Guru Ladho re, Guru Ladho re” (The Guru has been found, the Guru has been found).

The discovery of the Guru, brought great hardships for him. Dhirmal, even sent his men to kill the Guru. A shot was fired at the Guru, which wounded him. All his belongings were taken away by force. But the Sikhs under the leadership of Ma khan Shah caught hold of Dhir Mal and seized all his property including the original recension of the Adi Granth (Kartarpuri Bir). But the Guru, without any anger or rancour in his mind, restored to him everything. But still he faced the jealousies and bickerings from the opponents, throughout his life, even though he moved away to a new town, founded by him, calling it ‘the city of Bliss’ (Anandpur).

The Guru undertook his missionary tours in Punjab, after which he proceeded towards the East. In keeping with the tradition of the founder Guru, an extensive missionary journey was undertaken which lasted for about six years from 1665 to 1670. It may be emphasized here that the journey was performed on the same route, which was followed by Guru Nanak Dev in his first Udasi. This was purposely done, because the torch of the spiritual message of the founder had to be kept lit up, for the new generations. Since the Sikh Sangats were spread over a large area, several memorials had been raised at various places by them, commemorating the visit of Guru Nanak. In Uttar Pradesh, Behar and Bengal, the Sikh Sangats had already been established. It is recorded that the Ninth Guru was given a befitting reception by Bulaki Das Masand, when he reached Dacca. He stayed there for several days. The memorial of Guru Nanak had been raised by Bhai Nathu in AD. 1643 who was close associate of Baba Almast.

During his missionary tour, the Guru passed through Pehowa, Kurukshetra, Delhi, Mathura, Vrindaban, Etawah, Kanpur, Fatehpur, Allahabad (Prayag), Mirzapur, Benares, Sasaram, Budha- Gaya, Rajgriha and Patna. He left his family at Patna and proceeded further towards Dacca, passing through Monghyr, Bhagalpur, Sahibganj, Rajmahal, Malda and Gopalpur. At Dacca he received the news about the birth of his son Govind Rai. But he had already planned to go to Assam and was determined to revive all the old religious centers estab-

lished by Guru Nanak Dev there. Raja Ram Singh, son of Mirza Raja Jai Singh, who was appointed, by the Emperor Aurangzeb as the commander of the Assam expedition, met Guru Tegh Bahadur at Dacca. He also requested the Guru to accompany him to Assam, the country of magic and witchcraft. Since the Guru had already made up his mind to go there, he accompanied the Raja. The assertion by some non-Sikh historians that the Guru was fighting for Ram Singh is baseless and a mere fiction. The letters of the Guru give us clue about his movements. In Assam, the Guru stayed at Guru Nanak's shrine at Dhubri, while Raja Ram Singh camped at Rangmati about fifteen miles from Dhubri.

It is recorded in Purani Kamrupar Dharm Dhara written by Dr. Banikanta Kakati: "At the invitation of the king of Kamrup, the Guru arrived in the capital of the kingdom in the company of Raja Ram Singh. There, at the instance of the Guru, peace was made between Ram Singh and the king of Kamrup and as a mark of friendship they exchanged their turbans. The king then implored the Guru to leave behind some permanent sign of his august visit. The Guru shot an arrow at a banyan tree and the arrow pierced the tree. In the capital of Kamrup, Dhubri, Gurudev told Ram Singh's officers that as the place was sanctified by the visit of Guru Nanak every soldier should bring five basket-fuls of earth and erect a memorial to perpetuate the visit of Guru Nanak. Soon the task was accomplished. Some of the Gurudev's disciples stayed behind in Kamrup and their descendents are still in Dhubri and Chololo."

In Kamakhya temple in Assam, which was earlier hallowed by the visit of Guru Nanak Dev, there is a mention of the historical record describing Guru Tegh Bahadur's visit to the Ahom Kingdom. Dr. Trilochan Singh has translated some portion of this important document in his book, "Guru Tegh Bahadur: Prophet and Martyr." At page 250 it is recorded, : "Inscrutable are the ways of the merciful Guru; it is impossible to describe his wonderful life-story. He is a god in human flesh, and yet he has not the slightest attachment. With a calm courage and sun-like splendour, his heart ever rests in Shunya, the silence of self-realisation. On seeing him, the strength of his enemy and opponents failed. Pure like the holy Ganges, he lives in the joy of divine contemplation. From outside he appears to be a king indulging in all the luxury and joy of princely life. At heart he is detached, exalted in spirit, firm in his concentration of mind like the Yogis. He performs all the worldly duties like a worldly man. Within his heart his mind remains poised on

thoughts of God. The seekers of Truth, who were eager to meet the Prophet of Light, now had their desires fulfilled. He travelled into the most difficult regions, suffered the hardship of strenuous journey in far-flung regions of the East, just to meet the humble and patient seekers of Truth. Somehow or the other he reached these far flung regions, and fulfilled the Eternal promise of God, proclaiming that the Prophet will knock at the door of every seeker of truth. Everywhere the devotees sing his praises. Whoever remembers the merciful Enlightener, Guru Tegh Bahadur, finds that he is there with him, ever present. The Sangats of the East were craving for a glimpse of the Guru. Now Guru Tegh Bahadur has crossed mountains, rivers and undergone great physical strain to reach his devotees of the East and bless them. In every region of the East, every home, every seeker of truth was devoutly making preparations at home, in the hope that the Guru would divine their secret wish to meet him, and come to them. Day and night people prayed in every region of the East that Guru Tegh Bahadur might come to their homes and bless them.”

While the Guru was propagating his doctrine of equality and brotherhood of man in Assam, the land of sorcery and superstition, Emperor Aurangzeb was doing his utmost to extirpate Hinduism and Islamise the whole of India. The Sikh movement was also under the wrath of the Emperor. Guru Gobind Singh had been born at Patna, when the Guru was at Dacca on his ongoing journey. After hearing about the news of the royal designs of the suppression of the Sikh movement, he came back hastily and after meeting his family at Patna, he left for Punjab. The members of his family followed him. The Sikhs greeted their Guru in large numbers with their presents. The newswriters misconstrued the reception of the guru, and mis-represented to the Emperor about the growing influence of the Guru. The Muslim chroniclers have recorded the versions of the newswriters, without taking into consideration the love and adoration of the Sikhs for their Guru. The Sikh gatherings were considered as dangerous multitudes, and the presents of the Sikhs as forcible exactions. Mention may be made here of the important Muslim chronicles, the Patshah Buranjis of Assam and Siyar-ul-Mutakhirin in Persian of Ghulam Hussain Khan. The historical and religious information given by them is baseless. They are quite ignorant about the basic doctrines and beliefs of the Sikhs. Most of the Western writers have followed the line of the Muslim chronicles.

The Naqshbandi saints also played their part in poisoning the mind of the Emperor against the Guru and the Sikh Movement. Ahmad, a famous Sufi saint of the Nakshbandi order and a great opponent of Shia Muslims, who had remained imprisoned in Gwalior fort for three years, ultimately won Jahangir on his side and the Sunni code was adopted as the law of State and there after the Naqshbandi order continued to be an important factor in the courts of Mughal Emperors. Ahmad forbade the use of music, dancing while in a state of ecstasy, prostration before one's pir, the worship of saints and shrines, or illuminating tombs of saints'. After Jahangir, Shah Jahan was also a disciple of Ahmad. In his early youth Aurangzeb was also his devotee, but when he died in AD. 1625, Aurangzeb became a disciple of his son Muhammad Masum. The saint after initiating him into his order, predicted that he would succeed his father as Emperor of India. From that time, Aurangzeb was supported in his contest against his brothers for the throne by this saint, who wielded very great influence throughout the Empire. It was largely through the influence of this puritanical pir of his, Masum, that he reimposed the jiziya on his Hindu subjects and forbade the use of music. Even the practice of sama at the shrines of the Chishti was put a stop to. Hujjatu'llah, the second son of Masum, succeeded him. He also influenced Aurangzeb in his political career. It was at his instigation that 'Aurangzeb led out his great expedition against the Shia Kingdom of south India'. Zubayr, the grandson of Hujjatu'llah succeeded him and it was during his time that Aurangzeb died.

On the orders of the Emperor, the Guru was arrested and not fulfilling the two conditions of either accepting Islam or showing miracles, he was executed in Chandni Chowk, Delhi. These conditions have been mentioned in the Persian chronicles including *Risala Dar Ahwal-i-Nanak Shah Darvesh* (of Buddh Singh, 1784), *Khalsa Nama* (Bakht Mal), *Tawarikh-i-Sikhan* (Khushwaqt Rai, 1809), *Umdat-ul-Tawarikh-i-Sikhan* (Sohan Lal, 1812), *Zikr-i-Guruan wa Ibtida-i-Sin-ghan* (Ahrood Shah of Batala) *Tarikh-i-Punjab* (Ghulam Muhiyudadin alias Butey Shah), *Ibrat Nama* (Ali-ud-din, 1854), *Char- Bagh-i-Punjab* (Ganesh Das, after 1849) and *Siyar-ul-Mutakhirin* (Sayyid Ghulam Hussain). The Sufi saints of the Naqshbandi order as stated earlier, were responsible for the anti-Hindu and fanatical actions of Aurangzeb. They wanted to see the whole of India as a Sunni Islamic State. They could not tolerate existence of any religious leader, who could raise the voice regarding the protection of Hindu religion. Therefore they advised the

emperor for the execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur, in case he did not come into the fold of Islam.

The earliest evidence regarding the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur is from the pen of his illustrious son Guru Gobind Singh: When the Kashmiri Pundits had approached the Ninth Guru in order to save their religion from extinction, the Guru suggested the sacrifice of a great leader, it was the tenth Master (though he was merely nine years of age, and had not as yet succeeded to the spiritual throne) who suggested that none could equal the greatness of his father. In the "Bachittar Natak", it is clearly stated: "The Lord (Guru Tegh Bahadur) protected the sacred thread and the frontal mark of the Hindus, he performed a great event in the Iron age. He did this for the sake of saints, he laid down his head and did not utter a groan. He performed this great act for the sake of Dharma. He laid down his head and did not surrender on principles. The people of the Lord-God considered the performance of miracles as foul acts. Breaking the potsherd on the head of the emperor of Delhi, he went to the abode of the Lord. None could excel this act of Tegh Bahadur. On his departure the world was aggrieved, the whole world moaned, but the heavens hailed his arrival". The Tenth Guru states that the Ninth Guru made the supreme sacrifice for the sake of the principle of the freedom of religion and conscience.

It is a fact that Guru Nanak raised his voice against the Hindu formalism and symbolism. He did not appreciate the externalia (like the frontal mark and the sacred thread) of Hinduism, but still when the freedom of religion had been thwarted by a despot, Guru Nanak would have gone to its rescue. In 1675 it is his successor Guru Tegh Bahadur who did, what none else could do. The Sikh Gurus had a high spiritual status but, unlike the Naqshbandi Sufi saints, they lived and acted only within the human limits in their eyes the performance of a miracle was a sinful act, because it was against the will of God. Under the influence of the Naqshbandi Sufi preceptors, Aurangzeb considered the performance of a miracle as a sign of saintliness. That is why he asked the Sikh Guru to perform a miracle and such a craving of the emperor was immediately rejected. In the words of Guru Gobind Singh: "The performance of a miracle was a bad act; the men of God felt ashamed of it."

Guru Tegh Bahadur was the second martyred Guru, the first being Guru Arjan Dev. The martyrdom of Bhai Mati Das and Bhai Dyala preceded the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur. The Masters, by their

examples infused such a spirit amongst the disciples, that we find a long line of martyrs in Sikhism. Guru Arjan Dev sat on a hot iron plate with showers of hot sand on his body. Bhai Mati Das was sawed alive and Bhai Dyala was boiled in a cauldron. Guru Tegh Bahadur braved the sword. As one gets through the history of martyrdom in Sikhism, one is amazed. There is no parallel else where. The martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur, however, has a peculiar significance. Whereas other martyrs laid down their lives for the religious freedom of their Dharma, the ninth Guru sacrificed his life for the religious freedom of another faith. He had a universal cause before him. He wants freedom of conscience, which was being curbed by an aggressive ruler. His martyrdom is a single glaring example of its own kind in the history of martyrdom. Sir Gokul Chand Narang has hailed the martyrdom in following words : “In his (Guru’s) death, however, he surpassed anything that he had done in life. He was known throughout upper India, was highly revered by Rajput princes, was actually worshipped by the peasantry of the Punjab and was generally looked upon as a champion of the Hindus.”

We have fifty-nine hymns (padas) composed in fifteen pages and fifty-six shlokas of the Guru in Sri Guru Granth Sahib, which were included in the recension of Damdama by Guru Gobind Singh. The shlokas are couplets in Dohira and Soratha verse-forms, but the (hymns) have been composed in the style of the Padas of Sur Sagar.

A cursory reading of the hymns of Guru Teg Bahadur leads to the erroneous view that the Guru preaches renunciation as a pessimist, and considers all worldly activities as illusion and maya. But this is not so. Though the world for the Guru is temporary, a mirage, a bubble, a mountain of smoke or a wall of sand, and being engrossed in it for egoistic purpose is wrong, it is the same Guru who, in line with the doctrines of the Guru Granth Sahib, treads the path of martyrdom for a righteous cause. The specialty of the Guru’s hymns and couplets consists in its impact on the human mind in creating disinclination for worldly pleasures. They reveal in no uncertain words the sufferings of the world, its ephemeral character, the pitiable plight of the living beings, the power of death, the instability of the body. This suggests to the human mind and the seeker to remain detached and follow the path of Naam, godliness or virtue. The Guru has time and again advised the man of the world to refrain from sinful actions and go into the refuge of the Lord by following closely the discipline of the Guru or of Naam, (Tilang M. 9, p. 727). The Guru’s philosophy of life is “Fear not and



frighten not” (Shalok M.9, p.1427). The Guru was totally against asceticism. He says, “why should you go in search of Him in forest? The Omni-present Lord, who is always unaffected by maya, pervades in thee” (Dhanasari M.9,684). He says again: “Bring the devotion of the Lord in your heart, Nanak saith this un to you to remain associated with the world.” (Jaijaivanti M. 9, p.1352).

According to the Guru, the spiritual life is to be led as a householder. There is no difference in concept of jivanmukta of Guru Teg Bahadur and that of the other Gurus. The concept of Jivan-mukta of the Guru is as follows:

He who does not feel anguish in grief,  
 Who is free from pleasure, attachment and fear  
 and who considers gold as earth,  
 who is free from calumny and approbation, greed, attachment and ego,  
 Who is free from joy and sorrow, honour and dishonour,  
 Who has renounced all hopes and desires and expects nothing from the world,  
 Who is untouched by lust and anger, the Lord resides in his heart.  
 He on whom the Guru has showered his graces, he recognises this way,  
 Saith Nanak: He is united with the Lord just as water in water.

(Raga Sorath)

## **DEVI WORSHIP STORY - A CRITIQUE**

**MADANJIT KAUR**

The focus of this paper is to make a critical study of devi worship associated with Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth Master. The study proposes to trace out the various issues related to the origin, development and impact of the devi story: How it crept into the accounts related to the life of Guru Gobind Singh? Who were the authors who introduced this episode? What is its relevance to the fundamental beliefs of Sikhism? And, what is its effect on the status of Sikhism as an independent religion?

The Khalsa Brotherhood was created by Guru Gobind Singh in AD. 1699. Its detail in some Sikh chronicles, popularly known as Gurbilases, appears with an account of worship of Goddess Durga. The authors of these Gurbilases or chronicles seem to convey the idea that Guru Gobind Singh, before creating the Khalsa Brotherhood, invoked Goddess Durga to bless him. Durga, we know, is a Shakti deity. In Hindu mythology she is known to be the Goddess of power who in times yore killed many demons and saved the innocent from their clutches. This tale of Devi worship has now been picked up by some scholars of Sikh studies to mar the image of Guru Gobind Singh on the creation of a new order. One of them, W.H. Mcleod, observes in a very diplomatic language:

“Shivalik hills have long been a stronghold of the Devi or Shakti cult ...

The result of prolonged residence within the Sivaliks was that elements of the hill culture eventually penetrated the Jat Sikh culture of the plains and produced yet another stage in the evolution of the Panth.”<sup>1</sup>

Mcleod does not pronounce the elements of hill culture explicitly but is at pains to explain that:

“In this (Guru Gobind Singh’s) writing and in those which were produced at his court, we find constant reference to the mighty exploits of the Mother Goddess, one of the most notable being his own Chandi-ki-var.”<sup>2</sup>

He then hastens to add another work Chandi Charitra (Sat-saya) from ‘Markande Purana’ to the list and ends with the explication that

as a result of “the fusion of these two cultures a new and powerful synthesis (took shape), one which prepared the Panth for determinative role in the chaotic circumstances of the eighteenth century.”<sup>3</sup> What McLeod seems to hint at is that Guru Gobind Singh could bring forth good results only after he had invoked the help of Goddess Durga before the creation of the Khalsa.

McLeod, and some of our own scholars, who generally toe his line or, conversely, McLeod toes theirs, seem to hold that Guru Gobind Singh with a view to winning over the support ‘of the hill people did actually undertake the worship of Durga before the creation of the Khalsa. This McLeod seems to suggest either because of expediency of the situation or because of Guru’s faith in the might of the Devi. Both these reasons, on which these scholars seem to base their view, in a way, cast aspersions on the great Guru.

We, therefore propose to examine the authenticity of the Devi worship story. Our approach shall be, first, to trace out the genesis of this story, and see when, how and with what motive, it got introduced in the account of the creation of the Khalsa, and, secondly, to see how far this is in consonance with the teachings of the Tenth Guru.

McLeod has, it seems, given undue importance to the works, Chandi-ki-Var and Chandi Charitra (Satsaya). It is naive on the part of this scholar to assume that these two works aimed at appeasing the sentiments of the hill people who were given to the worship of the Goddess. But this hypothesis does not hold good.

Guru Gobind Singh was a great patron of learning and had quite a large number of poets and scholars in his court enjoying his patronage. Some of these scholars, it appears, rendered a number of ancient classics into the native language Desh Bhakha prevalent at the time. In consequence, the story of Ram, Mahabharat, Chankaya Rajaniti, Gobind Gita, Chandi-ki-Var and Chandi Charitra (Satsaya), etc. were, it seems, rendered into the native tongue. He had also kept a Persian scholar of the eminence of Bhai Nand Lal in his court who produced works such as Zindgi Nama, Tausif-i-Sana, Ganj Namah, Jot Vikas, Diwan-i-Goya (Ghazaliat), Arz-ul-alfaz, etc. The two works, Chandi-ki-Var and Chandi Charitra (Satsaya) have been irrationally isolated from this whole mass of translated literature, nor, can they warrant any such conclusion as drawn by McLeod. In fact the motive for rendering Chandi Charitra in Desh Bhakha has been explicitly stated in the narration couched in newsimilies and metaphors to show poet’s Art. Indeed, the translator has indicated therein his purpose: “Chandi

Charitra has been rendered into Bhakha verse for the sole purpose of instilling the sentiment of anger. The entire personality of Chandi has been described in unique metaphors. This story of seven hundred slokes has been completed by the poet to show the daring exploits.”<sup>4</sup> Thus, in this epilogue there is no hint of worship of Devi or of asking any boon from her. Now if we turn to the prologue of this very work, the invocation is not to the Devi but to God, who is “Ocean of Compassion” (Kripa Sindhu), for helping him in rendering the story of Chandika in verses:

“O Ocean of Compassion, Bless me, so that I render the story of Chandika in befitting language.”<sup>5</sup>

This invocation shows the motive of the translator in rendering an ancient tale into the native tongue, and that motive is clearly not to worship Goddess, in anyway. The same is the case with Chandi-ki-Var which is the story showing the victory of virtue over evil forces. Hence, as Dr. Jaggi has pointed out, translation of Hindu mythical literature by some poets, not all of whom were Amritdhari Sikhs or Singhs, cannot by any stretch suggest Guru’s faith in the Devi or Avtaras.

Now we come to the genesis of the Devi worship story and its aggrandisement in Sikh literature.

The most important work in Sikh annals pertaining to the times of the Tenth Master is Sainapat’s Gursobha.<sup>6</sup> He happened to be a court poet of Guru Gobind Singh. This work gives a detailed and realistic account of the creation of the Khalsa on the Baisakhi Day, in the year 1699.<sup>7</sup> The important thing to note is’ that Sainapat does not mention the worship of Durga anywhere in the book. Had it been a part of the event, he would not have missed it, rather he would have flashed it conspicuously. This shows that there is no truth in the story of worship of Goddess by Guru Gobind Singh.

McLeod, who concedes its importance as the earliest account of the Baptismal event, Khande-di-Pahul, and of the fundamentals of the code of conduct for an initiated Sikh, however, contends that, the date of this work does not stand confirmed. He observes that there are two dates AD 1711 and AD 1745<sup>8</sup>, suggested about the production of Gursobha, and, if latter turns out to be correct, then it does not become a contemporary source detailing baptismal account.<sup>9</sup> The first date of the production of the Gursobha seems to have been borrowed from S. Hans, who in his A Reconstruction of Sikh History from Sikh Literature, holds AD 1711 to be the date of compilation of Gursobha.<sup>10</sup> Hans has concluded this date from the analytical study of the dating of Gursobha

published by Punjabi University, Patiala. Ganda Singh cites the evidence of Baba Sumer Singh who in his *Gurbilas Dasvin Patshahi Ka* writes:<sup>11</sup>

“saina singh kari gur sobha satmh sat athhsathh nij Obha.”<sup>12</sup>

Some mistake seems to have occurred somewhere in holding the date to be AD. 1711, for the Punjabi manuscript reads: “Sa mat satrah sai bhai barakh athhavan bit; bhadav sudi pandras bhai rachi katha kar prit.”<sup>13</sup> This gives us 1758 B.K./AD 1701 as the date of this work. Some manuscript copies of *Gursobha*, it is alleged, have the word *athanav* (Ninety-eight) in place of *athavan* (Fifty-eight). Hence the discrepancy is the year which seems to worry McLeod. The year 1758 B.K./AD. 1701 is correct and not 1798 B.K./AD. 1741, because the manuscript itself gives the date 1701 AD.

This is so because another work *Chanakya Rajaniti* rendered into the native tongue by this very poet, *Sainapat*, has come down to us. In this work (*Chanakaya Rajniti*) it is stated:

“Guru Gobind Ki Sabha mein lekhak suja.

Chanakya Bhakha Kari, kavi Sainpat man.”<sup>14</sup>

This shows that the author of *Gursobha* was actually associated with the writing during the days of *Guru Gobind Singh*.<sup>15</sup> As such, a lapse of some forty years between the composition of the two works can in no case be justified. On the contrary it will be more appropriate to assume that the author undertook to write *Gursobha* soon after his first work, that is, during the period when he was still in the *Guru's Court*.

The second date relied upon by our friend, *McLeod*, thus, does not hold good, with the result that *Sainapat's* account about the creation of the *Kha/sa Brotherhood* becomes contemporary and authentic.

*Sainapat's Gursobha*, not only, furnishes the negative evidence of the complete absence of the story of *Devi worship* or *Horn*, but there is also a positive statement therein, indicating that the *Devi*, like other *Avtars*, only indulged in egoist self praises for her own worship and not that of *God, the Creator*.

Now about the accretion of the *Devi worship* story to the *Baptismal account*. The other two treaties which matter, are *Parchi Patshahi Daswin Ki* by *Sewa Das Udasi* (1798 B.K./AD. 1741 and *Mahima Prakash (Vartak)* by *Kirpa Dyal Singh* (1798 B.K./AD 1741).<sup>16</sup> Both of them do away with the event in a most cursory way.

“Once the *Guru* called *Pandas* from *Kashi*,  
Got the *Hom* done by them. Initiated the

Khalsa Panth.’<sup>17</sup>

The information given in both the works is identical. The word *hom* seems to suggest some sort of ceremonial ritual in the nature of an initial ceremony and not at all the worship of goddess Durga. If it had been there, they would not have forgotten to mention it, particularly, when they give all sorts of other stories.

Among the chronicles (Gurbilases) of the Guru, that which comes next, is one by Koer Singh captioned Gurbilas Patshahi 10.<sup>18</sup> This gives the devi-worship account but not without serious chronological mistakes. It says that the ritual to appease the Devi started in the year 1742 BK (AD. 1687) and went on till 1746 BK (AD. 1689) i.e. for over three years.<sup>19</sup> Now, during this period Gurl, Gobind Singh was actually at Paonta Sahib and not at Anandpur. The author forgetting all this makes the Devi appear atop Naina Hills. This is a serious chronological mistake.

After the above mentioned works that deal with the Devi episode, we have a plethora of writings dwelling on the event in great detail, namely: Mahima Prakash by Sarup Das Bhalla (1831 BK / 1774) Gurpratap Suriya Granth by Bhai Santokh Singh (AD. 1843) and so on. All these later writers, however, do not agree in their details of the Devi worship. They differ in respect of the motive behind the worship; in the identity of the Hotra (Brahmin Agent), in her effect on the Guru, in Guru’s service rendered to her, and in the gift given by the Devi to the Guru.

The problem of the Devi worship story in Sikh literature has been critically studied by Bhai Vir Singh in his Devi Pujan Partal.<sup>20</sup> His study shows growth of the story according to the fancy of each writer. Yet the source of all these works is obvious. It is Koer Singh’s Gurbilas Patshahi 10 or else Mahima Prakash of Sarup Das Bhalla. We shall, therefore, dispense with these accounts and concentrate only on the first three, i.e. Gursobha, Parchi Patshahi Dasvin ki (Sewa Das) and Koer Singh’s Gurbilas Patshahi 10.

The creation of the Khalsa was a very unique event in which a whole barrier of caste and status was demolished. Its effect on the privileged class of the Hindu society was bound to be negative. It appears that in the period intervening between Sainapat’s Gursobha and Koer Singh’s Gurbilas Patshahi 10, extending to some five or six decades, the Sikhs were engaged in a most fierce struggle against the State, when claiming to be a Sikh or Nanakpanthi meant death. Hence, only Hindu outsiders were left, who, because of their Brahminical

leanings, introduced the Devi in the Khalsa account in order partly to give credibility to their Hindu beliefs by attributing Devi worship to Guru Gobind Singh, and partly to dissociate themselves from Sikhism in the official eye, since being a Sikh meant sure destruction in that period. It is very significant that Sainapat's account which is the most authoritative and contemporary record, does not mention any thing like Ham or Devi worship. But it does mention that on the point of shaving or Bhadar, many Sikhs in Delhi and elsewhere were reluctant to give up their old Hindu appearance and practices. This meant that they were not willing to declare themselves as Sikhs and run the risk of elimination. Here two facts are significant. In Parchian Sewa Dass and Mehma Prakash Vartak, it is the Hindu or Vedic practice of Ham, which is conducted through a Brahmin, thalis mentioned as preceding the Amrit initiation of the Khalsa. In the subsequent narration, including that in the Mehma Prakash, it is the Saiva practice of Devi worship that is mentioned. It only shows that the Ham story or the Devi worship is a mere addition following the personal fancy of the writer according to his personal belief or preference for Ham or Devi worship. Second; in introducing the Hindu practice, the writer is not careful as to whether or not he is making a clear contradiction in his narrative. For example, Koer Singh at one place writes that the Guru wanted every person to be treated equally, but later concludes by suggesting that Brahmins should be given preferential treatment.

Another possibility is that the story was introduced on the analogy of the ancient tale of the birth of Agni-Kul Rajputs, who, it is stated, were born out of Agni Kund. Therefore, these Brahminically oriented writers created the Devi's story to show that like the Rajputs of yore, the Sikhs were born to fight aggression and wrest power from the Malechhas or the Turks. Evidently, no follower of the Guru could have started Devi story, when there was no mention of it in Gursobha. There was first a mention of a havan (ham) only in Sewadas Udasi's Parchi Patshahi dasvin ki and Kirpa Dayal's Mehima Prakash (Var-tak). Later on, this story of a Vedic rite was converted into a full-fledged story of Devi worship who bestowed a sword or a Khanda on Guru Gobind Singh. These Hindu oriented chroniclers did this conversion to serve a cause they held dear, i.e. the elimination of evil. They were in their own way trying to propagate the story that the divine forces were on the side of the Khalsa which, they confirmed, had been created

specifically to destroy the Moghal Rule. They had thus no inhibition in propagation of stories which had no factual basis but which, they thought, would be good for their cause.

Hence the coining of the story of Devi worship and its alignment with the creation of the Khalsa. The story has, thus, to be considered as only a figment of the imagination of writers who due to their background of Hindu mythology revelled in the creation of myths, and thought them to be very potent for the fulfilment of their prejudices or beliefs.

That Guru Gobind Singh did not stand in need of invoking the Devi, is clear from the fact that his Grandfather Guru Hargobind, had already employed the sword and had fought battles with the aggressive rulers.<sup>21</sup> Even Guru Gobind Singh, before he created the Khalsa, had himself successfully fought a few battles at Nadaun and Bhangani to chastise the evilmongers.<sup>22</sup> He, therefore, did not need any new sanction from any God or goddess to sanctify or legitimise his act of the creation of the Khalsa.

*Ideological Contradiction:*

The most vital point to be considered in this context should be the Sikh Gurus' belief about God. They believed in only One Form-less Supreme Lord whose concept has been made explicitly clear in Mulmantra and various hymns enshrined in Sri Guru Granth Sahib (the Scripture of the Sikhs). The same unity of thought has been retained in the bani of Guru Gobind Singh. In the Jap sahib,<sup>23</sup> Akal Ustat<sup>24</sup> and many other hymns, whenever the Guru seeks to perform some task, invariably, he invokes God, (the Timeless Supreme Reality, the Creator) and not a Devi. There are several passages in Guru Gobind Singh's writings in which he advocates only the worship of the Supreme Reality and none else.<sup>25</sup> Guru Gobind Singh was strictly an uncompromising monotheist, so he cannot be said to have worshipped Devi, for this specific purpose.

*Conclusion:*

Our discussion makes it very clear that Guru Gobind Singh had neither any need to invoke the Devi, nor had he at any time sought her help or blessings. Devi worship is ideologically in complete opposition and contradiction to the Sikh tradition both in the Bani in the Guru Granth and the accepted Bani of Guru Gobind Singh himself. From the historical point of view we find that the contemporary author of Gur Sobha who first gives the story of Amrit, does not at all make any suggestion about Horn or Devi. In fact, Sainapat condemns the role of



Devi as being an egoist. It is only a creation of the later Brahmnical minded chroniclers, who just exhibited their Puranic bent of mind in introducing the Horn or Devi worship story. We, therefore, conclude that the story of Devi worship has to be rejected as a myth and as an unreality both on the basis of the historical and the ideological evidence.

#### Notes

1. W.H. McLeod, Evolution of the Sikh Community, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1975, p. 133
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p.14
4. Sri Dasam Guru Granth Sahib Ji, ed. Giani Mohinder Singh Ratan, Pub. Jawahar Singh Kirpal Singh, Amritsar, 1967, p.99.
5. Ibid., p.74
6. Shamsher Singh Ashok (ed.) Sri Gur Sobha (Kavi Sainapat), Sikh History Research Board, Shiromani Gurdwara Vrabandhak Committee. Shri Amritsar, 1967.
- 7: Ibid. Ch.5, pp.29-41
8. The introduction of Khalsa was a revolutionary change and it was not readily accepted by the followers of the Guru. There is a reference to the protest of Sikhs of Delhi (of the locality of Gilwali gali) especially those of the Brahmin and Khatri followers who reacted against the Khalsa rahit of keeping unshorn hair. This account is recorded in Gursobha written by Sainpat who was an eyewitness of it.
9. W.H. McLeod, The Sikhs, History, Religion and Society. Columbia University Press, New York, 1989, p.63
10. McLeod: "Its (Gursobha's) potential significance is considerably diminished by the fact that its actual date has yet to be conclusively settled" - Ibid. See also McLeod's *Who is a Sikh: The Problem of Sikh identity*. Clarendon Press, 1989 p.35
11. S. Hans, A Reconstruction of Sikh History from Sikh Literature; p.246
12. See Ganda Singh (ed.) Sri Gursobha (Kavi Sainapat), Punjabi University, Patiala, 1980, Introduction, p.17
13. Shri Gursobha, Ch. I, p.10
14. Shamsher Singh Ashok, (ed.) Sri Gursobha (Kavi Sainapat). Introduction, p.1
15. Ibid. Ch 1-18.
16. Parchi Patshahi Daswin Ki (ed.) Piara Singh Padam, Paliala, 1988, Sakhi IS, p.60
17. Mahima Prakosh (Vartak), Sakhi I, as quoted by Bhai Vir Singh, Devi Pujan Partal, Khalsa Samachar, Amritsar, 1%3, p.55
18. Koer Singh, Gurbilas Patshqhi 10 (ed.) Shamsher Singh Ashok, p.112
19. See chart of the comparative study of contradictory statement of these authors given in a chart in Bhai Vir Singh's Devi Pujan Partal, facing p.66. See Appendix, A
20. See Fauja Singh, 'Chronology of the Battles of Guru Hargobind' in Proceedings, Punjab History Conference, Sixth Session, 1971.
21. See Sri Dasam Granth, 'Bachitar Natak'
22. See 'Sri Dasam Granth; 'Bachitar Natak'.
23. Ibid.

24. Ibid. p.74
25. Ibid
26. Ibid. p.55
27. Ibid., p.57
28. Ibid. pp.57-58
29. Sri Dasm Granth. Akal Ustat, 40, p.15 30. Ibid., Akal Ustat, 50, p.16
31. Ibid., Akal Ustat, 140; p.24
32. Ibid., Sawayya, 15 p.714.

## TWO VIEWS ON DASAM GRANTH

GURTEJ SINGH

Eversince its compilation in about the third decade of the eighteenth century, authorship of the greater part of the Dasam Granth<sup>1</sup> has been fiercely disputed by scholars. That was in spite of great prestige undoubtedly enjoyed by Bhai Mani Singh, its alleged original compiler. Even the contemporaries of the Guru held different views and objected to its compilation in one volume which hinted at single authorship. Within a decade, strong sentiment in favour of dismembering it swelled up within the Panth. Decision in favour of its being kept in one volume was the result of a pure chance.<sup>2</sup> The controversy having been thus swept under the carpet, has never since been seriously addressed. Had the majority's view<sup>3</sup> been accepted then for maintaining it in the form of different volumes, as originally intended, it would have automatically solved the problem of authorship as Guru's compositions were well known. In this ongoing controversy, an attempt will be made to assess the value of the contributions of Dr. D.P. Ashta<sup>4</sup> and Dr. Rattan Singh Jaggi<sup>5</sup> who are prominent representatives of two sides.

At the outset it may be mentioned that there is no controversy regarding the authorship of Jap, Akal Ustat (except from verses 201 to 230), Swayyias<sup>6</sup>. These portions of the Dasam Granth are indisputably accepted as compositions of the Tenth Guru. It may also be observed that, strangely enough, both schools of thought appear to share the belief that whatever is written by the Tenth Guru, would ipso facto constitute a part of Sikh canon. The root cause of the controversy is this underlying assumption, though it is clearly unsustainable. Since its compilation, Guru Granth is the only Sikh canon.

Though outwardly attempting to ward off the vital assumption by adopting an innocuous title for his work, Ashta is clearly drawing conclusions which are possible only if the entire Dasam Granth is

accepted as canon. In the preface he indicates that the Granth, “has a very important place in Sikh... theology” and decrees it an “excellent evidence of influence exercised by Hindu theology, mythology, philosophy, history and literature in the life and activities of Guru Gobind Singh.”<sup>7</sup> It is this baseless assumption which is further fully revealed in the Foreword by S. Radhakrishnan who further widens the scope of author’s formulations to assert, “from a study of this work we learn the profound influence which Hindu tradition and mythology has had on the development of Sikh religion” and that, “Ashta’s work... is exposition of the teachings of the 10th Sikh Guru, Shri Gobind Singh.”<sup>8</sup> True import of the short foreword is that there is need of accepting “a religion which is spiritual and non-sectarian” (that is Hinduism) in preference to “sectarian views”<sup>9</sup> (that is Sikhism). The work aims at making it easier for the Sikhs to accept the suggested transformation.

This underlying objective manifests itself in several subtle and not so subtle ways in Ashta’s work. Quite often he insinuates that the Sikh views are borrowed by the Gurus from Hindu Bhagats. His statement that Guru Gobind Singh, “like other Hindu thinkers... uses negatives in describing Him” is repudiated in the same breath “confessing” that “to him God was not a mere abstraction.”<sup>10</sup> It is indicative of the origin he would like to place on Sikh thought. That desire must explain another insinuation that the idea of transmigration of soul in Sikhism is ultimately inspired by Upanishads and Bhagwatgita. This statement is made in the full knowledge of Guru’s clear injunction that, “they who forsaking me adopt the ways of Veds and Smritis, shall fall into the pit of hell”<sup>11</sup> Ashta goes to absurd lengths while pursuing this course. For instance, he sincerely holds that even the satire of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh is borrowed from Ramanand and Kabir.<sup>12</sup>

The self-created predicament obliges Ashta to take up untenable positions again and again. To bring the philosophy of Sikhism in unison with that of Hindu Bhagats, particularly Kabir, he states that the Gurus believed in Kabir’s Nirguna Brahma.<sup>13</sup> While imposing “vishishtadvaita position” on the Sikh Gurus, he asserts that their God is “above...worldly entanglements.”<sup>14</sup>

Facts, however, stare him in the face and he has to conclude that according to the Guru, “God is omnipotent as love.<sup>15</sup>... God is sublimest Love. He loves his creation.”<sup>16</sup> He also accepts wholeheartedly the basic truth of Sikh religion that, “God is Himself the Creator, the Preserver and Destroyer, all in one.”<sup>17</sup> God of Sikhism is also accepted

by him to be “the Punisher of the evil.”<sup>18</sup> Surprisingly, in spite of all these realizations he does not feel compelled to revise his earlier formulations regarding the nirguna, the vishishtadvaita and the non-involved nature wrongly attributed to God in Sikhism. He holds on to both points of view though he himself has effectively refuted one.

Apart from the fact that he contradicts himself, he betrays ignorance of the overall position of Sikh theology and history, which has always been clear to serious students. Discerning minds have always realized that the Kabirpanthis are “virtually submerged under the tide of Hinduism.” In comparison it is recognized that Guru Nanak’s teachings conspicuously tended towards and eventually ended up providing “an entirely new environment called for the reforms introduced by Guru Gobind Singh while other medieval reformers... created sects which were swallowed up by Hinduism.”<sup>19</sup>

In view of the above, it must be said of Ashta that he ventures forth to study the Dasam Granth with a definite premeditated design in mind. That obliges him to give up objectivity and he abandons it without a second consideration. It is therefore no surprise that he fails to see the significance of Guru Gobind Singh formally recognising Adi Guru Granth as the only Sikh canon and persistently refusing to collect his composition in a single volume and under a common name. This approach also explains why Ashta enthusiastically accepts Ram, Shyam and Kal to be the pseudonyms<sup>20</sup> of Guru Gobind Singh on absolutely flimsy grounds. This is in spite of the fact that a previously existing work of Baba Sumer Singh testifies to the ‘independent existence of these poets as pointed out by Jaggi. Jaggi has gone into the same question more deeply<sup>21</sup> and has not only noticed, Shyam<sup>22</sup> amongst the court poets of Guru Gobind Singh, but has also succeeded in unearthing some of their compositions which are not a part of the Dasam Granth.

In order to establish the authorship of the Tenth Guru, Ashta repeatedly asserts that the poet of the Dasam Granth “does not believe in incarnations, gods or goddesses’ of Hindu or Mohemmadan religious books.”<sup>23</sup> That he also often contradicts himself<sup>24</sup> goes without saying. It is left for Jaggi to effectively bring out that several contributors do regard goddesses, gods and incarnations<sup>25</sup> as objects of worship. Jaggi’s argument that, therefore, the Guru is not the author of bulk of it is

more rational and cannot be controverted as it proceeds on the same basic premise as accepted by Ashta.

It defies explanation as to why the deliberate non-use of Nanak, the legitimate name of Guru Gobind Singh, in the Dasam Granth has not been noticed both by Ashta and Jaggi. They have not worked out the implications of that fact. Another fact that has been neglected is that the Guru insisted upon excluding his writings from the Adi Granth.<sup>26</sup> It is also quite significant that the entire schemata of grammatical representations used in Guru Granth is almost completely missing from the Dasam Granth.<sup>27</sup> The significance of the fact that this book was originally known as Bachittar Natak Granth and has travelled arduously towards the present nomenclature has been missed both by Ashta and Jaggi. These facts alone are sufficient to convince any scholar that Guru Gobind Singh did not wish to interfere with the previously settled Sikh canon beyond adding his father's compositions to it.

In addition, the conclusion sought to be drawn by Ashta and emphasized by Dr. Radhakrishnan, can only be sustained if the internal incongruities of the Hindu religious system are effectively ignored. Whatever may have been the earlier position; the gods surely were so jealous of each other as to promote mutual contempt amongst their mutually exclusive followers. "In all these respects, Puranas and Tantras were especially instrumental, and they not only taught their followers to assert the unapproachable superiority of gods they worshipped, but inspired them with feelings of animosity towards those who presumed to dispute that supremacy..."<sup>28</sup> Consideration of this aspect alone rules out any single authorship for the narration of various incarnations included in the Dasam Granth. Though in passing, Jaggi has at least noticed<sup>29</sup> the difficulty presented by such inclusions. They include the incarnations worshipped by Vaishnavites, Shaivites, Sakats, Sanyasis, Jogis and even Muslims for Mir Mehdi is also amongst them. Seven incarnations of Brahma are also included. In the context of times in which it is written, it could only have been composed by several authors having differing views of Reality. This also explains the existence of at least three versions of the story of Chandi in the Granth.

Ashta's convenient argument that, "the diction, the rhythm and vigour of the lines are peculiarly Guru Gobind Singh's own"<sup>30</sup> sounds hollow when in the latter part of his thesis he compares the poetry of

the Dasam Granth with that of other poets and hints that it is in strong measure influenced and inspired by the type of the diction, rhythm and vigour commonly found in the poetic compositions of the age.<sup>31</sup> This argument is further developed by Jaggi. He concludes that the poetry of most of the Dasam Granth is conventional and of common occurrence. He further exhibits that most of the poets composing it, exhibit themselves as humble supplicants who often pray for favours from their patron and seek forgiveness for the possible mistakes-living in constant dread that those would be detected and be laughed at.<sup>32</sup>

Jaggi on the other hand has proceeded scientifically and objectively. He has clearly delineated in detail the views of both parties to the controversy and has then set out to examine them thoroughly. His logic is scathing and whatever cannot stand scrutiny is discarded without hesitation. This constitutes the first three chapters of his present work. His scrutiny of the letter attributed to Bhai Mani Singh is quite thorough. One would wish that he had gone into the circumstances in which it was discovered. It is well worth knowing whether G.B. Singh discovered it when he was in the thick of the controversy about the authorship of the Dasam Granth. It would also be relevant to know whether serious aspersions cast on the integrity and objectivity of G.B. Singh by Bhai Sahib Singh<sup>33</sup> are valid and whether any conclusion on that basis is warranted in the present context?

The fourth and fifth chapters deal with the four well-known manuscripts of the Dasam Granth. After incisive enquiry done with extreme care, Jaggi comes to the conclusion that there are material differences in the four versions. These sometimes extend to including additional works not usually associated with the book.<sup>34</sup> He notices that the material put together represents diverse and scattered writings completely lacking a common theme. The conclusion that it would have been more homogeneous, had the Guru intended to put it in one volume is entirely warranted. The other conclusion that it was not compiled during the Guru's life-time is obvious. The very fact that such liberties have been taken by different compilers clearly indicates that no particular sanctity was attached to the compilation. There is thus no doubt that it was not considered by them to be the Guru's word.<sup>35</sup>

Any analysis of the portions supposedly in the handwriting of the Guru himself has been done with characteristic thoroughness by

Jaggi. These pages have mostly been pasted later into the volumes pointing unmistakably to their very late origin. It is also pointed out that these are often materially inaccurate which totally rules out their being written by the Guru.<sup>36</sup> The Script used is the commonly used local one and it is wrong to advertise it as the Guru's peculiar invention. Jaggi approvingly quotes Giani Gian Singh's assertion that these pages are forgeries made by Charat Singh son of Sukha Singh author of the Gurbilas. That perhaps reflects the true position.

Two chapters have been devoted by Jaggi to the analysis of the ideology of rest of the Dasam Granth. By comparing it with the known writings of the Tenth Guru, he has conclusively shown that the two are poles apart. In this connection it is highly significant that meat eating, drinking alcohol and sex indulgence are highly inducted in writings which are translations and in spite of the fact that original texts of which these are translations do no mention such activity.<sup>37</sup> That to Jaggi reasonably reveals an interested Sa kat's hand in the composition. Serious anachronisms which would be discredit to any ordinary man of moderate learning have been pointed out.<sup>38</sup> The eighth chapter on the ideology of authors is well argued.

Concluding it can be stated without the fear of contradiction that, in comparison, Jaggi's thesis is well authenticated and balanced. Ashta on the other hand appears to be too keen to adopt a particular point of view. He is not thorough in his analysis, is quite often self-contradictory, and appears eager to gloss over material facts which are inconvenient from his point of view. On the whole his work appears quite lacking in objective inquiry. If we relate it to the conclusions drawn from it by Dr. Radhakrishnan, we cannot say that it is devoid of a motive or a predisposed desire to confirm to certain pre-determined notions related to the position of Sikhs in the Indian polity.

## Notes

- 1 To begin with it was known as Bachitter Natak or Bachitter Natak Granth, then by various names including Dasam Patshah ka Granth until it was finally christened as Dasam Granth in this century
- 2 Bhai Sukha Singh and Mehtab Singh who passed through Damdama Sahib on their way to punish Massa Ranghar, desecrator of the Harmandar, proposed that it should be kept in one volume if they succeeded and returned but should be kept separate if they died in the attempt. They were successful and returned. See Kahan Singh, Bhai, Mahan Kosh (Pbi) (Reprint) Bhasha Vibhag, Patiala 1974, 616



- 3 Ibid., 616
- 4 Ashta, Dr. Dharam Pal, *The Poetry of the Dasam Granth*, Arun Prakashan, New Delhi 1959, pp.312 + XXXXVIII + iv
- 5 Jaggi, Dr. Rattan Singh, *Dasam Granth da kartritav* (Pbi). Punjabi Sahit Sabha, New Delhi, 1966, pp. 237 +1
- 6 See conclusion by Jaggi, Dr. Rattan Singh, *Loc. Cit. p.*, 198. Jaggi has apparently kept his options open by using the word etc., at the end of his list
- 7 Dr. Ashta, *Loc. Cit. X*
- 8 Ibid., VII
- 9 Ibid., VII
- 10 Ibid., 187
- 11 Ibid., 188
- 12 Ibid., 205-206
- 13 Ashta, *Op. Cit.*, 169
- 14 Ibid., 171
- 15 Ibid., 175
- 16 Ibid., 178
- 17 Ibid., 176 also “God not only creates but also provides for the sustenance of all” p. 180
- 18 Ibid., 182
- 19 Banerjee, A.C., “Guru Nanak And Problems of his Age,” *Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol No. 1. September 1969, 45
- 20 Ashta, *Op. Cit.*, 13,14,15
- 21 Jaggi, Dr. Rattan Singh, *Op. Cit.*, 21, 22 see Appendix 3 and pp. 47 to 58
- 22 Ibid., 173-175
- 23 Ashta, *Op. Cit.*, 21,22
- 24 Jaggi, *Op. Cit. Chapter 8*, 176-194
- 25 The Sikh position is ably summed up by Mohsin Fani, a contemporary of Guru Hargobind. See Ganda Singh’s translation in *The Punjab Past and Present*, Vol.iii, Punjabi University, Patiala 1969, 5, wherein he says, ‘disciples of Nanak condemn idol worship they do not read the mantras of Hindus. They do not esteem their Avtars’
- 26 ‘Guru did not allow it to be incorporated in the *Adi Granth*’, Chhibber, Kesar Singh, “Bansawalaianamah,” Parakh, Panjab University, Chandigarh 1972
- 27 For instance, had the system been followed, *ik chun chun jharon kadian* in *Chandi-divar*, would have been written as : *ikki chuni chuni jharon kadiani*. cf. Gurdit Singh, Giani, “Shabdantik Lagan Matran” *Singh Sabha Patrika*, August 1990, Chandigarh, 18
- 28 Wilson, H.H., *Religious Sects of The Hindus*, (1861), (Reprint) Susil Gupta (India) Private Limited, Calcutta, 1958, 2
- 29 A passing reference by Jaggi, *Op. Cit.*, 181. Padam, Piara Singh, *Dasam Granth Darshan*, (Pbi.) Patiala April 1990, 81 are aware that no other work which includes these diverse incarnations, exists. Referring to love for Krishna, Ashta does affirm that “their devotion was so much that they could do away will all their deities and be devoted to him exclusively” Ashta, *Op. Cit.*, 77
- 30 Ibid., 168
- 31 The following extracts are from Ashta, *Ibid.*, “In the *Dasam Granth*, also descriptions of nature fall within this conventional category” p. 297; “This fono of poetry from the beginning of Hindi literature even to this day is still being attempted. The treatment is

more or less conventional.” p.299;

“here to Guru Gobind Singh has employed the conventional style.” p. 301.; He considers Gian Parbodh to be “an attempt at revival of the epic philosophy.” p.305.; “Bachitra Natak Granth follows the Puranic tradition...” p. 306; “The poetry of the Dasam Granth like the Hindi poetry of the day has several elements of conventionality in it.” p. 307. See also pp. 308, 309.;

“In war poetry, Bhushan’s Shivraj Bhushan, Shiva Bhawani and ChhatarsaI Dasak get the precedence of Dasam Granth in time as well as in epic quality.” p. 309.; “In variety of meters, Dasam Granth ranks next only to works of Keshavdas” p. 310

32 See Jaggi Op. Cit, Chapter VI and particularly the concluding pages 166-168

33 Cf. Sahib Singh, Adi Bir Bare, Singh Brothers, Amritsar, February 1970 pp. 110-118

34 Jaggi, Rattan Singh, Op. Cit., 98-99

35 Ibid., 112,125,126

36 Ibid., 121, 138, 139

37 Ibid., 151

38 Ibid.,164

## RAJ KAREGA KHALSA

**KHARAK SINGH  
GURDARSHAN SINGH DHILLON**

*“Raj Karega Khalsa Aid Rahe Na Koe.*

*Khwar Hoe Sabh Milenge Bache Saran jo Hoe ?”*

This couplet has been, and continues to be, a part of the Litany sung by all Sikhs at all congregational prayers for the last three centuries or so. This has worked as a slogan to remind the followers of the Great Gurus of the ultimate triumph of truth, of their destiny and of their commitment to social responsibilities and struggle to ensure genuine freedom and equality for all human beings. It has, thus, inspired the Sikhs to make sacrifices unparalleled in history, for the cause of bringing about the kingdom of God on earth.

A free rendering of the couplet is as follows :

“The Khalsa shall exercise political power: No-body will challenge this resolve. Eventually every one will accept this position. And he who seeks refuge, shall be protected.”

According to tradition the couplet follows from the Tankhah-nama of Bhai Nand Lal, whose Granthawali, collected or verified from the family records of Bhai Sahib, was edited by Dr. Ganda Singh. This question-answer series also records the words of the Guru, “Listen, Nand Lal to this truth; I shall cause an expression of Self-rule or sovereignty” (Suno Nand Lal eho sach; Pargat Karoon apna raj).<sup>1</sup> On the same page after the above statement appears this couplet “Raj Karega Khalsa.” This explains how the couplet originated and became part of the Sikh prayer. Following upon this and with the blessings of Guru Gobind Singh himself, Banda Singh Bahadur undertook his mission and after the capture of Sirhind established the Khalsa Government in 1710 (AD), within two years of the demise of Guru Gobind Singh.

Bhai Rattan Singh Bhangoo testifies to the conviction of the struggling Sikhs about the righteousness of their cause and in-avoidability of their goal in his *Panth Parkash* in his description of the following two events.

i. Nawab Aslam Khan of Lahore sent his emissary, Subeg Singh, to the Khalsa for peace, offering them a Nawabship. The initial reaction of the Khalsa, when the title (Nawab) was offered to Darbara Singh, was “When did we ask for it ? The Satguru has promised us a Sovereign rule. In comparison to this, the title of Nawab appears to be a lump of clay. We claim sovereignty, which is sure to come sooner or later. What the Satguru has promised is bound to happen. The word of the Guru can never remain unfulfilled, although the Dhruva (the Pole Star) or Dhawala (the legendary Bull supporting the earth) may shift their positions. How can we exchange our sovereignty with this insignificant title of Nawab. Accursed be such servility.” Similarly, others who were offered the Nawabship, refused the title saying. “How can sovereignty be had by begging?”<sup>2</sup>

ii. Capt. Murray who was Charge-De-affairs of the East India, Company at Ludhiana, and who was obsessed with the question of legitimacy of the Sikh Rule, had a dialogue with the author of the *Panth Parkash*. This is recorded as follows :

Murray: Explain to me how did the Sikhs attain power? And who gave them sovereignty?

Answer: Sovereignty was bestowed on the Khalsa by the True Lord.

Murray: Who is the true Lord ?

Answer: He is Satguru Nanak.<sup>3</sup>

From the above it is clear that the Sikhs during their fierce struggle with the Mughal Rulers had no doubt about their social goal of gaining sovereignty, which is expressed in the couplet “Raj Karega Khalsa.” Nobody, Hindus or Sikhs, objected to the singing of this couplet during that, period, or even after that upto Independent of India in 1947. During the last few decades, however, the reaction has changed. In the words of Sardar Kapur Singh :

“This startlingly tall and audacious claim has been publicly proclaimed by the Sikh people during the last three centuries, firmly and defiantly and it has moved many to sheer ridicule, others to fright, still others to resentment and boiling-head anger, many Sikhs themselves to chicken-hearted craven fear of shameless apology, and to the political Hindus of the post - 1947 euphoria, it has, almost invariably moved to greater contempt for those whom they see as already in their last death throes.”<sup>4</sup>

Objections to this slogan are understandable, when they come from non-Sikh quarters. However, some Sikhs have also raised their voice against this concept. Their advise is that “politics must be insulated from religion.”<sup>5</sup> or politics does not go well with Sikh ideology, and, therefore, it should be eschewed. It has also been argued that the Gurus preached only Naam Simran and had no socio-political directions or doctrines for their followers. Some even go to the extent of saying that any struggle for an honorable political status for the Sikhs or to ensure their identity, is against the teachings of the Gurus.

Dr. Ganda Singh wrote a brief scholarly article which appeared in the Sikh Review July 1987, on this subject and showed clearly that the slogan issued from Guru Gobind Singh himself, and that there was nothing wrong or sectarian about this couplet. He concluded that It was “a permanent and inseparable part of the Sikh prayer and should be recited as such on all occasions of prayers by all Sikhs and Sikh congregations, where-ever they might be, in all Gurdwaras, historical or other.”<sup>6</sup>

The controversy, however, is kept alive by stray views ‘expressed in some quarters every now and then. The basic question is as to what is the Sikh ideology, or what the Gurus had been aiming at, or whether it is only a church of worship or a church of social policy as well. This is the fundamental question. It is the difference on this issue that had led to misconceptions, especially in the field of historical interpretation. Sikhism is not an extension of the Bhakti movement; nor were the Gurus Bhakti Saints who started their own cult. Sikhism is a revealed religion and mission, indeed, the only whole-life or Miri-Piri religious system that appeared in India. Outside India also except Judaism and Islam, no whole-life system, combining the spiritual with the empirical, has arisen. It is not an accident that the last five of the Ten Gurus maintained an army, and the Fifth Guru had already created a “state within a state”, much to the annoyance of the political power of the day who ordered his execution. It is Guru Nanak who calls God the ‘Destroyer of the Evil’-doers’ and ‘of the Demonical’,<sup>7</sup> Again in his Babur Vani, he unambiguously states that oppression is violative of the Order of God who is Shelter of the shelter less, and who, as the Master of the flock, is responsible to see that the weak are not oppressed.<sup>8</sup>

This further clarifies two things, namely, that the Gurmukh who carries out the Altruistic Will of God, and who, for that end, creates a

society, has to see that in society, aggression, oppression and injustice are resisted. In whole-life religions, whether Sikhism, Judaism or Islam, social responsibility clearly extends to the political field as well. For, what is within the domain of God, is within god-man's domain of responsibility. Two facts are undeniable that while the rulers, in order to maintain their moral legitimacy, have to ensure justice among their subjects, it is righteous for the man of religion to confront oppression and injustice; and that when kings or rulers fail to be virtuous, and injustice and oppression are the result, such a situation invites response of the man of religion. For over hundred years the Sikh Gurus had maintained an army, and initially even employed mercenaries for that end. The point to be seen is what was the oppression to be confronted, injustice to be undone, or challenge to be met. This militarisation was progressive, until the Tenth Master created the Khalsa on the Baisakhi Day, 1699, and prescribed Kirpan as one of the five Kakars. At that time it is significant that all the sons of the Guru were alive. It is important to understand that in whole-life systems, monasticism, asceticism, celibacy, Ahimsa, pacifism and all kinds of negativism, are rejected. This is a common characteristic of the three whole-life systems mentioned above. And these fundamentals explain why this category of systems mentioned above accepts socio-political responsibility, and others do not. The Kirpan, it has to be understood, is not just a symbol. It is a Hukumnama emphasising two things that the Sikh society is both permitted and enjoined to use force, as a last resort, for a righteous cause, and second, that Sikhism should never revert to monasticism. The Kirpan as a weapon, may not be of much public use today, but the injunction it represents, is fundamental and eternal.

Pleading against political activities a writer recently stated : "they (The Gurus) were ready to take the sword, but always in self-defence and only as a last resort. For the zulum of the Governor of Sir hind, Guru Gobind tried to seek redressal from Aurangzeb and Bahadur Shah to punish the culprits and transgressors. It is also significant that when Banda Bahadur started establishing a State with the help of Khalsa, a hukamnama was issued by Mata Sundri to disassociate themselves from the objective which did not have the approval of the tenth Guru, and they did so, which led to the defeat of Banda Bahadur."<sup>9</sup> The first point is what was the zulum that the Governor of Sirhind had done. Was it during the general course of his administration over the years he had done it, or was there any specific act that was wrong or

tyrannical? So far as the general administration of the Governor is concerned, there is nothing to suggest that he did anything in violation of the orders or wishes of the Emperor in Delhi. In any case, there is nothing known to have happened to which the Emperor could have taken offence, as being contrary to his instructions, or for which only the Governor had been responsible and not the Emperor. If, however, the reference is to the martyrdom of the two younger Sahibzadas, we wonder if this could be the real or even a laudable reason, for the Guru to depute Banda Bahadur. Is it the writer's suggestion that while there was nothing wrong with the administration of the Emperor or the Governor, it was only the execution of the two Sahibzadas that furnished a good reason to the Tenth Master to seek revenge by directing Banda and the Sikh armies to do so ? Also, can we accept the suggestion that the Gurus who were always the first to sacrifice their person, would, in this case, seek to have revenge? For, we know full well that no military reaction was made after the martyrdom of the Ninth Master or the Fifth Master, except the general preparation for confrontation with the Empire or the Establishment, as a whole, for its misrule over the decades. The Tenth Master could not be unaware that the attack on the Governor meant full-scale war involving death of thousands of Sikhs as well as of the opponents. Is it suggested that revenge, involving death and devastation on a vast scale of the people, was justifiable? And if that had really been the reason, would it serve as a good moral precedent or lesson for the Sikhs or the people? Further, even assuming that only the Governor was to be punished, the Tenth Master could not be so unaware that as to believe that the task could be accomplished without a major war about which the Emperor at Delhi could not remain unconcerned. And in the event of Banda's victory and death of the Governor and the transgressors to whom was the rule of Sirhind to be handed over, if the Sikhs were not to accept political responsibility and power? It is known to every historian that one of the greatest revolutionary and humanitarian work the Sikh rule did, was Banda's distribution of land among the poorest tillers. He created "The Bold Peasantry" which continues to be the backbone and the fundamental strength of the Sikh Society.

It is on the basis of this precedent and tradition that, when the British Government created canal colonies and wanted to turn-the clock of socialization back by granting only tenancy rights to the Colonists, the Sikhs and others agitated and forced the Government to confer

proprietary rights on them, Here it is relevant to recall that Martin Luther, the great Christian reformer, called the peasants ‘mad dogs’ when they agitated for their rights against the princes with whom Luther sided. Equally significant is the fact that, even in the French Revolution, which took place eight decades after Banda, the peasants and the poor, the Fourth Estate, had no place in its leadership, which rested with middle classes; nor were they among its beneficiaries. Jagjit Singh in his book, ‘In the Caravan of Revolutions’ has made a detailed comparison of the work of the Sikh Gurus with the French Revolution. Its obvious conclusion is that the characteristics, ideals and achievements of the Sikh Revolution were in every respect superior to and more enduring than those of the French Revolution.<sup>10</sup>

It is relevant to state that in Bhangoon’s ‘Panth Parkash’ there is a reference to a letter said to have been written by Mata Sundri to the Khalsa. In that letter there is nothing to suggest that the objective of the attack by Banda Singh was not to gain rule of the land, or that the Khalsa was forbidden to rule. In fact, on the contrary, there is a clear statement that the Guru had bestowed Patshahi (Rule or Sovereignty) on the Panth and not on any individual. Thus, the letter, by implication or otherwise, far from denouncing the war objective of temporal sovereignty for the Sikhs, clearly records, in the words of Mata Sundri, that Patshahi was granted to the Sikhs (Banda ko Khijmat dei, dei patshahi nahei; Dei Patshahi Panth nij, ap sache patshahei.)<sup>11</sup>

The above, we feel, explains, both the reason for the Tenth Master’s deputing Banda Singh and the letter written by Mata Sundri to clarify that objective.

The writing of Tamur Shah<sup>12</sup> should also be revealing to every one, that Emperor conveyed it to the ‘apostle of tranquility and harmony’, the Ninth Master, that if he desisted from political activities and confined himself only to spiritual prayers and preaching, he would have no trouble, and in fact, would be given considerable grants. But the offer was spurned, with results that are a part of history. Quoting Ghulam Hussain Khan in ‘Siyurul Mutakharin’ Sher Singh concludes that there were clear apprehensions of revolt by the Guru and that the revolt by the Guru would lead to the setting up of a Sikh State.<sup>13</sup> Further, quoting ‘Hiqiqat-i-Banau Uruj-i-Firqa-Sik-han’, he states, that the Emperor feared that the people gathering around Guru Tegh Bahadur were emerging as a new nation (Millat- Nau).<sup>14</sup> The unfortunate part is



that persons often conditioned by pacifist influences, or with pacifist inclinations, fail to understand the Saint-Soldier concept. The Ninth Guru embodied it as much as the Tenth Master. The Establishment has generally used aggression and oppression as the source of its power, and the Saint-Soldier, as the instrument of God's Will, must inevitably come into conflict with it. This is the eternal equation. For 'the earth belonging to the 'saint' is being usurped by the robber.<sup>15</sup> Hence, the struggle for its liberation. The lesson of history is that the series of martyrdoms initiated by the Fifth Guru, the Ninth Master, the Sahibzadas, the Tenth Master, a single historical process, and it would, we feel, be a sheer distortion to reduce this glorious spiritual marvel to the level of an episode of personal revenge as we egoist humans do or conceive.

Some critics have also argued that the Gurus did not establish a political state for themselves to rule,<sup>16</sup> and therefore the Sikhs should also not entertain any such ambition. It must be noted that no state could be established without a direct clash with the Mughals during the Guru's time. A state could be governed either by becoming a vassal of Delhi and paying tribute to it, or by snatching a territory from the empire after an inevitable clash with it. Thus, the choice was between becoming a subordinate of Delhi and a military confrontation with the Empire. The question of the first alternative could not arise, and the second was the alternative for which the preparations were being made, the community motivated and the Khalsa created. Evidently, confrontation could not be done before Baisakhi, 1699, when was completed the epitomic work of the Sikh religion and the movement. And it was for this end that Khalsa was created; and even the Hill Rajahs were invited to join the struggle against Delhi. It is a known fact that they declined to do so. It is thereafter that the organisational and the preparatory work was completed, and the struggle started. It was in its continuity that later Banda was deputed to lead the confrontation.

Advocates of pacificism frequently argue that because in the Guru Granth Sahib it is stated at numerous places that a man of religion hankers neither after worldly power nor after personal redemption, political power could not be the objective of the Khalsa. The verse often quoted and misinterpreted, is "Raj Na Chahun Mukht no Chahun man preet charan Kamlare."<sup>17</sup> According to Sardar Kapur Singh, "They do not understand that these are not injunctions or commandments of Sikhism, for statements of a doctrine, but merely clues to techniques

for mood-inducement, the roots of which techniques go to the ancient Yoga texts. To interpret a sacred scripture is not a job which every man who happens to be a graduate from a university, a brave General or a successful lawyer can properly undertake.”<sup>18</sup>

The question never was that the Gurus wanted an empire for themselves. What they wanted was the organisation of a community with trained motivations and aspirations to live as a fraternal people with a sense of independence and the capacity to discharge complete socio-political responsibilities, including struggle against oppression of the invaders and the Establishment. We have already referred to this conflict between the forces of righteousness and those of evil, oppression and injustice. The Saints and Gurmukhs appear not to carve out empires for themselves, but to prepare the people to live as brothers and establish a kingdom of God, or a ‘dharamsal’, the land for righteous living, as envisaged by God.

Before the close, it may be proper to have a look at the couplet “Raj Karega Khalsa” again. It is simply an announcement that the Khalsa should look after its own affairs, empirical as well as spiritual. Now, what is wrong with it? In these days all sections of the population, all political parties, openly declare their intention to provide a Government, and no body objects to that. In fact, the Government organises this exercise regularly. Why is it that the same thing is a taboo for Sikhs? Secondly, if the Sikhs are forbidden to rule in their own area, who will do, if others do not run it properly, what will they do? It is both their responsibility and destiny to confront misrule and injustice. Can they shirk to accept or discharge the moral and historical responsibility, which is enjoined upon them by the Gurus? It will be clear that “Raj Karega Khalsa” is a couplet perfectly in consonance with the injunctions and the thesis of the Gurus. In all Miri-Piri systems this religious responsibility is natural and essential. Of course for the purpose, the cultivation of religious and spiritual strength and stamina is essential. Hence this religious reminder and resolve at the time of prayer before the living Guru is natural and necessary.

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## **PUNJAB RIVER-WATERS DISPUTE**

**DALJEET SINGH**

### *1. Introduction:*

Normally, we would not have written on a subject that is a current issue. But unfortunately and in fact inexplicably, opinions regarding the Punjab problem have been expressed in academic publications and circles that are far from being correct and factual. For this reason, it appears necessary briefly to state the factual, legal and constitutional position about the Punjab water and hydel power problem, the most elemental issue. We hope the confusion, misinformation and ignorance that prevail in some academic circles because of some journalistic and fast-food literature is dispelled, or atleast the serious scholar or researcher takes into consideration the aspect of this Punjab problem which is stated in this paper.

The River-Waters Dispute forms the prime social, economic and political issue in the Punjab, and is central to the solution of the socio-political problems in the state, since all further progress in the social, economic and political fields depends on the fair and constitutional resolution of this matter. Hence the necessity to understand the genesis and the gravity of the problem and how it has been unnecessarily prolonged and side-tracked with serious detriment to all concerned.

### *2. The Problem*

Until 1966, Punjab like other states was the master of its river waters. But in 1966 at the time of the creation of the Punjabi Suba, the Centre introduced sections 78 to 80 in the Punjab Reorganisation Act, 1966, under which the Centre virtually assumed the powers of control maintenance, distribution and development of the waters and the hydel power of the Punjab rivers. This assumption was unconstitutional because section 78 to 80 vesting those powers in the Central Government, were considered discriminatory and violative of the

provisions of the Indian Constitution, While it was demanded that the only fair and right solution of the problem was to refer the issue to the Constitutional Bench of the Supreme Court, this legitimate demand was side-tracked, and instead, the Centre not only started exercising powers under these sections of the Act, but also allotted over 75% of the available Punjab waters to the non-riparian areas of Rajasthan, Haryana and Delhi. In fact, the history of the struggle between the Punjab or the Sikhs, on the one hand, and the Centre, on the other, is virtually a history of the Punjab trying to seek a constitutional reference and solution, and the Centre being continuously reluctant to follow that course. So much so, that while at one time the issue had actually been referred to the Supreme court at the instance of the Punjab Government, (by an Akali Ministry) and was pending there for hearing and decision, the Centre and the Congress Ministry in the state managed to withdraw the case from the file of the Supreme Court and frustrate the attempt to obtain a judicial verdict. So the problem continues since the Punjab feels that the drain of its natural wealth is unconstitutional and unjustifiable and would be ruinous for its future and its people.

### *3. The Riparian Law, Constitutional Rights And Practices*

Under the age old International Law and practice it is accepted that where a river lies wholly within the territory of one state, it entirely belongs to the state, and no other state has any rights therein. And where a river passes through more than one state; each state owns that part of the river which runs through its territory. Thus, according to authorities like Berber, Heffer, Stark, Samisonian and others disputes relating to river waters can only be between riparian states and not between If riparian state and a non-riparian state. This riparian principle stands embodied in the international laws and national laws, including the Common Law of England, and also in Helsinki rules for inter-state water allocation.<sup>1</sup> In short, river and river waters which flow on land are an essential part of land or territory of a state, which has absolute rights therein. For, territory constitutes an integral attribute of a state. Here it is necessary to indicate that the word state for the purpose of this right includes a state or a province within a country. This riparian principle stands embodied in the Indian Constitution vide entry 17 of the list to 7th Schedule of the Constitution. Rivers, River Waters and Hydel power have exclusively been kept as state subjects. The entry reads;

“17 - Waters, that is, to say, water supplies, irrigation and canals drainage and embankments, water storage and water power subject to the provisions of Entry 56 of List I.”

Entry 56 of List I of the 7th Schedule reads;

“56 - Regulation and development of Interstate rivers and river valleys to the extent to which such regulation and development under the control of the Union, is declared by the Parliament to be expedient in the public interest.”

Article 262 of the Constitution says;

“262 - Adjudication of disputes relating to waters of interstate rivers or river valleys.

(1) Parliament may by law provide for the adjudication of any dispute or complaint with respect to the use, distribution or control of the waters of, or in, any inter-state river or river valley.

(2) Notwithstanding anything in the constitution parliament may by law provide that neither the Supreme Court nor any other court shall exercise jurisdiction in respect of any such dispute or complaint as is referred to in clause (1).”

Further, regarding a river the state has full and exclusive legislative and executive powers under Articles 246(3) and 162 of the Indian Constitution. Entry 56 and Article 262 mentioned above give authority to Parliament to legislate only in regard to interstate rivers and not in regard to water of a state river over which the concerned state alone has full, exclusive and final authority. A river valley is “a tract of land lying between mountains and hills, generally traversed by a stream or a river or containing a lake usually narrower than vale and lying between steeper slopes.” Valley also means “a land drained or watered by a great river.” At the 1958 conference of the International Law Association a basin has been defined thus:

“A drainage basin is an area within the territories of two or more states in which all the streams of flowing surface water, both natural and artificial, drain a common water-shed terminating in a common outlet or common outlets to the sea or to a lake or to some inland place from which there is no apparent outlet to the sea.” 2

As such, both under the definition of the basin and the valley, Rajasthan and Haryana lie beyond the basin of the three Punjab rivers, Satluj, Beas and Ravi. In fact Haryana lies in the Ganga -Yamuna basin, and partly in the Ghagar basin which is clearly distinct from Satluj basin. For, no river or drain from Rajasthan or Haryana has a common ending with the Punjab Rivers. The fundamental principle

and rationale underlying the Riparian Law is that since for centuries on end it is the inhabitants around a river or rivulet who suffer loss of land, property, cattle, and human life from the ravages and floods of a stream, they alone are entitled to the benefits or water rights of the concerned stream. Here it is relevant to state that in the 1988 floods, Punjab suffered a loss of scores of lives apart from the loss of property estimated officially at over one billion dollars. It is significant that neither Rajasthan, nor Haryana nor Delhi ever suffered a penny worth of loss from floods in the Punjab rivers.

#### *4. Existing Judicial Decisions - National and International*

(a) On the riparian principle there are clear judicial decisions including the one concerning the Narmada River which passes through the territory of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujrat, but not through Rajasthan. As such, following was the judicial, decision on the petition of Rajasthan for a share of the Narmada Waters:

“(1) Rajasthan being a non-riparian state in regard to Narmada, cannot apply to the Tribunal, because under the Act only a co-riparian state can do so; and (ii) the state of Rajasthan is not entitled to any portion of the waters of Narmada basin on the ground that the state of Rajasthan is not a co-riparian state, or that no portion of its territory is situated in the basin of River Narmada.”<sup>3</sup>

On Rajasthan’s plea that even though non-riparian, it should get Narmada Water, just as it is getting Punjab waters, though a non-riparian state, the judgement records as follows:

“Utilisation of Ravi and Beas : The apportionment of water was the result of an agreement. It appears from Rajasthan documents Volume VI at pages 26 and 30 that Punjab was prepared to satisfy the needs of Rajasthan, provided its own needs as a riparian state were first satisfied.”

“Tested in the light of these, we are not able to say that Rajasthan has fulfilled the burden of showing the requirement of opinion necessitated. Nor is there evidence of a clear and continuous course of conduct with regard to the rights of Rajasthan, as non-riparian state in the rivers of Punjab or Uttar Pradesh.”<sup>4</sup>

“(12-A) 1951, When the question of utilisation of waters of Ravi and Beas was under examination, the Punjab Government again claimed a preference, vide their representation dated 16.11.1964, for the waters of these rivers on the ground of their being a riparian state. The superiority of the right of Punjab was not upheld by the Government

of India and in the meeting under the auspices of the Government of India, the water was apportioned Rajasthan was allotted 8 MAF out of a total available quantity of 15.85 MAF.

Two important facts are clear from the Narmada Judgement, namely, that Rajasthan accepts that it is non-riparian vis-a-vis Ravi and Beas, and that the Centre has been allocating Punjab waters to Rajasthan, despite objections from the former and their knowledge of the verdict that non-riparian Rajasthan has no claim to Punjab waters.

(b) On the ground that those who suffer from a stream, are alone entitled to enjoy rights therein, the inhabitants of South California for over a hundred years did not allow water even to the lands and parks of the Federal Government situated in South California itself. It was only in February 1988 that the lower court agreed that the forest lands of the Government in South California should be allowed water, but this permission was made subject to the provision “that state water authorities retain the power to subordinate any new federal claims to the needs of the current water users in the state”<sup>5</sup> It shows that the principle of reciprocity, that benefit should in equity go only to those who suffer, is so strong that even Federal Forest Lands and Parks in that very state, remained deprived of the facility for over a century, and when it was allowed, the right was made clearly subject to the interests and needs of the private users. The decision was considered establishing and unsatisfactory, and the affected private parties were going in an appeal to have it reversed. This shows how strong is the recognition and sanctity of the Riparian Law, and its equitable linkage between the sufferers and the beneficiaries.

The irony of the injustice felt in this context is that whereas Punjab needs every drop of the waters of its rivers, under the Central awards or decisions over 75% of the available waters of the Punjab rivers, have been allotted to the non-riparian states of Haryana, Rajasthan and Delhi.

### *5. The River Water Dispute*

The real cause of this dispute are Sections 78 to 80 of the Punjab Reorganisation Act 1966, which provide for three things. First, that in case of difference between Punjab and Haryana the power of making distribution and allotments of the River waters and the hydel power from the Punjab rivers would lie with the Central Government This power was later exercised by the Central Government vide its orders of 1976, which gave over 75% of the available river waters of the



Punjab to the non-riparian states of Haryana, Rajasthan and Delhi. i.e. 11.7 MAF out of 15.2 MAF. Second, that after 1966 all powers of control, management, administration and maintenance of the multipurpose projects of the three Punjab rivers shall vest in a Board appointed by the Central Government. Third, that the powers of extension and development of the multipurpose projects involving irrigation and power on the three Punjab rivers also vest in the Central Government.

The net result of these provisions is that after 1966 the State subjects of Irrigation and Hydel power, which are solely in the state list under the constitution, have virtually become Central subjects.

#### *6. The Dispute Accentuates*

After 1966 Haryana planned the SYL Canal to carry 5 MAF of waters and got the Project approved from the Central Government. Since it was a post-1966 Project to carry Punjab waters and there was no reference or mention of it even in the unconstitutional provisions of the Reorganisation Act, the Punjab government naturally objected to the scheme, the same being violative of the statutory rights of Punjab under the Constitution. But the Centre utilised its powers of decision under Sections 78 of the Reorganisation Act, although even the 1966 Act (itself considered unconstitutional) does not mention the SYL Canal or any other scheme of a non- riparian state, whether Haryana or Rajasthan. Accordingly, Punjab suggested that the only way to solve the constitutional problem was to refer the issue to the constitutional Bench of the Supreme Court for decision, which would be obligatory for the States to follow, and which no state could object to. Punjab's contention is that Sections 78 to 80 of the P.R. Act are not only violative of Entry 17 of the State List of the Constitution, clearly indicating 'water power' and 'irrigation' to be state subjects, and of Articles 162 and 246(3) of the Constitution, but are also discriminatory under the Equality Article 14 of the Constitution in so far as it gives all the Jamuna waters to the Haryana, but provides for the distribution of the Punjab river waters flowing in the Punjab territory to non-riparian states. Hence, the argument has been that the only solution of the water and hydel power dispute has to be a reference to the Supreme Court for its constitutional verdict.

#### *7. Beas Project*

We have explained above the Riparian principle under which just as Punjab is not entitled to Jamuna waters after 1966, Haryana is not entitled to any water of the Punjab rivers except what could be

contracted on grounds of actual appropriation before 1966. But in violation of the Constitution, the planned Beas Project was made an excuse for diverting most part of Punjab waters to non-riparian states, and divesting Punjab of its economic, political and constitutional rights. Before 1966, Beas project had already been drawn and finalised after two revisions. In the finalised Project only about 0.9 MAF of water was to go to Haryana, which was earlier, a part of the erst-while Punjab. As is normal, every detail of the Project, including areas to be irrigated, water courses to be dug, quantity of water to be supplied to each channel or area, stood determined. There was no ambiguity in this regard. Since the scheme had not actually been fully completed before Punjab had been divided, and Haryana became non-riparian, it ceased to be entitled under our Constitution even to 0.9 MAF envisaged in the Project. But this project was made a ground for the inclusion of Sections 78 to 80 in the Punjab Reorganisation Act 1966, thereby giving a lever to Haryana illegally to claim Punjab water, and the Central Government to become the masters and the arbitrator of the untenable claims of the non-riparian states. We give below provisions of the Punjab Reorganisation Act to show how later a new scheme of the SYL Canal was drawn up by Haryana, with the approval of the Central Government, and how provisions of the Act have unconstitutionally been made the excuse to drain Punjab of its natural wealth.

The relevant provisions of section 78 run as follows:-

78. Rights and liabilities in regard to Bhakra-Nangal and Beas Projects:-

(1) Notwithstanding anything contained in this Act but subject to the Provisions of section 79 and 80, all rights and liabilities of the existing State of Punjab in relation to Bhakra-Nangal Project and Beas Project shall, on the appointed day, be the rights and liabilities of the successor States in such proportion as may be fixed, and subject to such adjustment as maybe made by agreement entered into by the said States after consultation with the Central Government or if no such agreement is entered into within two years of the appointed day, as the Central Government may by order determine having regard to the purpose of the Projects:

Provided that the order so made by the Central Government may be varied by the subsequent agreement entered into by the successor States after consultation with the Central Government.

(2) An agreement or order referred to in sub-section (1) shall if there has been or extension or further development of either of the projects referred to in that sub-section after the appointed day pro-vide also for the rights and liabilities of the sucesor States in relation to such extension or further development.

(3) The rights and liabilities referred to in sub-section (1) and (2) shall include:-

- (a) the rights to receive and to utilise the water available for distribution as a result of the projects and
- (b) the rights to receive and to utilise the power generated as a result of the projects,

but shall not include the rights and liabilities under any con-tract entered into before the appointed day by the Government of the existing State of Punjab with any person or authority other than Government.

4. In this section and in section 79 and 80

(A) “Beas Project” means the works which are either under construction or to be constructed as components of the Beas Sutlej Link Product (Unit-I) and Pong Dam Project on the Beas river (Unit-II) including.

- (i) Beas-Sutlej Link Project (Unit-I) comprising -
  - (a) Pandoh Dam and works appurtenant thereto,
  - (b) Pandoh - Bagi Tunnel,
  - (c) SundernagarHydel Channel,
  - (d) Sundernagar Sutlej Tunnel,
  - (e) By-pass Tunnel
  - (f) four generating units each of 165 M.W. capacity at Dehar Power House on the right side of Sutlej river,
  - (g) fifth generating unitof 120 M.W. capacity at Bhakra Right Bank Power House,
  - (h) transmission lines,
  - (i) Balan\ing Reservoir;
- (ii) pong Dam Project (Unit-II) comprising -
  - (a) Pong Dam and works appurtenant thereto,
  - (b) Outlet Works
  - (c) Penstock Tunnels,
  - (d) Power plant with four generating units of 60 M.W.each,
- (iii) such other works as are ancillary to the works aforesaid and are of common interest to more than one State;

(B) “Bhakra Nangal Project” means -

- (a) Bhakra Dam, Reservoir and works appurtenant thereto;
- (b) Nangal Dam and Nangal Hydel Channel;
- (c) Bhakra Main Line and canal system;
- (d) Bhakra left Bank Power House, Ganguwal Power House and Kotla Power House, switch-yards, substations and transmission lines;
- (e) Bhakra Right Bank Power House, with four units of 120 M. W. each.

These provisions emphasize two things, namely, that it is only the waters of the Beas Project that would be distributed, and, second-ly, that this regulation would be with the sole object of meeting the purposes of the Beas Project. The purposes of the Beas Project, we have seen, stand clearly defined and detailed. The following prescribed purposes of the Beas Project have been ignored and the award creates altogether new purposes going far outside the purview of the project and Section 78.

(a) The Beas project as defined in section 78(4) A means the works under, construction or to be constructed as components of (1) Beas Sutlej Link Project (Unit I) and Pong Dam Project on the Beas river (Unit 11). It is only the Beas waters available from these two works that can be distributed under section 78 (3) (a). For, the Beas Project as defined above, has to be constructed strictly. This definition which is very specific clearly excludes (1) works like the Ravi-Beas Link that were in existence even before the initiation of the Beas Project. It is only the works that are ‘under construction’ or are to be constructed that are included in the Beas Project); and, (2) The Ravi waters or works like the Thein Dam that will store the Ravi waters. Accordingly all the Ravi waters stand excluded from the scope of section 78 or the Beas Project as defined in this section in which there is no mention whatsoever either of the old works, of the waters of Ravi or of any Project that might be related to the river Ravi. The two projects of Pong Dam and Beas-Sutlej Link specifically relate only to the Beas waters, and that, too, only with that part of Beas water that is dealt with by these two works. Hence, the distribution of all Ravi and Beas waters, is illegal and beyond the scope of section 78. Because both the award and the modified agreement have been made under section 78(1) and the proviso thereto. The two works mentioned in section 78(4) only relate to a part of Beas water; and that part alone could be distributed

or regulated under section 73(3) (a), keeping into view the purpose of these two works as laid down in the approved Beas Project. According to the Beas Project, the purpose of these two works is to supply 3.2 MAF at Harike (3.66 minus 44 MAF in use form pre-partition days) and 2.2 MAF at Ropar (3.6 minus 1.374 to go to Harike). This comes to 6.44 MAF. This quantum of water is thus the only water that could be distributed or regulated under section 78(1) and (3)(a). Hence the illegality of the distribution of waters to the extent of 17.17 or 15.58 MAF.

(b) Secondly, under section 78(1) rights and benefits of the defined Beas Project could be allocated only to the successor States as defined in section 2(m) of the Punjab Reorganisation Act, 1966, namely, Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh. Thus, the allocation of benefits and waters to Rajasthan or Delhi is illegal, being an allotment to non-successor States, and being for that reason, beyond the scope of section 78.

(c) Thirdly, the participation of Rajasthan in the agreement of December, 1981 is beyond the scope and contemplation of proviso to section 78(1) under which successor States alone could enter into an agreement. Therefore, the participation of Rajasthan and the allocation of waters to it in the agreement vitiate the entire agreement and its related proceedings.

(d) Fourthly, the SYL canal, the time-bound execution of which forms a part of the Agreement of 1981, made under the proviso to section 78(1), is a work completely beyond the scope of the Beas Project as defined in section 78. In fact, it is a work even far beyond the purposes of the original or the accepted Beas Project of 1959, 1961, or 1966. In that Project there is a complete detail of the waters available at each point of distribution, the areas to be irrigated, the channels to be dug, etc. and, yet, there is no mention whatsoever of the SYL Project or a canal scheme of like nature planned to carry 3.5 MAF. Actually there is no scope at all of the availability of 3.5 MAF of waters at any single point, since all the water the Beas Project has to yield, stand allocated to different areas and points of distribution. In reality, the SYL canal, to be started from Nangal for supply to Haryana and to carry 3.5 MAF of waters is a project conceived and 'framed by Haryana after the Reorganisation in 1966. It is a work neither under construction in 1966 nor 'to be constructed' under the project nor within the contemplation of the framers of the Beas Project. Hence this work is clearly beyond the scope, consequences and purposes not

only of the Beas Project as defined in section 78, but also of the Project as framed or accepted before October, 1966. It is an entirely new project devised by Haryana after 1966. Otherwise, how could it be that its capacity allocation, etc., have remained undetermined and undefined.

(e) Fifthly, no Beas Project canal from Harike plans supply of water to Haryana out of the supply there of 3.2 MAF. The entire waters are projected to supply water to the Punjab area. Out of the 2.2 MAF to be supplied at Ropar only 0.9 MAF have to go to the Haryana area, the same having been fixed in the earlier distribution itself. According to Punjab, project calculations worked Haryana's share at 0.9 MAF. If there was any arithmetical error the Centre could recheck those calculations in accordance with the defined purpose in the project for distribution of 2.22 MAF of waters at Ropar. But the Centre as explained below, in its Award of 1976, ignored both the purposes of the Project and the provisions of section 78.

(f) Non-riparian Haryana has been given 3.5 MAF at Nangal when the project provides for the delivery of 3.22 MAF at Harike with no channels to supply any water to Haryana and of 2.2 MAF at Ropar for supply to the channels both of Punjab and of Haryana. Under the Beas Project, Punjab had already constructed channels that are ready to supply water to the projects areas of Punjab. Non-perennial supply is already being given, but perennial supply could be made only after the Central decision. But how can now the projected perennial supply be made to Punjab, when instead of the contemplated 0.9 MAF, 3.5 MAF have been allotted to Haryana for areas that are beyond the plan or the purposes of the project? The purpose of the Project was to supply about 4.54 MAF to Punjab (3.22 at Harike and 1.32 MAF at Ropar) and about 0.90 MAF to Haryana. But the Central award completely frustrated the purposes of the Project. In fact, by the allotment of 3.5 to Haryana, the entire project has been demolished. The Punjab channels constructed under the project have become largely redundant. The purpose of the Project has been drastically altered so as to effect adversely the economic fate and future of Punjab and millions of Punjab is. Under section 78, the Centre has no powers of regulation that go beyond the purposes of the defined Beas project.

#### *8. River Waters and their Allocation*

The old Punjab derives its name from the presence of Satluj, Beas, Ravi, Chenab and Jhelum, the five rivers that run through its territory. All these five rivers join the Indus on to the sea. Hence the name Punjab and Indus Basin to the areas which these six rivers drain

finally into the sea. At the time of partition of India in 1947 Chenab and Jhelum remained in Pakistan Punjab and the remaining three rivers ran both in Indian Punjab and Pakistan Punjab. Thus while Indian Punjab ceases to be co-riparian regarding Chenab and Jhelum, it continues to be co-riparian in relation to Satluj, Beas and Ravi. Before partition Pakistan Punjab had a canal system which drew waters from these three co-riparian Punjab rivers. Indian Punjab being the upper riparian, during the first year after partition, it more than once virtually stopped, to the detriment of Pakistan agriculture, water supply to the canal system of Pakistan, which was fed from these rivers. Hence arose the dispute between Western Punjab and Indian Punjab.

The factual position was that before partition, Punjab had about 170 MAF of water in its rivers. It had 5.6 MAF of waters from River Jamuna of the Ganga basin, because a part of that river basin stood included in the old Punjab. After partition, including the share of Jamuna waters, the three Punjab rivers in the state had a total supply of about 38 MAF. Finally, the dispute was resolved at the international level with the decision that the waters of the three rivers, Satluj, Beas and Ravi, became the share of Indian Punjab and the waters of the other three rivers went entirely to Pakistan Punjab.

Here two points need clarification. Pakistan Punjab did not very seriously insist on the share of Indian Punjab rivers, even though it was co-riparian and its canal system was fed from them, because no country could allow its irrigation system to be controlled by and be subject to the whims of an upper riparian foreign state, especially when the relations between the two countries had not remained cordial. Second, the payment of 62 million Pounds made to Pakistan as contribution was not compensation paid for the share of waters of the three rivers, which had earlier been used in Pakistan Punjab, but it was only a minor contribution towards the cost of replacement works which had to be constructed in Pakistan Punjab rivers. Most of the cost of those replacement works was met from the aid of World institutions. Regarding this payment of contribution for replacement works former Chief Justice, S.M. Sikri says: "The fact that the Central Government paid to Pakistan a sum of \$62 millions in order to obtain unrestricted use of all waters of Eastern Rivers, the Sutlej, Ravi and Beas, is irrelevant to the question, namely, what if any, are the rights of Haryana in the Ravi and Beas. It is irrelevant because the effect of the Indus treaty, 1960, was that the sovereign right of erstwhile state of Punjab to control

or regulate the use of waters of Ravi and Beas which was a limited right in 1966 in view of the existence of the international servitude (Page 51 of Law of Succession by Counsel) ceased to be limited in 1970. It was the reorganised State of Punjab which had either retained the Sovereign right under the Act or acquired it under the Act.’<sup>6</sup>

At the time of Independence, out of about 32.5 MAF in three Punjab rivers, about 9 MAF were being used in Punjabi Suba area and one MAF was used in the erstwhile Bikaner state for which it paid royalty to Punjab, the waters being of the State and not of the Central Government. The rest of the water was being utilised in Pakistan Punjab or going down to the sea.

Here it is relevant to state that in 1954 while the Indus water dispute was going on, the Indian representative, Mr. Gulati, in order to make an argument before the Commission about the proposed utilisation of waters of the Punjab rivers, required the Central Government hastily to draw a project showing utilisation of the waters of these rivers in the Punjab and Rajasthan. Accordingly, the Centre called an officer level meeting to frame and submit a project for utilisation of 8 MAF in Rajasthan. This was done for the consumption of the Indus Water Commission. It is this show business which was later made the basis for draining the bulk of Punjab waters to Rajasthan. This allocation done in that officer-level meeting was not in pursuance of any decision by the Punjab Ministry, Government, or the Legislature, nor was an early post facto endorsement of this allocation sought.

However, it is very relevant and revealing to give the views of the International body before whom the above Rajasthan Project was presented. David E. Lilienthal, erstwhile Chairman of the Tennessee Valley Authority, and Chairman of the US Atomic Energy Commission, was asked to undertake a fact-finding tour of India and Pakistan and to report how the dispute before the Indus Water Commission could be resolved. His views were also endorsed later by the Eugene R. Black of the International Bank of Reconstruction and Development, in short, the World Bank. Taking all these views into consideration, Alloys A. Michael, author of the Indus River - A Study of the Effects of Partition, concludes as under:

“Viewed realistically the Rajasthan Project in its ultimate form is a dubious one... The ideal of extending the Rajasthan Canal parallel to the Indo-Pakistan border in the northern portion of the Thar Desert



down to a point about opposite the Sukkur Barrage was a seductive one: 7.9 million acres could be brought under command and 6.7 million of these are potentially cultivable although the project in its present form is limited to supplying water to only 4.5 million acres of which only 3.5 million would be cultivated in a given year. Even then, these lands will receive only 1 cusec (F.N.II) of water for each 250 to 300 acres, an intensity lower than what has prevailed in the Punjab since the British times (1 cusec for 200 acres) and less than one third of what prevails in the US... Assured by her geographical position and later by the treaty of the full use of the Eastern Rivers, India naturally sought an area to irrigate. Forgotten or overlooked were the fundamental differences between the Punjab, with its con-vergent streams, tapering doabs and salty soil, and the Thar desert, hundreds of miles from the Sutlej with its sand and sand dunes. The cumulative irrigation experience in India, Egypt, the US, and the Soviet Union indicates that more food and fibre can be obtained by increasing the water allowance to existing cultivated lands than by spreading water thin over new tracts... But to introduce it into the Thar Desert is economically unjustifiable. The 8.8 MAF of Beas-Sut-lej-Ravi water that are to be diverted from Harike for the Rajasthan canal could be put to much better, use in the East Punjab, north and the south of the Sutlej and in eastern margins of Rajasthan served by the Bikaner Canal and Sirhind Feeder. Combined with concentrated application of the limited fertilizers at India's disposal, yields in the established areas could be doubled or trebled at a saving in cost and pain in Rajasthan. The very experience with the Bhakra project itself, which increased water supplies to 3.3 million acres south of the Sutlej demonstrates this, yet even here, out of every 182 run into a canal, 112 are lost by seepage, evaporation and non beneficial transpiration of plants. On the Rajasthan canal, although the lining will reduce seepage in the main canal, to a minimum, evaporation alone might reduce supplies by 50 percent. And the seepage losses in the unlined branch canals, distributaries, minors, subminors, water courses, and on the bunded fields themselves will further reduce the share of water that can be used beneficially by plants of economic value..."<sup>7</sup>

The US Bureau of Reclamation and the author of the "The Indus River" severely criticized India "for undertaking a costly project to irrigate the lands which like all desert lands are highly porous and deficient in organic matter without first carrying out the basic soil surveys and the studies on the land classification. They warned that

the consequences of persisting with the project for the sake of pride by negating the technical and the economic values could be plain frustration in the end.”

The objective view of the highest authorities emphasizes the economically unjustifiable, extremely unproductive and, indeed, clearly wasteful nature of the Project to carry Punjab waters to Rajasthan areas. The significant point is that the Central insistence on transferring Punjab waters, and later increasing the allocation of Rajasthan from 8 MAF to 8.6 MAF, has been done in full knowledge of these expert observations and the results of experience and investigations pointed out above.

### *9. Central Award*

After 1947 the Bhakra Nangal Project was completed. Under this scheme 25 lakh acres have to be irrigated in non-riparian areas (16 lakhs in Haryana and 9 lakhs in Rajasthan) and only about 11 lakh acres have to be irrigated in the Riparian Punjab. We have already mentioned that this allotment contravenes the Riparian principle embodied in our Constitution.

Out of the about 32 MAF in the Punjab rivers, about 10 MAF stood utilised in the Punjabi Suba and Bikaner. It is the remaining about 22 MAF which the Centre has been distributing in a manner, and almost under the assumption, that the water of Punjab rivers belonged to the Centre for distribution in its discretion.

Even if it were assumed that what was done was constitution-ally justifiable, the distribution would apparently seem to have been governed by considerations of politics rather than by those of utility and production. After 1966 since Haryana had ceased to be riparian, it could have no right to Punjab waters. In any case, there was no ambiguity regarding the specific allocation to each area or the Haryana area in the finalised Beas Project, and there was no justification for the provisions of section 78 to 80 in the Reorganisation Act except that this unconstitutional provision could later be used as a lever for Punjab being made a sub-state and deprived of the major part of its waters and its hydel power for diversion to non-riparian states, and to schemes and projects that were not at all envisaged, much less approved, before 1966. From what has actually happened later this would seem to be the only reason for inclusion of these unconstitutional provisions.

While Punjab could insist on not giving even the 0.9 MAF provided in the Beas Project, it declined to give anything more than 0.9 MAF for the SYL Canal, a project framed and got approved without reference to or concurrence of the Punjab Government, the riparian state. Actually, the precedent was obvious in the Reorganisation Act itself, which gave the 5.6 MAF waters of Jamuna, belonging to the erstwhile Punjab, to Haryana entirely without giving any share to Punjab, which after 1966 had ceased to be riparian in reference to it. The dispute between Punjabi Suba and Haryana dragged on. It was in the interests of Haryana to do it, so that it could request the Centre to allocate waters for the SYL Project, which it had already approved unilaterally. The Bhakra Nangal Project, having already allocated the waters of Satluj, only the waters of Beas and Ravi were left, and these were made, at the instance of Haryana, the subject of Central arbitration under Section 78 of the Reorganisation Act.

The agitation against the unconstitutional provisions of the Reorganisation Act had started after 1966 and Sant Fateh Singh had kept a fast unto death in this regard. But in order to solve the issue neither the Act was changed, nor was it referred to the Constitutional Bench of the Supreme Court for decision, that being the only forum for adjudicating on such constitutional matters. But instead of doing that, the Central Government, under Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, gave in 1976, as mentioned earlier, the award allotting 3.5 MAF each to Punjab and Haryana, and 0.2 MAF to Delhi, an area unconcerned with the Reorganisation Act. The remaining 8 MAF were earmarked for Rajasthan. The decision being considered unfair and unconstitutional, the agitation against the award continued in Punjab. In 1978 when the Akali Party was in power in Punjab, the Government filed in the Supreme Court a case regarding the unconstitutionality of the Punjab Reorganisation Act and the award made there under. At that time the Congress Government was not in power at the Centre.

But in 1979 the Congress returned to power under Shrimati Indira Gandhi. The Akali Government in Punjab was dismissed. The agitation regarding the water issue was restarted. While the 'Akali agitation was going on and the Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, was having negotiations with the Akalis, she arranged in 1981 a meeting at Delhi among the Chief Ministers of Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan. All the three Chief Ministers belonged to the Congress Party and an agreement was made virtually endorsing the award of the Prime Minister.

Under it Punjab was given 4.22 MAF, Haryana 3.5 MAF, Rajasthan 8.6 MAF, J & K 65 MAF and Delhi 0.2 MAF. This time the available waters of the three rivers were assessed at a higher level, of 17.17 MAF than at 15.2 MAF as in 1976. This was just the result of arithmetic jugglery. After the agreement, the government withdrew the case pending in the Supreme Court regarding the constitutionality of the PR Act. (A report appeared in *The Tribune* according to which the Chief Minister, Punjab, had indicated that he had signed the damaging agreement under the threat of gunpoint.<sup>8</sup> The report was later denied by the Chief Minister, but it was reiterated by the correspondent). The Prime Minister soon thereafter laid the foundation of the disputed SYL Canal. The Akalis having found the door to negotiation closed against them, and the Central issue of momentous social, economic and political potential for the state summarily decided against them, and the foundation of the SYL canal having been laid, restarted the agitation at Kapoori to resist the digging of the SYL Canal. Government decision to withdraw the pending case from the Supreme Court has, from every point of view, been ruinous for the state, its people and the country. The agitation continues still, with Punjab problems increasing in number and their complications mounting from year to year. Although obvious, it needs to be stressed that a problem which had only one solution has been kept unresolved.

#### *10. Judicial Process Thwarted Yet Again*

An organisation of farmers had filed a petition in the High Court, Punjab and Haryana, regarding the unconstitutionality of the drain of the waters of the Punjab to the non-riparian states under the Reorganisation Act. The issue being of fundamental constitutional importance, the Chief Justice, S.S. Sandhawalia admitted the long pending petition and announced the constitution of a Full Bench, with himself as Chairman, for the hearing of the case on the following Monday, the 25th November, 1983. In the intervening two days before the hearing of the case could start, and these two days were holidays, two things happened. First, before Monday, the Chief Justice of the High Court was transferred to the High Court of Patna. Hence neither the Bench could sit, nor could the hearing of the case start. Second an oral application was given by the Attorney General in the Supreme Court requesting for the transfer of the writ petition from the file of the High Court to that of the Supreme Court on the ground that the issue involved was of great public importance. The request was granted; the

case was transferred.<sup>9</sup> And there this case of great public importance rests unheard for the last many years.

Evidently, it is difficult to avoid the inference that the Central Government has been reluctant to allow the constitutional issue to be decided by the courts which would permanently have solved the most important issue of the Punjab problem. In fact, while the core of the Punjab problem was kept unresolved, by avoiding a constitutional verdict, public attention was sought to be diverted to matters of so-called law and order and separatism.

### *11. Role of Supreme Court Versus Tribunal*

Another matter needs to be stressed. Throughout the decades after 1966, the Akali demand was that the water and power problem being in every aspect a constitutional issue, the only lawful and acceptable solution could be a verdict of the Supreme Court, there being already clear national and international Court rulings and precedents on the subject. But the Government had been suggesting, that the matter might be referred to a Tribunal constituted by the Government under the Inter-State Water Disputes Act, 1956. As against this suggestion it was urged that a reference to the Tribunal under that Act would, for a number of reasons, be wrong and uncalled for. First, Satluj, Ravi and Beas are not inter-state rivers in relation to Rajasthan, Haryana and Delhi, and, as such, the dispute could not be the subject of a reference to a Tribunal, the matter being not a 'water dispute' as defined under section 2 of the Act. Second, the criticism of the Punjab Reorganisation Act is that it is unconstitutional, first, because it is discriminatory and violative of Article 14 of the Constitution and, second, because its enactment is beyond the legislative powers of Parliament, water and hydel power being purely and exclusively state subjects. Therefore, the issue to be decided was the ultra vires character of the Reorganisation Act, and not the distribution of the waters, which was never in dispute. But a tribunal is not competent to decide a constitutional issue, which the Punjab was keen to have adjudicated upon and the Centre to avoid it. Hence the sole method of solution, as provided in the constitution was a reference to the Supreme Court, and not a reference to a Tribunal. Apart from the fact that a reference to the Tribunal was, for the above two reasons, uncalled for, it was objectionable otherwise too. First, a decision by an Tribunal constituted at the instance of the Central Government or the Executive authority could not have the sanction or finality of a constitutional decision by

the Supreme Court, nor could such quasi-judicial bodies, it was felt, command necessary respect, as was found in the case of Justice Shah, appointed by the Janata Government to adjudge the conduct of the erstwhile Prime Minister, Shrimati Indira Gandhi. Second, a reference to a Tribunal has been considered a negation of justice because once a Tribunal gives its verdict on a water issue, it cannot again be the subject of a reference to the Supreme Court. Since Punjab's case was against the un-constitutionality of the Reorganisation Act a reference to the Tribunal was felt to be a denial for all time of Punjab's objective of getting justice by seeking a constitutional verdict of the Supreme Court. Third, whereas a decision by a tribunal was quasi-judicial, and for that matter only of individual applicability, without the force of a constitutional ruling binding in future cases, and liable to be influenced by even non-judicial factors, a verdict of the Supreme Court, because of its general and future applicability, has strictly to be governed only by existing laws and rulings, uninfluenced by any extraneous considerations. Hence the suggestion for reference to a Tribunal was considered just a trap to avoid a judicial verdict, and to have endorsed the executive decision of the Prime Minister by a Government appointed Tribunal, thereby closing the door of the Supreme Court. Thus, for the Akalis both the constitutional path and that of negotiation stood barred, and a sore which could easily be cured was inevitably allowed to fester.

### *12. Hydrel Power Issue*

We have indicated above how over 75% of the available waters of riparian Punjab had been allotted to the non-riparian states, and the channel of approach to the Supreme Court closed. But there was a snag still left. The agreement of 1981 among the three Chief Ministers dealt with only the water issue. Hence in relation to hydel power there could still be the possibility of the constitutional issue regarding the violation of Articles 14, 162 and 246, and item 17 of the State List by Section 78 to 80 of the Reorganisation Act being raised in the Supreme Court. In May 1984, a situation was created that the Hydrel Power issue too could not be referred to the Supreme Court. For that end a new ground was found to twist the arm of the Punjab and have an out of the Court agreement regarding the hydel power issue as well. The Punjab had constructed a thermal plant at Ropar, which was to yield over 400 megawatts of electric power. For its working and cooling it was essential to draw water from the Satluj channel. After doing the cooling by circulation, the water was again to be diverted back to the

irrigation channel. But preposterous as it appears, Rajasthan and Haryana both non-riparian states, objected to even this temporary use by the Punjab of the water of its own rivers. And, the Centrally appointed Bhakra Board would not allow the proposed circulation. Had Rajasthan or Haryana any justifiable claim, it could move the Supreme Court and get its decision any time during all those earlier 17 years. But the Centre, that was controlling the Punjab projects, withheld permission to get water for cooling the Ropar Thermal Plant, and raised the issue to the level of a major dispute. Instead of advising Rajasthan to follow the constitutional path and obtain the verdict of the Supreme Court, it became a self appointed mediator using the issue of the cooling channel as the ground for pressurising Punjab into entering a hydel power agreement of the kind it was made to do in 1981 regarding the water issue.

There was President's rule at the time in Punjab, and the Governor was responsible only to the Centre whose agent he was. An agreement was obtained from among the States of Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan providing for the exclusion of the hydel dispute, which clearly involved constitutional issues, from being placed before the Supreme Court for its verdict. And the inappropriate part of the matter is that such a crucial agreement adversely affecting the long-term constitutional rights and economic interest of the entire state and its people, was signed by the Governor for the State of Punjab. He did so being fully aware of the agitation in the Punjab and the demand for a reference of the dispute to the Supreme Court. The agreement in effect provides for arbitration by a nominee of the Centre. It envisages that the Centre would refer the matter of any dispute for the opinion of the Supreme Court, and in case it declined to give such an opinion, the States would request the Supreme Court to appoint a Judge for giving an award on the dispute, and if the Supreme Court declined to do so, the Centre would itself nominate a Judge to give an award on the claims and the award shall be binding on the parties. Evidently, the object of the agreement, as in the case of the 1981 agreement, is three fold. First, it virtually gives a legal status to the baseless and un-constitutional claim of the non-riparian states against the Hydel Power project from the Punjab rivers, even though the claims are so untenable that during the last over two decades, Rajasihan has never thought of approaching any Court for a verdict on them. Second, the decision in the qmse would not be by the Supreme Court, but it would be by a nominee judge of the Centre, which

would virtually be an award. This is evident because our Constitution does not provide for taking it obligatory for the Supreme Court to give an opinion or to appoint an arbitrator at the request of two states. The very fact that the agreement provides for the third alternative of a nominee judge of the Centre, shows that the Government knew that the possibility of the acceptance of the first two alternatives is remote. Third by this agreement Punjab is barred from moving the Supreme Court and obtaining its judicial verdict on the unconstitutionality of the Reorganisation Act or the claim of the non-riparian states on Punjab Projects. Like the 1981 Water Agreement, the 1984 Hydel Power agreement closes the door of the Supreme Court for its verdict on the hydel power issue under the Reorganisation Act. In sum, the issue of the constitutional sovereignty of the Punjab over its waters and hydel power has been taken out of the purview of the Supreme Court, and made the subject of arbitration by the Centre or its nominee. Thus, 'the ultra vires character of the Section 78 to 80 of the Reorganisation Act would remain unchallenged and unexposed. The agreement of 1981 and 1984 are clear instruments both to legitimize the permanent channelising of 75% of the Punjab waters, and hydel power to non-riparian states, and to destroy the constitutional right of Punjab under Article 131 to have the SYL drain set aside by a judicial verdict of the Supreme Court.

### *13. Water Needs of Punjab*

At the time of Independence the Punjabis generally and the Sikhs particularly, were the worst sufferers in the loss of men, property and lands. Lakhs of acres of well developed land mostly colonised by them and generally irrigated by canals, had to be left behind in Pakistan. Lakhs were murdered, and the rest under threat of extinction had to migrate to India as penniless refugees.

Two facts indicate the kind of welcome they got in their country. First, the broad policy became that these refugees would remain virtually confined to the erstwhile Punjab area. There were lands in abundance, mostly undeveloped, outside Punjab, which could be made available to them and later developed, as they were subsequently done in many a case. This would have meant that these unfortunate refugees, while they could not be compensated for the colossal loss of men, moveable property and houses, could be compensated in respect of at least the area of their lands, if not regarding its quality or source of irrigation. But government policy envisaged that the refugees should be



accommodated on lands the Muslim migrants of Indian Punjab had evacuated. This available land, apart from being unequal in quality to the lands Hindu and Sikh migrants had left, was extremely small in area and sources of its irrigation. Actually whereas the lands they had left were mostly irrigated by the canals, the available perennially irrigated avacuee lands were less than one third of the area they had left. The refugees had left 67 lakh acres or 39.35 Standard acres, out of which 43 lakh acres were generally irrigated and 22 lakh acres were perennially irrigated. Against this in India they got 47 lakh acres or 24.28 Standard acres, of which 22 lakh acres were generally irrigated and only 4 lakhs were perennially irrigated.<sup>10</sup> The result was a very heavy blow in the form of cuts extending upto 95% of the land claims of the refugees. The second unjustifiable blow, as mentioned earlier, is the transfer or allocation of over 75% of available water of Punjab rivers to the non-riparian states, thereby depriving Punjab of its own water resources which could justifiably be used for the purpose of irrigating the barani (unirrigated lands) allotted to the poorly compensated refugees. It is a known fact that in 1947 the Indian Punjab was, because of lack of tubewell and other irrigation, deficient in food. This gives the back-ground.

Punjabi Suba has, at present, 105 lakh acres of cultivable land. Because of the needs of modern agriculture, double cropping, hybrid seeds, etc., minimum water needs to mature an acre of land are according to University and Government experts over 5 to 6 acre feet of water per annum for the commonly followed paddy- wheat rotation. Thus, Punjab's minimum water needs amount to 52.5 MAF, of water per annum. Satluj, Ravi and Beas, have a water flow of only about 32.5 MAF. It shows how deficient Punjab is in its water resources; and modern agriculture is impossible and uneconomic without 'assured' irrigation. This means that even if the entire Punjab resources of water are utilised in the state, these would not meet even the minimum requirements for its lands, and could at most supply about 3 acre feet of water per acre.

The present position is that only about 37 lakh acres of Punjab lands are canal irrigated. The sanctioned water supply per acre of commanded area is hardly adequate for the requirements of assured irrigation necessary for modern agriculture. On the basis of minimum requirement of water, the supply necessary for 37 lakh acres comes to about 18 MAF, whereas the agreed allotment to Punjab is only about

15 MAF. It means that after 1947 out of the available waters less than 25% have been allotted to Punjab. It is, therefore, necessary to emphasize that even for the canal irrigated lands, the peasant has, so as to reach the level of assured irrigation, to sink tubewells to make up for the deficiency of canal water supply. Accordingly, Punjab peasants have performed sunk over 8.5 lakh tubewells at a capital cost of over 1,200 crores. Considering the colossal loss in irrigated land the present refugee inhabitants of Punjab had suffered in 1947, the irony of injustice to Punjab in the unconstitutional allotment of over 75% of Punjab water resources to non-riparian States becomes too evident to be ignored by any academician especially when its transfer to distant non-riparian desert areas has been considered almost wasteful and poorly productive.

#### *14. Dismal Future of Tubewell Irrigation*

The second and intimately related part of the issue is tubewell irrigation in the state. It is indicative of the enterprising spirit of the Punjab peasants that they have sunk at a capital cost of about 1200 crores and on their own initiative, about 8.5 lakh tubewells in order to irrigate another 55 lakh acres and to supplement canal water supplies so as to make it assured. But, this aspect of the matter has some serious dark side as well. The latest figure is not available but a few years back only about half of the tubewells were energised by electricity. The rest were run on diesel oil. Normally, the cost of electric irrigation, apart from the need of capital investment of Rs. 2,000 per acre, and the erratic nature of supply, is 3 to 4 times that of canal irrigation. In addition, sub-soil waters cause sometimes, complications because of salinity in the underground strata. As against it, canal water has the quality to refurbish the soil with deficient micro-nutrients. In addition canals serve as natural drains.

The cost of diesel irrigation, apart from its continually rising prices and scarcity of procurement, is considered ten to twelve times higher than that of canal irrigation.

But in addition the greatest danger of tubewell irrigation, both short term and long term is, because of over-draw, the continuing fall of sub-soil water level. For this reason, during the last decade water level has gone down from 3 to 10 feet or even more. Experts have assessed the average fall on this account to be 12 inches per annum. Peasants have therefore, to face the problem of periodical sinking of the water pipes and lowering of the pumping sets. The phenomenon has already reached dangerous proportions, with the result that in-

most areas tubewell irrigation and, for that matter, modern agriculture, have become unremunerative. Government has therefore, classified areas into 3 classes, black, grey and white. Of the 118 Blocks in the state, 69 are black, meaning that tubewell sinking is unremunerative there. Twenty are grey blocks, meaning that tubewell irrigation is feasible, but only to a limited extent. The remaining 29 Blocks are called 'white'. But in all these Blocks the water is brackish, saline or very deep. There is no sweet water in these Blocks. Hence exploitation is hardly possible. So limited irrigation is possible only in 20 blocks out of 118.

But the greatest fear is that because of the continuous draw of subsoil water, by the end of the decade or the century, a very large majority of the existing tubewells would become non-functional. Dr. Dhillon of the PAU and other experts draw a dismal future of tubewell irrigation in the Punjab. Their repeated warnings are based on clear calculations. Two facts have to be ascertained in this regard, namely, the annual draw of subsoil water by the tubewells and the annual recharge of soil by rain and seepage. According to the Punjab Government white paper, the annual available subsoil water is 3 MAF.<sup>12</sup> Evidently, this is on the assumption that the sub-soil water level is not allowed to fall and only the recharge part is drawn each year. The second fact is the 8 to 8.5 lakh functioning tubewells. On an average a tubewell gives assured irrigation, i.e. at least 4 acre ft. of water, if not 5, to 8 acres. It means that the annual draw of water is at least 27 MAF. This makes for an annual gap or overdraw of 24 MAF. It is necessary to state that tubewell irrigated area is 55 lakh acres and not 68 lakh acres, because, canal supply being woefully inadequate for assured irrigation, a sizeable part of tubewell water is diverted to supplement canal supply to make irrigation 'assured'. According to another apparently inflated assessment of the Central Ground Water Board, the ground water supply or recharge is 10.6 MAF.<sup>13</sup> This would give us a gap of about 16.4 MAF per annum. There is a third method of calculation which is an assessment based on the water requirements of crops actually cultivated. The available estimate relates to the matured crops in 1986-87. These calculations - approved by the World Bank; are that the total water consumed by the crops in 86-87 was 37.7 MAF. Considering the annual recharge of about ten MAF and the water supply from canals of about 15.6 MAF (This indicates actual water utilised by Punjab because of non-utilisation of allotted water by Rajasthan and Haryana, although

the allotment to Punjab is less), the overdraw comes to about 12 MAF per. annum. According to these three methods the overdraw of sub-soil water is between 12 and 24 MAF per annum, leading to an average annual drop of over 12 inches, measured after the great flood year of 1988 when the earlier falls in the sub-soil water had to a considerable extent been made up. Even in that year the water table in some Punjab districts like Ludhiana, Patiala, etc. was rapidly going down near the “danger line.”<sup>14</sup>

In this context, the prospects are going to be dismal, especially if the existing Central policies and decisions are continued. Punjab is today irrigating 551 lakhs acres from its tubewells, 50% more area than canal irrigation, and in addition the tubewells supplement canal waters to give 37 lakh acres assured irrigation, which an erratic canal water supply can never itself do. These realities are making the degradation to the “danger line” inevitable, with the result that in about a decade about three fourth of the tubewells will become nonfunctional, thereby reducing the area irrigated by tubewells by about 40 lakhs acres which would become barani (unirrigated). According to existing estimates, if the Punjab user of canal water is reduced to the level of actual allotment, another about ten lakh acres would become unirrigated. In other words the irrigated area in Punjab from both sources would drop down by about 50 lakh acres because of diversion of river waters to non-riparian areas. The fall due to the drain would be colossal, and calamitous. Its obvious injustice can be judged from the fact that a state and its people who had suffered in 1947 tremendous losses in men, property, land and irrigation are, instead of being compensated for their losses, being deprived of the natural wealth of the area, where they had come to settle after being uprooted. For, on the one hand, their natural resources which are to give them cheap canal irrigation as against the exorbitantly expensive tubewell irrigation, are being diverted to the non-riparian states, on the other hand, they are being made to face the prospects of about 50 lakh acres of their land becoming barani leading to catastrophic economic and social consequences. Here it is necessary to record an expert conclusion: “How long can this state of affairs last? We must take steps to correct the situation, lest our grand children inherit a land returned to semi-desert conditions.”<sup>15</sup> The basic importance of water and hydel power in our modern life and culture can hardly be over emphasized. In this regard Dr. W. C. Lowdermilk in his report to the Economic and Social Development

Council of the United Nations writes : “the present water supplies both in developed as well as undeveloped areas are either already insufficient or will prove to be so, in the foreseeable future, which will mean a severe set back to the economic development. The rate of increase in water require-ments is greater than that in population.”<sup>16</sup>

### *15. Satluj -Jamuna (Yamuna) Link Canal*

There is a strong expert opinion that 3.5 MAF allocated for the SYL Canal, the waters of which have to join Jamuna waters to be lifted for irrigation in Gurgaon (in Jamuna basin), would not be available to it without substantial decrease in supply’ to the old running canals of Punjab, thereby reducing the irrigated area of the state by about ten lakh acres. The corresponding damage, it has been stressed, would be serious in districts like Bathinda, Faridkot and Ferozepur, especially because the ground water in those districts is saline and carries toxic elements like boron and flourides. Supplies to the level of allotments made by the Central Government for Rajasthan and the SYL Canal would never be available from Satluj even if the MB Link were completed, although before its completion the question of supply to SYL ‘Canal cannot arise; and the scheduled date for the completion of the Thein Dam Project is about a decade later than that of the SYL Canal.

An important factor which is forgotten while making calculation for the supply of waters to the SYL Canal, is to accept the figure of “mean water discharge” instead of the “dependable annual flow” which is the only realistic figure, because of its availability during 90% of the time. The existing requirement of three Canals, Bhakra Canal, Sirhind Canal and Doabist Restricted Perennial, is 14.76. MAF but the “dependable flow” from Satluj is 11.125 MAF. Hence, even if the Beas Satluj Link worked to full capacity, the dependable flow from Satluj would not be above 13.37 MAF. This will be the highest level, considering that the loss of availability in the Pong Dam for Harike will have to be made up by a release of about 1.37 MAF at Bhakra for Harike canals. Therefore, these calculations show that even if the Beas Satluj Link worked to the full, the old scheduled supply to the old Punjab canals, would hardly be met. For, as against the demand of 14.76 the total dependable supply could only be 13.37 MAF. Dr. Dhillon in his article “More blood than water down SYL” and Dr. V.P. Singh another expert in his paper, “What Surplus to Share”, have independently arrived at similar conclusions. The latter, writes “The

moment the SYL flows, 9.75 lakh acres or 3.91akh hectares will go barren in these districts.” According to him “apart from the minimum estimated crop loss of 900 crores per annum and loss by its effect on agro-industries and reduction in employment, the biggest damage will be the changing of saline dis-tricts into desert.”<sup>17</sup>

### *16. Rajasthan Canal - An Unproductive Venture*

It has already been indicated that the project for use of Punjab waters in non-riparian Thar Desert areas was proposed purely as a contrivance to convince the Indus Waters Commission that Punjab waters could be fully utilised within India. As it is, it was done hastily at the instance of Mr. Gulati, the Indian Representative before the Commission. While Pakistan would never have allowed its canal system to work according to the whims and will of the upper riparian authorities whom they considered hostile towards their interests, the Indus Water Authorities have considered Indian Projects in Rajasthan to be wasteful. They have severely warned and ‘criticised India against taking up such a hazardous project, without proper investigation and study. We have already recorded some of their expert observations.

This criticism of Rajasthan Projects has been two-fold. First, that these Projects are economically unjustifiable, especially when the use of those waters in Punjab for lands close at hand could be far more productive and at a far less cost. Further, it has been stressed that because of lack of drainage in Rajasthan and the difficulties of creating any worthwhile drainage, these Projects would create more problems than they would solve.

Already while the Projects in Rajasthan are under construction and water utilisation is partial and at preliminary stages, the areas where stage I of the Canal has been completed, “are blighted by significant water logging and salinity. In the view of many experts on Water and Power Consulting Agencies (Like WAPCOS), the problem is likely to be more acute in the stage II areas of the Canal, if the same cropping pattern and mode of irrigation continues.” The problems that the experts have warned against are : “Accelerated rise of water table, salinity, seepage, water logging and increased incidence of disease. The study warns that these long-run problems can more than offset short-term benefits like infrastructural facilities and which accrue as soon as irrigation is introduced.” Soil analysis shows that “water logging and similar conditions are spreading rapidly. Water logging and salinity account for about 34% of the irrigated area at Stage 1.18 The above is

the position at the preliminary stage. With time, the warning says, the conditions are going to be worse. The fundamental trouble is the lack of drainage and there is hardly any feasibility of it in the desert and semi-desert areas of Rajasthan. But the unfortunate part is that despite all expert warnings and the known wasteful and uneconomic nature of the - Projects, the Centre has persisted in diverting waters of riparian Punjab into the semi-desert areas of non-riparian Rajasthan, hundreds of miles away.

### *17. Decision by Tribunal*

We have indicated above the position of all allocations and the subsequent agitation in Punjab, culminating in the tragedies of 1984. In 1985 the Centre had at last had its own way in regard to the water problem. After 1984 the Akali leadership capitulated completely because it stood discredited both with its own people and the Central Government. They were anxious somehow to rehabilitate themselves and in 1985 agreed that the SYL Canal against which the agitation had been started at Kapbori in 1981, would be completed within months and the water issue would be referred to an Inter-state water dispute Tribunal instead of to the Supreme Court. Thus, they gave up a demand for which they had been agitating and struggling for the earlier two decades. In full knowledge of the fact that a dispute regarding a state river could not be referred to a Tribunal under the ISWD Act, the water problem was placed before a Tribunal constituted for the purpose. Of course the Tribunal could not give any verdict about the constitutionality of sections 78 to 80 of the Reorganisation Act. As was feared or anticipated from a tribunal, it has, in defiance of the legal or standard definition of a basin or valley, made the following allocations: Punjab 5.0 MAF, Haryana : 3.83 MAF, Rajasthan : 8.60 MAF, Delhi: 0.2 MAF, Jammu and Kashmir: 0.65 MAF. The over all increase to 18.28 MAF from 17.17 is again, as in 1981, an arithmetic projection without any ground reality. The broad ratio of allocations among Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan remains more or less the same as in 1981.

### *18. Political Implications of the Water Problem*

The history of the water problem shows that for over two decades the Punjab has been resisting the unconstitutional allocation of its natural wealth, and the Centre has consistently been, taking steps to serve the non-riparian states even though the diversion has been considered extremely ruinous for the Punjab and its people. All attempts by Punjab to follow the straight and simple constitutional course so as to solve

the problem through the Supreme Court were frustrated. The Centre could succeed in its objective, because it was felt, the constitution was heavily centralised and this enabled it to interfere and intrude at its will in the state administration and functioning. Apart from that, the Centre had created institutions like the Planning Commission and the Water and Power Commission, both non-statutory bodies, that had over the years been the instrument of controlling and determining every scheme, project and activity of the state even in its own statutory field. The classic example is the Thein Dam, a state scheme for the development of Ravi waters, costing originally only 70 crores, which for decades could not receive clearance from these bodies and the Central Government, although its cost has since risen to over 800 crores. The underlying reason for not approving the scheme is said to be the contemplated Central award of 1976, which has allotted to distant Rajasthan and Haryana share of the waters and hydel power of the Ravi, running on the border between Pakistan and the Punjabi Suba. Another classic example of the dwarfed political status and autonomy of the State is that it is not competent to construct even a cooling channel to circulate water for its Thermal plant from its own waters in its own territory.

The history of the Punjab water problem and the Central policies, decisions, doings and undoings in this regard, deeply im-printed on the minds of the Punjab that under the existing centralized set-up it was virtually impossible for the Punjabi Suba to work effectively even within its own sphere or maintain and exploit its own resources and natural wealth. For, instead of solving once for all the central issue of the Punjab problem by a reference to the Supreme Court, the Centre has been raising the matter of Law and Order. This side tracked the real issue. There is a serious opinion in some quarters that if this simple judicial process had been followed, perhaps the course of events that led to the tragedies of Bluestar, Wood Rose, the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, and the massacre of Sikhs in Delhi and other parts of the country would have been avoided. But the Punjab problem still continues unsolved. Besides, the Punjab found that Sections 78 to 80, apart from being economically ruinous for the Punjab, had placed a virtual ceiling on its economic growth, development and political progress. Because a state which in modern times could not exploit its own resources, or control and develop that wealth, could hardly be considered to have any worthwhile economic or political autonomy



or status. Hence in 1978 the Akali Party reiterated its demand for an autonomous state, called the Anandpur Sahib Resolution, which the Sikh representatives in the Punjab Assembly had unanimously made in 1949, saying that Indian Constitution, as had consistently been proclaimed by the Congress Party and its leaders, should be a Federal structure with only Defence, Foreign Affairs and Communications to be the Central subjects. Because autonomy envisaged under this resolution, they felt, to be the only constitutional arrangement that could undo the drain of Punjab's natural wealth and avoid thereby its clearly imperilled socio-economic stability and remove the ceiling on its political growth.

#### *19. Loss of Punjab*

Broadly speaking, about 19 MAF of waters of Punjab, have been allocated to non-riparian states. At the present rate of water allowance prevalent in Punjab" it would irrigate about 45 to 50 lakh acres in Haryana and Rajasthan. The statistical abstracts show that in Punjab the food grain yield per acre of irrigated land is 2.2 tons higher than that in the non-irrigated areas. Thus, irrigation gives an additional income of about Rs. 5,000 per acre. This means an annual loss of about Rs. 2,250 to 2,500 crores per annum to Punjab and an equivalent gain to the non-riparian states each year. Further loss in the generation of employment, subsidiary industries and trade would also be considerable. Similarly, the annual loss in power and consequent loss in industrial production, reinvestment and generation of employment would easily be four times more. This loss is being suffered when Punjab's farmers are in acute need both of water and power, and its industry is in serious need of cheap energy. The farmers are losing about anything between 100 to 150 crores each year by having to resort to inefficient and expensive diesel irrigation or ill-fed electric tubewells.

Experts fear a calamitous fall of about 40 lakh acres in the area under tubewell irrigation, if the existing overdraw is not stopped. Hence, substitution of tubewell irrigation by canal irrigation is a dire necessity to avoid the socio-economic disaster.

#### *20. Constitutionality of The Tribunal*

There is one aspect of the tangled Punjab water problem, which remains, as before, unsolved. It is true that the Centre has through a tragic course of events been able finally to get a verdict of the Tribunal regarding the allocation of Punjab waters to Haryana and Rajasthan

without a prior decision of the Supreme Court on the unconstitutionality of Sections 78 to 80 of the PR Act. But, an allied constitutional issue has arisen and remains unsolved, namely, the value and validity of the amendment of the ISWD Act by which the dispute of Ravi and Beas has been referred to the Tribunal. The fundamental constitutional hurdle remains, because Ravi and Beas, being not inter-state rivers, any issue about the allocation of their waters, cannot be adjudicated upon by the Tribunal under that Act, since it is not a 'water dispute' as defined in Section 2 of that Act. Merely adding an enabling Section to the ISWD Act for allowing a reference of the Ravi Beas water issue to the Tribunal does not by itself make the Tribunal constitutionally competent, or enhance its jurisdiction to decide the Ravi-Beas water dispute, or make that dispute an inter-state river water dispute as defined in Section 2. This dispute about a state river cannot be entertained in relation to a non-riparian state for adjudication until Section 2 of the ISWD Act is amended to include such a dispute, namely, a dispute concerning a state river as between a riparian state and a non-riparian state. And the difficulty is that such an amendment cannot validly be made, because item 56 gives powers to the Parliament to legislate only in regard to an inter-state river, and not in regard to a dispute concerning a state river. Hence neither the present amendment of the ISWD Act is of any meaning or value, nor can an amendment of Section 2 of it be validly made by Parliament under item 56 of list I, which gives powers to it in respect of only inter-state river disputes and not about a state river dispute like the one concerning Ravi or Beas. Hence, we believe, that the Punjab water and hydel power problem still remains, as before, the fundamental issue that is going to determine, on the one hand, the socio-economic health and growth of its people, particularly of the rural masses, and on the other hand, all political development, peace and amity in the state.

### *21. Conclusion*

We have given a brief factual statement of Punjab river waters problem. Perhaps it would go down in history as the issue that has continued to be mishandled, and misrepresented for over two decades by all the actors of the scene. It appears to be a clear classic example showing how human prejudices can not only plague the course of public affairs, but also of peace between sister communities of neighbouring States that have lived in amity for centuries on end. There is little doubt both as to how ruinous, economically, socially and politically would be the diversion of Punjab waters and how

wasteful and unproductive, would be those waters to the distant non-riparian desert areas in Rajasthan.

The manner in which the central Government has persistently refused to refer the issue to the Supreme Court, has withdrawn it when it had been done, and followed every other course, excepting the simplest one, which no state or party could object to, shows clearly that the Centre had throughout the belief that the drain of Punjab waters and hydel power to non-riparian area was constitutionally un-warranted and unsustainable. For, as we have explained earlier, the constitutional problem remains unsolved as before. The unfortunate part of it is that it is the social, economic and political fall-outs that have caused great human suffering. And what is worse still is that it is difficult to pretend and hope that the issue would not in the future create further complications and catastrophies. Because by providing unmerited gains to million of families in non-riparian Rajasthan and Haryana, there is created a hostility of interests between the peoples of neighbouring states which could be a major hurdle against both solution of the Punjab problem and peace in the country.

To us the lesson seems to be clear that no amount of political measures can change the geographical realities, that Punjab is riparian in relation to Ravi, Beas and Satluj, and Rajasthan, Haryana and Delhi territories are not. In fact, the allocation of Jamuna waters to Haryana itself concedes that.

The Punjab Rivers issue holds the key to understanding the Punjab problem and how the manner in which it has been dealt with has determined the course of socio-economic and political events, including peace and harmony in the state.

The present position is that large scale diversion of Punjab waters and hydel power is sought to be made a fait accompli. This diversion apart from being disastrous to the future of the state has led to a standing contradiction that while Punjab should year after year continue to suffer devastating flood losses, actually running to over a billion dollars even in a single year, the non-riparian states should reap each year a benefit of over a billion dollars from the waters of those very rivers. It is a classic case of the gross violation of the fundamental principle of equity on which the riparian law in every country is based. This diversion is the real hurdle to its solution. This being against the spirit and letter of our constitution, forms the stumbling block why peace, prosperity and growth in the state cannot be restored till it is removed. This is the

essential aspect of the problem, which needs serious study and consideration for its under-standing by every student and scholar. In sum, the Centre wants unjustifiably to drain Punjab of its natural wealth, which its op-ponents seek to avoid because of its evidently ruinous effects.

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## THE SIKH CODE OF CONDUCT

**R. S. WAHIWALA**

Guru Gobind Singh issued a proclamation to the Sangat at Kabul in the form of a letter. It is dated 10 Jeth 1756 (Samvat), that is 23 May 1699. Clearly it was issued after he had initiated the ‘panj pyare’ and established the order of the Khalsa. It reads as follows:

“The entire Kabul Sangat comes under my sustenance and protection. The Guru’s blessings ‘are’ upon you. I am very pleased with you. You should get yourselves initiated with the double-edged sword by the panj pyare. Keep the hair uncut. Never do away with kirpan and kachha. Always wear a steel kara. Look after your hair by combing it twice a day, never eat kutha meat. Do not smoke or keep family ties with those who kill their daughters. Do not enter into the company of Minas, Masands or Ramrayas. Always meditate on the name Wahiguru and follow the Guru’s ways. I am pleased with the Sangat.”

The code of conduct, which is a brief set of rules to be observed by Sikhs has much more to say. A number of instructions have been laid down in the gurbani with regard to Nam Simran and the ethics of life. Leading Sikhs and close associates of Guru Gobind Singh came out with various Rahit Namas and Tankhah Namas, from time to time.

Many things as mentioned in the aforesaid letter of the Guru are quite common in those “Hukam Namas” and “Tankhah Namas”, but there are a few deviations and even incorrect observations here and there. A few such examples to be mentioned here are:

“Tankhah Nama Bhai Daya Singh.” “Tankhah Nama Bhai Prahlaad Singh.” “Rahit Nama Bhai Desa Singh.” “Ra hit Nama Bhai Chopa Singh”, “Ratan Singh Bhangu.”

At times references are also made to various other religious books, like “Sarab Loh Granth”, “Gur Partap Suraj” or “Suraj Parkash of Bhai Santokh Singh”, “Panth Parkash of Bhai Rattan Singh” and “Prem Sumarag.”

It became quite essential to produce a code of conduct acceptable to all the schools of thought. This hazardous task was

undertaken by the Shromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, which is considered to be the supreme body of the religion. They have their headquarters at the Samundri Hall, Darbar Sahib, Arnritsar. There are five Takhats (the religious thrones of the Sikh religion). Four out of the five are managed by this body. The fifth one, "Takhat Sri Hazur Sahib" is managed by the local committee of the Takhat itself. In the year 1936 this strenuous job was entrusted to the Raho Rit Sub-Committee. A number of prominent Sikhs and scholars of the time were its members. The list includes Jathedars and Head Granthis of the Takhats, Sikh missions, scholars, Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha, Bhai Vir Singh, Bhai Gurmukh Singh, representatives of the Sikh organisations from the length and breadth of India and abroad. The draft outlines laid down by the Raho Rit Committee were printed and circulated amongst the Sikh nation. Many Sikh organisations, Singh Sabas, prominent Sikh Sants and other Sikhs sent their comments. The final draft of the Rahit Maryada was approved in the year 1945. Out of the twenty-three Sikh organisations which participated in this exercise, one to be mentioned here was the Shromani Akali Dal : the President of the Dal, Master Tara Singh, was one of the active participants in the meetings. The representative of the "Takhat Sri Hazur Sahib" also rendered tremendous help in shaping the Rahit Maryada. Teachers, scholars, Istri Satsang, Jathedars of all the Tak-hats, missionary colleges and the Singh Sabhas fully contributed in this hard exercise of approval, deliberation, editing, reading, writing, revising and printing.

Let us now have a look at the Rahit Maryada itself. It opens with a definition of the Sikh.

*Sikh*

A Sikh has been defined here as one who believes in the one and only God. He possess an undaunted faith in the preachings of the Gurus and the Gurbani. He believes in initiation offered by the Five Beloved Ones. He has no faith in the religious orders outside Sikhism. His image is two-fold (i) Personal life (ii) Congregational faith in the institutional life. He meditates on the Wahiguru. The five passages of Gurbani as laid down for daily worship are: Japji of Guru Nanak, Jap and Swayas of Guru Gobind Singh as the morning prayers: Rehras (the first nine passages after Japji from Guru Granth Sahib, Chaupai of Guru Gobind Singh and six stanzas of the Anand Sahib of Guru Arnar

Oas), as his evening prayer, and (Kirtan) Sohila as the bed-time prayer, Sikhs always offer an Ardas at the conclusion of each one of the prayers.

#### *Ardas*

Ardas, offered by the Sikhs is unique in character. It opens with words of praise devoted to God. There after, Sikhs meditate on the names of the Ten Gurus and the Holy Guru Granth Sahib, and their preachings. Various references appreciating the deeds, services and sacrifices of the martyrs, brave men and women, saints and people of wisdom are made. After every such stanza, a chant of “Wahiguru” is uttered. After meditating on the Holy Takhats, Shrines, emblems, the national flag and Sikh mansions and praying for the prosperity of the Sikh nation, another chant of “Wahiguru” is made.

Finally, it is prayed that the Sikhs be blessed with the spirit of Sikhism, keeping long hair, the gift of meditation on God’s Name, confidence in God, full faith, the gift of knowledge and an opportunity of a visit to the Nectar of Arnritsar.

Towards the end of the Ardas, there is prayer for the forgiveness of errors and commissions in chanting or reciting the Gurbani. They pray to meet those blessed ones, in whose company they are inspired to meditate on the Name of the Almighty God. The prayer always ends with:

“O Nanak, let Nam be held in the highest esteem. By your grace may the world prosper and may your “blessings descend upon everyone.”

#### *The Gurdwara (Sikh Temple)*

The Gurdwara has been defined as a place for congregational prayer and worship. The Holy Guru Granth Sahib is seated on a platform under the cover of a canopy, called “chanani” and a chour is always kept at hand to wave over it as a mark of respect. When the Holy Granth is brought in or out of the place of its rest or from anywhere, the entire congregation stands and bows their heads in reverence. Ardas is always offered at the time of opening or closing the Holy Granth Sahib. Ringing of bells, incense, burning of ghi (butter oil) lamps, or waving of the arti dish before the Guru Granth Sahib is considered superstitious. No other holy book can ever be installed along with the Guru Granth Sahib, and the celebration of religious ceremonies other than the Sikh ones is prohibited in the Gurdwara. All the visitors, Sikhs or non-Sikhs, must cover their heads and take off their shoes before entering the Gurdwara. No intoxicants, alcohol, drugs or tobacco are allowed in the Gurdwara. The seating arrangements for all the

congregation are uniform. No-one is offered special place to be seated in the Gurdwara.

#### *Singing of Hymns*

Hymns should be limited to the Gurbani or the authentic verses of Bhai Gurdas or of Bhai Nand Lal. Discourses on the Gurbani with reference to the writings of Bhai Nand Lal or Bhai Gurdas, Gurpartap Suraj, Mehma Parkash or such religious books may be delivered in the Gurdwara. The purpose is mainly to present spiritual aspects, and strict injunctions are given to speakers to observe respect towards other religions. However, healthy comparison is not disallowed.

Sikhs are also required to sing, chant or recite the Gurbani or at least read a few pages from the Holy Guru Granth, congregation-ally or in their own family daily. On the conclusion of recitations, discourses or an such assembly, the Anand Sahib (six stanzas) is recited, followed by Ardas. Finally a Hukam Nama is read from the Guru Granth Sahib before distribution of Karah Parshad.

#### *Sahaj Path*

Every Sikh should learn Gurmukhi and read the Holy Granth. They should read at least a hymn by way of Hukam Nama, (spiritual order) before their morning meals. Should they not be in a position to do so, they may do so at any other appropriate hour of the day.

Sikhs are also desired to read the Holy Granth from cover to cover over any suitable period convenient to them at least once a year or so. This is called Sehaj Path. At many times a Sehaj Path can be completed much earlier than this, say a week or so.

#### *Akhand Path*

An uninterrupted continuous recital of the Holy Guru Granth is called an Akhand Path. It takes normally about forty eight hours to complete the reading, and a number of Gur-Sikhs can perform it by taking turns. No other book should be read along with the Holy Granth at the time of Akhand Path. The complete recitation of the Guru Granth is then followed by Anand Sahib, Ardas, Hukam Nama and distribution of Karah Parshad.

#### *Karah Parshad*

In order to remove caste distinctions and to teach social equality, Guru Nanak started the custom of distribution of Karah Pars had amongst the congregation. It is a preparation of butter (ghi), flour and sugar mixed in equal proportions and is often prepared in an iron pan. Recitation of the Anand (Six stanzas, i.e. the first five and last,



fortieth one) is followed by Ardas. The person officiating as, Granthi, or some other Gur-Sikh, touches the parshad with a Kirpan (sword). The parshad is distributed amongst the congregation equally, irrespective of caste, colour or creed. Before the distribution of the Parshad commences, a portion of it is set aside in the memory of the Five Beloved ones and for the Granthi sitting in attendance upon the Guru Granth Sahib. This is then given to five Sikhs and the Granthi.

*Living according to the Guru's Teachings*

Sikhs should live and work in accordance with the principles of Sikhism. They should believe in the oneness of the Ten Gurus, having no belief in caste, black magic, or superstitions like feeding Brahmins in the name of their ancestors, or fasting. They may, if they like, read the holy scriptures of other religions but only for the sake of the general enlightenment and in no way to offend others in this respect. They should never cut their hair, nor that of their sons or daughters, and as a matter of duty they should teach Sikhism to their children. Sikh boys should be named Singhs and girls Kaurs. The use of intoxicants like alcohol, tobacco or drugs is prohibited to them. Infanticide is strongly condemned. Sikhs should live on their own hard-earned income, and keep aside a Daswandh (tenth) from it, for religious or charitable purposes. Sikhs should never indulge in gambling, theft or adultery. All women other than man's wedded wife, should be respected as mothers, sisters or daughters. A Sikh should be faithful to his wife, as she should be to him. There is no restriction on wearing any kind of dress, but a turban for males is essential.

*Birth and the Naming Ceremony*

After the birth of the child, on an appropriate day, the child and the mother accompanied by some relatives or friends, go to Gurdwara. After offering a thanks-giving prayer, when the Hukam Nama is taken, the first letter of the verse is noted and the name of the child should commence with this initial. No omens or superstitions should ever be observed.

*Anand Karaj (Marriage)*

Sikh men and women are married at mature age. A betrothal ceremony is not essential, but if it does take place, it should be very simple. A mutually convenient date for the marriage having been fixed, the ceremony is solemnised in the presence of the Holy Guru Granth. The marriage vows should be explained to and clearly understood by the bride and the groom. It is either done by the Granthi or some learned person from among the congregation. After having their

consent, the marriage ceremony is solemnized by chanting the four stanzas from the Holy Guru Granth, called, "Lavan." Anand Karaj is essential to solemnize a marriage among Sikhs. Polygamy is highly discouraged and the couple is enjoined to be faithful to each other. The same ceremony is performed at the time of a widow or widower's remarriage.

#### *Death Ceremony*

Lamentations at the time of death or thereafter are highly discouraged. The dead bodies of the adult or child, male or female, should be cremated.

At the time of cremation, a prayer known as "Kirtan Sohila" should be offered. The bereaved family, for their solace as well as for the peace of the departed soul, start the reading of the Holy Granth.

It could be a Sehaj Path or Akhand Path. On the concluding day the final prayer should be offered.

#### *Discipline of Service*

The Holy service in the Gurdwara or to the community is an essential part of a Sikh's duty. Service recognises no barriers of religion, caste, creed or sex. It may not necessarily be in the form of charity but may vary according to the needs of the hour. Gurdwaras are rather the laboratories for teaching sacred service to the community. This service is called "Sewa"

#### *Langar (Free Kitchen)*

This is also called Guru Ka Langar. The purpose of community dining is to spread a message of equality and brotherhood of mankind. All are treated alike in the Langar, thus removing the evil of un-touchability from amongst Sikhs. It is an important institution with the Sikhs and is run in every Gurdwara to serve the needy and the hungry.

#### *Corporate Life (Panthak Rehani)*

A Sikh is supposed to practise holy service in social life as well, i.e. service for the organisation (panth). This is very important. Every Sikh is expected to take part in the life of the community as a matter of sacred duty to the Panth.

#### *Amrit Sanskar (Initiation)*

The initiation of the Sikhs is called "Amrit Sanskar." The Amrit Sanskar ceremony is usually held in a Gurdwara, in the presence of the holy Guru Granth Sahib. At least six initiated Sikhs (Five Beloved Ones and Sixth in attendance on the Holy Granth) are required to conduct this ceremony. The Five Beloved Ones, and those desirous of

being initiated, offer Ardas before conducting the Sanskar. Thereafter, the Holy Vows (The Rahit) are administered to them. The Amrit is prepared in an iron bowl, water and sugar crystals are added to the bowl while it is being held securely by the Five Beloved Ones. One by one, they stir it by means of the double edged sword (Khanda), while in turn, each one of them recites one of the following five banis:

The Japji of Guru Nanak  
 Jap Sahib of Guru Gobind Singh Ji  
 Chaupai of Guru Gobind Singh Ji  
 Ten Swayyas of Guru Gobind Singh Ji  
 Anand Sahib of Guru Amar Das Ji.

The (Amrit) prepared thus, is offered to the ones being initiated in the prescribed manner as laid down in the Rahit Maryada. They are reminded of injunctions against removing hair by any means, from any part of their body, eating Kuthha meat, committing adultery and smoking tobacco or using any intoxicants. These are the four major taboos. A Sikh who violates these injections becomes “Patit” (apostate).

Reinitiation can be allowed to an apostate person, only when he requests for it and admits his guilt before the Sangat. The Five Beloved Ones consider the request and usually decide to pardon him imposing some sort of Tankhah (Punishment) on him. When he accepts it, he is administered Amrit in the same manner as above.

#### *Discipline of the Organisation*

All the decisions affecting the entire community are made by the “Panthic” gathering. These decisions are taken to clarify some fundamental issues or matters of national or panthic importance. This is called “Gurmata” (Panthic Resolution). Gurmata can only be passed in respect of the purity of rituals or for the sake of the panthic organisation in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib.

Appeals against the decision of the local Sangat lie with the Akal Takhat. The decisions of the Panthic gathering or nominees of the Panthic meeting are inviolable and binding on the Sikh community. The decisions of Akal Takhat are known as Hukam Namas. Hukam Nama is only issued by Akal Takhat, through its Jathedar or head priest, in the manner prescribed above.

#### *Disciplinary Action (Tankhah)*

A Sikh who commits a breach of Rahit, is expected to present herself/himself before the nearest Sikh Sangat to confess her/his guilt. At this, a commission of the Five Beloved Ones is appointed out of the

Sangat, who would hear the confession in detail and ascertain the magnitude of the fault. They can then suggest some sort of punishment. It may be cleaning the utensils in the Langar, wiping the floors, cleaning the shoes of the congregation or some act of service or any other punishment. The Sangat is generally supposed to be not very rigid or revengeful while imposing punishment in pardoning the wrong-doer. The purpose is to mend him.

If there has been a breach of the major taboos, in addition to the punishment he/she is also commanded to be reinitiated. The punishment is taken without any contempt or humiliation. A prayer for forgiveness is then offered before the Holy Guru Granth Sahib.

This is a brief statement of the Rahit Maryada, the Code of Conduct of the Sikhs.

### *Conclusion*

Evidently, there is only one Code of Conduct or “Rahit Maryada”, approved by the Sikh World under the seal and authority of the supreme institution of the holy “Akalk Takht”, the spiritual throne of the Sikhs, from where religious injunctions are issued, and respected by the Sikhs throughout the length and breadth of the world. These injunctions are unquestionable. After the death of Guru Gobind Singh Sahib, a number of Rahit Namas or Rahit Maryadas cropped up as given in the beginning of the article. If we go through those written or unwritten Rahit Maryadas, it is revealed that they are one in character, except for minor deviations here or there. In fact most of them are elaborations of the original Maryada as laid down in the letter, written by Guru Gobind Singh Sahib to his followers in Kabul (Afghanistan).

The idea of formulating the present Code of Conduct of the Sikhs was to bring about global uniformity among the followers of the Sikh faith. Sikh organisations, prominent Sikhs, Sikh institutions, Satsang and on top of all the institutions, the representatives of the spiritual Throne assembled together, drafted and laid the seal of finality on this Code of Conduct (Rahit Maryada). Unfortunately some of us are still not quite clear about the standard “Rahit Maryada.” Some Sikhs individually or otherwise have started introducing variations from the, approved Rahit Maryada. This is hardly desirable, being against the spirit of the Sikh tradition of public or collective decisions.

Maryada does not mean a book of ethics or a Code of Conduct only. It is not a green passport to heaven or personal glorification. It

lays down the discipline of sacrament for the followers of the faith. Being Sikhs of the Khalsa order, we are sons and daughters of the one and only one Holy Father. Being the Wards of Guru Gobind Singh Sahib, we become free of caste, colour or race prejudice. There does not remain an iota of doubt, why we should not have one uniform Code of Conduct, which should be followed by all of us. We should pledge whole-heartedly not to be led away by the so-called thinkers and reformers. How can they seduce Guru's Sikh with their materialistic ideas? A Khalsa of the Waheguru, the illustrious Lord can only be pure-one (Khalsa), when in the words of Guru Gobind Singh Sahib "Ra hit piari mujh ko Sikh piara nahin", "the discipline, and not an individual is dear to me."

(Except for some personal observations the paper represents broadly the approved Rahit Maryada by the Shromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee. -Editors)

## NEED FOR WORLD INSTITUTE OF SIKHISM

KHARAK SINGH

### I GURU NANAK'S RELIGION

1.1 Sikhism, a revealed religion, is the latest among the major world faiths. This system, as preached by Guru Nanak, has a universal appeal and an eternal relevance. Some of its essential features may be briefly reproduced below:

*a. Monotheism:* Guru Nanak believed in only One God as the ultimate Reality. In the Mul Mantra he described Him thus; 'The Sole Supreme Being; of eternal manifestation; Creator; Immanent Reality; Without Fear; Without Rancour; Timeless Being; Unincarnated; Self-Existent:

*b. Reality of the World:* Guru Nanak rejected the earlier view of the world being *mithya* or unreal or a place of suffering, and human life a punishment. Since God is Real, he argued, so is His creation - 'the continents, the universes, the worlds and the forms : 'In the midst of air, water, fire and the nether regions, the world has been installed as *Dharamsal* or a place for righteous actions: 'This world is the abode of the Lord who resides in it: 'Human life is a rare opportunity for spiritual fulfilment:

*c. Goal of Life:* In Sikhism the goal is not *moksha*, *Nirvan* or personal salvation after death. It is the status of *gurmukh* or *sachiara* or a Godman to be attained in life itself. A *gurmukh* is attuned to the Will of God, and engages himself in carrying out the Divine Will., There is no selfishness in his goal. He wants to liberate not only himself but the whole world.

*d. The Methodology:* Guru Nanak did not accept the dichotomy between empirical and spiritual lives preached by earlier systems. Asceticism which was considered essential for spiritual attainments, was described by the Guru as escapism and parasitism. He advocated a householder's life, with emphasis on hard work, honest means for a livelihood, and sharing of earnings with others in need. God loves His

creation, and takes pleasure in looking after it. In fact He is immanent in it. So the Godman must also love his fellow beings and carry out the Divine Will through altruistic deeds. Only thus can one find the path to Him. Full social participation, and struggle against oppression, injustice and tyranny in the cause of the poor and the weak, are an essential part of the Guru's system. While the need for worldly pursuits is recognised, there is a very clear warning against acquisitiveness, accumulation of wealth and indulgence or what is called consumerism. Ritualism is condemned. Instead the emphasis is on Naam, i.e., remembering God or keeping Him in mind or being conscious of Him always. This means a realization of His immanence in the entire creation, or living in His presence all the time. All this comes under *sach achar* or truthful living which, the Guru says, is even higher than truth. Sikhism is, therefore, a system of noble deeds and moral conduct. It is the deeds that determine whether one is close to or away from God.

*e. Equality and Human Dignity:* Sikhism recognises no distinction between man and man on the basis of birth or otherwise. The Guru rejected the 3,000 year old caste system in India, and accepted and associated with the lowliest among them. His concept of equality for women can never be surpassed. 'How can she be considered inferior, when she gives birth to kings?' he asked. He also preached a life of honour and dignity. 'He who lives with dishonour, does not deserve the food he eats', says the Guru.

*f. Removal of Inhibitions:* Apart from the caste system, which restricted one's right to spiritual pursuits and selection of occupation, there were several other restraints in earlier religious systems in India. Ahimsa, celibacy, vegetarianism, and asceticism were considered essential in the practice of religion. He rejected all these and recommended a householder's life with emphasis on noble deeds, dignity of labour, service of humanity and full social responsibility. Later the Tenth Master confirmed this through his famous *Nash Doctrine* by which he broke away from all earlier traditions.

*g. Development of the Society:* The Guru was not concerned with the individual alone. His concern covered the society as a whole also. Based on the gospel preached by him, he founded a settlement towards the end of his mission at Kartarpur, which was open to all, and in which everybody worked and ate together. People subdued under the rigours of caste system, the oppressive alien rule and religious bigotry, could not be expected to take over the social responsibilities and

adjust to the liberation offered in the new society, overnight. This infant society had to be nurtured for some time, and it had to spread geographically. So the Guru introduced the system of succession under which nine Gurus carried the mission forward upto the time Guru Gobind Singh created the Khalsa. A practical demonstration of Guru Nanak's system had been given. Personal successor after the Tenth Lord was not considered necessary, and the guruship was conferred on the Adi Granth and Guru Granth Sahib, or the *shabad* or the 'Word' of the Lord.

*h. The Scripture:* The Adi Granth, compiled by Guru Arjun Dev, with later addition of *bani* of Guru Tegh Bahadur is the sacred scripture of the Sikhs. As pointed out above, the scripture was given the status of *guru* by the Tenth Master. This appointment of the Scripture or the Word as Guru is unique to Sikhism. It simply means that in spiritualism the real guru is the 'Word' or the command or *shabad* of the Lord, and not the human body. Also it is only in Sikhism that the Scripture was written and authenticated by the founder himself or his successors. In other religions the scriptures were written decades or even centuries after the founders had left.

1.2 Besides the above there are some other features that need to be mentioned. In contrast to earlier systems, Sikhism is a life-affirming faith with a positive attitude towards the world. It is a religion of activism, noble actions and altruistic deeds. It is a religion of hope and optimism with rich traditions of *charhdi kala* or ever-rising high spirits. Pacificism and pessimism have no place in Sikh thought. Sikh discipline is a conscious effort to live in harmony with nature and to carry out the altruistic Divine

1.3 Macauliffe in his classic study 'The Sikh Religion' (1910), summed up the moral and political merit of the Sikh Religion thus:

"It prohibits idolatry, hypocrisy, caste-exclusiveness, the concremation of widows, the immurement of women, the use of wine and other intoxicants, tobacco smoking, infanticide, slander, pilgrimage to sacred rivers and tanks of Hindus; and it inculcates loyalty, gratitude for all favours received, philanthropy, justice, impartiality, truth, honesty and all the moral and domestic virtues known to the holiest citizens of any country."

On the originality of the Sikh religion Macauliffe's conclusion was:

"The illustrious author of *Vie de Jesus* asks whether great originality will again arise, or the world would be content to follow the



paths opened by the daring creators of the ancient ages. Now there is here presented a religion totally unaffected by Semitic or Christian influences. Based in unity of God, it rejected Hindu formalities, and adopted an independent ethical system, rituals and standards which were totally opposed to the theological beliefs of Guru Nanak's age and country. And we shall see hereafter, it would be difficult to point to a religion of greater originality or to a more comprehensive ethical system."

1.4 The religion and the society founded by Guru Nanak grew steadily and in the hands of his successors brought about a complete revolution in the minds of the people as well as in the social and political setup in the North-West of India. His followers challenged the oppressive Mughal rule, overthrew it, and supplanted it with an empire of their own based on egalitarian principles and freedom of religious practice, with real power in the hands of the common people who had had nothing but oppression and exploitation at the hands of earlier rulers. The values taught by Guru Nanak are as relevant today as in the 15th century when he started his mission. The world today needs this faith of hope and optimism that preaches '*sarbat da bhala*' (welfare of all). The Sikhs owe it to the world to share their rich heritage with the rest of mankind. Even more, they need to do this in their own interest in order to project a correct image of themselves.

## *II THE PRESENT POSITION*

2.1 The followers of Guru Nanak are no more confined to the land of Five Rivers or within the borders of the Indian Union. They have migrated to practically all parts of the world with sizeable populations in the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States of America, and other countries of Europe, America, Asia and Africa. With their turbans, unshorn hair which dominate their external appearance, they are easily distinguished, and become the object of curiosity. Missionary efforts have not kept pace with the requirements of Sikh emigrants, and as a result, they have often become the victims of suspicion and misunderstanding abroad. Reactions of the local population in other countries to the presence of Sikhs have varied from a rare appreciation, through common curiosity, to not infrequent positive hostility.

2.2 While the Sikh community in general and their organisations in particular, have been completely indifferent to the need for projecting the Sikh philosophy and history to the outside world, it seems that

some hostile agencies have been very active in misrepresenting Sikhism and tarnishing the image of Sikhs in the world community. The extent of damage that has been done, may be judged from the opinion poll conducted in 1988 in Montreal by the Tandmar Research Inc. for the Macauliffe Institute of Sikh Studies, Toronto. The findings confirmed the worst fears. Thirty percent of the population in the sample perceived a clear prejudice against Sikhs, the figure being higher than that for the minorities as a whole. In the prejudice scale, Sikhs were behind only Blacks and Haitians. 80% of the respondents knew little or nothing about the Sikhs, and only 18% knew any Sikh. Although in India Sikhs are known to be the most industrious people, only 19% of those surveyed, believed that the Sikhs are hard working members of the community. Over 60% thought they were untrustworthy. Most alarming, however, was the response to the question, "What comes to your mind, when you hear the word Sikh?" Forty three percent used terms such as the following: 'Revolt, conflict, riots in India, trouble makers, bringing trouble here, bombing, terrorism, violence, fanatics, extremists, fighters, warriors, hostile, don't like them, bad impression, shot Gandhi, fighting with Hindus.' Only 14% of them saw Sikhs as suffering from oppression.

2.3 One can only hope that the Montreal sample was not representative of communities in the West. For Sikhs are a flourishing community and are doing very well in most new countries of their adoption, in spite of handicaps. Yet the indications furnished by the survey, should be enough to shake the community out of its indifference and complacency. Steps must be taken to set the record straight and to project a correct picture of the great faith of Sikhism and its valiant followers. This points to the need for an organisation or an institute for an assessment of the world reaction from time to time, for research into and exposition of various aspects of Sikhism, and for dealing effectively with misrepresentations of Sikh doctrines and history coming from various quarters.

### III MISREPRESENTATIONS

3.1 *Old Sikh Literature*: This includes *janam sakhis* or biographical accounts of Guru Nanak, *Cur Bilas* or *Gur Sobha* tradition, *Panth parkash*, *Rahitnamas*, etc. The *janam sakhis* contain serious misrepresentations and damaging interpolations attributable to schisms. associated with Baba Sri Chand (Udasis), Hundal (Niranjanis), Prithvi Chand, Dhir Mal, Ram Rai, and others. Unfavourable critics have frequently drawn upon these sources, and will continue to do so, unless

studies are undertaken to lift the right from the trash that has crept in. The other categories of Sikh literature mentioned above, are also not free from the personal whims of the authors or the motives of those who sponsored the works. .

3.2 *Encyclopaedias*: A survey of entries on Sikhism in 50 major encyclopaedias published in the West, has revealed gross misrepresentations. These include errors of fact as well as misinterpretation of Guru Nanak's system. The Guru has frequently been shown as a disciple of Kabir. Sikhism is invariably presented as a part of Hinduism, and its teachings are confused with the so-called *Sant Mat*. In several cases the authors have failed to see the unity of thought of the Ten Masters, mistakenly referring to Guru Nanak's philosophy as pacificism and that of Guru Gobind Singh as militancy. Another common misinterpretation is the theory of syncretism, which means that Sikhism is only an amalgam of elements drawn from Hinduism and Islam, denying any originality to Guru Nanak. Recognition of Sikhism as a revealed religion is rare. No wonder that the space given to Sikhism is extremely limited as compared with other major faiths of the world. Some of these publications make only a passing reference to Sikhism, while a few do not even mention it.

3.3 *Recent Misrepresentations*: The last two decades have seen a mounting of a regular campaign to misrepresent Sikhism. This was started by a former missionary in India, who has so far produced eight books relating to Sikhism. His thesis revolves around the following main points:

a. It is misleading to call Guru Nanak the founder of Sikh religion, as he did not originate a new school of thought or set of teachings. What Guru Nanak offers us is the clearest and most highly articulate expression of the *nirguna sampradaya*, the so called Sant tradition of Northern India, a system which he inherited, reworked according to his own genius and passed on in a form unequalled by any other representative of the tradition. It was the influence of Nath doctrine and practice upon Vaishnava Bhakti which was responsible for the emergence of Sant synthesis.

b. The ten gurus never preached one set of religious doctrines or system and particularly the Third Guru created new institutions on the old Hindu lines, the very thing Guru Nanak had spurned. From the Sixth Guru onwards the teachings of Guru Nanak were completely given up in favour of a militant pose in response to socio-political situations.

c. The arming of Panth could not have been the result of any decision by Guru Hargobind, but because of Jat influx in the Sikh fold. . . “The growth of militancy within the Panth must be traced primarily to the impact of Jat cultural patterns and to economic problems which prompted a militant response.” The traditional account about the founding of the Khalsa on the Baisakhi day of the year 1699 (AD) cannot be accepted, as there are “compulsive reasons for scepticism”, and “the traditions relating to the period of Guru Gobind Singh must be, in some considerable measure, set aside. The slate must be wiped clean and must not be reinscribed until we have ascertained just what did take place during the eighteenth century.”

d. The Sikh code of discipline, *Rahat Maryada*, and Sikh symbols were evolved during the eighteenth century as a result of gradual growth, though the tradition declares they were definitely settled by a pronouncement of Guru Gobind Singh and were a part of the Baisakhi day proceedings in 1699 (AD). Though the Gurus denounced caste system and preached against it, yet they did not seem sincere or serious in removing caste differences.

e. The succession of the Granth Sahib as Guru of the Sikhs, ending the line of personal gurus on the death of Guru Gobind Singh, was not because of an injunction of Guru Gobind Singh himself but was a subsequent adoption by the Sikhs, who were fighting for their existence, to meet the needs of the Panth for cohesion.

f. The authenticity of the current version of Guru Granth Sahib which is widely accepted and used by the Sikhs, is open to question, since there are three manuscripts (Birs) available which are not entirely identical.

3.4 This missionary managed to enlist a few associates from India as well as abroad, with whose assistance he has been holding conferences and delivering lectures to propagate the above line of thinking. For want of an organised resistance his claim to being an authority on Sikhism has been taken quite seriously in some quarters in the West. In fact both the Chairs established in Canadian Universities for Sikh Studies with collections from Sikhs are manned by this group.

3.5 There were some very unfortunate developments relating to Sikhs in their home state of Punjab and the rest of India during the eighties. These include the army attack on the Golden Temple, Amritsar,

and other sacred Sikh shrines in Punjab, the massacre of thousands of Sikhs in Delhi and other towns of India, and large scale violation of human rights and issue of draconian laws, which withdrew even the right to live. This attracted widespread criticism from the international community. I would normally not have referred to it, but for propagation of disinformation even from academic seats and platforms in the West. A spate of unfounded propaganda has been made against the community. Impression was sought to be created that all Sikhs were terrorists, traitors and undependable, and that they have no separate religious identity. It seems that the efforts did not go in vain, if the results of the Montreal inquiry, mentioned earlier, are any indication.

3.6 Here notice must be taken of the contribution made by a few other movements towards misinterpretation of Sikhism and Sikhs. Arya Samaj was very active towards the end of the nineteenth century. Its leader initiated a relentless tirade of hostile criticism of the Gurus and their teachings. Trumpp's work appeared almost at the same time, and may not be a mere coincidence. Other movements that sometimes draw on the *bani* in the Guru Granth Sahib~ to support their doctrines diametrically opposed to Sikhism, are the Radha Swamis, and the Nirankaris (Delhi based). They are frequently confused with Sikhism by unsuspecting persons. While the former continues to take advantage of the sayings of Gurus in a subtle way, the latter has entered a phase of open hostility towards Sikhism.

#### *IV THE RESPONSE*

4.1 Upto the end of the 18th century the community was engaged in a bitter struggle for survival, any scholastic activities were more or less out of question. The common man was not even aware of the misrepresentations that had crept in. Even during the first half of the nineteenth century, when Sikhs ruled the Land of Five rivers, the attention paid to the study of Sikh literature with a view to setting the record straight, was minimal. While the Sikhs during the earlier period, had to abandon their hearths and homes and stay in the jungles to escape the wrath of the hostile Moghal rulers, their shrines passed into the hands of Udasis and other sects who were more Hindus than Sikhs. The British conferred proprietary rights on these Mahants. As a result several Hindu rites had been introduced and even Hindu images had been installed in the Sikh sacred places including the Golden Temple. Patronisation of Mahants who controlled the Sikh shrines, was also

aimed at achieving the same purpose. The Arya Samaj movement, mentioned earlier, became very active, and its founder, Swami Daya Nand started his campaign of Shudhi to bring back the Sikhs into the fold of Hinduism. His enthusiasm, however, evoked an unexpected and very severe reaction from Sikh theologians of the time. This appeared as the well organised Singh Sabha Movement in the seventies of the last century. The famous publication of Bhai Kahn Singh, ' *Ham Hindu Nahin Hain* ' shows the gravity of the threat of absorption in Hinduism faced by the Sikh Community, as well as the intensity of the reaction of the Sikh leadership of the time. The other stalwarts engaged in this struggle were Giani Dit Singh and Bhai Vir Singh. This Trio will always rank among the greatest scholars and theologians of Sikhism. They managed to bring about a revival of the real Sikh traditions, and successfully repulsed the attack from outsiders. The Movement also effectively checked the inroads the Christian missionaries had started making with the advent of British rule in the Punjab, besides preparing the community for the struggles that lay ahead. The Singh Sabha survives in name even today, but its influence is too feeble to be felt. But the glorious role it played in the end of the last century, will always be remembered with pride and gratitude.

4.2 *The Akali Movement*: The next response came from the Akali Movement in the twenties of the present century, which after a prolonged struggle, sufferings and sacrifices, succeeded in wresting control of the Sikh shrines from the corrupt Mahants who had introduced several practices against the teachings of the Sikh Gurus. The outcome was the setting up of the statutory body, known as the Shromini Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee in 1925 for the control and management of the major shrines of the Sikhs. This is an elected body which has introduced reforms in *gurdwara* management and has restored the Sikh *maryada*. It carries some missionary responsibilities also, which have received only limited attention. The body is dominated by politicians, and scholars have never had an effective say in its affairs. As a result, research and scholarly pursuits have never been its strong points, and the basic questions of misrepresentation of Sikhs and Sikhism have not been addressed.

4.3 *Recent Interest in Sikh Studies*: This started after the Independence of India, and received impetus, as the Quincentenary of 'Guru Nanak's birth approached. Guru Nanak Dev University was set up at Amritsar in 1969, with expectations of research into and propagation of the mission of Guru Nanak. Departments dealing with

religious studies had earlier been set up at the Punjabi University Patiala. Several Sikh and non-Sikh scholars turned their attention to Sikh studies, and the literature that has appeared during the last two decades (Seventies and eighties) is indeed considerable, when compared with the very lean earlier period. However, the misrepresentations of Sikh ideology and Sikh history appear not to have received the attention due to them.

4.4 *University Chairs*: Well-meaning Sikhs collected funds from the Sikh community and succeeded in setting up Chairs at some leading universities abroad with a view to promoting Sikh Studies and projecting a correct image of Sikhism and the Sikhs abroad. Unfortunately their efforts have so far misfired, since the incumbents selected were sometimes non-Sikhs holding derogatory views that make a misrepresentation of the Sikh faith. The views of one incumbent have been briefly stated earlier. For the other Chair (Vancouver) the incumbent selected is a scholar of cultural history. Some of his views may be reproduced here for the benefit of readers:

“If there is any such thing as a key to historical problems, in case of Sikh tradition it is to be found in its social constituency, Sikh religion is first and foremost a peasant faith. Sociologists have spoken of how Islam is an urban religion, Sikhism may be spoken of as a rural religion. When dealing with the beliefs, rituals and practices of the Sikhs — be they religious or political — it is always worthwhile to constantly remind ourselves that we are fundamentally dealing with the peasantry and the world view of this social class has historically always been very different from other social classes. A lot of knotty issues to do with Sikh studies would become easier to solve, if we stop applying paradigms that have developed out of the study of urban social groups --merchants, middle-class or city workers — and deploy concepts that relate to this day-to-day life of the peasantry.”

The finding in the paper read at Berkeley about Sikhs being Sakhi Sarvarias is partly based on the fact that in the 1911 Census less than 3% Sikhs had been mentioned as followers of Sakhi Sarvar as well. He does not say that this was an aberration despite the teachings of the Gurus and of the writings of Sikhs enjoining the worship of God alone. In another paper read at Anaheim in 1989 he characterizes the present Sikh struggle as ‘fundamentalism’ with little political or economic justification.

4.5 It should be obvious from the above illustrations that these Chairs have added a new dimension to the problem of misrepresentation of Sikhism. They have not solved any problem, but they have created

new ones. They are turning out material which is dearly damaging to the cause of Sikhism. Instead of improving they are spoiling the image of Sikhs. It may be mentioned here that The Institute of Sikh Studies Chandigarh and a few other Sikh organisations in India offered to discuss some fundamental questions like the originality of Guru Nanak's religion and the Authenticity of the Kartarpuri Bir with the University. The offer was, however, not accepted. The only conclusion from the sad experience with the University Chairs so far is that these can do more harm than good in institutions over which the community has no control, and where the incumbents have no sympathy for or allegiance to the cause of Sikhism. The new enthusiasm of well wishers of Sikhism to promote Sikh Studies through new University Chairs, therefore, needs to be directed to more productive channels, i.e. for the setting up of independent, institutions strictly under the control of the Sikh Community.

*4.6 Meaningful Response:* Since the agencies mentioned above, did not take any notice of the attacks on Sikhism coming from hostile quarters, misrepresentations continued and the critics flourished. It was only in the late seventies that a group of free lancers, notably Justice Gurdev Singh, S. Daljeet Singh and S. Jagjit Singh took up the challenge and set out to controvert the misleading theses of the Group led by Dr McLeod. They worked first in their individual capacity, but later they organised themselves into 'The Institute of Sikh Studies' at Chandigarh. As a result of their efforts a number of publications have already appeared and all the points raised by McLeod and his group have been adequately dealt with. The following books need special mention in this connection:

- a. 'Sikhism - A Comparative Study of its theology and Mysticism' by Daljeet Singh (1979)
  - i. 'Sikh Ideology' by Daljeet Singh (1984)
  - ii. 'The Authenticity of Kartarpuri Bir' by Daljeet Singh (1987)
  - iii. 'The Sikh Revolution' by Jagjit Singh (1981)
  - iv. 'Perspectives on Sikh Studies' by Jagjit Singh (1984)
  - v. 'In the Caravan of Revolutions' by Jagjit Singh (1988)
  - vi. 'The Sikh Tradition' by Justice Gurdev Singh (Ed.) (1986)
  - vii. 'Advanced Studies in Sikhism' by Jasbir Singh Mann &
  - viii. Harbans Singh Saraon (Eds.) (1989)

*4.7 Other Organisations:* Recently a few other organisations have also carried on the academic work on sound footing. The Academy of



Sikh Religion and Culture, Patiala, under the leadership of Justice Gurdev Singh is making valuable contributions. The book 'The Sikh Tradition' mentioned above is the outcome of its efforts. The Council of Sikh Affairs Chandigarh has been taking keen interest in the academic field. Outside India, The Sikh Community of North America organised a seminar at Los Angeles in December 1988, and the papers read have already appeared as 'Advanced Studies in Sikhism' mentioned above. The Sikh Council of Education UK, and the newly organised 'The Canadian Institute of Sikh Studies', Toronto, have actively joined in this effort. As a result of collaboration between these societies and The Institute of Sikh Studies Chandigarh, a number of Conferences were organised in UK, Canada and USA in November-December, 1990

#### *V. THE PRESENT RELIGIOUS MOOD IN THE WEST:*

5.1 Since misrepresentations of Sikhism have flourished in the West, the thinking of the communities in Europe and America, is relevant to our problem. The West is by and large Christian in its religious and emotional affiliation. The following opinions expressed by the representatives of the Christian Churches at their world meets and conferences, may be good indicators:

- i. 'The American view was that there are three realities: Christianity, other religions, and secularism, and that these three realities can either be allies or enemies. It was argued that the Christians had to choose whether they were to ally themselves with other religions against secularism. The Americans, especially the Boston Personalists who were leading the debate at that time, took the view that secularism is a common danger for all religions to fight secularism. European theologians, particularly, Barth, Brunner, and Kramer took a totally different view. They maintained that secularisation, not. secularism, is the primary process: It is a process in which some of the values of Christian faith have been put into a secular framework, bringing about a powerful force which is destroying all old ideas. Hence secularisation is an ally, because it will destroy Hinduism, Islam and other forms of what they considered to be superstition So we should ally ourselves with secularisation and see it as the work of God.'
- ii. 'That is why at the World Council of Churches it was almost impossible to begin any kind of dialogue. That is one of the things on which I fought many battles, before we finally

established a department for dialogue in the World Council. We brought Stanley Samartha from India to head the Department. That was quite a step forward. But then it was ruthlessly defeated in 1975. We had begun very cautiously, with a few meetings in the Middle East with Muslims and Jews. Then we had a multi-religious dialogue. The one in Colombo was the most important one of these, where we had all kinds of religions talking to one another. But there were problems.”

- iii. “One of the books published during that era by Emily Brunner, the Swiss theologian, was called ‘Either/Or. In it Brunner argued that Christian gospel has overcome all its enemies except one, and that is mysticism. Mysticism is an enemy, because it claims that you can have unmediated access to God, and as long as you can have unmediated access, there is no use for Jesus Christ. Therefore, mysticism is the only remaining enemy, and one has to make a clear choice: either the gospel or mysticism.”

5.2 In the West religion is generally studied at three places. One is the forum of Theological Unions and Christian Seminaries. At these places the main study is of the Christian religion. Many of the colleges at the Universities are funded by the Christian community. Thus, normally the obligation of the scholar at these institutions is to uphold the Christian dogma, e.g., at the Oxford University in England the scholar appointed for the study of religion has to give an undertaking for the purpose. The second place is the Department of Comparative Religion in the Universities. Here different religions are studied as traditions. But, to date, whether one likes it or not, the basis of this study is generally what is called the reductionist or mechanical method, i.e., the studies are by and large governed by the methodology and assumptions of evolution, behaviourism or what may be called naturalism or empiricism. The net result is that religions are studied merely as socio-cultural developments, class developments or developing traditions. So much so that many a scholar in this field does not accept the very idea of God or the existence of a spiritual dimension of Reality. Hence arises the use of somewhat derogatory terms like Neo-Sikhism, syncretism, eclectism, evolving Sikh Tradition, more specially in relation to non-Christian religions. The methodology of social sciences colours and governs very greatly the study of religions and their concepts. One finds that many scholars, particularly senior scholars of religion, are perturbed over this development. For this group, as also for the Sikhs, no study of religion is possible, unless the idea of

God or the spiritual dimension is accepted as fundamental to it. The third field for the study of religion is the one of social sciences. Here the study gives us what may be called the Anthropologist's view of religion or the Sikh religion, the Sociologist's view of religion, the Historian's view of religion, or the Psychologist's or the Psychoanalyst's view of Religion. Each of these subjects has its own discipline and fundamental assumptions from which it cannot depart, and which form the basis of the study of any religion, like Sikhism or any other religion. It is necessary to impress that such studies can never be studies of religion, as the scholar is primarily governed by the discipline of his own subject. For example, for the Anthropologist, the Behaviourist or Psycho-analyst, values are just 'defence mechanisms' or 'reaction formations'. And for reasons that are obvious he is justified in doing so. For, he cannot violate the very discipline of his subject in which he is trained. The result is that whereas from the point of view of the religion concerned such studies look vitiated and lop-sided, these are valid from the point of view of the discipline of the social science doing the study.

5.3 As it is, Eastern religions are studied generally under the Departments of South Asia or Eastern Studies. In these Departments religion is not studied as a separate department or discipline. Studies of religion in these organisations are, by and large, anthropological, sociological or historical, none of which are bound by the discipline of religion or accept its premise. Now, according to the Gurus, Sikhism is a revealed religion, and the Bani comprises the Commands of God, and the lives of Gurus have been lived in furtherance of that spiritual direction, involving the creation of a Panth that was anti-caste and anti-class. Secondly, Sikhism is not a tradition, nor can it be studied as such. Sikhism has a recorded scripture authenticated by the Guru himself. To view or study its principles as a socio-political development or as a growth of cultural or class interests or as a tradition is a clear distortion. For, a tradition according to Webster, relates to a system or doctrines that are understood and conveyed orally.

## *VI CONCLUSIONS*

6.1 Sikhism is a revealed religion, and is uncompromisingly monotheistic. Based upon his mystic experience, Guru Nanak described God as the Ultimate Reality. He is the 'Creator', 'Without Fear or Rancour', 'Beyond Time', 'Unincarnate' and Self-existent'. He is 'All Love', and 'Ocean of Virtues'. God is transcendent as well as immanent in His creation. The world is real and a place for practising

righteousness. It is not *mithya* or a place of suffering, as described in some earlier faiths. Life is an opportunity for meeting the Lord. The goal of life is to be a *gunnukh* attuned to the Will of God. The methodology comprises householder's life, earning an honest livelihood and sharing the fruits with others in need, truthful living, altruistic deeds, high morality, full social responsibility, service and sacrifice in the cause of justice, etc. Escapism and parasitism in the garb of asceticism and monasticism are condemned. Sikhism preaches a world view which is positive, life-affirming and progressive.

6.2 Misrepresentation of faiths is common. However, Sikhism seems to have had more than its share, and more often it has been motivated. Misrepresentations abound even in the old Sikh literature, e.g., Janamsakhis, Gurbilas Tradition, Rahitnamas, etc., and later in the encyclopaedias published in the West. Sikhism is invariably presented as a part of Hinduism and is confused with the so called Sant Mat or is deemed an amalgam of Nathism and Vaishnavism. Theory of syncretism is popular in some quarters, which assumes that Sikhism is only a combination of elements borrowed from Hinduism and Islam. The Sikh doctrine of Miri- Piri is the most widely misunderstood of all and militancy is ascribed to expediency or social factors.

6.3 Response of the Sikh Community to this onslaught or campaign of misrepresentations and adverse criticism has been rather slow and inadequate. This has encouraged the unsympathetic quarters, and their activities have assumed serious proportions and more subtle forms. Literature has appeared during the last two decades, which seeks to demolish the very foundations of the Sikh faith, distorting the history, misinterpreting the teachings of the Gurus, twisting the doctrines, denying any originality to the founder or claim to religious identity to the Sikhs.

6.4 The Sikh Community has, by and large, been unaware of the damage being done. Mention may be made of some steps taken by Government and the Sikh Community, which could have rectified the situation with any good luck. A couple of Universities were established in India, and some chairs created in India and abroad to carry out studies on Sikh religion and to promote sound research. But the Universities have their own limitations.

6.5 Fortunately there is a silver lining to the dark clouds mentioned above. A few devoted individuals in India and abroad, have taken up the challenge, and have already made a promising start by organising societies committed to this cause. They have brought out a number of books, giving sound scholarly information about Sikhism and its history. In the present climate and age it is essential that reliable academic studies on Sikhism are organised, to provide to readers in India and abroad, fully and properly researched literature.

6.6 The present situation demands concerted and coordinated efforts. Utmost vigilance is necessary to take quick notice of any uninformed or biased attacks on the philosophy, theology, ideology and history of Sikhism. Fundamental research needs to be conducted into the doctrines of Sikhism. An authentic interpretation of the gurbani is required. Basic literature of Sikhism needs to be studied in depth. There are some real or substantial controversies which need to be resolved. This cannot be done by small societies and their efforts here and there in an unorganised manner. There is an immediate need for Centre(s) of Sikh Studies to take up this responsibility. In fact there is need for a full fledged World Institute of Sikhism, at a central place with sub-campuses at selected places. Alternatively, there may be several Institutes with a Central Coordinating Body. It is difficult to give a detailed blueprint of the Project in this paper or in a preliminary discussion. This task will have to be entrusted to a special committee. Some hints are, however, given on the steps involved, in the last Section of this paper.

6.7 *Conceptual Plan:* A tentative plan of the contemplated campus (assuming a rectangular area of ten acres) is enclosed. The Complex includes:

- Gurdwara and Langar
- Pool and Pavilion
- Class Rooms
- Seminar Rooms
- Classical Languages and Music Rooms
- Auditorium
- Open Air Theatre
- Library
- Staff Quarters
- Students Hostels

Gymnasium and Changing Rooms  
 Suites for Visiting Scholars  
 Administrative Block  
 Outdoor Sports  
 Garden of Retreat  
 Plaza

It is for the Sikh Community to turn this 'Castle in the Air' into a reality and to install it on a firm ground.

### *VII WORLD INSTITUTE OF SIKHISM*

7.1 As indicated earlier, details of the Project will have to be worked out by special committees. However, some of the steps required to be taken, may be mentioned below:

a) Set up Committee(s) for

i. Drawing up a Constitution: Name, Aims and Objects, Activities, Membership, Management Administration, Finances, Status, Coordination, Registration, etc.

ii. Selection of Location: Major considerations would be accessibility, availability of facilities, local support, etc.

iii. Collection of funds.

iv. Publicity.

b) Monitoring: This should be done by a high power Committee with Members drawn from the above committees and other agencies cooperating in the Project. This should also include liaison with similar bodies and institutions in other countries.

7.2 The details should be carefully worked out and given in a comprehensive document. It should, however, be borne in mind that the goal is eventually to create a University level Institute with modern facilities for graduate and post-graduate teaching and advanced research on Sikhism leading to highest academic degrees, besides a nucleus for a World Sikh Missionary Organisation, as a Separate wing. This may have to be achieved in a phased manner, depending upon the physical, financial and technical man-power resources. The purpose of this paper is to stress the need for a Centre or an Institute to perform the functions mentioned above. Once the idea is accepted by the Community, its fulfilment is only a matter of time. And with the traditional enthusiasm of the Sikh Community, there is no doubt, that the proposed Institute will be a reality SOON.

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FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES  
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**in**  
**Sikh Studies**

*Editors*

**KHARAK SINGH**  
**GOBIND SINGH MANSUKHANI**  
**JASBIR SINGH MANN**

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## PREFACE

The initiative for the seven conferences held in UK and North America in November and December 1990, came during a discussion between Dr. Jasbir Singh Mann of the Sikh Community of North America, and Dr. Darshan Singh and S. Balbir Singh Nijjar, President and Secretary, respectively, of the Canadian Institute of Sikh Studies, Toronto, while Dr. Kharak Singh of the Institute of Sikh Studies, Punjab, was in Canada on a private visit. S. Kuldip Singh Chhatwal and S. Bhupinder Singh Sarkaria of Waterloo were among active supporters of the proposal. Simultaneously, the idea was also taken up by Dr. Pargat Singh, Dr. Baljit Singh Bagga and Dr. G. S. Mansukhani, President, Secretary, and Member, respectively, of the Sikh Council of Education, UK. The proposal was welcomed by Dr. Gur-bakhsh Singh Gill, the Roving Ambassador of Sikhism, and leading Sikh Organisations in North America. Accordingly, the President, S. Satnam Singh, and Secretary, S. Jasbir Singh, of the Canadian Sikh Study and Teaching Society, Vancouver, Dr. N. S. Kapani and Dr. Sabherwal of the Sikh Foundation, USA, San Francisco, S. Harjit Singh, Gursharanjit Singh, S. Balwant Singh Hansra and S. Pritam Singh of the Sikh Religious Society, Chicago, Dr. Rajinder Singh Bajwa, Dr. Rajwant Singh, S.G.S. Ahluwalia and S. Amrik Singh, of the Guru Gobind Singh FOJ.Indation, Washington DC, and S. Jatinder Singh Sabherwal, President, the Sikh Cultural Society, New York and Dr. Satnam Singh Dhami of the Tristate Area Sikh Society also joined the other organisations to hold International Conferences at London, Toronto, Vancouver, Berkley, Chicago, Washington DC and New York. At their instance the Institute of Sikh Studies, Chandigarh made a choice of the subjects and the related scholars, with specialty in those fields for addressing the seven Conferences. It is our pleasure to convey gratefulness on behalf of the nine organisations mentioned above to their organisers and helpers who have with their labours made the Conferences at each place a success.

We also take this opportunity profusely to thank all the contributors and hosts who have funded the Conferences and offered generous hospitality to the scholars and other participants.

We should like to convey our special gratefulness to the scholars who have very kindly contributed their papers at the Conferences mentioned above. Our deep thanks are also due to Dr. Hugh Johnson, Professor of History, Simon Fraser University of RC., Dr. Newman, Principal Harbhajan Singh, S. Kirpal Singh Sirha, S. Lou Singh Khalsa, S. Kuldip Singh Channi, who contributed their papers at the Conferences, but for one reason or the other could not send their revised contributions.

The papers were appropriately divided for publication in two volumes, one mostly of papers read or contributed in North America, and the other of papers received for the London Conference. Our particular thanks are due to the Editors for their long and hard labour in obtaining, and editing the material. It has indeed been a labour of love in furtherance of the cause that is dear to our nine Organisations. We shall be failing in our duty, if we did not thank S. Manohar Singh Momi for his honorary organisational and secretarial work for the publication of the two volumes.

We are deeply grateful to the Members of the Institute for their generous help in 'he organisation of the Conferences and the publication of the two volumes.

On behalf of the nine organisations It is our pleasure to express our sincere and deep gratitude to Dr. H.K Manmohan Singh, Vice-Chancellor, Punjabi University Patiala for his keen interest in this academic venture involving publication of the volume comprising the North American papers. In this regard our thanks are also due to Professor(s) Jodh Singh, Balkar Singh and Gurnam Kaur of the Punjabi University Patiala, for their valuable suggestions

Lastly, and importantly, we should like to express our gratefulness to Dr. Hazara Singh of the Publication Bureau, Punjabi University, Patiala, for his invaluable guidance and help in the publication of the papers. In fact, the speed with which publications have come out, and the quality of publication, are mainly due to his expertise in the field.

The Editors have indicated the objectives of organising the various Conferences, and the reasons for the choice of subjects of the papers contributed. It is our pleasure in offering these publications to the scholars and the reading public in India and abroad. We hope

that these papers will contribute towards projecting an authentic image of Sikh religion, history and institutions, and in creating better understanding of Sikhism, especially in countries abroad where Sikhs have settled.

MAJ. GENERAL MOHINDER SINGH (RETD.)  
MVC, MC.  
President

October 1, 1991.  
Institute of Sikh Studies, Chandigarh



## INTRODUCTION

Since the holding of the Conference of Sikh Studies at the California University, Long Beach, in 1988, by the Sikh Community of North America, and the publication of papers contributed for it, there has, in the West, been a keen academic interest in Sikhism and its history. This led to a demand for similar conferences from different organisations 'of the community in UK, USA and Canada. Another event was the publication of literature in 1989-90, by some scholars at Vancouver and Toronto Universities, which contained considerable disinformation about the religion and history of the Sikhs.

Accordingly, the Sikh Community of North America in conjunction with the Institute of Sikh Studies, Punjab, organised at the instance of local Sikh societies, seven International Conferences. The first was arranged by the Sikh Education Council, UK, on the 17th and 18th November 1990 in London. The other six Conferences were hosted by the Canadian Institute of Sikh Studies at the Toronto University, by The Canadian Sikh Study and Teaching Society at the UBC, Vancouver, by the Sikh Foundation USA at Berkley, by the Sikh Religious Society at Chicago, by the Guru Gobind Singh Foundation and the Guru Nanak Foundation at Washington DC, and by the Sikh Cultural Society New York and the Sikh Community of the Tristate Area at New York, in November and December 1990.

A careful selection of topics was made, the object being to clarify important issues and to dispel disinformation that had been published. In that light expert scholars were requested to write papers on major issues raised in recent literature. For example, it had been stated that *the Miri Piri* doctrine was an 'innovation' made by the Sixth Guru, as a response to external factors. Daljeet Singh's article deals with this issue. He states that the above perception is held by persons mostly from the pacifist or dichotomous religions and is due to the conditioning of their own background, and their failure to understand that Sikhism, based on the whole-life revelation of Guru Nanak, is fundamentally a *Miri-Piri* system, combining inalienably the spiritual life and the empirical life of man. It was for that reason that Guru Nanak at one stroke rejected monasticism, withdrawal from life,

celibacy and Ahimsa, and called life real and a game of love, com-mending a householder's life, accepting full social participation and total responsibility in all fields of life. Consequently it was he who organised a society and introduced the system of succession, so as to create and develop a Panth, motivated with the spiritual and social ideals and ethics of his system. In the background of three thousand years of ascetic and monastic ideals, the Gurus found it necessary to create their Panth through nine successions. The last five of the Gurus kept armies, and continued confrontation with the Empire, initiated by the Fifth Master by his martyrdom. The author concludes that this faulty perception of persons drawn from pacifist religions is due to their own religious tradition, and that scholars from whole-life religions like Islam have never felt any disunity in the thesis of the Sikh Gurus. This view has also been stressed by Dr James Lewis saying, "in fact, the theme of supposed contradiction between early and later Sikhism, often carrying with it the same undertones of moral censure that it originally carried, is repeated in Western discourse about Sikhism to this very day, and will, undoubtedly continue to be present in such discourse, as long as scholars from Christian back-grounds fail to come to terms with the contradictions in their own culture."

Another observation was that the Sikh view point on the Dasam Granth is not available. As a matter of fact, on this point two researched publications exist., The first one by Dr.D.P. Ashta who views the entire Dasam Granth as the work of the Tenth Master. Later appeared the work of Dr R.S.Jaggi, supported by Dr Hazari Prasad Dwivedi who took into account the work of Ashta and controverted it, in a detailed analysis, concluding that many of the writings attributed to the Tenth Master, could not be his compositions. In this background Gurtej Singh was requested to give a critical appreciation of the two studies. He considers Jaggi's work to be sound.

Third, there have been observations regarding the Punjab crisis which were far from being accurate or well informed. It was asserted that in July 1985 the Prime Minister could be magnanimous and reached an agreement conceding 'most of what the Akalis had all along been demanding'. The papers of Kharak Singh and Daljeet Singh, respectively, deal with the major issues leading to the Punjab crisis, and the River Water and Hydel Power Dispute indicating the genesis of the problems which unfortunately still remain unsettled.

The papers contributed at these seven conferences are being published in the form of two volumes. In order to keep a balance, some of the papers contributed for the London Conference that could not be read there for paucity of time, have been included in the present volume. A brief resume of the various papers is given below.

1. In 'Guru Nanak: The Prophet of a Unique Ideology', Dal-jeet Singh deals with some important aspects of the Sikh Ideology. Apart from giving a brief account of Guru Nanak's system, he states that his spiritual experience is entirely different from that of the other Indian mystics. Therefore, he makes a complete departure from the Indian religions by combining the spiritual and the empirical lives of man, laying down the Miri Piri system, and prescribing a new spiritual goal and methodology, involving social participation and total responsibility as the instrument of God's Will. Guru Nanak himself proclaims both his prophet hood and his mission. Daljeet Singh emphasizes that this uncommon step of Guru Nanak is fundamentally linked with his goal of continuing a mission and creating a separate Panth. It is only in this context, that we can understand the role of the subsequent Gurus in organising and developing a new Panth. Hence, even though the ideology had been laid down by Guru Nanak and the scripture compiled by Guru Arjan, yet the succession was continued for another hundred years through five Gurus, all of whom continued militant confrontation with the Empire. It is only after the Five Piaras and the Khalsa had been created that the Tenth Master closed the succession, even though all his sons were alive then, and introduced the Nash doctrine of a complete break with the earlier traditions and culture. Lastly, the author explains why persons drawn from pacifist or dichotomous systems, being conditioned by their own religious traditions, fail to find the continuity in the Guru Nanak-Gurubind Singh succession, while scholars from whole-life religions like Islam, have never felt any incongruity in the role of different Sikh Gurus.

2. Avtar Singh's synopsis of his proposed paper on the 'Role of Moral Philosophy in Sikhism', states that freedom as a moral value has played an important role in shaping the Sikh sentiment for the virtue of courage. Accordingly, the moral philosophy of 'Nirbhau' and 'Soorah' inspires the seekers to continue the righteous struggle. It is extremely unfortunate that the learned author could not send us his revised paper owing to the sad and unfortunate fatal accident he met early in the year. His departure is a very major loss to Sikh Studies.



3. Harnam Singh Shan's well documented paper, 'Sikhism- an Original, Distinct, Revealed and Complete Religion', marshalls a large volume of contemporary evidence to explain how, viewed in the context of its thesis, scripture, institutions, ethics, methodology and other factors, Sikhism is in every respect an independent system. He has indicated about a score of points which show that Sikhism has its own singular identity.

4. Gurnam Kaur brings out with clarity the unity of revelation and reason in Sikhism. She states that although primarily a revelatory religion, Sikhism not only finds no contradiction between revelation and reason, but also makes proper use of reason for the purpose of a religious life. She concludes that the Sikh thought, which is the result of direct experience of Truth, has created history, but is not the product of history. In Sikhism, the role of reasons is Complementary to the revelation received by the Gurus.

5. Baljit Singh Bagga in his paper 'Mysticism in Sikhism' gives a concise statement about the mystical experience of the Gurus, its distinct features, expression and style, the new direction it took and the historical role it fulfilled in Indian history. He supports his views by the Bani of the Gurus and how they tried to implement their mystic thesis.

6. In his second paper on the 'Concept of Charhhdi Kala in Sikhism' Baljit Singh tries to stress how in the context of pessimism that materialism and scientific philosophies have generated in the life of man, optimism and even inspired struggle for a righteous cause are an important aspect of the spiritual thesis of the Gurus, and the consequent approach of the Sikh society.

7. Kanwaljit Kaur in her paper 'Sikh Women' emphasizes the radical contrast between the approach of Guru Nanak towards the position, status and role of women in society and similar thoughts about women in the contemporary and traditional religious societies. She stresses that such a contrast could only be spiritually conceived and ordained, and could not be the result of contemporary or earlier religious or social environment.

8. In emphasizing the identity of Sikhism and Sikh Society in his paper, 'The Sikh Identity', Daljeet Singh explains how in the matter of spiritual experience, the concept of God, ideology, class, scripture and its institutions, Sikhism is entirely different from the other religions, and has a personality of its own.

9. In his paper 'The Saint Soldier', Kharak Singh stresses that Guru Nanak in his pioneer role gave a clear blow to the dichotomy between the spiritual life and the empirical life that existed in all the earlier Indian religions or the pacifist systems. He delineates that in pursuance of his new whole-life or Miri Piri thesis, the Sikh Gurus developed the concept of Sant- Sipahi or a spiritually integrated man alive to his duties both to God and man. He explains the clear logic of the Gurus' thesis, the development of the Sikh society and the epitomic spiritual personality of the Sant Sipahi or the Sikh Gurus.

10. In the paper 'The Origin and Development of Sikh studies' G.S. Mansukhani gives a graphic picture of the development of Sikh literature in the English language in the preceding about two hundred years. From the earlier fragmentary works of James Brown, John Malcolm and the superficial work of the German missionary, E. Trumpp, he states how the study took a more comprehensive approach in the works of Macauliffe, Dorothy Field, Teja Singh, Sher . Singh and others. In the forties and fifties and later there was a spurt in Sikh writings, especially following the establishment of Sikh Foundations, Sikh Chairs in the Universities and the celebration of the Quincentenary year of Guru Nanak. In the third phase, he states, have appeared interpretative works of Mansukhani, Daljeet Singh, Jagjit Singh, Harbans Singh, J.S. Mann and others. Finally he indicates some areas in which further studies need to be undertaken. He commends the method of holding academic conferences, and concludes that the seed sown by the Gurus is of God and shall grow.

11. Kharak Singh's paper, 'Sikh Ideology, Fundamentalism and Punjab Problem' is a response to some sketchy observations made by Oberoi and McLeod who have tended, to misrepresent the issues of the Punjab Problem. In the back-ground of Sikh ideology, the author relates the sequence of events that have led to the various issues involved in the current crisis in the Punjab. The statement of facts given makes it evident that fundamentalism or parochialism has hardly anything to do with the problems of the Punjab, which are primarily cultural, social, economic and political, and can be solved only on the basis of accepted principles of democracy and justice.

12. In 'Guru Tegh Bahadur-The Ninth Nanak', S.S. Kohli gives a clear picture of the Bani and life of the Guru. He makes cogent use of contemporary sources, and concludes that the Ninth Master sacrificed his life for the cause of Dharma, which included the right

of the people, the Hindus in this case, to practise their faith in the manner they liked.

13. In her paper 'Devi Worship Story - A Critique', Madanjit Kaur makes a detailed analysis of the tale of Devi Worship in the various writings of Koer Singh and others. Apart from the fact that she finds the story completely inconsistent with the entire lives of the Gurus and their Bani, including that of the Tenth Master, it finds no mention at all in the first and most authentic narration of a contemporary, Sainapat, in his Gursobha that appeared near 1701 AD. Further, she cites support for the version of Gursobha from the evidence of Par chi Patshahi Daswin ki and some other contemporary or near contemporary works. She argues that Koer Singh's version is obviously very incongruous and is clearly influenced by his personal prejudices of being a person with evident Brahminical leanings. Similar are the reasons for Chhibber Brahmins to distort the Amrit Story.

14. Gurtej Singh has analysed the works of Dr. Ashta and of Dr. Jaggi on the Dasam Granth. He finds that the former has failed to examine properly some of the available sources and material. Another serious fault, he believes, is that Ashta has entirely ignored the obvious contradiction between the ideology of the Guru Granth, which emphatically rejects gods and goddesses and the theory of Avtarhood, and a large section of the Dasam Gnanth which is profuse-ly devoted to the praise of Devis and Devtas. Similarly, Ashta, he suggests, while drawing his conclusions has also omitted to explain the contradiction between the known compositions of the Tenth Master, condemning the worship of Avtars and devtas and a major part of the Granth written to eulogise Shiva and other gods and goddesses. He concludes that Ashta's work and views do not, for that matter, attain a high academic level. He finds that his view that the whole of the Granth is the production of the Tenth Master, is un-tenable. On the other hand, he finds Jaggi's view, which has been supported by Dr. flazari Prasad Dwivedi, quite scientific and well -researched. For, on clear ideological, linguistic and other grounds, he is reluctant to accept that compositions like Chaubis Avtaar, Chandi Charitra, etc., devoted and worshipful to Devis and Devtas, could be the production of the Guru.

15. 'Raj Karega Khalsa' by Kharak Singh and G.S. Dhillon is a historical study of the slogan which, according to the question-answer series written by Bhai Nand Lal, arises from the objectives

explained to him by the Tenth Master. In this context the statement of Mata Sundri that the Tenth Master had assigned the role of Sewa or service to Banda and the role of righteous and just rule to the panth, is very significant. The paper explains what a great socio-political revolution was brought about by the Sikhs in the state. By any standard or assessment it was a revolution, the authors aver, greater in its implications than the French Revolution or any other revolution, because the lowest strata of society were elevated to the highest level, and unlike elsewhere, they not only gained equality and prestige, but once for all brushed aside the social stigma attached to their status, profession or caste.

16. The spate of books on Punjab crisis mostly miss the historical perspective of the Punjab river waters dispute. which Daljeet Singh draws concisely. He explains how over time the major part of Punjab waters has been diverted to non-riparian states in apparent contravention of the riparian principle embodied in the Indian Constitution. He stresses that while from the national point of view it would clearly be unproductive to use those waters in the distant deserts of Rajas than, their use in the parent riparian state is critically vital and essential for the future economic and socio-political well-being of Punjab and its people. He suggests that a problem which could easily be solved judicially, has been allowed to grow into a major block to the solution of the crisis in the State. For, he concludes that without the full acceptance of the riparian principle, it would be impossible to solve the continuing crisis.

17. R. S. Wahiwala, in his paper 'The Sikh Code of Conduct' deals with a subject of contemporary relevance, and seeks to clarify the many issues about the Sikh Rahit regarding which quite a confusion is sought to be created both by some scholars and some non-Sikh organisations. He concludes that seen in the light of history, tradition and literature, the Rahit prescribed by the SGPC is authentic.

18. In the last paper Kharak Singh emphasizes the need and justification for a World Institute of Sikhism and gives an outline for it. He argues that Sikhism being a whole-life religion with an optimistic attitude towards life and a goal of carrying out the Altruistic Will of a Loving Creator, the Sikhs owe it to themselves and their faith to present its world-view at the forum of other Higher Religions. The author points out that the damage from the earlier indifference, both by the scholars and the intelligentsia, has been considerable. Efforts

made so far, he indicates, have been, although commendable, inadequate. It has been evident that in the field of religious studies work by proxy is not possible. That is why existing efforts have been neither quite fruitful nor in any sense authentic. Further neglect, or allowing the existing state of affairs to continue, he believes, could be suicidal. Hence his emphasis for the establishment of an Institute/Centre of Sikh Studies and Education with modern facilities for research and publication.

As a brief account of the various papers show, the organisers of the Conference, purposely took up issues both of permanent and contemporary relevance. It is these matters that the authors' have tried to deal with at the academic level, so that a balanced and accurate understanding and assessment of the issues is possible, both by scholars and the reading public. Of course, in academic matters, while no finality can be achieved, many of the cobwebs have been removed, and the points have been analysed, clarified and supported with cogent factual, historical and scriptural evidence. It is for these reasons that we have given a brief resume of the various papers so that the busy reader may select the subject of her or his interest.

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