

AN INTRODUCTION
TO
SRI GURU GRANTH
SAHIB

G. S. TALIB



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FOREWORD

Sikh Scripture, the Sri Guru Granth Sahib, is a 1430-page-long psalm in laudation of the Transcendent. Its poetry is all in the spiritual key. It lays down no dogma or prescriptions. The message it communicates is couched in the language and symbolism of love and faith. It is purest and most exalted poetry ever written. Being liberal in design and spirit, the Holy Granth is a major repository of spiritual thought in world literature—thought apparently common to all religious traditions, but unique in its announcement of the existence of the Absolute Being, and in its celebration of God-consciousness.

As the principal sacred text of the Sikhs, Sri Guru Granth Sahib is the pivot of their religious and social life. It is not merely a text bejewelled with sacred word and phrase, it is for Sikhs the mystic personality, the person visible of the Gurus. Students of religion will find in it much that is in consonance with the richest spiritual experience of mankind. Also, much is to be found in the text which points to contemporary concerns of a broad humanitarian

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doctrine based on truth, compassion and justice.

It is a measure of the vast and ready learning of Professor Gurbachan Singh Talib that he undertook to translate into English the entire text of Sri Guru Granth Sahib, since published by Punjabi University in four handsome volumes. 'To translate', as the adage runs, 'is to betray.' To render a religious and cultural text of one tradition into another is a challenging task which requires a deep understanding of the idiom and phraseology of both languages and traditions—host as well as guest. It amounts to a confrontation of two heterogeneous sensibilities which are conditioned by the intrinsic value systems of their respective cultures. Professor Talib through his remarkable genius for 'intercultural mediation' has accomplished a new semiotic reference by evoking the consciousness of rupture in the continuity of identification. He has employed Indian theistic, philosophical and devotional vocabulary, intelligible to the general readers, having a universal significance, conveying at the same time the meaningful exposition in subtle music and cadence to the recipients of target language culture.

Professor Talib's prolegomenon to his four-volume translation is, in a way, an exhaustive and a comprehensive essay on Sikh philosophical thought. Terms fundamental to Sikh belief and doctrine such as *guru*, *hukam*, *nadar*, *mukti*, *niranjan*,

and *sachkhand* are expounded with uncommon intellectual finesse and clarity. Several exegetic expositions of the Holy Book exist, but Professor Talib's rendering excels them all in aesthetic as well as in literary grace. Conversant with the currents of the philosophical and religious traditions of both the east and the west, having at the same time a deep understanding of Persian, Sanskrit, Arabic, Urdu and Hindi traditions, Professor Talib's renderings and interpretations attest his life-long pursuit—the pursuit of excellence. While his translation preserves the soul, beauty and rhythm of the original, his interpretation is a happy fusion of the perceptively critical approach and an intuitive vision. The Punjabi University is publishing Professor Talib's Introduction to his four-volume translation of the Guru Granth Sahib as a separate treatise. For its cogency of analysis of Sikh concepts and for its freshness of expression it will bear reproduction in this form and, I believe, it will be received with equal appreciation by the erudite as well as by the lay reader.

Punjabi University, Patiala
August 21, 1991

H. K. MANMOHAN SINGH
Vice-Chancellor

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INTRODUCTION

THE HOLY GRANTH SAHIB—ORIGINS

'Granth', which is derived from the Sanskrit, implies like 'Koran' and 'Bible' a book—the Book *par excellence*. Unlike some other scriptures, it is neither history nor mythology, nor a collection of incantations. Its contents are spiritual poetry, the vision of the cosmic order and exhortation to the higher life. In that respect it is a unique scripture among the source books of religion. It remains unique in consisting solely of the meditations of God-inspired men, who have communicated the Divine Word in a spirit of deep humility and compassion for mankind.

This holy Scripture of the Sikh faith, called variously Sri Adi Granth (Primal Scripture), Granth Sahib (the Holy Granth) and Guru Granth Sahib is not looked upon by the followers of the Sikh faith in the aspect only of a book or scripture, but as the embodiment in visible form of the essence of the Person of the Ten holy Gurus. Being the repository of the Divine Word (Shabad, Nām) it is offered worship and not mere veneration. In the religious assemblies of the Sikhs, the holy Granth is the

presiding Presence; all who enter, bow before it and make offerings, which may range from the humblest token of a copper coin to large sums of money or commodities. These offerings are believed to be made to the holy Guru, and are intended to be utilized for the accomplishment of religious objectives and philanthropic purposes. Wherever the holy Granth is kept in state, with an attendant waving the fly-whisk (*chanwar*) over it, and recitation and Kirtan (holy music) and other due ceremonial performed, that spot becomes for that occasion a Gurudwara (Guru's Portal, a Sikh Temple). In the Sikh Temples the Granth Sahib is kept, brought out in state, prayers offered in its presence and at night-time taken to a duly appointed place for 'retirement'. It is thus, treated as a sacred Person, the Guru, rather than as merely a book. Over it is spread a canopy or awning, to mark its sacred character, partaking of the ceremonial due to royalty. All must sit with folded hands and in a prayerful attitude of reverence in its presence; no action or gesture smacking of levity or casualness is permitted. No one may sit in its presence on a raised seat, such even as a cushion, but all must squat on the floor, which may be spread with cotton mattresses, or rich carpets. Where these are not available, even simple straw may be spread, as in large rural religious assemblies. All must offer prayer standing before it with folded hands. Thanksgiving for a joyous event

or prayers for the peace of the departed must alike be offered in its presence. No Sikh marriage can be sanctified except in its presence, with the bride and bridegroom circumambulating it reverently, while the nuptial hymns from its pages are being chanted. Its affirmations may be invoked for blessing or as oracles to guide the devoted seekers in situations demanding solemnity in thought and action. Such a practice is resorted to all over the Sikh world.

The Conveyance of the holy Volume from one place to another too is attended by a ceremonial. Usually it is carried over short distances on a man's head, with a number of persons in attendance, chanting hymns and someone sprinkling ordinary or perfumed water in front. If carried over a large distance, it must be placed reverently on a carriage or lorry, or in a car, with the attendants taking off their shoes as a mark of reverence. It may be carried at the head of a procession, placed on an elephant's open howdah or on some other elevation. Sikh religious occasions are generally marked by largely attended processions, chanting hymns and carrying in front on a properly decorated mount or vehicle the Granth Sahib.

Where Sikhs gather to consider solemn issues concerning religion or the welfare of the community or to resolve some crisis, there too the holy Granth Sahib may preside. All decisions taken in its presence are held sacred and binding on the faithful.

The principal Sikh religious ceremonial consists in making a complete recitation of the Granth Sahib over a number of days, usually a week or ten days, concluded with the holding of congregational prayers, chanting of sacred hymns (*Kirtan*) and distribution of grace-offerings (*Karah-Prasad*). This ceremony is called *Bhog* (lit. Partaking). Since recent times a non-stop recitation of the Scripture (Akhand path) followed by *Bhog* has come largely into vogue. To offer thanksgiving or to seek blessing, to sanctify the memory of the dead or in general to express devotion, such recitations are held. For these, properly trained priests (granthis, pāthis) are called in and at the conclusion charities disbursed.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF COMPILATION OF THE GRANTH SAHIB

The Granth Sahib consists of hymns of devotion to God, inspired reflections on the Divinely-ordained cosmic order, the vision of the higher life and exhortation to man towards lifting himself to the state of spiritual peace and the attainment of liberation (*mukti*, *moksha*). Its form is throughout verse, built on the principles of Indian neo-classical tradition of music prevalent in northern India. Its language is predominantly medieval Hindi of the Braji variety, with variation of Punjabi, and in general in verbal terms that are akin to the popular spoken forms. In the vocabulary used, a large variety of language-traditions of India are drawn upon,

including a fair deal of Persian and Arabic, which in the time of the holy Gurus in the Fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had become well-established in the cultural tradition, especially of northern India. These two languages, brought with them by the Muslim invaders and rulers from abroad, had passed into familiar popular idiom, and were employed by the holy Gurus to emphasize the universal character of their message, which was directed to the Muslims no less than the Hindus and others.

Guru Nanak Dev, from time to time in the course of his holy ministry poured forth his vision in the form of hymns which are devotional, deeply reflective and morally inspiring. These continued by himself or some disciples to be written down. When he quit this mortal world (1539), he left to his successor in the holy office of Guruship, Guru Angad Dev, a *Pothi* (sacred volume) of his inspired compositions as the most precious legacy, to be preserved and its teachings spread among mankind. Guru Angad Dev, whose period of apostleship lasted from 1539 to 1552 added some compositions of his own, though their volume is slender. He was mainly amplifying the deeper meaning and significance of the teachings of the Master. His successor, the aged Guru Amar Das (period of holy ministry, 1552-1574) with the fervour of inspired devotion, added a large volume of sacred poetry

(Bāni) to what he inherited from Guru Nanak Dev and Guru Angad Dev, and gave expression to deep devotion, philosophy and the higher moral vision. In his life-time he collected the entire body of sacred verse of his own composition and of his predecessors, along with the compositions of some of the Bhaktas or saint-poets of India whose teachings accorded in principle with those of Sikhism. This entire body of sacred verse was recorded in two volumes or *Pothis* which are still extant with the descendants of the Guru. These became, when some years later the holy Granth Sahib came to be compiled, the matrix for the sacred Volume itself.

The Principal source of the *Bani* included in the holy Granth Sahib were the *Pothis* aforementioned, found in Goindwal. These were scribed from Samvat 1627 to 1629 (1570-1572) by Baba Sahas Ram, son of Baba Mohan and grandson of Guru Amar Das. These two volumes between them consist of 300 and 224 leaves respectively, making a total of 1048 pages, all written in one hand, except two hymns, presumably in Guru Ram Das's hand, prior to his assumption of Guruship. Some pages are left blank. On page 94 of Volume II is written, 'Ghulam Mastan Jeth Chand'—Jeth Chand being Guru Ram Das's original name. So this is in the authentic hand of Guru Ram Das.

In these *Pothis* are included 15 ragas out of the

30 that found place in the Volume as finalized under the guidance of Guru Arjan Dev. The 31st raga, Jaijawanti was the mould of some hymns of Guru Teg Bahadur, and was added when under the command of Guru Gobind Singh the Volume as it now stands, was completed. In the Pothis the order of the ragas and of the hymns of the Gurus is not the same as in the extant canon of Guru Granth Sahib. In volume I of the Pothis the following eleven ragas are included : Suhi, Prabhati, Dhanasari, Basant, Telang, Gujari, Bilawal, Bhairon, Maru and Kedara. In Volume II, 4 ragas appear : Ramkali, Sorath, Malar, Sarang. Thus a total of 15 ragas appear in these Pothis. To these however, additions were made when the Scripture was finalized.

Some additions were made to the pre-existing Banis, when final form was given by Guru Arjan Dev to the holy Granth Sahib, e. g. in the Pothis *Anandu* contains 38 pauris, and *Siddha-Goshti* 72 pauris. Besides these, *Vārs* and much other Bani was added. Guru Angad Dev's Slokas were procured from some other source. On the margin of P. 216 of Vol. II is written : "*Guru Angad Gurmukhi akkhar banae. Babe de aggei Shabad bhet kita*" Guru Angad formulated the Gurmukhi Script. He presented the collection of hymns to the holy Guru Nanak).

In these Pothis *Rahau* or 'Pause' is inserted frequently at appropriate places. *Mahalla* or the title-name of the Guru is mentioned only once each time

at the end of a group of hymns. Numbering of hymns has been done.

The Bani of several Bhaktas is included—Kabir, Namdev, Ravidas, Bhikhan, Trilochan, Sain, Ramanand and Farid. In the holy Granth Sahib some more matter was added from other sources. 'Kabir' is written down in several places as 'Kamir' which is the popular pronunciation of this name in Punjabi.

Revision and additions in other respects too were undertaken when the Scripture came to be completed. *Japu* was added to the finalized Scripture from a copy of it made by Guru Ram Das. The form to the *Banis Rahiras* and *Kirtan Sohila*, standing after *Japu* in the holy Granth Sahib was also given when the scripture acquired final shape.

Guru Amar Das was followed in the seat of apostleship by Guru Ram Das (1574-1581). He it was who made the holy pool called Amritsar (Pool of Immortality) in the centre of which was erected Hari Mandir, known the world over as the Golden Temple, and round which has grown the great city of Amritsar in the Punjab. He composed a fairly large body of hymns rich with devotional fervour, whose inspiration and musical appeal is irresistible to the human spirit. Thus body of verse too got added to the tradition of the Sikh sacred literature.

As discussed in detail by Professor Sahib Singh in his *Adi Bir Bare*, besides the Goindwal *Pothis* other

collections of Guru-bani were also preserved by devoted Sikhs, which must have been available for inclusion in the holy Book to Guru Arjan Dev. As mentioned in Giani Gian Singh's *Tawarikh Guru Khalsa*, a Sikh Bakhta Arora of the Hasan Abdal area presented to Guru Arjan Dev a large volume containing the Bani of the preceding Guru Arjan Dev a large volume containing the Bani of the preceding Gurus. This volume, which may have been one of the sources of compilation of the holy Volume, is stated to be still extant.

Guru Ram Das, after his brief ministry of seven years was followed by his son Guru Arjan Dev, then a youth only of eighteen years. With an exceptional divine gift of devotional poetry and music, Guru Arjan Dev set out giving to the Sikh church, by then nearly a century old, a stable and enduring form that should become the nucleus of a new order; and as it happened in course of time, it took form only a century or so later of a new society. Such was the consolidating influence of the projects initiated by Guru Arjan Dev.

Guru Arjan Dev built in the middle of the Pool made by his holy father, Guru Ram Das, a temple that he named Hari Mandir, in which the One Formless Supreme Being, *Ek Oankar*, *Akal Purakh* of Guru Nanak Dev's revealed vision should be lauded and worshipped and no deity, visible or invisible. This great Temple, now the centre of a

great concourse of pilgrims everyday and the holiest of holy of the Sikh faith, is known as the Golden Temple, because of its walls and domes being plated with sheets of gold in later times. This temple and the Pool became to Sikhism what Mecca is to Islam, Jeruslaem to Judaism and Christianity and Bodh Gaya to Buddhism. Besides establishing the Pool and the Temple, Guru Arjan Dev composed himself a large volume of sacred verse, renouncing the teaching of his predecessors, elucidating and amplifying them and adding visions and insights of his own. To the compositions of his predecessors he imparted an amplified form by adding to them elucidatory passages of his own composition or of some of these holy teachers themselves. This may be seen particularly in several Vārs or long disquisitional compositions which form part of the sacred volume of the Granth Sahib.

The *Bani* or sacred compositions of the holy Gurus were available in short collections and excerpts for daily meditation and recitation (*nit-nem*) since Guru Nanak Dev's time. As averred by Bhai Gurdas in his first Vār, in the new *ashram* at Kartarpur on the Ravi that Guru Nanak Dev set up, the inmates would rise at early dawn and after bathing, would recite in the dharamsala (temple) the *Japu*. In the evening would be recited the *So Daru* and *Arati*. This would include such of the Banis of Guru Nanak Dev as later came to be included in

Rahiras and *Kirtan Sohila*. Later came into vogue the morning recitation of *Asa-ki-Var* to which are added slokas of Guru Nanak Dev's and Guru Angad Dev's composition. This Vār is now recited in *extenso* in all large Sikh Gurudwaras with the addition of some rich, devotional pieces in the measure Asa of Guru Ram Das's composition. Portions of Guru Amar Das's composition *Anandu* are an essential part of the Sikh ceremonial of worship.

After the resolve to compile the sacred Volume was made, Guru Arjan Dev decided upon collecting the texts of compositions of his predecessors in the holy office from wherever these could be available. He is also said to have sent out his messengers to far-off places in the country to collect the authentic texts of the compositions of such of the Saints (Bhaktas) as had preached worship of the sole unattributed Formless Supreme Being (*Ek Oankar*, Nirguna, Nirankar Brahm), who moreover, had exhorted the people to rise above caste barriers and to still sectarian strife. According to the account in Kavi Santokh Singh's *Guru Partap Suraj Granth*, some contemporary Bhaktas and Sufis—Kahna, Shah Hussain, Pilo and Chhajju—approached the Guru for inclusion of their own compositions in the sacred volume. On consideration these were found to be lacking in the universal vision, humility and deep humanitarianism that were characteristic of the Guru's teaching, and were declined. The Guru sent

one disciple, Paira Mokha to Ceylon (Sri Lanka of these days) which Guru Nanak Dev was reported to have visited and composed there a yogic text, *Pran Sangali*. This was brought, and on examination was found to be spurious, centred in hatha-yoga whose system throughout Gurubani has been repudiated. Another rejected text, *Jugavali*, also hatha-yogic in import, may be studied in the *Puratan Janam-sakhi*.

The greatest of all tasks was to obtain from Guru Amar Das's elder son, Baba Mohan, a maternal uncle of Guru Arjan Dev, the two *pothis* or volumes of the sacred Bani that were compiled in Guru Amar Das's life-time. Baba Mohan had shut himself up in an upper chamber of his house in Goindwal, on the river Beas, the seat of his holy father. Being of a mystical cast of mind, he was sparing of granting audience to anyone. A hymn in the measure Gauri, of Guru Arjan Dev's composition, beginning, 'Mohan Tere uche mandar mahal apara' (Gauri M. V. Chhant) is related as having been sung by Guru Arjan Dev below the window of Baba Mohan's retreat in the street to the accompaniment of the sarinda, a stringed instrument, to move him to part with the *Pothis*. The hymn has a beautiful ambiguity about it, employing one of the attributive names of God, Mohan, to sing Divine laudation. Anyway, it is said that Baba Mohan's heart melted at the sweet humility of Guru Arjan Dev; he came down, made obeisance to his nephew, enshrining in himself the

light of Guruship, and handed over the *Pothis*. These became the principal constituent of the sacred Volume to be compiled, and after use were obviously returned to the descendants of Guru Amar Das, the Bhala Bawas, in whose possession these still are.

While the sacred Volume itself was completed in 1604 (first of the bright half of Bhadon, Samvat 1661) when it was installed in Hari Mandir, arrangements for such a vast project must have continued for quite a considerable time, in the form of collecting and collating of hymns, giving final form to the Vārs, inclusion at appropriate places of the Bani of the Bhaktas, and adding elucidatory verse-notes to the Bani, particularly of the Bhaktas at different places.

After all the constituent compositions had been collected, remained the basic task of writing out in a calligraphic hand this vast material, in proper order and form and with editorial directions for study. The whole was to be cast, except the *Japu*, standing at the head of the sacred volume, into Ragas or musical measures. There are thirty-one of these now, including Jaijawanti which was added subsequently along with the hymns of Guru Tegh Bahadur. Since all the holy Gurus took the title-name 'Nanak' on coming to the holy ministry, to distinguish the correct authorship a convention had been devised whereby each of the Gurus was

designated as *Mahalla* or *Mahla*, that is, Tenement of God, numbered according to his succession to Guru Nanak Dev, who is designated as Mahalla I. The hymns are arranged in accordance with the order of the Gurus in the Sikh tradition. Thus, Guru Nanak Dev comes at the head in each measure and genre, followed by Guru Amar Das, Guru Ram Das and Guru Arjan Dev in that order. After these are included the compositions of the Bhaktas, with Kabir being given the principal place. Under each raga are *Chaupadas* (quatrains) *Ashtpadis* (octets), *Chhants* (lyrics) and *Vars* (long disquisitional compositions.) Besides all these genres are compositions cast in special moulds according to the principles of Indian poetics such as *Pahre* (hours of day and night), *Thitten* (lunar dates), *Sat-Var* (days of the week), *Bara-Maha* (the twelve months or seasons), *Bawan-Akhhari* (acrostics built on the fifty-two letters of Sanskrit alphabet) and others. *Patti* is built round the Gurumukhi alphabet. There are a few compositions with special titles; such as Guru Arjan Dev's *Sukhmani in Gauri*; Guru Nanak Dev's *Siddha-Goshti* and *Oankar*, both in Ramkali. Following another tradition are included *Solahe* in the measure Maru. These are verse-units each of sixteen couplets.

There were a number of bards, Brahmin by birth, called Bhattas who had for long been attached to the Guru's household. They were well-versed in

the Indian religious lore and possessed a deep and intimate Knowledge of the great moral and spiritual force of the Guru's teaching. These bards, whose *Swaiyyas* (laudatory ornate stanzas) were selected for inclusion in the holy Granth Sahib, composed stanzas of laudation of the Gurus from Guru Nanak Dev to Guru Arjan Dev. Their devotion and art were pleasing, and they were honoured by inclusion in the holy Book. These *Swaiyyas* are inspired compositions and enshrine besides good poetry in phraseology characteristic of this class of oratorical composition, deep insights into the teachings of the holy Gurus. In these compositions the imagination and feeling are deeply stirred, and a highly evocative imagery and style induces the devotional, worshipful mood.

Two bards of the Dūm caste, professional singers of popular ballads, about whom an account is current that they offended Guru Arjan Dev by their arrogance, but later begged humble forgiveness, were also similarly honoured. Their great composition, *Satte-Balvand-ki-Var* in the measure Ramkali, is a noble piece of homage to the House of Nanak uptill Guru Arjan Dev. This Vār is popularly also known as *Tikke-di-Var* (Coronation ode), as its theme is the assumption of Guru ship by the first five Gurus and the ideals inspiring each.

Towards the close are recorded Slokas (couplets or verse units) from the Gurus, and from Bhaktas

Kabir and Farid and from Guru Tegh Bahadur, a later insertion. The opening, as stated earlier, is with *japu (japuji)*, followed by *Rahiras*, the hymns of the evening prayer and by *Kirtan Sohila*, a group of hymns to be recited before retiring at night. Then follows the principal Raga of the Indian musical system, Sri Raga. At the close is the *Mundavani* (puzzle or seal) to mark the close of the Book, so that no spurious compositions thereafter, can be added, followed by a hymn of thanksgiving at the successful completion of the great task by Divine grace. As an appendix is added *Raga-mala*, a catalogue of musical measures. This is not the composition of the Guru, but of the medieval poet Jodh, in ornate semi-classical style.

Kavi Santokh Singh has narrated in his characteristic picturesque style the process of finalization of the holy Book, in his magnificent *Guru Partap Suraj Granth*. Guru Arjan Dev along with his devoted disciple the great poet and savant, Bhai Gurdas repaired more than a mile out from the precincts of Hari Mandir towards the north-east (*ishan-disha*), a direction held auspicious. There under a clearing amidst thick clusters of *ber* trees at the spot where now Gurudwara Ramsar on the Taran Taran road is located, the Guru got tents pitched. A quantity of paper, reedpens and the inks was stocked, and Bhai Gurdas served as amanuensis to record the holy Volume. In this sequestered spot,

the process of writing took a year. From time to time, as may be evident from the original copy now found at Kartarpur in the Jullundur District of Punjab, certain compositions of some Bhaktas deemed on reconsideration unsuited to the total vision and teaching of the Sikh faith were rubbed over with a paste of Sulphur. This in those time was the usual mode of rubbing off errors and unwanted writings. Here and there blank spaces are left, presumably to insert any other hymns in the respective genres that may be discovered or selected. In some places are appended notes presumably inserted by Guru Arjan Dev's command, commending the preceding text as 'correct' (*Suddh*) or directing that it be corrected (*Suddh kichai*). Preceding the sacred text is a list of contents (*Tatkara*) detailing each hymn recorded. The volume consists of 974 leaves. At the opening is a page, containing the *Mul Mantra* (enunciation of the fundamental creed of Sikhism, preceding the *Japu* stated to be in Guru Arjan Dev's hand. Page 541 bears Guru Hargobind's signature. This Volume, in rich leather binding is now preserved at Kartarpur under the custody of the Sodhis, descendants of Dhirmal, Guru Hargobind's grandson, who made an unsuccessful claim to Guruship. Later his descendants came into the mainstream of Sikhism, though they still exercise a kind of apostolic influence over the people around their seat.

This volume at Kartarpur is accepted as the genuine original authentic copy prepared by Bhai Gurdas, as stated above. Sometimes doubts have been expressed as to this claim, but these appear to be founded more on a general attitude of scepticism characteristic of the modern intellectual spirit and the extreme pursuit of historical fact, seeking proof positive of every happening. But as testified by the Sikh tradition, by the Shiromini Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee and by two distinguished modern scholars, Bhai Kahan Singh of Nabha and Bhai Jodh Singh, this is the authentic original copy a unique phenomenon in religious history. All other copies, whether in manuscript or print, of the holy Book conform to this and are tested according to its text. Subsequently, under direction of Guru Gobind Singh, in 1705-06 (Samvat 1762-63 Bikrami) the hymns of Guru Tegh Bahadur were incorporated in the same order according to ragas and genres as in the earlier volume.

The writing out of the sacred volume was completed on the first of the bright half of the month of Bhadon in the year 1661 of the Bikrami Era, corresponding to about the later half of August of the year 1604 of the Christian Era. Less than two years were remaining at this time of the mortal life of the Guru, when he was to wear the crown of martyrdom at the hands of the bigoted Mughal ruler of the day. With prophetic insight into the future, the holy Guru

with unshrinking labour completed two grand projects of imparting distinctive features to the new faith—the Temple (Hari Mandir) that must serve as the centre of its devotion, and the holy Scripture which must enshrine the spirit of its teaching.

The sacred Volume was carried to the town of Amritsar to be installed in the holy Temple with joyous fanfare, in a reverent procession with the Guru himself walking beside it, waving the fly-whisk over its sacred pages. Sacred food was distributed as it was installed with due ceremonial in the Temple, that the worshipper bowing to it must face east. There the holy Book has rested all through the years since then, brought to it again and again after the ravages of marauders, and the Temple after destruction rebuilt. With profound reverence, while the Book was placed on a cot, as it has been ever since, the Guru himself sat by its side on the floor. Sacred music was played in its presence, except for a few hours preceding and following midnight. At the installation the Guru asked Bhai Gurdas, the great scholar, to make recitations from the Book. Later he ordained that first to hold the sacred office of Granthi (custodian of the Book) should be Bhai Buddha, now in advanced years. He was one of the first to listen to Guru Nanak Dev's teaching, and for his devotion had been invited to apply the paste-mark of ordination to all the Gurus till Guru Arjan

Dev's time. From Bhai Budhha the Guru and the congregation listened to the recitation of the *Japu* which is recorded at the opening of the Book. The ceremonial ordained by the Guru for observance of the hours of prayer and rest has been observed in each detail ever since. A *pahar* (three hours) before midnight, the Book must be closed, wrapped in sheets and conveyed to a room close to the temple, to rest there for the night. As narrated by Kavi Santokh Singh in *Guru Partap Suraj Granth*, as the Book was thus conveyed for retiring, it rested on a cot, while the Guru slept by its side on the floor. Seldom would he go to his own house, but would remain by the side of the Book. Ever in the Temple must burn a lamp of pure ghee. At dawn, after the floor of the Temple has been washed, must the Book be Brought back to be installed, and at three *gharis* (about one hour and a half) to daybreak must the performance of *Asa-ki-Var* be begun by the Temple musicians.

At the installation, the Guru thus addressed the congregation, expressive of the deep mystical meaning of the Book, which is no mere book, but the visible form of the Divine Essence. Said the Guru :

The Granth is the ship across the ocean of the world; those devoting their hearts to it shall swim across. As he Guru's person in all places to all shall not be visible, know the Granth to

be the Guru's heart—its exalted self shall last for all time. Its significance is deeper than that of my own self; know it to be your lord and show it reverence. Worship is with fragrance of sandalwood paste and saffron; burn incense before it and make offering of flowers...

He whose laudation Vedas and Puranas sing loftily all through, whose extent to Shesh-naga is not known, nor to Sharda, goddess of learning, who only utter *neti, neti*,¹ He who is supreme over all, prop of all existence—His name in its pages is lauded. No difference subsists between the Name and that which is named—this is thus the noble embodiment of the holy Creator.

Further, the Guru adjured the congregation recite and listen to it, with reverent, believing hearts; thereby would all attain the supreme state at the end of life. It must be recited in memory of those who depart this life. Its worship shall confer bliss and joy on the self in the hereafter.

The first day as the Book was carried by Bhai Buddha to its resting-place on his head, the Guru was reverently waving the fly-whisk over it.²

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1. 'Not this, not this', signifying helplessness to know the Divine Essence.
 2. The above account is based on *Guru Partap Suraj Granth*, Rasi III, Ansu 50 (Bhai Vir Singh's edition).

THE GRANTH SAHIB AS THE MYSTICAL PERSON OF THE
GURU

In the preceding paragraphs some idea has been conveyed of the holiness of the Granth Sahib, whose text must noway be tampered with even in the minutest particular; which when installed as the sacred Book, must be written down without splitting letters to form separate words. One of the doctrines, held aximotic among the Sikhs is the belief in the Book as Guru. This is held firmly and irrevocably, and despite demurring voices from certain sects which believe in the continuity of the line of Gurus in flesh after Guru Gobind Singh's injunction to confer Guruship on the Khalsa (the corporate Sikh Commonwealth) and the holy Granth, the overwhelming majority of Sikhs hold firmly to the belief in the Guruship of the Granth Sahib. Each morning and evening at the conclusion of congregational prayers, this belief is asserted in unison by chanting :

'Sabh Sikkhan kau hukam hai maniyo Guru Granth.'

(We command all Sikhs to hold the Granth to be the Guru).

This line, coming from Giani Gian Singh's *Panth Parkash* (1869) is only a variation of a much older transcript of a command of Guru Gobind Singh's injunction as reported in the *Rahitnama* (Code of Conduct for Sikhs) compiled by Bhai Prahlah Singh, purporting to have listened to the substance of this affirmation from Guru Gobind Singh himself :

Akal-Purakh ke bachan siun
 pragat chalaiyo Panth;
 Sabh Sikkhan ko hukam hai
 Guru maniyo Granth.

In *Guru Bilas Padishahi Chhevin* (a narrative of the life of Guru Hargobind) dating from the early nineteenth century, occurs the adjuration :

Whoever seeks to have a sight of the Guru
 the holy Granth must behold;
 Should he seek to have converse
 with the Guru the Granth must he study
 with devoted heart.

(Chapter 4)

Kavi Santokh Singh in *Guru Partap Suraj Granth*, already drawn upon, reports the affirmation of Guru Gobind Singh before his departure from mortal life :

Whoever holds belief in the ten Gurus
 as one in spirit, is my true disciple.
 Behold ye the Guru Granth as the eleventh Guru,
 Its Bani too as the holy Preceptor.

(Rut 5, Adhyaya 15, Verse 4)

Earlier than these in time, in *Guru Bilas Padishahi Daswin*, a verse-narrative of Guru Gobind Singh's life by Bhai Sukha Singh in Samvat 1854 Bikrami (1797 of the Christian era) Guru Gobind Singh is reported thus to have left his testament to his disciples, the Khalsa, at departing this life :

"The Volume of the Granth, repository of utterance of
 the Ten Gurus,
 Study ye, that it may bring to you the state of liberation".

Doctrinally, the *Bani* or the sacred Word has

been paid high ecstatic homage by the holy Gurus in the Granth Sahib itself. The most explicit such statement occurs in the measure Nat Narayan (Ashtpadi 4) composition of Guru Ram Das :

Bani Guru, Guru hai Bani,
vich Bani Amrit sare;
Guru bani kahai sevak jana manai
partakhi Guru mistare

(The *Bani* is Guru, the Guru in *Bani* is manifested;
In the *Bani* lie all immortal boons;

The Guru in *Bani* expresses himself, to which the disciple brings faith :

Thus does the Guru manifestly
save the disciple.

Another adjuration by the same Guru occurs in the Measure Kanra, Ashtpadi 3, page 1310 :

Satiguru bachan bachan hai Satiguru
Padhar mukti janavaigo.

(The holy Guru is his Word, the Word the holy
Guru:

This shall show the way of liberation).

Bhai Gurdas, the great poet and savant, whose interpretation of the teaching of the Gurus is held to be the most authentic, affirms in Var 20 :

Guru-murat Guru-shabad hai
Sadh Sangat vich paragatiyaiya.

(The Guru's World is the Guru's visible form, that
in holy company gets expressed).

In a Kabit in Braji Hindi, Bhai Gurdas affirms likewise :

Guru mahin Shabad hai

Shabad mahin Satiguru,
Nigruna sarguna, gian dhiyan so sujhawai ji.

(Within the Guru is implicit the Word, in the Word
the holy Preceptor, the Guru :
The Word brings realization of the Unattributed,
and the Attributed Supreme Being
And confers enlightenment and meditation).

Doctrinally, it has been asserted, as recorded in the *Rahitnama* of Bhai Nand Lal, purporting a transcript of Guru Gobind Singh's teaching, to be that the Divine Being is to be conceived as having three forms : *Nirguna* (unattributed) *^argun* (*Saguna*—Attributed) and *Guru-Shabad* (the Guru's Word or Bani). This last is the holy Granth and the Bani recorded there in, which reflects the Divine Essence. In the ancient Indian tradition occurs in sacred texts the phrase *Shabda-Brahman* (the Supreme Being in the form of the holy Word). The Sikh belief in the holy Granth Sahib as Guru is in consonance with this ancient Indian tradition.

DETAIL OF THE CONTENTS OF THE HOLY GRANTH SAHIB

Before taking up a brief study of the teachings of the Granth Sahib, a statement may here be inserted of its contents. The number of verse-units of the authorship of each one of the contributors is as detailed later in this section.¹ These units are

1. Based on Bhai Kahan Singh's *Guru Shabad Ratnakar* (Encyclopaedia of Sikh Religion).

overwhelmingly quatrains and slokas (couplets) and longer verse-units, expressive of deep meditation and insights. Then there are Pauris, each a stanza consisting usually of eight to ten lines, some rhyming all through their length uniformly, others in the form of rhyming couplets. There are some rarer forms, like Kundaliya. Of this last an example would be stanza 23 of *Japu*, beginning 'Salahin salahi eti surati na paiya'. The verse-units are all numbered—there being a multiple system of counting : the compositions are counted author-wise, genre-wise and in respect of each larger unit. Count is also kept by internal numbering of each couplet, quatrain or stanza. The attentive reader can soon enter into this system of numbering followed, and since in a quotation it is usual to mention the author, the raga and the genre, it is not difficult to trace a particular line or verse. The recent device of mentioning the page-number has been possible after the availability of copies of the holy Granth in print, in which its pages have been fixed at the standard count of 1430. Still, a page-number would tell little about the verse quoted, without the other details as mentioned above. In the case of *Banis* like *Japu*, *Anandu*, *Siddha-Goshti*, *Alahuniyan*, *Vars* and others, it would be appropriate to name the particular *Bani* and the number of the unit from which the quotation has been extracted. Preachers, writers and others who make use of Gurubani for purposes of special study, and who have to frequently quote from the Scripture

in special contexts, have great need to know the particular context in detail.

The study of Gurubani has a long history behind it, going back to the seventeenth century, when discussion of various facets of it began according to the insights of the system of learning then available. There have been explications, commentaries, glossaries, and concordances, besides studies of special selected texts. Since the introduction of the Western type of learning, certain new aids and study on the lines of modern scholarship have been introduced. With footnotes, alphabetical glossaries and concordances, dependence on sheer memory, characteristic of the older type of Gyani or scholar has been reduced, and new helpful books in print are made available, to guide anyone engaged in some aspect of the study of Gurubani at any level. Particularly has this new trend been strengthened by the occurrence of the centenaries of the births of Guru Gobind Singh (1966) and Guru Nanak Dev (1969) and later (1979) of Guru Amar Das, and undertaking of the study of the Sikh Religion at the level of the universities both in India and abroad. Besides the theses of various grades of competence recently produced, a few remarkable aids to study are the following :

Guru Partap Suraj Granth Kavi Santokh Singh
(Early 19th century)

- Garb-Ganjani Teeka of Japuji* Kavi Santokh Singh
(Early 19th century)
- Guru Girarth Kosh* Pt. Tara Singh Narotam
(19th century)
- Gurubani Kosh* Edited by Vir Singh
(20th century)
- Gurushabad Ratnakar* }
Gurmat Martand } Bhai Kahan Singh
Gurmat Prabhakar } (20th century)
- Guru Shabad Ratan Parkash* Akali Kaur Singh
(Index to each line
of the scripture)
(20th century)
- Adi Granth Shabad
Anukramanika* Gurcharan Singh
(Concordance)
(20th century, recent)
- Shabdarth* Guru Sewak Sabha
(text of Adi Granth with
glossary and explicatory
footnotes)
(20th century)
- Santhya Sri Guru
Granth Sahib* Bhai Vir Singh
(7 volumes of exhaustive
exegesis and explication of
Adi Granth uptill Raga Asa)
(20th century)
- Gurmati Nirnai* Bhai Jodh Singh
(detailed study of
Principles of Sikhism)
(20th century)
- Nirukta Sri Guru
Granth Sahib* Dr. Balbir Singh
(A study in Etymology and
derivatives of words and
terms in the Scripture :
First 2 Vols. published)

There are a number of studies of *Japuji*, of the Banis of Bhaktas and of special problems like the Ragmala and such others by devoted scholars, saturated with the tradition of Sikh classical learning. In the exegetical paraphrase the most deeply learned work is the *Teeka* made at Faridkot by Gyani Badan Singh, assisted by a group of scholars and published for the first time in 1899. This is a learned work with inclination towards, Indian philosophy, Puranic lore and Vedantism, but it nevertheless is a remarkably helpful work in understanding the original text. At places it appears to lose itself in traditional Brahmanical learning, where the reader, with the benefit of insights brought in by more recent Sikh thought, must apply the corrective. This has partly been done by Bhai Vir Singh in *Santhya Guru Granth Sahib* (mentioned above). Only that work is left a fragment.

Some translations and studies of Gurubani in English are available, but these mostly suffer from thinness of background learning. In some the expression too is weak. The most helpful in this category is M. A. Macauliffe's *Sikh Religion* in 6 volumes (OUP). Besides containing exhaustive biographies of all the ten Gurus and the Bhaktas whose *Bani* has found a place in *Adi Granth*, it contains copious translations from the Scripture in rendering that is generally satisfying both as to its level of learning and expression.

To take up now the long-deferred statement of the number of verse-units author-wise in the Granth

Sahib. These are as below :

Guru Nanak Dev	947
Guru Angad Dev	63
Guru Amar Das	869
Guru Ram Das	638
Guru Arjan Dev	2312
Guru Tegh Bahadur	115
Guru Gobind Singh	1 (Sloka)
Baba Sundar	6
The Bards Satta and Balvand	8
The Bhaktas : Sadhna	1
Surdas	2 (Of one hymn only 1 line in Raga Sarang)
Sain	1
Kabir	534
Jaidev	2
Trilochan	5
Dhanna	4
Namdev	62
Parmanand	1
Pipa	1
Shaikh Farid	123
Beni	3
The Bhattas, authors of <i>Swaiyyas</i>	123
Bhikhan	2
Mardana	3
Ravi Das	40
Ramanand	2
Total	<u>5751 Verse-Units¹</u>

1. This count is according to the extant recension of Guru Granth Sahib to which the *Bani* of Guru Tegh Bahadur was added by Guru Gobind Singh's command in 1705-06 at Damdama Sahib.

LANGUAGE OF THE HOLY GRANTH

PRELIMINARY

In *Guru Partap Suraj Granth*, Rasi 3, Ansu 41 occurs a beautiful passage in relation to the narrative of writing out of the holy Granth. This puts forth Guru Arjan Dev's justification of the choice of the popular spoken medium of language for the holy Book in preference to Sanskrit, the language believed by tradition to be 'Dev Bani' or language of the gods. This may be given here in English translation, so that the reader can feel a touch of original :

The Guru, perfectly-endowed, withdrew into solitude,
And called Gurdas to his presence.

Seating him by his side, to him he revealed his purpose
thus :

Listen, brother! to my wish.

Make the Granth into an ample volume,
And write it out in the Gurmukhi characters.

In the *Patti*¹ devised by Guru Nanak,
Are included thirty-five letters.

In these letters record the entire *Bani* of the Gurus,
Which all may be able to study with ease,

Those that are greatly endowed with understanding,
Should study it more amply through their learning.

After a study and contemplation of many years,
May alone its essence be realized.

Such essence too in Gurmukhi should they express with
hearts full of reverence,

In language that may be easy to follow,
Those endowed with learning express themselves

In Sanskrit and the Mohammadan tongues² :
Over all such writing shall it spread soon,

1. This composition is in the measure Asa.

2. Persian and Arabic are implied.

As oily substance poured over water.
 Householders engaged in daily labour, who have little
 learning,
 Yet seek knowledge, may study it with ease.
 By it shall be indicated a broad card-road on which
 those traversing, shall nowise stray.
 Therefore, write you down the Gurmukhi letters,
 That these over the wide world may get known.
 Let those with faith read these with ease—
 Thereby shall they learn contemplation of God, giver of
 liberation.
 Great is the merit of those letters,
 That the world over shall be known as Gurmukhi.
 These shall mankind see, read, write and offer to these
 reverence;
 And to annul their sins shall to these be devoted.

(Stanzas 3-10)

From the foregoing narrative it becomes clear that the purpose of the holy Gurus in composing the Bani in the popular tongues, and writing it out in a popular script rather than in the complexities of Devnagri alphabet, was to bring Divine knowledge, spiritual experience and ethical thought to the simple, working folk. This compassion for mankind, caught in sin and engaged in daily toil, has been characteristic of the mission of the holy Gurus, and is visible no less in the preparation of this Scripture than in all the other measures adopted to spread and consolidate the Sikh faith.

The structure of the language of the Scripture is constituted of two main elements almost in equal proportions—Punjabi and old Hindi. To take Hindi

first :

This language, out of which evolved Khari Boli or modern Hindi, whose grammatical forms are parallel to Punjabi, was spoken over an area bordering on the Punjabi-speaking lands lying north of the river Ghaggar, now dividing Punjab and Haryana over a considerable distance. In this medieval Hindi a vast volume of religious and romantic poetry had come to be created during the centuries after the establishment of Muslim rule over northern India, and a characteristic idiom and literary tradition had time to grow. Over a vast stretch of India, comprising crores of inhabitants, this language had become a common medium of propagation of ethico-religious thought and of modes of romantic poetry. As vehicle of the reflected philosophical thought of India and the experience of Bhakti it had replaced Sanskrit, whose vocabulary in the original (*tatsam*) or altered (*tadbhav*) forms continued to dominate its more serious literary expression. It had borrowed also from Persian and Arabic, which had gained currency after the establishment of Muslim rule and the growth of large Muslim populations all over Northern India. This was a fairly large vocabulary, not only in the areas of administration and law, but even in the more common concerns of life, so that these new words got firmly well established in popular speech, and in most cases drove out the older Indian parallel

words or were used in conjunction with them. Thus grew a language, with its staple drawn from the popularized (apabhramsh) forms from Sanskrit, interspersed with similarly treated forms of Persian and Arabic with verbendings adhering sometimes to the Braji forms, and at other times being closer to the later Khari Boli, whose patterns are parallel to Punjabi and modern Hindi.

The holy Gurus made extensive use of this language form, though the emphasis vary, as we turn from Guru Nanak Dev on to his several successors. But the basic structure remains. The Braji character of this Hindi got greatly diluted by the growth over it of the Punjabi spoken form, which as has been shown by competent linguistic studies, is parallel to modern Hindi and Urdu, both evolved from Khari Boli. So this language character is visible all over the holy Book, except in passages and compositions cast more predominantly into the Punjabi mould. The shade of language that is close to Hindi is visible in the verbendings, propositions and vocatives etc. The vocabulary in general, of noun-substantives adjectives and adverbs etc. stems from a large variety of dialects.

The other great Constituent in the language of the Book, Punjabi, was of course the spoken language of the people from among whom the holy Gurus came forth. Punjab, by which should be implied the areas lying north of the Ghaggar

stretching north and west uptill the river Indus, had all along a folk literature of its own, in the various dialects spoken over its vast extent. Of this the more remarkable forms had come from the areas lying west of the Ravi, which while culturally not following a uniform pattern, had generally been tinged by Muslim traditions and by Persian and Arabic, though basically it remained firmly Indian. The Punjabi language of the composition of the holy Gurus partakes somewhat prominently of the idiom of the various regions of Punjab lying west of the Ravi, indicating the cultural influences that had been built up there. These influences might also indicate the predominance at least in the earlier period of the rise of Sikhism of disciples and believers from areas in Western Punjab, of what are now known as the Rawalpindi and Multan Divisions. Guru Arjan Dev has composed a number of Slokas called *Dakhne* (with the 'd' hard) in the Multani or south-westerly dialect of Punjabi. In the case of Shaikh Farid, his entire *Bani*, brief though in volume, is in Multani Punjabi, indicating the adherence of this saint to his native dialect. The bards Satta and Balvand and the Bhattas who have left the *Swaiyyas*, have employed the Punjabi language grandly and with power in certain stylistic forms characteristic of the genre of poetry they were practising.

The *Banis* more prominently Punjabi in character may be met with in Guru Nanak Dev in general,

more particularly in compositions like *Alahuniyan* and *Pahre*. But the predominance of Punjabi in him is visible everywhere, even in a composition such as *Siddha-Goshti*, with a pronounced Hindi character. *Siddha-Goshti*, is the transcript of a discussion with the Yogis, who would be drawn from several language-areas, and who would normally carry on their discourses and discrimination in varieties of Hindi.

Guru Amar Das and Guru Ram Das have both expressed themselves largely in rich Punjabi, with the touch of Hindi never far away. So has Guru Arjan Dev, the predominant language characteristic of whose *Bani* is Hindi close to the Khari Boli idiom with the touch of Punjabi prominent and palpable. A saint from the Hindi speaking areas would express himself in a different language-character. Guru Tegh Bahadur, saturated with the tradition of the neo-classical Hindi of his age, has expressed himself almost completely in Hindi, but this is again Hindi with the awareness and compulsive influence of Punjabi, which provided the Guru's own linguistic background.

A broad distinction might be sought to be discovered in respect of the use of Hindi and Punjabi in the *Bani* of the holy Gurus. Generally, though this may not be an absolute rule, in compositions expressive of contemplation and philosophical thought, Hindi is predominantly employed. In the

expression of deep personal feelings of devotion, which is one of the forms that Bhakti in Gurubani takes, the more intimate expression of Punjabi predominates. It might again be reiterated that this is not a practice observed without exceptions, but its occurrence may be seen generally and usually.

Thus Hindi and Punjabi with an admixture of philosophical terminology derived from Sanskrit on the one hand and Persian and Arabic in the current folk forms on the other, are the main linguistic warp and woof of Gurbani. In special contexts the Yogic, Brahmanical or Muslim doctrinal terminology may pre-dominate, of which the careful reader should take account. Besides these languages, some of the dialects of northern India, particularly Rajasthani Dingal, Sindhi and occasionally Haryanvi may be found used. The Bhaktas coming from different language regions, have naturally employed predominantly the idiom of their respective regions. Thus, in Kabir and Avadhi vocabulary predominates. So in Ramanand, Ravidas and Bhikhan. In Namdev may be beheld prominent touches of Marathi. In Jaidev, whose medium of self-expression was Sanskrit, an adaptation of Sanskrit predominates. The holy Gurus themselves have left a small body of their compositions in this tongue resembling Sanskrit, probably in contexts where the message was meant for hermits and the common folk outside the language range of Punjabi and Hindi. A variety

of Sanskrit was the universal India-wide medium of exchange of serious thought.

The understanding and interpretation of the text in the holy Granth Sahib is manifestly difficult. The source of this difficulty does not lie in the use of any archaic language as is commonly believed. The Hindi and Punjabi employed in the Scripture is grammatically not different from what is spoken over the Punjab and its neighbouring regions uptill today. Like all living languages, these too have altered in the course of the five centuries since the time of Guru Nanak Dev, but the alterations have been slight and not beyond the grasp of the average intelligent user of these languages. The sources of the difficulty may be looked for in a different direction. These are, in the first place, the use of vocabulary outside the range of the common experience of the average person. This vocabulary, philosophical and mystical, has to be cultivated by a special effort of learning. Next is the vocabulary employed in folk forms, to which no key is provided by classical learning. These folk forms have their own laws of morphology, which need nor be detailed here.

Again, there is the use of symbolical and metaphorical language, into the secret of which the mind has to initiate itself by a special effort. This symbolical usage and idiom, while part of it is shared by Gurbani with the mystical poetry of India

in general, some of it is an especial feature of Gurbani. A certain terminology is adopted in Sikhism or given a special orientation. Thus, *Akal Purakh, Ek Oankar, Kartar, Sati-Nam*, despite their derivations from Sanskrit, are employed in the Sikh sacred literature with a connotation all their own. So is *Guru*, which in most context stands for the human spiritual preceptor, but signifies also the Supreme Being. Esoteric terms like Nām, Shabda, Gurmukh and the terminology of Yoga employed to symbolize the spiritual and ethical attainments present quite great difficulties of comprehension and explication. Another source of difficulty is a kind of ambiguity. For example, *Karam* which is frequently found used, may stand for good fortune made by one's good actions. This would be if the term is derived from Sanskrit. If Arabic based, it would mean Divine grace. Since in the writing out, no distinction is made, difficulties of interpretation might arise.

A great source of difficulty of comprehension arises from the structure of its syntax. The *Bani* being poetry its grammatical structure need not conform to analytical prose. Especially because of the expression being in most cases highly compact, arising from the flow of spiritual inspiration, structure is left to take care of itself. A line may be interpreted differently by conceiving a different alignment of words into. To this difficulty is added

the especial grammatical system of Gurubani. Its vowel marks are intended, as shown by scholars who have made a deep study of it, to express the different aspect of grammatical sentence-formation, in the manner especially of Vibhaktis or conjugational and derivational rules of Sanskrit. These vowel marks are a reliable guide to interpretation, and have to be carefully studied. With attention to these, numerous problems of interpretation are solved.

The above are a few of the source of difficulties of interpretation. To these may be added a feature shared by Gurbani with the Indian classical writing in general—the writing out of the lines without splitting them into words. This no one can claim now to do with definitiveness. Words may often get jumbled upon faulty understanding, and astonishing freaks of mis-interpretation may ensue.

THE TEACHINGS OF GURU GRANTH SAHIB

The creed that is embodied in the pages of the holy Granth Sahib, and which is enunciated right at the opening in *Mūl Mantra*, is uncompromising monotheism. *Mūl Mantra*, the basic creed of Sikhism, standing at the head of the *Japu*, enunciates this creed in several sentence-phrases, internally consistent in spirit and significance, reinforcing and amplifying each other, enunciating the faith on which Sikhism is based, and to which every Sikh on taking initiation,

must testify by repeating it solemnly. This creed, a *mantra* or chant of power, is an affirmation of faith like the *Kalima* of Islam, the *Gayatri* of theistic Hinduism, the *Om Padmane hum* of Buddhism and similar creeds of other faiths. Its words are all related to the concepts of Indian philosophy, bearing out the fact that with its broad and tolerant approach to other faiths, including those like Islam stemming from the Semitic tradition, Sikhism bears essentially and emphatically the character of an Indian-born religion, sharing with the other great religions of India certain concepts and axiomatic assumptions. This is borne out by a deeper study of Sikhism.

Monotheism in Sikhism is not exactly like what is met with in Judaism and Islam, with a personified yet transcendent God, Jehovah or Allah. It is rather the Supreme Being in two aspects the unattributed-transcendent and the attributed-immanent. To distinguish these two aspects of the Supreme Being a subtle differentiation in terminology has been made: *Ek Oankar*, standing at the head of *Mūl Mantra*, meaning the Sole, Indivisible Supreme Being is the unattributed transcendent Par-Brahm, mentioned sparingly because of His awe and inaccessibility, unknowability. He is the eternal, changeless Reality, beyond Maya. His attributes are enumerated in *Mūl Mantra* itself and further in the course of *Japu* and Gurubani as *niranjan*, *nirban* and such others. *Ek Oankar* is the holiest name of the Supreme Being.

The Sikh faith has a number of other, attributive names for the Supreme Being including *Wahguru*. These other names are attributive in some form or the other, including *Karta* or *Kartar* (Creator), another extremely sacred word.

According to the Sikh exegetical writings, *Oankar*, divested of the (One) *Ek*, is the attributed aspect of the Supreme Being, operating in the creation, preservation and dissolution of the universe through His *Maya*, *Lila* or *Kudrat* (might). In this aspect He is the upholder of the moral elan of the universe, and is the fountain of all existence and of moral and spiritual values. In each of these two aspects, the Supreme Being is sole without a second, Formless (*Nirankar*, *Nirakar*), beyond time and thus beyond incarnation and mortality. That disposes of the doctrine called Henotheism by Max Muller, according to which in India there has been belief in one supreme deity besides a number of subordinate deities. In the Sikh sacred writings deities out of the Hindu pantheon and from the Epics and the Puranas find mention, but their existence is very clearly not to be assumed literally; nor are they objects of worship. They are mentioned only symbolically and metaphorically, and on this score no manner of doubt is left by the context in each case, and by the total vision of Sikhism. Here it may also be mentioned that the non-duality or *advaita* of the Shankara School is also not adopted, despite its close relationship with the concept of the

Sole Supreme Being. Warnings are scattered all over Gurubani against adhesion to Duality (*duja bhav*, that is, attachment to Maya; so the essence of the Sikh teaching is basically nonduality. Only it does not preclude the attribution to the Supreme Being of the moral and lovable qualities and urges, so that He can be approached by the devotee through loving devotion (Bhakti), can respond to love and reward it. As a matter of fact, as will be discussed further on in somewhat greater detail, Bhakti is the essence of the spiritual quest in Sikhism, is the main gateway to bliss (Anand) or Mukti and is commended over the other paths to realization.

Mūl Mantra, as stated earlier, is a string of sentence-phrases each expressing an aspect of the Supreme Being, *Ek Oankar*. These sentence phrases emphasize His eternity, immanence, timelessness, freedom from the shackles of birth and from rancour, along with His being uncreated self-existent. The last phrase, *Guru-Prasadi* expresses what is reiterated in thousands of contexts in the Scripture—realization of the Supreme Being coming by grace of the Preceptor, the holy Guru. This formula (*mantra*) is the corner-stone of Sikh belief, and it may be said, an epitome of the holy Granth, which is itself an expanded expression of its vision. There are deep mystical interpretations given of *Ek Oankar*, in which as stated by Sant Mangal Singh, a Nirmala Sadhu, *Ek* (One) is the Bij Mantra, the manifestation of the

Divine Essence (*Ekara shuddh swarup Wahguru hai*). This figure it is stated, is manifest in the form of Oankar, the Creator or attributed Brahm. Bhai Gurdas in Var 3.15 has given a similar central significance to *Ek* (One), where it is stated to have been given precedence :

The Absolute (*Ek Oankar*) first manifested the 'One'
And then placed by its side Oankar with 'O'.
(For 'O' above the original is *Ūrā*, the opening vowel
of the Gurumukhi alphabet).

While in *Mūl Mantra* the conception of the Supreme Being (*Ek Oankar*) is the Sole Unattributed, over the rest of the text following it, that is the *Japu*, He is delineated, appealed to and supplicated as the Creator attributed, controller of the Moral order (*Hukam*) of the cosmos, Retributor of Deeds and Awarder of Grace (*Karam*). This conception of the Supreme Being is pervasive all over the Book and forms the core of the Sikh faith. The Sikh faith postulates the synthesis in the Supreme Being of the unattributed and the attributed aspects. In Guru Arjan Dev's *Sukhmani* this is stated explicitly :

Himself is He unattributed and attributed,
Who by assumption of His might the whole creation
has charmed.

(*Sukhmani. 18.7*)

Guru Amar Das has similarly affirmed :

Himself is He unattributed and attributed,
Whoever His essence recognizes is a true pandit.

(*Majh III. Ashtpadi 32, page 128*)

In the unattributed aspect as Par-Brahm the

Creator is in sunn (shunya) samadhi—the state of absorption in the Cosmic void. This is the high point of mystical realisation in Sikhism. In *Sukhmani* it is thus affirmed :

The Formless is Attributed and Unattributed,
And gone into Absorption in the cosmic Void.
Saith Nanak : Himself has made creation,
Himself on it meditates.

(21. *Opening Sloka*)

In the Cosmic Void is He absorbed,
where plays the unstruck mystic music—
Beyond expression is this miraculous wonder.

(23. 1)

With this, in the Attributed aspect as the Lord, the Creator is immanent in all creation.

Ever is He present with you—know Him not far.
By the Master's teaching realize Him within the self.

(*Majh III, Ashtpadi 12, page 116*)

In similar phraseology, Guru Arjan Dev affirms :

Many by attachment deluded, take Him to be far :
Saith Nanak, ever by you is He present.

(*Gauri Cheti V, 139, page 210*)

On this theme of immanence which however, does not imply or suggest the Vedantic Pantheism, infinite variations of expression may be met with in Gurbani. The Creator is distinct from the self. Yet the self is a part of Him, as the wave of water, yearning to merge into its source. The self is of Divine Essence, yet is not itself the Infinite (Brahm). This subtle, monotheistic mysticism, distinct from

monism, must be kept in view.

Certain postulates and laws, as these emerge from the study of the teachings of the Granth Sahib, are in accord with similar postulates of Indian philosophy, though here these have got modified by the vision and corrective brought to these by the revelation Divinely vouchsafed to Guru Nanak Dev and his successors. Maya, which in Indian philosophy is a neutral term, standing for the mutable principle of the universe, as against the eternal Brahm (Brahman), in Sikh teaching bears a definitely evaluative signification. While it is the mutable principle, lying at the basis of all changing phenomena, governed by time, it at the same time is the veil that obscures from the human self the vision of the Eternal. It is the source of the temptation that drags man towards the various evils; it creates the image of duality or the apprehension that anything other than the Eternal is real. It creates attachment in the human mind, and is the source of sin that keeps the self away from attaining liberation. Man is, therefore, repeatedly warned against involvement with Maya, and exhorted to be in tune with Brahm.

The philosophical postulate of the Three Qualities (Triguna), characteristic of Maya is accepted from the Samkhya Shastra. These qualities *tamas* (sloth, darkness), *rajas* (passion) and *sattva* (intelligence, poise) are repeatedly mentioned. The

individuals is exhorted to rise above these to the state called in Indian thought *triguna atit* (beyond the three qualities) and to enter the Fourth State (*chautha pad*) or absorption in the Infinite, the Absolute. This state is also designated by the use of the yogic phrase of the opening of the *Dasam-Duar* (the Tenth Door of super-consciousness). That is the state of bliss, ecstasy, called *maha-anand* or the quaffing of *maharas* (the supreme elixir). Man is *Maya* gripped, matter-dominated, as long as he remains bound in the Three Qualities. There he must transcend through prayer, meditation and devotion. This is the path of *Sahaj*, commended in the Guru's teaching, which will be discussed a little later.

KARMA AND GRACE

Ava-gavan, the transmigratory process into which all creation is involved, is again accepted as axiomatic. To this is tied the doctrine of the retribution of deeds. For deeds arising out of desire, passion (*trishna*, lit. thirst) the creature must continue in the round of births and deaths in perpetuity, suffering and sinning in the process. All deeds done must find retribution. From this law there is no escape. In *Japu*, 20, Guru Nanak Dev affirms referring to man :

Sow thyself the seed, consume the produce thereof.

In *Bara-Maha Majh*, Guru Arjan Dev affirms, referring to the state of man : 'As he sows, so does he reap'.

In both these visions the imagery to express this stern law of retribution is taken from the realm of agriculture. Dharamaraja or Yama, the god of death and retribution, in Indian mythology is adopted as a symbol for the Divine law wherein no deed, good or bad; fails to produce an effect on the future destiny of the individual self. The imagery of Chitra and Gupta, the celestial recorders of deeds is also frequently employed. The accumulated load of deeds that the individual self must carry, known as *Kirat* (Kirta-deeds done) continues to influence his destiny. Destiny as a matter of fact, in accordance with this Divine Law, is only another name for the accumulated, though unknown consequences of deeds. It is not something arbitrarily or mystically made in an inscrutable heaven, but is a consequence of the Divine Law, Hukam.

Hukam (Ar. Lit. command) is a term of wide application, standing for the cosmic moral force or elan called Dharma for the operation of the law of retribution and the law of grace, to be discussed soon hereafter. *Karam*, a popular form of the Sanskrit *Karma*, which like *kismet* has become fairly well-grounded in the English language, stands for destiny made according to the individual's deeds. This is truly destiny, as from its operation, there is no escape. Human birth in the midst of millions of births spread over long aeons is repeatedly called in Gurubani *dur-labh* (hard to attain). It is attained as

a consequence of good deeds done and contemplated over an immense length of time. This valuable birth, this incarnation, it will be a pity to waste in Maya-pursuits or pursuing pleasures of the senses, in sinning and indulgence in passion. Says Guru Arjan Dev in the measure Asa, in a hymn included in *Rahiras*, the Evening Prayer :

Now that the human incarnation thou hast attained,
 This is thy opportunity to be united to the Lord.
 No other action is to thee of any avail—
 In holy company devote thyself solely to contemplating
 the holy Name.
 Engage thyself in preparation to swim across the ocean
 of existence :
 Now thy life in pleasures of Maya is being wasted.

To be borne on the moving wheel of transmigration is the greatest of calamities; to be taken out of its revolution by prayer and grace is bliss and liberation. The process of living and of death each, is attended with fear. By prayer and grace is attained *mukti*, annulling these fears. The only fear that man's self must entertain is the fear of God, on which in numerous places in Gurubani, profound affirmations are made. One such occurs in the measure Gauri, which epitomizes this ethico-philosophical vision :

The fear of God is mighty and of great weight.
 Egoism is worthless and just vociferous.
 Walk under the weight of such Fear;
 And through Divine grace obtain Knowledge of God.

None crosses the ocean of existence unless he bear fear.
Through fear the fear-directed life is beautified with
divine love.

Through fear of the world, the fire of fear blazes in the
human frame.

Through fear of the God and love is moulded spiritual
beauty.

Without fear of God all that is uttered is misshapen and
worthless—

The mould and the shaping strokes both blind.

Fear of God is the abode, and in such abode is Fear.

Through Fear of God vanish worldly fears.

The Fear of God which eliminates all other fear—how
may it be called fear?

No other resting-place is except Thee;

All that happens is Thy will.

One might be afraid of it if anything other than God
held any fear—

To be shaken with such fears is sheer perturbation of
mind.

(Gauri Guareri M. I. I, page 151).

The state of annulment of transmigration is variously delineated. It is the state of Bliss (Anand) or of being absorbed in the Divine Light. Sometimes it is expressed as the mingling of a stream of water with the ocean, and by such other universal images.

Along with the law of Karma or inevitable retribution of deeds is the sovereign bliss of grace available to the human self. Grace is shrouded in Divine mystery, like predestination. Some are blessed to be devoted to the holy Name of God in Primal Time (*dhuron*); some by Divine will are

damned—but nowhere is it implied that such bliss or bale is arbitrary, uncaused. As affirmed by Guru Nanak Dev in *Japuji 2* :

Iknān hukamīn baksheesh, ik hukamīn sadā
bhavāīyai.

(Some by the Divine law are conferred bliss; others
by the same law ever in transmigration are
whirled).

The greatest blessing, the fulfilment to yearn for, is devotion to the holy Name Divine. To attain this is the truest bliss, heaven (*baikunth*). For the selves are the two states of *sanjog* (union with the Supreme Being and *bijog* (separation, alienation from God)—each included in the individual's destiny according to his account of deeds. This itself is a mystery, as there is so much hidden evil in human nature as to beguile man into thinking that despite this hidden evil his actions are good and commendable. Wherever in Gurubani *Pūrab likhiya* (pre-recorded) or a similar term is used, the implication is that of retribution for deeds recorded in destiny in accordance with the primal Divine Law (*Hukam*).

As hinted earlier, grace is related to the law of Karma. It comes in an inscrutable manner, by the Divine will (*bhāna, reza*). As affirmed by Guru Nanak Dev in a sloka included in Sri Ragaki-Var M. IV, the Divine mystery of grace is absolutely beyond human reasoning and calculation. That is what the nature of grace is. The sloka reads in the original

as :

Dāṭin Sahib sandiyān kya challai tis nāli;
Ikk jāgande rta lehan ikna suttiyān dae uthāl.

(The Lord's blessings cannot be forced out of His hand : Some even while awake attain them not; on others He confers these, shaking them awake).

This sloka is recorded in the midst of the slokas of Shaikh Farid, and is related apparently there to Farid's sloka numbered 80, which reads as :

Faridā rati kathūri wandiyai suttian milai na bhau
Jinnhan nain nindrawale tinnhan milan kuwao.

(Farid ! at night-time is distributed musk;

Of this those asleep receive no share.

Those with sleep-oppressed eyes—what may they get?)

The mystical significance of either sloka is clear and each contains a vital facet of the truth regarding grace. Grace is a Divine mystery and no amount of austerities, no amount of intellectual search of performance or ritual or hathayogic praxis or any such devices can force it out of God's hand. Yet, in accordance with Farid's sloka whose view-point is amply confirmed by numerous other affirmations in Gurubani, without prayer, humility, wakefulness in the way or God, grace may not come. It does not come, as believed in the Puranic tales so often quoted in popular religious discourses, by a chance remembrance of God. The path to attain it is hard, long, and yet the result is in God's hand. This teaching is not dissimilar to the Lord's exhortation

to Arjuna in the Gita to engage in action, but leave the reward thereof to the Lord, who knows best how to retribute actions.

That grace does not come by man's own effort and the calculation of good and bad deeds, and by the balance of good deeds, is borne out by the following affirmation :

Lekhai kateh na chhuttiyai khinu khinu bhullan hār;
Bakhshanhar bakhsh lai Nanak pār utār.

(Gauri Bawan-Akhhari, Guru Arjan Dev, 52, page 261)

By our accmpt find we nowise liberation : Thou
who art Liberator, take Nanak across.

How does grace come ? Hints to that effect from the spiritual experience of the holy Gurus are given. Its process is by Divine mercy to engage in devotion :

Jis daya karei mera Par-Brahm meri jindariyei
Tisu mani Nama wasaie Rama.

(Bihagara Chant, Guru Ram Das, 6, page 541)

(My self ! on whomsoever the Supreme Lord
showers mercy, in his self He lodges the holy
Name).

This becomes the path to grace. To fall on God's shelter in humility inspires the inducement to prayer, that opens the gate-way to grace :

Nanak tis non shabad bujhawaj jo jae pawai Hari
sharnai.

(Wadhans, Guru Amar Das, Chhant 6, page 571)

(Saith Nanak : He grants realization of the holy
Word to whoever on the Lord's shelter throws
himself).

The Lord is responsive to prayer, devotion :

Jithai Hari ārādhiyai tithai Hari mitt sahai;
Guru kirpa te Hari mana wasai horatu bidhi laiya na
jae.

(Suhi, Guru Ram Das, 10, page 733)

(Where the Lord in devotion is meditated on,
there comes He as friend, helper;
By the Master's grace lodge in heart the Lord—
By no other device is He found).

The Lord's grace comes to those who utterly
throw themselves on the Lord's mercy, grace;

Ab ham chali Thakur peh hār;
Jab ham sharan Prabu ki āi, rākh Prabhu bhavai mār.

(Dev-Gandhari, Guru Ram Das, 4, page 527)

(Exhausted after all effort, to the Lord's shelter I
go.

Now that to His shelter I have come, say I :
Lord ! preserve me or ruin me as may please Thee).

Affirms Guru Arjan Dev :

Ja kai simran sabh kachh pāiyai birthi ghali na jāi

(Sorath 32, page 617)

(By contemplation of Him are obtained all boons—
The devotee's endeavour goes not waste).

Devotion therefore, is not a heart-breaking,
barren quest, doomed to failure. The Lord is
responsive to devotion. Only He is the true judge.
But without the basic fulfilment of devotion, grace
may not be looked for.

In another context, Guru Arjan Dev has given
expression to a similar vision :

Laj marai jo Nam na levai
 Nama bihūn sukhi kivn sovai
 Hari simran chhod param-gati chahai.
 Mūl bina shākhā kat āhai

(*Bhairon, Guru Arjan Dev, 45, page 1149*)

(Behoves it one without devotion to the Name to die of
 shame;

How without the Name can such get peaceful sleep?
 One that discarding contemplation of the Lord seeks
 the supreme state,
 Should know—How without the root can the branches
 come ?)

The Name or devotion to the holy Divine Reality
 is the root from which grows liberation and grace. It
 comes not without devotion—not as though
 uncaused.

Guru Nanak Dev, in a figure drawn from the
 household chore of making curd from milk,
 expresses the secret of true devotion and the pure
 heart into which Divine grace may be hoped to enter:
 Not in the heart fouled by sin, but one that by
 devotion is purified.

Bhānda dhoe baisi dhūp dewo tau dūdhai kau jāwahu;
 Dūdhu karam phuni surati sama inu hoe nirās
 jamāwahu.

Japuh ta Eko Nāmā :
 Awari nirāphal kāmā.

(*Suhi 1, page 728*)

(wash the pot sitting patiently; then apply to it
 incense.

Thereafter proceed to pour into it milk.

Our actions are milk, our attentive devotion the
 yeast.

With heart freed from desire put yeast in the milk.
 Contemplate ye the Sole Name of God—
 Unavailing are all other actions).

Bhai Gurdas, the great savant and the first commentator on Gurbani, in one of his *kabits* in Braji Hindi, expressive of the deep mystery of devotion also expresses himself on this theme. His compositions, it may be remembered, were called by Guru Arjan Dev the key to Gurubani. The opening line of this famous kabit, innumerable times quoted in discourses on Sikh devotional thought and mysticism is :

Charan saran Guru ek painda jae chal,
 Satiguru koti painda age hoe let hain

(Whoever takes one step to seek shelter of the Guru's
 holy feet,
 The holy Guru comes forth a million steps to accost
 him.

Anyone that even once the Lord's Word
 contemplates,

The Lord lovingly remembers him time and again.
 Anyone that in loving devotion offers a cowrie—
 To him the Lord shall in charity all treasures grant.
 The holy ocean of mercy, of praise beyond our
 knowing—

To Him I offer obeisance;
 Beyond our ken abiding).

Thus, to cut this part of the discussion short, it may be seen that while the law of Karma, operating under Hukam or the Divine will is supreme, yet

through loving devotion this law may be transcended. Or to put it differently, a deeply mysterious, inscrutable aspect of this same law, grace overflowing like rain from heaven, may overwhelm the devotee. Of grace and its abundance the holy Gurus have such deep consciousness that in all situations, even of suffering by human standards they have sung paeans of Joy. That the prelude as well as sequel to grace is devotion, is evidenced by the following affirmation of Guru Nanak Dev in Asa 31, page 358 :

Sach Nami pati upjai karami Nām Kartaru;
Ahinisi hirday je wasai Nanak nadrīn pār.

(By devotion to the holy Name comes true honour;
By grace is obtained devotion to the Name Divine
Should the Name in the heart day and night be
lodged,

Saith Nanak, by grace then is obtained liberation).

BHAKTI

Bhakti or devotion, as hinted earlier, is the path above all commended for realization. Learning and intellectual feats are discountenanced, since they are only sources of disputation. In *Japu 1*, it is said :

Sahas siyānapān lakh hoe tan ikk na challai nali.

(A thousand and hundred thousand feats of
intellect shall not accompany man in the
hereafter).

Guru Arjan Dev in a hymn beginning with the line, 'Na Tu awai wasi bahut ghinawane' thus specifies the sovereign path of God-realization.

Not by a showing great contempt for the world may we
 win Thy favour,
 Nor by study of scriptures;
 Nor by holy bathing;
 Nor by wandering the world over;
 Nor by subtle philosophy;
 Nor by shoals given in charity.
 Thou who art inaccessible, unknowable,
 All in Thy power lies :
 Thy devotees alone may command Thy love—
 From Thee they find exaltation.

(Var Ramkali, Guru Arjan Dev, page 962)

Empty ritual and barren austerity are denigrated, as these lead the self away from loving devotion and humanitarianism with its constituents of charity, compassion and forgiveness in which true religion consists. Dhaul-Dharma daya ka pūt' (*Japu*). 'The Bull of Righteousness is born of compassion', affirms Guru Nanak Dev.

To write on Bhakti in detail would involve voluminous detail. Suffice it to say here, that this aspect of the practice and life of religion, has been commended, explored and delineated by the holy Gurus in loving detail.

The object of love, that is, the Divine Being, being separated from the self by the wheel of transmigration, there is the painful feeling, the pangs of separation, and in the poetry of Bhakti in Gurubani deep anguish of separation is expressed, called in the tradition of Indian romantic poetry, *prema*. A great deal of the poetry of Bhakti in

Gurubani is expressive of *biraha's* anguish and the joy of union through devotion and grace. The greatest of all such compositions in Guru Nanak Dev's *Bara-Maha* (Song of the Months) in the measure Tukhari. In the *Bani* of Guru Amar Das, Guru Ram Das and Guru Arjan Dev, poignant expression of yearning for union, which is *biraha* may be studied.

Bhakti in Gurubani is of the variety called Nirguna Bhakti (devotion to the Unattributed Supreme Being). To attune the mind in love to the Formless unattributed involves deep concentration of it on what cannot in any way be grasped by the senses. To express this passion, the imagery of romantic poetry is employed. The devotee is, as in Indian romantic writing, conceived of as the yearning female, the wife pining away in sorrow for the Beloved gone into distant lands in ages when separation meant no news or communication for months or years, and parting once might mean parting for ever in a hopeless vigil to be kept. Such poignant feelings, with the beautiful hues of romance are scattered over the expression of Bhakti in the Granth Sahib. Of this greatest heights are found touched in Guru Nanak Dev's *Bani*, which is the fountain-head from which the inspiration subsequently flowed. Love, separation, vigil for the spouse gone far away, the love-lorn bride seeking companionship with her sister-friends (*sakhi, sahehi*)

to while away the days of sorrow—such moods are frequently expressed. To the student of Indian romantic poetry of the medieval period these modes will be quite familiar.

Philosophically, the essence of Bhakti lies in the quest for the Divine, spurred on by love. The heart, saturated with love, finds the way to the portal of the Supreme Being, To have lodged this quest in the heart is itself liberation, as affirmed by Guru Amar Das in Majh Ashtpadi 20, page 120: 'Jinu antari preet lagai so mukta' (Whoever has love in the heart lodged, is liberated).

The exalted status of Bhakti is affirmed again and again. Says Guru Amar Das in Asa, Ashtpadi 5, page 425 :

Is Bhagati non suri nar muni jan lochade winu Satiguru
pāi na jae :

Pandit parhde jotiki tin bujh na pāe.

(Gods, men and savants yearn for Bhakti—

Without the holy Preceptor's guidance it is not
attained :

Brahmin scholars and astrologers who study books,
of this have no realization).

Humility, self-dedication is the essence of Bhakti. In Var Asa, 13, Guru Nanak Dev affirms :

Bhāu Bhagati kar neechu sadae,

Tau Nanak mokhantar pae.

(One that practices loving devotion and seeks to be
known as one of the lowly—

Saith Nanak, liberation shall attain).

Bhakti as one of the three great paths to realization is commended also in the Gita. There too its essence lies in throwing oneself completely on the mercy, grace of the Supreme Being. This is a hard path, and contrary to superficial belief, not mere emotional abandon. In Gurubani it is constantly pointed out that Bhakti is the path of realization and dedication to high ideals. In Japu, 21, Guru Nanak Dev affirms :

Vin guna kitei Bhagati na hoe.

(Without performing meritorious deeds no Bhakti can be).

That is, the devotee must, to perfect his devotion, engage in holy, beneficent action.

Says Guru Amar Das in Ramkali, Ashtpadi 13, page 911 :

Bhay bin Bhagati na hoi kabahi bhay bhāe Bhagati savārī.

Maya mohu sabad jalāiya giani tatti bichari.

(Without fear of God Bhakti may no way be performed—

By fear of God and love is Bhakti ennobled.

In it is Maya —attachment in the holy Word consumed,

And the essence of realization contemplated).

To study the theme and expression of Bhakti in Gurubani is a great source of enlightenment in the higher spiritual secrets. Doubt arising from the spirit of unbelief is condemned as illusion, though discriminating wisdom is commended as Bibek

(Vivek), a term well-known to Indian philosophical thought. Unshakeable faith in the Preceptor, the Guru, is the essence of Bhakti. This of course, postulates the Guru to be genuine, one who has overthrown his lower self, and put himself in tune with the Absolute. Under the guidance of such a Preceptor and devotion to him, the disciple shall attain heights of realization. Since ordinary poseurs to piety might mislead the believers who put trust in them, the true Guru is conceived of as one who has realized holy Truth. His Word (*Bani*) is life-giving. Other than the true Guru's utterance or teaching (*Bani*) all other utterance is false (lit. raw), as affirmed in *Anandu*, 24 by Guru Amar Das.

MYSTICISM

Mysticism as viewed in the ambit of the Sikh faith, bears several aspects. Because of the centrality given to Sahaj, the path of prayer and meditation, in the process of spiritual ascent, it never loses itself in the mists either of nescience (*shunyavad*) or of emotional abandon as in the case of certain creeds, Indian and others, practising orgies of induced emotion. Basing itself also on the awareness of Duty in a world oppressed by evil, its accent on Action is always pronounced. The ideal to be striven after in the spiritual life is *sanjog*, which is the popularized form of a Sanskrit word implying union—union of the individual self with the universal, the Absolute. This experience, whose joy and ecstasy (*Anand*) are

constantly voiced; consists in the ever present remembrance (simran, smaran) of God, who is felt as much to be Nirguna (unattributed—transcendent) as Saguna (attributed-immanent). To have perpetual consciousness of the Divine Presence is mysticism as voiced in the Sikh faith. Not only in the whole universe is the Divine Presence perceived, but also in the recesses of the self, the heart where the seeker is enjoined upon to seek Him. In hymn after hymn occurs this injunction. This is authentic mysticism of the greatest teachers of mankind. The Sant, the holy man, as conceived of in Sikh teaching, feels such Presence ever by him. This experience is expressed by Guru Arjan Dev thus in Gauri-ki-Var, V, page 319 :

Those that remember the Lord with every breath,
 each morsel,
 And in whose mind ever abides the spell of the Lord's
 Name—
 Saith Nanak, are blessed, perfect devotees.

In the same Var earlier, on the same page, Guru Arjan Dev has given expression to the mystical experience of ecstasy in the presence of God in the ambrosial hour of dawn :

Has arisen the bird's chirping voice,
 dawn has broken, and the breeze in
 wafts is playing.
 Saith Nanak : In joy of the Name, strange are the
 experiences of God's devotees.

Guru Arjan Dev has also expressed the ecstasy of God-consciousness in the calm, midnight hour

with the devotees in holy vigil of communion, thus:

In the cool, dew-drenched night are shining the stars :

At this hour are awake the devotees,

lovers of God, meditating each day on the Name

Their hearts on the lotus feet of God meditating,

whom for an instant they forsake not.

(*Asa Chhant 10, page 459*)

Guru Nanak Dev has expressed such constant, unflinching God-consciousness all over his Bani. To take only two examples : In Sri Raga, at the opening, in the hymn '*Moti ta mandir usarei*' are recounted pleasures of the world, such as gorgeous palaces, delights of voluptuous pleasures, miraculous powers, royal grandeur. At the end of each such vision arises the resolve : 'Lest such pleasures delude me into forgetting Thee, and Thy Name enter not my mind'. In the next hymn '*Koti koti meri ārijā*' are mentioned achievements of yoga, the harshest austerities, ascent, into the firmament on bird's wings writing out God's laudation with everlasting motion of the wind : Yet at each step the cry arises, 'Even thus can I not know Thy worth; how may I express the greatness of Thy Presence?' In Var Majh, 9, page 141-142 in a re-expression of these affirmations are mentioned the world's wondrous delights, terrible maladies, great evils pursuing the self, voluptuous delights—yet despite all distractions 'Still must I laud Thee, in unyielding joy of heart'.

In Asa, in a hymn also included in Rahiras, the

Evening Service (page 9) Guru Nanak Dev thus expresses the consciousness of the Divine Presence as they very breath of the devotee's life :

I live only as God's Name I utter;
 Forgetfulness of it to me is death.
 Hard it is to induce in oneself utterance of the holy Name.
 As hunger for the holy Name Divine aries,
 In that hunger are consumed all sorrows.

In the study of mysticism in Sikhism, this perpetual Divine presence is met with every-where which is at its core.

Union with the Absolute is expressed through symbols. The most commonly used such symbol is that of water flowing into water—the stream into the ocean—and merging to be indistinguishable from it. In *Sukhmani*, the state of union is thus delineated :

As water into water mingles,
 So does light merge into Divine Light.
 Then is ended wandering in transmigration and rest
 found.
 Nanak ever is a sacrifice to the Lord.

(*Sukhmani*, 11.8)

Guru Arjan Dev elsewhere expressed this experience thus :

The ray into the sun is merged, water into water.
 Light into light has gone, and perfection achieved.

(*Bilaval Chhant*, 2, page 846)

The ultimate end of all spiritual endeavour is to transcend the experience of Righteous Action (Dharma), Illumination (Gian, Jnan), Grace (Karam), Spiritual Endeavour (Sarm, Sram) and to enter Sach

Khand (the Realm Eternal) eternally to abide in the Divine Presence. This state of grace is spontaneous operation of the Divine Ordinance (Hukam). Such is its mystery and glory, that as Guru Nanak Dev says, 'Its expression is hard as steel', (*Japu*, 37).

The urge for union brings of *biraha* or the pangs of separation, which has been mentioned elsewhere in some detail in this article. *Biraha* is expressed through the symbol of the loving, yearning wife, waiting through long days and nights for the Beloved. In a striking piece, Guru Amar Das has expressed the experience through a converse-piece between a loving wife and husband—the wife symbolizing the self pleading with her lord not to be entangled with the world, but to stay at home, that is, in devotion to God. These beautiful symbols have a novelty of their own, distinct from the powerful imagery of the yearning wife in Guru Nanak Dev's *Bani*. The piece under reference in Guru Amar Das is given below :

Beloved husband ! to do service to strangers,
 Leaving your wife, to strange lands you go.
 Beloved husband ! in duality none found joy—
 It is all attractive poison.
 How may one attracted by poison, lost in delusions feel
 joy?
 Full of suffering is service to strangers,
 In which selling oneself, Dharma one loses.
 One caught in Maya-bonds finds no rest—each moment
 tormented by suffering.
 Saith Nanak : Maya-affliction goes when the heart to

the Master's Word is devoted.

(*Gauri Chhant 17, Guru Amar Das, page 249*)

A fuller study of this theme will require a lengthy treatment, which will not be in place here. While in form this symbolism is romantic, in essence it aims at so guiding the self perpetually to live in the Divine Presence, and in thought, word and deed to give oneself to it. A synthesized vision of life such as suggested here is the essence of the concept of mysticism, and not any abandon or search after nescience, as in some other creeds.

SAHAJ

A key-term, representing the process of realization and spiritual ascent is *Sahaj*. This term is given particularly repeated and detailed orientation in the *Bani* of Guru Amar Das though it is long-established in the Indian spiritual tradition, and though the centuries has undergone transformation of signification. Literally, according to its aphoristic definition in Sanskrit (*Sahajayate iti sahaja*) 'That which is born with the self is Sahaj'. It means the natural inclination, tendencies, way of action of man. That might imply however, behaviour that is guided by the instincts alone. Its meaning in Gurubani is the path of devotion that involves no 'forced' processes of self-purification, nothing that does not arise from the depths of the higher self. Thus, along with ritual baths, fasts, observance of 'sacred' days and hours and casterial, the path of hatha-yoga

(yoga of forced effort) is discountenanced. Not these and such processes as forced austerities, self-maceration, living in wild places, and observance of years of silence, often with the mouth stopped with a piece of stone etc. are to be regarded as the way to realization. In Gurubani there is repeated castigation of such processes. Along with these, warning against the system and paraphernalia of hatha-yoga is of frequent occurrence in Gurubani. Such processes have little value in conferring on the individual life that merit which the holy Gurus have regarded as the highest realization, engaging in beneficent humanitarian activity, and ultimately attaining liberation (*moksha*, *mokh-duār*, *mukti*). Particularly commended is the ideal of *jivan mukta* (one liberated while alive or still in the flesh). He would be one who has transcended the lower self and who lives for attaining of the higher objectives as just mentioned.

The path commended in Gurubani for such attainment is given cumulatively the name of Sahaj. That is because in following this path no forced, unnatural austerities or esoteric praxis is involved. This is the path of the purely spiritual processes as outlined in *Japu*, of *Suniyai* (listening, absorption of holy teaching) *Mannei* (contemplation, firm faith) and *Dhyan* (meditation). To these are added Devotion (*Bhakti*) and spiritual self discipline as outlined in stanza 38 of *Japu* and the performance of

beneficent actions. This ethico-spiritual scheme is the path of Sahaj. Its essence lies in the dawning in the self, of realization through the processes of prayer, meditation and devotion. It does away, as stated above, with all ritual actions, with yogic and occult 'practice' and observance of codes like the yogi's wearing of earrings, blowing the horn, carrying a patched coat and smearing the body with ashes etc. The true Guru's disciple, practitioner of Sahaj, need not retire to a forest or mountain-cave, but engaging in prayer in the early morning hours, which practice is repeatedly commended in beautiful words, engage in pure, beneficent, socially useful action. To the process of devotion he should add Kirtan (performing and listening to holy music, lauding the Creator). Thereby shall celestial joy, bliss (Anand) descend upon him. This pattern of life the holy Gurus set up as example to their followers. And herein lies the essence of Sahaj, though as one explores it spiritually, the term acquires a deeper and deeper meaning, leading on to the mystical vision, the apprehension of the Divine Presence in all creation.

As stated earlier, the orientation of the spiritual state of Sahaj is found particularly detailed in the Bani of Guru Amar Das, who has elucidated this term and woven his vision round it numerous times. Sahaj, while it implies the unforced, natural path of realization, stands in other contexts also for the

realization itself, for illumination and poise of mind. The interpretation in either case has to depend on the context, and pitfalls have to be avoided. The opening of Guru Amar Das's *Anandu* in the measure Ramkali is wrapt in the joy and ecstasy of realization through Sahaj, attended with the strains of Divine music. This great text opens thus :

Mother mine ! bliss have I attained in union with the
Divine Master :

Spontaneously has union with the Divine Master come
about—

In my mind has resounded joyous music.

Fairies of the family of jewel harmony to sing holy songs
have descended.

Sing all ye the Lord's song, who in heart have lodged it.

Saith Nanak : Bliss have I attained on union with the
Divine master.

(*Anandu*, 1)

Guru Amar Das in Sri Raga, Ashtpadi 6 (page 68) has illuminated different facets of Sahaj. This Ashtpadi may be studied in detail, wherein the term *Sahaj* is repeatedly used to express the state of illumination, equipoise. The 'Pause' and stanza 2 of this Ashtpadi run thus :

Brother—without guidance of the Preceptor comes not
illumination and poise.¹

From the holy Word arises *poise*,

And is the holy Lord attained.

What in *poise* is sung is properly rewarded;

Without *poise* is all utterance void.

From *Posie* arises devotion; from *poise*

1. For words in italics the original is *Sahaj*.

comes love and pangs of separation.
 From *poise* arise joy and peace;
 without *poise* is life a waste.

From the above the comprehensiveness, the centrality of Sahaj in Sikh teaching may clearly be seen.

In *Anandu*, 18 again, Guru Amar Das has expressed the mystical quality of Sahaj :

By ritual performance is not *poise* attained;
 Without *poise* is not cast out doubt :
 Saith Nanak : By the Master's grace arises *poise*—
 Thus is doubt banished.

Other affirmations concerning Sahaj, the path of prayer, meditation, devotion are met with. Some may be mentioned here.

Guru Arjan Dev, declaring theological learning irrelevant to attainment of the supreme state, declares :

The creature of God who on the Lord meditates,
 Be he learned or unlearned, the supreme state attains.
 (*Gauri V, 159, page 197*)

The following affirmations are from Guru Nanak Dev. These are about the uselessness of *hatha*-yoga.

Whoever dies practising *Hatha*, is not entered into God's reckoning,
 However many the guises he assumes or the ashes he rubs on his body.
 Neglecting devotion to the holy Name, great shall his regret be.

(*Gauri, Ashtpadi 12, page 226*)

By *hatha* and self-suppression comes dissolution to the body;

By fasts and austerities is not the mind touched with devotion.

Nothing approaches the merit of contemplating the Name Divine.

(*Ramkali, Ashatpadi 5, page 906*)

To exhaustion have I practised muttering of texts, austerities and self-suppression :

Not by Hatha and self-suppression is the Lord attained.

Saith Nanak : By Sahaj is attained the Life of the Universe.

This enlightenment by the holy Preceptor is granted.

(*Asa Chhant 2, page 436*)

Bhakta Kabir in the measure Gauri, 48, page 333 has set down in *extenso* the equable experience of the state of Sahaj thus :

In the state of Sahaj are no changes as the rainy season,

No storms like the ocean,

No alternations of sun and shadows;

Neither erection occurs therein nor dissolution;

In that is neither life nor death,

Nor feelings of pain and pleasure;

Nor induced states of ecstasy.

Unique, inexpressible is the story of Sahaj—

Neither can it be compared in simile nor does it end;

Nor has it alternating states, like light or heavy.

In that state is no decent or ascent,

Nor change of day or night.

It is made not of elements like water, wind or air—

In it is the holy Preceptor absorbed.

That state is inaccessible, unknowable;

Therein one equably abides :

This state by the Master's grace is induced.....

NĀM, SHABDA

Two other key-terms, Nām and Shabda are of

frequent occurrence in Gurubani. Their simple, dictionary meanings respectively are Name and Word. Each however, bears a deep mystical signification. Nām is identical with the bearer of the Name (Nami) that is the Supreme Being. In the process of Sahaj, in a creed where in no visible form or symbol of the Supreme Being is permitted to be adopted, as that would be idolatry, the 'Name' is the sole medium wherethrough the Lord may be approached. It is the only visible form of the Creator available to the devotee. Being a sound, it is itself abstract, immaterial, formless. The Supreme Name of the Creator is *Ek Oankar*. Parallel to it is *Satti-Nām* (Eternal, holy Presence). Other names on which the devotee may concentrate, and which he may repeat and contemplate are *Wahguru*, *Kartar* and the later *Sachcha Pādishah* and others. But to repeat and contemplate the Name is the essence of prayer and devotion. Nām as in *Sukhmani*, is employed as identical with the Creator and sustainer of all. Ashtpadi 16, stanza 5 of *Sukhmani* open thus :

Nam ke dhare sagie jant
 Nam ke dhare khand brahmand.

The stanza in *extenso* in translation is :

All creation by the Divine Reality¹ is prompted;
 By the Divine Reality are propped continents and the
 universe;
 By the Divine Reality are propped Simritis, Vedas and

1. For 'Divine Reality' the original is Nām.

Puranas;

By the Divine Reality are propped the processes of holy listening, realization, meditation.

By the Divine Reality are propped the firmament and the nether regions.

By the Divine Reality are propped all created forms.

By the Divine Reality are propped all habitations and abodes.

By the holy Name and abodes are saved the ears that to it have listened.

Whomsoever in His grace to His Name

He devotes,

Saith Nanak, such a one entering the Fourth State, the supreme state attains.

In *Japu*, 19 occurs the line : *Jeta kita teta nāun* (All that is created, is His visible form). Here 'visible form' is rendering of *Nāun* which is the Punjabi form of *Nām*.

Nām in Gurubani stands for devotion, devotion to the holy Name. *Nām* or such devotion is highest attainment to be aimed at by the devotee. In *Var Asa*, 8 Guru Nanak Dev affirms : *Nanak sache Nām binu kya tikka kya tagg*. (Without devotion to the holy Name, the paste-mark and sacred thread are of little worth). Guru Arjan Dev in *Asa*, 18, page 401 affirms :

Purn dan jap tap jete

Sabh upar Nam.

(The Name is superior to all charities, chanting of texts, austerities).

The Name here implying *devotion to the Name*.

Shabda, like Nām bears a deeply esoteric meaning, with multiple shades of signification. Literally *Shabda* (Skt.) is sound; applied meaning word, holy word. The Word (Logos, Kalām) in other religious systems too bears a mystical meaning. Parallel aspects of signification may therefore, be discovered in *Shabda*. In Sikh religious thought *Shabda* or *Shabad* as pronounced popularly has an especial signification. The *Bani* of Guru Granth Sahib is popularly known as *Shabad*, particularly each verse-unit or hymn.

In Gurubani, often *Shabad* bears the sense cumulatively of holy teaching, which is conveyed obviously through words. Thus in Bilaval, 87, page 821, Guru Arjan Dev affirms :

Satiguru shabad ujāro dīpa;

Binasiyo andhkar tih mandari kothari khulhi anūpā.

(The holy Preceptor's Word has lighted a lamp;
From the mansion of the body is lifted darkness,
and a wonderful chamber opened.

In Maru Solahe, 21, page 1042 Guru Nanak Dev too implies by *Shabad* holy teaching :

Ehu bhavajal jagatu shabadi Guru tariyai.

(This ocean of worldly existence by the Master's Word¹ may be crossed over).

In *Sukhmani*, 15.3 Guru Arjan Dev affirms :

Jiun mandar kau thāmai thammanu,

Tiun Guru ka shabad maneh asthammanu.

1. That is, teaching, illumination.

(As an edifice by a pillar is propped,
So the mind by the Master's Word finds poise)

Shabad in certain contexts stands for the Divine Word of command, for Hukam, the cosmic Law, Divine will. In Majh Ashtpadi 14, page 117 Guru Amar Das has employed *Shabad* in this sense :

Utpati parlau shabadei hovai
Shabdei hi vich opati hovai.

(By the Divine Will occurs creation and dissolution;
By the Divine Will again comes about creation).

In the excerpt following Guru Nanak Dev has employed *Hukam* and *Shabad* interchangeably :

Chahun disi Hukamu vartai Prabhu Tera
Chahun disi Nam patālam.
Sabh mehn Shabad vartai Prabhu sacha
Karami milai bai-alam.

(Malar Ashtpadi 4, page 1275)

(In all four directions, Lord ! is Thy ordinance
operative;

Uptill the nether regions is evident Thy Name.

In all creation is pervasive the command¹ of the holy
Lord—

By good fortune is union with the immutable Lord
found).

Like Nām, *Shabad* is the form that the Formless Creator assumes. To this *Shabad*, which may be the holy word or holy sound or the esoteric sound heard in Samadhi, is worship due. This is done by the

1. Original, Shabad.

consciousness (*surati*) attaching itself there to. In *Siddha Goshti*, 44 thus answers Guru Nanak Dev the Siddhas :

Shabdu Guru surati dhun chela

(The holy word is the Master; concentrated meditation its disciple).

In Sorath Ashtpadi 1, page 635 says Guru Arjan Dev, attaching a similar meaning to *Shabad* :

Shabad Guru pira gahir gambhira;

Binu shabdai jagu baurnam.

(The holy Word is the Guru, the deeply mystical Preceptor;

Deprived of the Word is the world distracted).

In Japu, 38 *Shabad* stands for the state of realization, for Gian (Jnan). After outlining the process of forging the spiritual life in a universal image, yet in deeply mystical terms, says Guru Nanak Dev :

Bhānda bhāu amrita tit dhāl;

Gharīyai shabad sachchī taksāl.

(Make loving devotion the crucible; in that mould you the amrita of realization.

In this holy mint, mint the coin of realization).

In the Guru Amar Das's *Anandu*, *Shabad* is used in two related shades of signification, each referred to above.

Stanza 6 reads as below :

Sachi livai binu deh nimāni—

Deh nimāni livai bajhon kya karei vechariya.

Es non hor thāun nahin shabad lag sawāriya.

(Without true devotion is the poor self helpless;
 Helpless is the self without true devotion—
 What may this poor thing do?
 No other place has she; by attachment to the holy
 Word is she purified),

Stanza 7

Anand Anand sabh ko kahai Anand Guru te jāniya—
 Jāniya anand sada Guru te kirpa kare piariya.
 Kari kirpa kilvikh kāte gian anjan sariya.
 Andarahun jin ka mohu tutta tin ka shabad Sachai
 sawariya.
 Kahai Nanak ehu Anand hai,
 Anand Guru te jāniya.

(All talk of bliss, only by the Master's teaching is
 true bliss realized.

Ever is bliss by the Master's teaching realized,
 should he, my cherished friend, show grace.
 By his grace are sins annulled; the collyrium of
 realization to *sight* applied.

Those whose attachment of heart is annulled,
Their state of realization by the holy lord is exalted.

Saith Nanak : Such is the state of bliss.

That by the Master's teaching is realized).

In the totality of the teaching of Sikhism, with
 its conception of the Formless Supreme Being and
 its mystical path of God-realization, both Nām and
 Shabad acquire a deep significance. This significance
 however, few even among those professing the
 Sikh faith can realize, without a deep study of
 Gurubani.

AKKHAR (Word, Syllable)

In Gauri *Bawan-Akkhari*, 54, page 261, of Guru Arjan Dev's composition, the term used for the cosmic order is *Akkhar*, which is the popular form of *akshara* (Skt.) with the meaning 'imperishable' as well as 'syllable' or 'word'. In the passage referred to, Guru Arjan Dev marks the transition of meaning of *akkhar* from 'syllable' to 'cosmic order'. This transition has an obvious reference to stanza 19 of *Japu* in which occurs the couplet :

Jeta kita teta Naun;
Vinu Navain naha ko thaun.

(All that is created is His manifestation;
No place of His manifestation is devoid).

In Stanza 54 of *Bawan-Akkhari*, under discussion here, occurs the affirmation :

Drishtman akkhar hai jeta
Nanak Parbrahm nirlepa.

(All the visible Reality, saith Nanak,
Is immaculate, transcendent Brahm).

Sant Mangal Singh, a Nirmala scholar, in his learned exegetical work on *Japu*, *Ik Akkhari Teeka* has explicated *nāun* (Nām) as 'manifest form of the eternal' (Satya-sarup vyāpak).

Stanza 54 referred to above, along with the preceding Sloka is given below in English rendering. In it the key-word is *akkhar* (word, syllable).

Sloka

To seek shelter with the Lord, gracious and merciful,
have we come :

Anyone in whose heart is lodged the holy *Word* finds
bliss.

Pauri (Stanza)

(By the holy *Word* are the three worlds sustained.

By absorbing the holy *Word* are the Vedas interpreted.

The holy *Word* is the true mystic melody and spiritual
discourses.

In absorbing the holy *Word* lies liberation,

And the path of release from terror and illusion.

In the holy *Word* lies the performance of ritual duties :

All the visible Reality, saith Nanak,

Is immaculate, Transcendent Brahm).

The key-word in the original is *akkhar*.

This passage is followed by another sloka in which, continuing the context of *akkhar* (word) as the concept of Divine Writ finds expression :

With the pen in His hand, on each forehead the
inscrutable writ He inscribes :

With all creation is He involved—

His incomparable beauty in all manifested.....

GRIHASTHA (The householder's life)

The ideal life commended by the holy Gurus is that of the householder engaged in beneficent activity, keeping his mind absorbed in contemplation and devotion. This synthesis between the spiritual and the secular is meant to reject the monastic or ascetic kind of life. The various brands of mendicancy in India, such as Yogi, Bairagi,

Avadhut, Sannyasi etc. are disapproved, as their way of life is barren, cut off from the steam of humanity, to which their spiritual experience is expected to bring benefit. In the narrative of Guru Nanak Dev's life occurs the episode of his meeting the Siddhas in the mountains, and a discussion that ensued. The Siddhas, absorbed in their meditations away from the world of men, asked Guru Nanak Dev what the state of affairs in the mundane world was. To this the Guru replied, expressing the sorrow of his heart at the utter neglect of mankind by holy men. He told them, the earth was gripped by evil; he had himself set out to seek the 'moon of truth' amid this darkness. "The earth by evil is is gripped; the Bull burdened under it is groaning. The Siddha-yogis have hidden themselves in the mountains who then may bring liberation to the world? The ignorant yogis that are there, are engaged night and day in smearing their limbs with ashes.

Without a true Teacher is the whole world sinking.

(*Bhai Gurdas, Var 1.9*)

In *Siddha-Goshti* (Dialogue with the Siddhas) in the measure Ramkali, Guru Nanak Dev has recorded a transcript in a highly compact mode of the relative features of the main points of this debate. While the Siddhas were emphasizing the esoteric psychosomatic practices of hathayoga and its mystique, the Guru was pointing out the sovereignty of a life centred in moral and beneficent action as fruit of the spiritual life : Without such activity

spiritual life is barren. His ideal is akin to what in the Indian tradition is called Karma-yoga—action where in the mind at the same time is poised and attuned to seeking the higher experience of union with God.

In *Ramkali-ki-Var Mahalla 3* is set down in Slokas from Guru Nanak Dev, a detailed exposition of his view on the prevalent forms of asceticism and mendicancy. These are all critical of the practices associated with these paths. In the eleventh section of this Var (page 951) the Guru brings out the barren and negative features of the prevalent medicant practices, which benefit no one in society :

Yogis and householders smear their matted locks with ashes,

While their children are wailing all round them *for lack of support.*

By neglecting the true way of life is not yoga attained.

What good throwing ashes over one's own head?

Saith Nanak : such is the measure of Kali-yuga—

Each one is himself the spokesman and judge.

In the twelfth section of this Var, which is unusually long, is Guru Nanak Dev's judgement on the ascetic sects—Bairagi, Avadhut, Udasi, Pakhandi. An adept in these would be genuine and worthy of approval, should he keep his ego under restraint and seek truth. Not mere ritual, such as smearing of the limbs with ashes, wanderings the world over, begging ritually from door to door—not these, but search after true values like truth and

continence are the true ideal.

In the same section is the Guru's commendation of the householder who restrains his passions—

His alms-begging consisting in the practice of prayer,
austerity and self-discipline.

Let his cultivation bodily powers be his charity :

Such a householder is holy as Ganga-water.

(2.12. *Var Ramkali*)

The conception of the true ascetic as it emerges on the study of Gurubani is not one of who observes the outer symbols of ascetic mendicant orders, but one whose ego has turned away from the world in dispassion. In *Majh Ashtpadi 4*, Guru Amar Das has defined the *Bairagi* (an order, lit, one practising dispassion towards the world) as 'one who in the holy Name is dyed' that is, immersed.

In *Ashtpadi 3* in the measure *Gauri* also, Guru Amar Das has used the same expression :

Those dyed in the Name have perpetually renounced
the world;

Those are the true householders who to holy Truth are
attached.

Saith Nanak : Those serving the holy Preceptor are truly
fortunate.

(Page 230)

In *Gauri Ashtpadi 8* (page 233) Guru Amar Das has again affirmed : "The self has turned mendicant by realizing through the holy Word the fear of God."

In each one of these expressions, the term for mendicant is *Baiargi* (one struck by dispassion

towards the world). The true secret of renunciation lies, to repeat it, not in adopting the other discipline of a particular order, but as affirmed by Guru Amar Das in Gauri, 25 in subduing the ego so that its wandering may cease.

About false claimants to asceticisms, there is mention in the Bani of Guru Ram Das of a Tapa (ascetic) who calumniated Guru Amar Das, but was found to be greedy and a hypocrite. As a matter of fact, in the pages of Sikh history and in Gurubani, seldom is a member of the traditional ascetic orders mentioned in complimentary terms. Guru Nanak Dev's son Baba Sri Chand who founded the ascetic Udasi order, remained outside the line of Guruship and his followers outside the mainstream of Sikhism, though they were its sympathizers and during the period of Sikh persecution in the eighteenth century, maintained the Gurudwaras. Some of them acquired learning and wrote good exegetical works on Sikhism. It is because of the barrenness of asceticism that it is looked upon with disfavour. As is being pointedly discovered in the India of today, the millions of claimants to holiness and asceticism in India are a dead-weight on Hindu society, a totally decadent influence when not positively evil. Guru Nanak Dev discovered this five centuries ago, and gave powerful expression to his disapproval. While on his missionary journeys all over India and outside, called Udasis, he kept

himself free of family entanglements, though he visited his home and people at intervals even then. But around 1521, after these journeys were concluded, he put off the ascetic garb, reinvested himself with householder's clothing so to say, and set up a small farming colony and missionary centre at Kartarpur on the Ravi, now on the Pakistan side of the border. Here he practised godliness—guiding, teaching composing the Bani and serving any travellers that came. This was the ideal that he set up for others to follow, and in Sikh society from the times of the Gurus onwards, it has been carefully observed. Sikh 'Sants' (holy men) may or may not be householders. There is no precondition of forced celibacy for them, which as the Gurus pointed out, may only conceal suppressed sex yearnings.

The path commended by the holy Gurus to the disciples is really a mean between asceticism and involvement with the world. This is a noble ethical synthesis in which the seeker while fixing his gaze on the ultimate, the Absolute, at the same time looks upon the sphere of duty in the world as real and calling for his earnest endeavour to do good and to bring good to others. In *Japu* 34, the earth has been called 'Dharmasal' (place or field of righteousness) on which man is to engage in righteous act on and not to retire in a world of self-imposed idleness. He is not only to save himself, but also to save others, as affirmed in the closing line of the Sloka to *Japu*.

Other affirmations parallel thereto are met with at numerous places in Gurubani. Guru Nanak Dev in *Var Asa*, 2 has affirmed, apostrophizing the Creator :

Holy the continents and universes created by Thee;
 Holy the worlds and the forms therein;
 Holy Thy doings and all that passes in Thy mind;
 Holy Thy rule and Thy court;
 Holy Thy commandment and Thy order.
 Holy Thy grace and Thy mark of honour.....

All this stands contrary to the extreme vedantic belief that the phenomenal world is false, *Mithya*, illusion. According to Sikh belief it is not an illusion, but its reality is evanescent like 'a house of smoke' or 'cloud-shadow' and man must noway form attachment to it. To remind man of his duty, Guru Arjan Dev in *Sukhmani* has affirmed :

Holy the root, holy the creation therefrom. (16.6)

Holy Himself, holy all his creation. (16.7)

With this faith, man is to engage in action that may further God's plan of righteousness in the world. As stated earlier, not the way of the recluse, but to the devoted unassuming man of action—such is the scheme of life commended. Guru Nanak Dev has affirmed in other contexts :

Thā Creator is Sole Himself, having created the two states;

In Veda-utterances is introducād controversy.

Involvement with the world and renunciation are the two extremes :

In between operates righteousness that is the guide.

(*Var Malar*, 5, page 1280)

In *Siddha Goshti*, 31, page 941, the Guru mukh (God-directed man) is defined as one who realizes the limits of involvement with the world and renunciation, i. e. carries neither to extremes. In *Marū Solaha* 7 (page 1027) in the same terms it is affirmed :

Let the seeker realize limits of worldly involvement and
renunciation;
And in association with the Master, by the holy Word
realize his true home;
At no one should he cavil;
By truth alone does one acquire purity.

In the conduct of life the seeker; should God so will, may even be called upon to yield life, to suffer martyrdom. This was done by two of the holy Gurus, Guru Arjan Dev and Guru Tegh Bahadur. On this heroic theme of martyrdom Guru Nanak Dev has said :

Blessed is the death of those heroic men,
Who lay down their lives in an approved cause.
(*Wadhans, Alahunian 2, page 579*)

The Path of devotion may make a call for sacrifice and martyrdom :

Should thy heart be filled with the passion of love for
God,
Step onto this path with thy head placed on thy palm.
He who treads this path,
Must prepare to give up life without demur.
(*Sloka 20, Guru Nanak Dev, page 1412*)

On the duty of the man of God to succour the helpless, says Bhakta Kabir :

He is the true hero who fights to protect the helpless;
 Though cut limb by limb, flees not the field.

(*Maru, page 1412*)

In the holy Granth Sahib itself are included two narrative-hymns, one by Bhakta Kabir, and the other by Bhakta Namdev, telling in brief touches the story of their persecution, of their being sentenced to death by the fanatical rulers of their days and how by Divine intervention they were saved. This entire chain of thought and the examples of the holy Gurus and Bhaktas have deeply influenced the course of Sikh history, with its accent on beneficent action, righteous war and martyrdom.

ON YOGA

An important aspect of the teaching of the holy Gurus is the examination and evaluation of the yogic systems prevalent in India. Yoga has numerous varieties, from Patanjili's commendation of the practice of self-discipline to the Pranayam or breath-control of Hatha-yoga, with the entire mystique of arousing the Kundalini and penetrating the six 'lotuses' or *chakars* and the attainment of miraculous powers (*riddhi* and *siddhi*), entering into the state of *Maha-ananda* (supreme bliss) and the state of unbroken (*aphur*) samadhi or absorption into the Absolute. Other aspects of yoga, which may be considered its misapplication are the practices of the Sakta cult, with certain kinds of reprobate actions associated with it, commonly known as Vām-marga

or the left path. Whatever the claims to spiritual attainment of Yoga, its practice as Guru Nanak Dev observed it, consisted mainly in varieties of Hatha, Saktism and in the proliferation of mendicant sects, often concealing beneath the garb of saintliness a great deal of fraud. The least offensive of the claimants to Yoga were the idle drags on society, making a virtue of ritual begging and beguiling the people into claims to perform miracles and to exercise occult powers. Others spent lives in seeking such powers, called *riddhis* and *siddhis*. Many were seeking all their lives to arouse the Kundalini or *bhuyangambhathi* (the serpent-frunace) by the elaborate practice of pranayam. In a world requiring clean, honest work and service of the people, all such pursuits were distractions. In the foregoing section a brief hint has been given of Guru Nanak Dev's disapproval of the yogic practices and the withdrawal from the concerns of humanity characteristic of the Siddhas and Yogis, and his commendation of the life of the householder.

Guru Nanak Dev found the Yogic cults very widespread and popular. Along with the Brahmin-priest, the Yogi, known by one of the numerous current cult names, was dominating and directing the spiritual life of the Hindu masses. The Muslims in their Pirs, Rawals, Fakirs and Sāins and their own versions of the Hindu Yogis. Guru Nanak Dev, employing the current terminology of Yoga, like

Bhakta Kabir, sought to call attention to the fact that while the claimed miraculous attainment of Yoga were only worldly Maya pursuit, the spiritual attainments believed to be attainable through its practice were more truly acquired through the path of Sahaj and through beneficent action. He rejected Pranayam and Hatha, and severely condemned Saktism, whose practitioners the Saktas were considered misbelievers and reprobates. The Yogic equipment of the earrings, ashes, the staff, the horn, the patched quilt etc. he rejected, and called upon the Yogis rather to symbolize these items by cultivating moral and spiritual qualities. All barren asceticism, all practices involving occult rites, all miracle—mongering he severely condemned. Instead, as is obvious from *Ramkali-ki-Var m.4* and from *Siddha-Goshti*, he commended centring the spiritual life in beneficent action within the human society, where each one should contribute to the weal of all (*sarbat-ka-bhala*). His successors, particularly Guru Amar Das have richly adumbrated this theme, Guru Tegh Bahadur and later, Guru Gobind Singh in the Shabads have taken up the theme of transforming Yoga.

It appears that belief in Yoga being so widespread and so fascinating to the masses, the holy Gurus felt it worth while to treat this theme amply. The Bani of Guru Nanak Dev is full of esoteric Yogic terms, which however, imply the processes

and attainment of Sahaj—prayer, devotion, beneficent action and poise. Maharas, the supreme elixir of the Yogis, Mahaanand. The Supreme Bliss, Dasam-Duar and such other terms of Yoga are employed as symbols for ethico-spiritual attainments. *Anahad Shabda*, the unstruck music of esoteric Yoga-practice is again, one symbol, implying the state of ecstatic bliss in the experience of the Divine Reality. *Riddhis* and *Siddhis* miraculous powers in *Japu* are called *award sād* (joy alien to Godliness). Says Guru Amar Das in *Var Sorath* 20 (page 650) :

Other than devotion to the Name all wear and eating of
viands is worthless;
Cursed be occult and miracle-making powers.

On the Hatha-yoga ritual Guru Nanak Dev is emphatic in repudiating it :

One who engages in ritual cleansing of the intestines,
kindling the furnace of Kunadalini, and directs
the passage of breath—
Is, in the absence of guidance from the holy Preceptor,
in error;
And gripped in delusions, is ruined.
Blind and covered with the filth of ignorance—
However much he may try to cleanse himself,
His mind no whit is purified.
Without devotion to the holy Name all ritual is husk,
deluding man like juggler's tricks.

(*Prabhati Ashtpadi* 3, page 1343)

For Guru Nanak Dev's attitude towards miracles, the slokas under Pauri 19 in *Var Majh*,

beginning 'Pahiran agni hivai gharu bandhan bhojanu sar karai' may be studied. After rejecting all supernatural powers, the Guru in the end declares devotion to be the highest attainment :

Saith Nanak, on whomsoever falls His glance of grace,
Him He grants exaltation of devotion to the holy Name.

A famous term, Raj-yoga is current in Indian philosophy : literally, sovereign Yoga. In Gurubani this is the Yoga or pinnacle of spiritual attainment reached through the process outlined above as Sahaj—that is, prayer; meditation, devotion, self-discipline. In Gurubani the term occurs in several contexts, implying high attainments just mentioned. In Gauri V, Ashtpadi 5, page 237 says Guru Arjan Dev, on subduing the attitude of duality or Maya-attachment :

Whoever subdues and annuls duality,
Raj-yoga shall have achieved.

Further on, in the same text, Ashtpadi 8, page 239 is affirmed :

By following the Master's teaching have we attained
Raj-yoga :
Along with the Master is the whole world saved.

Guru Arjan Dev in Gauri 146 (page 211) more specifically affirms :

My tongue ! repeat thou the sole Name Divine :
Thereby in this life shalt thou have amplitude of joy.
In the hereafter shall it avail the self.
The malady of egoism annulled,
By the Master's grace, experience thou Raj-yoga.

Guru Nanak Dev has been ecstatically delineated as being Divine, an incarnation, despite repudiation of the Incarnation Principle of Hinduism by Sikh teaching. He has also been lauded as attaining Raj-yoga, which is an expression of his great enlightenment, his complete subduing of the carnal self and his attunement with God. The attribution of this phrase no way implied his having practised any form of Yoga.

In the Hatha-yoga manual called *Hatha yoga Pradipaka* it is stated that the path to Raj yoga lies through the practice of Hatha. This is contrary to the Sikh belief. If the supreme state of attainment is to be called Raj-yoga, its way lies through Sahaj, already discussed above. Says the Bard Kala in Swaiyya 6 (encomiastic stanzas on Guru Nanak Dev) on page 1390 of the Scripture :

Raj-yoga didst thou practise, the Lord in thy heart
lodging.

All creation was saved, repeating incessantly the holy
Name.

The Lord's laudation is sung by Brahma's sons and
rishis like Janak throughout the ages.

Blessed be the Guru; blessed and fruitful, noble his birth
in the world.

From the nether regions has risen the shout of thy glory;
this by the bard Kala is stated.

Guru Nanak, saturated with joy in the Name Divine !
Raj-yoga hast thou practised.

The attainment that the Guru has attributed to

the true Yogi, is the spiritual state of poise. It is the state of the Brahm-Gyani, about whom Guru Arjan Dev in *Sukhmani* affirms :

The Brahm-Gyani¹ is ever undefiled,
 As the lotus in water, untouched,
 In the Brahm-Gyani's self pervades humility.
 The Brahm-Gyani ever to do good to others yearns.
 The Brahm-Gyani is prop of the helpless;
 Over all is placed his protective hand.

(*Sukhmani*, 8.1)

The lotus figure occurs also in *Siddha-Goshti* to symbolize purity amid the impurities of the world, as the lotus that is not touched by water in which it grows. In that text another figure that occurs is that of the duck, whose pinions too remain un-touched by water while it swims. Other affirmations about the spiritual state that Yoga should induce, and which are more surely attained through Sahaj and not Yoga-praxis, are as below :

Neither in the patched quilt, nor the staff,
 Nor in smearing with ashes the limbs lies Yoga.
 Nor lies it in earrings, or cropping close the hair, or in
 blowing the horn :
 To live pure amid impurities of the world—
 Thus is the Yoga way attained.
 In idle chatter lies not Yoga.
 The Yogi truly so called is one who views all creation
 as equal with an equable eye.

(*Suhi*, 8 *Guru Nanak Dev*, page 730)

1. The God-enlightened.

The true Yogi is thus one who by his attainment is God-enlightened (Brahm-Gyani), with a pure life of benevolence towards all.

SOCIAL CONSCIENCE—CASTE

One of the prominent features of the teaching of Sikhism is the overwhelming presence in it of a humanitarian, compassionate attitude towards all humanity, which militates against cruelty and injustice and aims thus at the establishment of a just society. The rich and the privileged are castigated for their involvement with things of this world, since wealth to which cling so tenaciously must be taken away from them. In *Var Majh* 8, page 141 Guru Nanak Dev thus gives a vision of material glory :

Rulers, subjects, lords of property—none shall last.

Shops, market squares, streets by Divine decree shall collapse.

Ignorant man takes the firms, fine edifices to be his own;
Know that stores full of wealth in an instant are denuded.

Arab steeds, chariots, camels, elephants and housings;
Gardens, lands, house and home—when were they ours?

Tents, woven beds, silken curtains—

Saith Nanak, know the eternal Lord to be their true Bestower, by His might.

In his great vision on the destiny of nations, when they forsake the path of righteousness, in the hymns known as *Babar-Vani*, the Guru thus expresses his judgement on wealth and those who

heard it :

Vast multitudes for wealth are lost; many for it are dishonoured.

Without sin it is not accumulated; in death it accompanies not man.

(Asa, Ashtpadi 2, page 417)

In a similar vision in Sri Raga, the Guru thus affirms :

Painted palaces with elegant white portals, erected in joy of heart—all fruit of love of Maya.

Without love of God ever shall they remain empty;

Heaps of rubble, their occupants smouldering dust.

Brother ! man's body and wealth last not with him :

The purest wealth is God's Name;

This by divine grace comes.

(Sri Raga, Guru Nanak Dev, Ashtpadi 15, page 62)

The Guru has expressed deep anguish at the prevailing evil and injustice in society, which he has expressed through the symbol of the dark night :

The age is turned knife, rulers butchers *wielding* it;

Righteousness on wings has flown away.

In the dark night of evil, the moon of truth is nowhere visible.

I have sought for it to distraction;

No path is visible in the darkness.

(Var Majh 16, page 145)

In another place, this is how the age is depicted :

Avarice is king; evil-doing his minister,

Falsehood his revenue factor;

Lust is the counsellor, always consulted for advice.

The subjects are purblind and thoughtless—

Wretches who are like stuffed carcasses

(*Var Asa 2, page 468*)

The state of teachers of religion was such :

The Quadi speaks falsehood and eats filth.

The Brahmin, guilty of much cruelty makes a show of
ritual bathing,

The Yogi, blind and misguided, knows not the true
practice.

All three are at one in bringing ruin to the people.

(*Dhanasari 6, Guru Nanak Dev, page 662*)

On the true teachers thus the Guru expressed
himself Here the accent is on hard, honest work :

One claiming to be a saint,
And going about begging—

Touch not his feet :

He whose livelihood through hard work is earned,
And part in charity given away—

Such a one, Nanak ! truly knows the way of God.

(*Var Sarang 22, page 1245*)

Expressing himself on the cruelty and hypocrisy
rampant among the professed teachers of religion,
who should bring love and compassion in society,
Guru Nanak Dev thus castigates the priests of either
faith, Hindu and Muslim :

Those slaughtering human beings perform *namaz*;

Those wielding the butcher's knife wear the sacred
thread.

Brahmins blow the conch-shell in their homes—

As much slaves of appetite as their employers.

Evil is the capital, evil the commerce of such :

From evil-doing is their living derived.

Decency and righteousness have vanished.

Nanak, falsehood is all-pervasive.

(Var Asa 16, page 471)

About the institution of caste, the universal prevalent evil in Indian society, Guru Nanak dev has imparted powerfully effective teaching. Here are a few pronouncements illustrating his deep, universal humanitarianism :

Know all human beings to be repositories of Divine
Light;
Stop not to enquire about their caste;
In the Hereafter are there no castes.

(Asa 3, page 349)

Caste is a condemnable notion; pride of name is low
and mean.

All living things have their sole support in God.

(Sri Raga-ki-Var 3, page 83)

Those forgetting the Lord are the truly low-caste.

Nanak, the low-caste are those who live without God.

(Asa 2, page 349)

Know ye this to be the Lord's measure;

Caste and birth are not there considered.

Superiority of caste and worthiness by man's deeds are
determined.

Saith Nanak : By devotion to the Name comes liberation;
And the suffering of transmigration is annulled.

(Prabhati 10, page 1330)

Evil-doing, hard-heartedness, slander, violence—

These be the real untouchables.

How is your cooking-space pure with these low-caste
women beside you?

True ritual of purity is truthfulness;

Good actions your kitchen-bounds;

Prayer, true holy bath.

Saith Nanak : With God such only are considered noble,
As preach not to other sinful ritual.

(Var Sri Raga 20, page 91)

As against the pride of wealth and power and the haughtiness of high caste, Guru Nanak Dev and his holy successors have inculcated the spirit of humility :

He who attains humility through love and devotion to
God,

Such a one emancipation may attain.

(Var Asa 13, page 470)

Humility is my mace;

Touching the dust of feet of all my spear;

These weapons no evil-doer can withstand.

The Master, perfectly-endowed, has equipped me with
these.

(Sorath 80, Guru Arjan Dev, page 628)

In Joy abide the humble, controlling and subduing the
ego.

Saith Nanak; the pride of the greatly arrogant has all
gone rotten.

(Sukhmani 12, Sloka)

To amplify the theme of caste a little here : The holy Gurus raised their voice against the arrogance of the Brahmin particularly, who arrogated holiness to himself. Their hearts were full of compassion for the so-called lower castes, who besides being deprived of an honoured place in society, including the right to possess landed and house property, were also denied the ministrations of religion. This meant that the path of liberation, the highest goal achievable by a created being, was sought to be

denied to them. Guru Nanak Dev placed himself on a level with these poor disinherited folk out of a spirit of compassion for them. In Sri Raga 3, page 15 he thus raises his mighty voice :

The lowest among the low castes, lower than the lowliest—

Nanak is with them : He envies not those with worldly greatness.

Lord ! Thy glance of grace falls on the land where the humble are cherished.

In another place, with heart overflowing with Divine compassion, he thus exalts the low-caste :

Should anyone out of the higher castes serve the Lord,
Beyond expression in his merit.

One out of the lower castes that serves God,
Saith Nanak, may wear shoes made from my skin.

(Malar 6, page 1256)

Guru Arjan Dev, while compiling the holy Granth Sahib, took care to include in it the hymns of devotion composed by some of the so-called untouchable Bhaktas. This was meant to demonstrate that in the eyes of the Guru, not only should an untouchable receive religious ministrations, but should he have in him piety and enlightenment, also set up as a teacher. Out of such Bhaktas of the lower castes were Kabir, a weaver, Ravidas, a cobbler, Namdev, a dyer and Sadhna, a butcher. In their own pronouncements the holy Gurus have thus left their testament :

God's teaching to all four castes,
Khatri, Brahmin, Shudra and Vaish may be imparted.

Whoever by the Master's guidance utters the holy Name is liberated.

Saith Nanak : in each vessel does the Lord abide.

(*Suhi, Guru Arjan Dev, 50, page 747*)

Khatri, Brahmin, Shudra and Vaish—any may utter God's holy mantra.

Worship ye the holy transcendent Lord—

Serve Him day and night.

(*Bilawal, Guru Amar Das, 5, page 800*)

Guru Arjan Dev defines the true Pandit (Brahmin scholar) as one who imparts religious teaching to all four castes. (*Sukhmani 9.4*) Brahmanical orthodoxy forbade such ministrations to the lower castes. Further on, in *Sukhmani 9.5* Guru Arjan Dev affirms :

All to knowledge of the seed-formula of Divine illumination are entitled :

Anyone among the four castes may utter the Lord's Name.

Whoever utters it, liberation shall find.

Rare is one that to holy company attains.

Whoever has God's grace, the Name in his heart is cherished,

Which even to beasts, goblins and to those with stone-like ignorance brings liberation.

Such is the universal compassion of the holy Guru's teaching.

Another class out of humanity that called for compassion was woman, who was looked upon as inferior and impure. Guru Nanak Dev in *Var Asa 19* thus called upon mankind :

Why revile her from whom are born great ones

of the earth?

On *Sutak*, a belief that a house where a birth occurs is for a number of days impure, and so is the woman in child-birth, the holy Guru in *Var Asa* declared, in all nature is the process of birth and regeneration taking place. Birth and death by Divine ordinance occurs. Impurity inheres not in human birth or nature's generative processes, but in evil tendencies of the mind. Thus has he imparted his teaching on this point :

The mind's *sutak* (impurity) is avarice; of the tongue falsehood.

The eye's *sutak* is looking with lustful eyes at other women folk's beauty and their wealth.

The ear's *sutak* is listening to slander and scandal.

Saith Nanak : For such evils are selves and men dragged in bonds to Yama's demesne.

(*Var Asa 18, page 473*)

Bhakta Kabir in the measure Gauri 41 has made similar affirmations on *sutak*.

Suttee; the cruel custom whereby women of the higher castes were forced to burn themselves on their husband's funeral pyre, was condemned by the holy Gurus. Guru Amar Das and Guru Arjan Dev specifically raised their voice against this evil. True loyalty to the Husband's memory lies not in burning oneself, but in passing one's life in being faithful to him in his memory :

These be not the true suttees who burn themselves in logs of wood.

Saith Nanak : True suttees are those that bear the suffering of separation.

These be the real suttees that abide in good conduct and contentment;

Who served their Lord, and after, ever cherish his memory.

(Var Suhi 6, page 787)

By burning oneself is not obtained the beloved Lord;

Those who burn themselves as suttees, suffer in consequence of their former deeds.

In imitation of others, through stubbornness of will may one burn oneself;

By that is not obtained union with the beloved :

One may only thus wander through numerous births.

The woman that is of good conduct, noble discipline.

who is obedient to the husband's will—

Yama's chastizement on her shall not fall.

Saith Nanak : She who looks upon her husband as the true lord,

Is a blessed suttee—approved at the Divine Portal.

(Guru Arjan Dev, Gauri 99, page 185)

The duty enjoined upon man is called *Seva*, which has been given an especial orientation in Sikh teaching. *Seva* is beneficent action (lit. service) unsolicitous of reward. While prayer, meditation and devotion are so greatly and emphatically commended, *Seva* has the role of bringing completion and fulfilment to the spiritual life. This is an established tradition in Sikh society : High and low must all perform service humble, manual, labour, without social distinction. Guru Nanak Dev's injunction on *seva* may here be given :

Only through devoted service in this world may one
find a resting-place at the Divine Portal.

(*Sri Raga 33, page 76*)

All Thy creatures, though Thine,
Receive no fruit without devoted service.

(*Asa 19, page 354*)

I have learnt by the light given by the Master, perfectly-
endowed :

Recluse, hero, celibate or sannyasi—

None may expect to earn merit without devoted
service—

Service in which lies the essence of purity.

(*Maru 10, page 992*)

In *Var Asa 10*, page 468 Guru Nanak Dev has
thus summed up the essence of the pure, spiritually-
directed life. This is a scheme of life directed towards
finding fulfilment through beneficent action :

Sach ta par janyai jei ridai sachā hoe

He alone is truly pure,¹ whose heart is pure;

Who sheds the filth of falsehood,

And through self-purification makes the body chaste.

He alone is truly pure who loves truth;

One whose heart joys in God's Name shall alone the
Door of Liberation attain.

He alone is truly pure who knows the practice of the
pure life :

After preparing the soil of the self

Should he sow in it devotion to the Creator.

He alone is truly pure who receives the true precept,

Is full of compassion and gives away his substance in
charity.

He alone is truly pure who takes his abode in the

1. Lit. Truthful, holy.

pilgrim-spot of his self,
 And taking the Master's precept abides therein.
 Truth is the sovereign medicine—
 All evil it drives out.
 Nanak supplicates for grace those who possess truth,
 purity.

Other pronouncements on Seva may be found
 in following contexts :

Binu seva phal kabhu na pawasi seva karni sari
 (Without service are no objectives fulfilled; in service
 lies the purest action).

(*Maru 10, Guru Nanak Dev, page 992*)

Ja kai mastik bhag so seva laiya
 (He on whose forehead is writ good fortune, by the
 Lord in service is engaged).

(*Asa Chhant 7, Guru Arjan Dev, page 571*)

The holy Gurus have solicited God to grant them
 the gift of the humblest service, such as waving the
 fan over God's creation to keep it cool, to draw water
 and such other tasks. Prays Guru Ram Das in a hymn
 brimful of the fervour of devotion :

Pakkha pherin pani dhowan jo deveh so khām
 (May I wave the fan and draw water;
 And eat of whatever Thou dost grant)

(*Suhi, Guru Ram Das, Ashtpadi 1, page 757*)

MUKTI—JIVAN-MUKTA

Mukti (liberation) also written in Gurubani as
mokh (popular enunciation of *moksha*) is the end to
 be striven for as result of a life lived according to
 the teachings of religion. Its true conception is the

annulment of the cycle of births and deaths, that is transmigration, and the self abiding ever in bliss of God-consciousness. There is no visible, palpable heaven or hell according to Sikh belief, although Yama and his minions as symbols of terrible suffering undergone as a consequence of sin are constantly mentioned. Their existence too is not literal, as would be in the belief of Puranic Hinduism. *Mukti* is a state of consciousness—liberation from Maya-attachment, desire and from sin. It is achieved when the self has been engaged in devotion and contemplation of the Divine Reality. Ritual actions, thought to bring liberation in popular belief are discountenanced. Some affirmations pointing to such a conception of *mukti* may be given here :

Liberated is one who by love of God is inspired;
Whose senses are under restraint and who abides under
discipline;
And who ever on the Master's Word meditates;
Such devotion to the Lord is pleasing.

(Majh, Guru Amar Das, Ashtpadi 20, page 122)

The being that discards egoism and the Lord-Creator
realizes—
Saith Nanak, is liberated. This my self ! know thou to be
true.

(Sloka 19, Guru Tegh Bahadur)

Whoever has risen above joy and sorrow;
one to whom are foes and friends alike—
Saith Nanak, listen my self! know such a one to be
liberated.

(Sloka 15, Guru Tegh Bahadur)

Man seeks liberation through ritual performances.
 Know, the boon of liberation from the holy Word and
 Divine laudation comes.
 Without the Master's Word comes not liberation.
 Man by shows is deluded.

(Maru, Guru Nanak Dev, Sloka 4, page 1034)

He alone is liberated who has Divine grace :
 Such a one each day the Divine qualities lauds.
 Then he need not declaim aloud Shastras and Vedas.

(Malar, Guru Amar Das, 10, page 1261)

While in all situations prayer, meditation and devotion is indispensable, the ultimate goal to be achieved, that is Mukti, comes when Divine Grace descends on the self. Thus is it affirmed in *Japu*.

Karmin avai kappara nadrin mokh-duar

(By one's actions is achieved the vesture of human birth;

By grace alone is reached the door of liberation).

Jivan-mukta (liberated while alive; that is, while in the flesh) is as a matter of fact, the great ideal of life upheld by the holy Gurus. Not liberation after death of the body; but such liberation must be achieved, as hinted above, through a life dedicated to devotion. One engaged in contemplation, devotion and good work is indeed liberated. This ideal is expressed frequently in the pronouncements of the holy Gurus :

One in whose heart abides the Lord,
 Is truly wealthy, of noble lineage and honour :
 Such a one is *Jivan-mukta*.

(Sukhmani 23.8)

Whoever casting off pride and attachment,
Divine laudation chants—

Saith Nanak, such a one is known as *Jivan-mukta*.

(*Bilaval 2, Guru Tegh Bahadur, page 83*)

Whoever with his inner self cherishes the Lord's
commandment,

Is Known as *Jivan-mukta*.

To such a one are joy and sorrow alike;

Ever abiding in bliss, never does he pine—

One that follows such a practice,

Saith Nanak, is known as *Jivan-mukta*.

(*Sukhmani 9.7*)

One that in the self lodges the holy Name is *Jivan-mukta*.

By facing Godward in holy Truth absorbed.

(*Asa, Guru Nanak Dev, Ashtpadi 3, page 412*)

He may be pronounced as *Jivan-mukta* from whose self
is egoism eliminated.

(*Maru, Guru Nanak Dev, Ashtpadi 2, page 1010*)

Whoever the Master's Word lives,

And ever in the Lord remains absorbed,

Is *Jivan-mukta*.

(*Maru, Guru Amar Das, Solaha 14, page 1058*)

Like the Bodhisattva of Buddhism, the *Jivan-mukta* lives for rendering service in a spirit of compassion and dedication. His lower self subdued, his is truly the state of liberation.

THE COSMIC VISION

The holy Guru's vision of universe in its functioning is centred in Dharma which is the moral elan that keeps the cosmos going according to the Divine will. Dharma is righteousness, and as

affirmed by Guru Nanak Dev, its essence lies in compassion. This is stated in *Japu*, Stanza XVI : *Dhaul-Dharma daya kā pūt* (The Bull of Righteousness is born of compassion). The qualities of compassion and forgiveness (*Khima, Kshama, Daya*) are commended repeatedly in the holy Granth Sahib. In Var Asa 10 in a passage given in translation elsewhere (under "Social Conscience") in this article, the pure, truthful life is determined to be one that is full of compassion and charity. Cruelty and evil-doing must ultimately destroy their possessors and cherishers. Evil-doers meet an ignominious end. In a passage on page 224-25 of the Scripture is mentioned the end of evil-doers, among whom was Duryodhan, the tyrant Kaurava king of Hastinapur. Observes Guru Nanak Dev in this context :

Duryodhan in dishonour was ruined;
He forgot God the Creator.
He who persecutes God's saints must come to harm
and suffering.

(*Gauri, Ashtpadi 9*)

Among the great tyrants mentioned in Indian religious lore is Harnakash (Hrinyakashyapu), the atheist king who persecuted his saintly son Prahlad. Prahlad was succoured by the Lord as Nar-Singh (Lion-Man). The holy Guru's vision, unlike that of the ordinary devotee in India, was not confined to the Puranic, legendary past, but took in its sweep the contemporary scene wherein tyranny must come

to a deserved end too. In the lines following is an integrated picture of the discomfiture of evil in the past and the present :

The Lord in each age has raised His devotees,
 whose honour He has protected.
 The tyrant Harnakash was by the Lord destroyed,
 And Prahlad saved.
 Repudiating the arrogant traducers, the Lord on
 Namdev showered favour.
 Nanak, servant of God, has served the Lord who in the
 last extremity comes in to succour His devotees.
(Asa, Guru Ram Das, Chhant 29, page 451)

The hard-hearted, the tyrants, when their brief
 hour of glory is past, must be humbled in dust. That
 is the Divine Law :

Those who adjured forgiveness, despite their vast
 cohorts were effaced from the earth :
 Countless their number, hard to enumerate.
 He who knows the Master is liberated, never again to
 be bound.
 To know the True Word is to be approved in the celestial
 Mansion.
 True joy comes from forgiveness and truthful living.
 Expend ye the true wealth of meditation, attain thus the
 poised mind.
 Repeat ever God's Name with your mind, body and
 tongue.
 Thus may you cultivate noble qualities and a forbearing
 mind.
 Egoism shall be destroyed and destroy its possessor;
 Its seed must sprout into useless weeds.
 God, who created all creatures has put Himself into
 each one :

Yet is He apart from all.

(Ramkali Dakhani, Oankar 49, Guru Nanak Dev, page 937)

Whoever grasps forgiveness, vows of purity, the noble
way of life and contentment,

Is rendered immune from all maladies and malice of
the death.

(Gauri, Guru Nanak Dev, Ashtpadi 7, page 223)

In Guru Nanak Dev's own time occurred the invasions of Babar on India, bringing so much carnage and destruction.

Here was the occasion for a Teacher of mankind to inculcate the lesson that the world must learn, wrapped in its course of thoughtless and selfish pleasure. The four hymns pertaining to this occasion, besides throbbing with pity for the suffering of innocent humanity and with sorrow over the fall of India, state the great moral principles on which the cosmos rests, and neglect of which by men can lead only to suffering. Alluding to the profligate rulers of India, the holy Guru raises his voice in Divine indignation, and at the same time states a great truth :

These dogs have thrown away the jewels;
Shameful will be their ends; none will remember them
after death.

What is man's power before God's?

He alone joins and unjoins, such is His might.

A man, proud of his greatness, tasting all life's joy to
satiety,

In the eyes of the Lord, is a worm picking grains of corn.

Nanak, true success comes to one who ~~from~~ self-

abnegation draws life; and utters the Name.

(*Asa 39, page 360*)

In another hymn on the theme of Babar's aggression, Guru Nanak Dev affirms, despite the scene of carnage observed by him, that in all this the Divine Law (*Hukam*) which is just, is seen operative :

In this city of corpses, Nanak sings praise of the Lord,
and proclaims His Law.

He who made the creation, in all such beautiful aspect,
Watches it apart, inaccessible.

Blameless is the Lord, and true His judgement;

Just shall His decree be.

(*Telang 5, page 722-23*)

(Again enunciating the law, observes the holy Guru—this occasion too being Babar's aggression) :

The Lord confers honour,

And chastizes as in His will lies.

Man may escape chastizement by thinking of the
consequences of his acts.

The rulers lost their sense in pleasure and frivolity.

(*Asa Ashtpadi 11, page 417*)

Vast multitudes have fallen from grace for lucre, Been
sequestered from God :

It comes not except through sin, And accompanies not
man in death.

The Creator, whomsoever He would forsake Deprives
him first of goodness.

(*Asa Ashtpadi 12, page 417*)

Suffering is ultimately a Divine mystery. In the teachings of the holy Guru it has been mentioned as an inevitable part of man's destiny. To wish it were

not there, is to be forgetful of the Divine Law. Says Guru Nanak Dev :

Nanak, idle it is for man to ask for pleasure when suffering comes :

Pleasure and pain are like robes which man must wear as they come.

Silence alone is commendable where arguing can be of on avail.

(Majh-ki-Var 24, page 149)

Yet, from suffering the path of escape is through resignation to the Divine will :

When all suffering man has gulped as amrita, suffering never again comes to him.

(Maru, Guru Nanak Dev, Solaha 14, page 1034)

Guru Arjan Dev through a number of illustrative situations has expressed the path of peace and contented joy in the midst of deep suffering :

Ja Kau Mushkal ati banai dhoi koi na deai

One in the extreme of calamity,

Without human support,

Pursued by enemies, deserted by near and dear ones,

All succour gone and vanished—

Should God's exalted Name then enter his thoughts,

Not a whiff or hot air would touch him.

The Lord is strength to the feeble;

Uncreated, eternal, ever the same—

Learn the truth of Him from the Preceptor's holy Word.

(Sri Raga 26, page 70-71)

Suffering like grace, is a Divine mystery, but its incidence in the holy Gurus' vision is related to evil in the human heart. Suffering may come to the pure,

but faith will make them bear it with equanimity, as expressed in Guru Arjan Dev's phrase further on in the hymn just quoted above : 'On all sides of us is Rama's circle; suffering therefore penetrates not to us'. Life has four rivers of fire, that is evil, into which man constantly falls :

Violence, attachment, avarice and wrath—

these be the four rivers of fire :

Whoever falls into these is consumed; only such as have
God's grace, swim across.

(Var Majh 20, Guru Nanak Dev, page 147)

Four are the fearful rivers of fire—

Only the man of God has understanding of the rare
Divine Word.

The unbeliever caught in false notions is consumed—

Only the Master saves him who is dyed in God's love.

(Maru 11, Guru Nanak Dev, page 1031)

So, with the inevitable existence of evil is expressed each time the way to escape its pain. For those in pleasure and voluptuous joys involved, Guru Nanak Dev through two striking figures expresses his compassion over man's suffering, ignorant of the consequence of his own wild impulses. These are the figures of the black buck and the humming-bee. Elsewhere the lust-gripped elephant is the figure employed, romping through the forest of desire. The opening words of this great hymn are :

Tun sun harna kaliya,

Listen thou black buck, why art so absorbed in this
orchard?

The fruit of poison tastes sweet for a few days only;
 This fruit which has intoxicated thee, will then torment;
 Without God shalt thou be in deep suffering
 Pleasure is unstable like the stormy ocean;
 Like the flashing lightning.
 None is thy protector except God—
 Him hast thou forgotten.
 Believe Nanak, thou black buck !
 Forget not that death in this way is inevitable.

(*Asa, Chhant 5, page 439-40*)

Evil has its play, but the man of God puts away its poison. The Divine Law of Dharma must ultimately triumph—so runs the teaching of the holy Gurus. Says Guru Nanak Dev in *Ramkali-ki-Var 13*, page 953 :

Kur nikhuttei Nanaka orak sach rahī

(Nanak, falsehood shall be destroyed; truth ultimately shall last).

Elsewhere, in *Malar-ki-Var, 12*, page 1283 in an identical phrase the same truth is expressed :

Kur nikhuttei Nanaka Such kare so hoi

(Nanak ! falsehood shall be destroyed; what the holy Eternal determines shall come to pass).

GURU, THE HOLY PRECEPTOR, GUIDE

An important postulate of the teaching imparted by the Granth Sahib is the significance of the Guru the spiritual guide, holy Preceptor. The Guru's guidance being essential for spiritual upliftment of the disciple, all reverence, complete trust is enjoined upon the disciple to be given to him. The Guru is no ordinary mortal; he is a divinely-

inspired being, so completely attuned to the Supreme Being, as to share in His essence, to be identical with Him in spirit. Pronouncements exalting the Guru thus are to be met with in the Scripture in several places. This is not man-worship or idolatry of any kind. As in the case of the identification of the Shabda, the holy Word with Guru, not in his mortal body which is perishable, but in his God-experience is Divine and to be revered. In Gurubani, in a number of contexts, *Guru* or *Satiguru* also is meant to imply the Supreme Being, whereby confusion of interpretation may occur. The holy Gurus, in order to emphasize their humanity, have often employed epithets to themselves indicating extreme humility. In *Japu*, Guru Nanak Dev has in several Pauris designated himself as *neech* (lowly). In another place he has defined himself as *bechara* (helpless, humble).

In Sri Raga 29 (Page 24) Guru Nanak Dev has delineated himself, in the consciousness of being human, characteristic of a great soul, as a Dhanak, a caste held very low and living on hunting unclean animals and plunder. In this hymn he calls himself a *thug* (robber) and otherwise denigrates the lower self that attaches to the higher self. Very often the phrase in the closing line of a hymn may be *Jana Nanak-Nanak*, servant of God. This tradition of humility has descended from Guru Nanak Dev to his spiritual successors.

The qualities and merits of the true Guru, who is often designated as Satiguru (holy Preceptor) pūra-Guru (the Master perfectly-endowed) and in similar other exalted ways, will be apparent from some of the pronouncements given below :

He alone has title to the name of holy Preceptor who the Eternal Being has realized.

Saith Nanak : In association with him is the disciple saved, and Divine laudation chanted.

(Sukhmani 18, Sloka)

The Master¹ is Bestower of boons, house of snow, And of three worlds the lamp.

Saith Nanak : By reposing faith in him is obtained the immortal substance and joy.

(Var Majh 1, page 137)

The Master is the Lord, the Lord the Master.

Saith Nanak : Brother! between these lies no difference.

(Asa, Guru Ram Das, Chhant 1, page 442)

The Lord transcendent, Supreme Creator, unique—

The Master, whose sight all desires fulfils, is His image.

(Bhairon 56, Guru Arjan Dev, page 1152)

The Master Divinely-inspired, true Lord holding in perfection all faculties—

Saith Nanak, is image of the transcendent Lord, Supreme Being.

Ever by the devotee's side present.

(Bilaval 4, Guru Arjan Dev, page 802)

In the Sloka prefacing Guru Arjan Dev's *Bawan-Akhhari* in the measure Gauri is ecstatic tribute of praise paid to the Master, Divinely-inspired (Gurudev over a number of lines. Some of these are given below in rendering :

1. For Master, Preceptor in these excerpts the originals is 'Guru'.

The Master, Divinely-inspired is embodiment of poise,
 truth and enlightenment, felicitous of touch
 beyond philosopher's stone;
 The Master, Divinely-inspired is holy Pool of
 Immortality,
 Bathing in whose illumination is fruitful beyond limit.
 The Master, Divinely-inspired is manifest in the
 beginning and end of time, yuga after yuga.
 By utterance of the Divine Mantra by the Master,
 Divinely-inspired comes liberation...
 The Master Divinely inspired is enlightner,
 Essence of the Supreme Being, The Lord,
 Saith Nanak : The Master, Divinely-inspired,
 embodiment of the Lord, I make obeisance.

(Page 250 & 262)

Saith Nanak : The Master, embodiment of contentment
 is the tree,
 Righteousness the flowers, enlightenment the fruit.
 By endeavour in the way of God meditation does it ripen
 full of Juice.
 By faith is it tasted : such tasting is the supreme charity.
(Var Majh 20, Guru Nanak Dev, page 147)

The Master is ship and the pilot;
 Without the Master is not the ocean crossed.
 By the Master's grace is the Lord attained;
 Without the Master comes not liberation.

*(Swaiyyas M. 4. Stanzas in laudation of
 Guru Ram Das, Page 1401)*

The holy Preceptor is the tree of amrita; its fruits full
 with amrita elixir.
 To whomsoever it comes, obtains it-by the Master's
 Word is this blessing found.
(Var Sarang 20, Guru Nanak Dev, Page 1245)

The holy Preceptor is the soil of righteousness;
 Therefrom one obtains the fruit of what one sows.

The Master's disciples therein have sown amrita.
From the Lord have they obtained fruit of amrita.

(*Var Gauri 7, Guru Ram Das, page 302*)

To the Master am I a sacrifice a hundred times each
day,

who without an instant's delay

Has exalted us from human beings to gods.

(*Asa-ki-Var 1, Guru Nanak Dev, page 462*)

IMAGERY

The text of the holy Granth Sahib being essentially poetry of spiritual experience, the expression in it usually takes the form of figures, images and symbols. Some of these are such as are accepted in the Indian spiritual tradition and are used without reference; for example *ghat* (pitcher, vessel) for the individual self; *rayn* (night) for the human life; *mundh, kamini* (woman) for the individual human being, deluded but seeking the path. *Bikh, vish* (poision) is used for Maya or the lure of the world, without implying that it is a symbol. *Thandh* (coolness) is poise, resting in contentment and God-consciousness. *Gawan, bhavan* (wandering, whirling about) stands for transmigration. *Urdh kamal* (drooping lotus) in the heart turned away from God. Such images, wherever they have occurred in the text, have been explicated in the foot-notes. Other images are generally in the form of metaphors or similes. Thus, *pankhi (panchhi, bird)* is the human being sojourning through the world; so is commerce of good or evil in life. *Bhavjal* or ocean, existence is

self-explanatory. Images from the animal world, the world of nature and vegetation, of agriculture, commerce and from story and legend are constantly employed. The reader is helped through explicatory notes to enter into their spirit. *Kant* (husband, lord) is God, the Divine Spouse. The world of the married woman's relationship is drawn upon in which the parents' home is this life, while the hereafter is the husband's house, where the married woman has to bear with a different atmosphere. For Divine ecstasy as also for Maya involvement the imagery of wine is used, which is made explicit in each separate content.

Beside these, there are esoteric symbols pertaining particularly to the higher spiritual experience. These are drawn mainly from the realm of Yoga, but in Gurubani their meaning is transmuted to symbolize the joy and ecstasy consequent upon the accomplishment of the practice of Sahaj. Theological and Sulistic terms drawn from Islam are also there, but these are used generally in contexts where the audience specially addressed may be conceived to be Muslim. Also, such terms may represent the broad, universal outlook of the holy Gurus, to whom none is alien, but all mankind are brothers and friends.

In the terminology to be met with in the holy text, a large number of attributive names of the Supreme Being are found. These represent Him in

His Attributed aspect, as the Creator and Preserver and object of devotion. Some of these are drawn from the Indian lore; others, though only a few, such as *Kadir* (*Qadir*, mighty), *Karim* (gracious), *Rahim* (merciful), *Parvardagar* (preserver, cherisher), *Pak* (holy, pure) also come from the popularly current Muslim vocabulary. Some like *Dātā*, *Dātār* (bestower), *Sāchā* (eternal, holy), *Piyārā* (beloved) are especially made current by the Sikh tradition. *Sahib* (Lord, Master) and *Khasm* (implied meaning master, husband) come from the Arabic current at the time and since, and are used to symbolize God. Sometimes just an epithet like *Wadda* (great) is made to stand for the Lord. *Nām* and *Shabda* are two deeply significant esoteric terms, which have been discussed at some length earlier. Detailed studies of the imagery, symbolism and terminology of the holy Granth Sahib are being undertaken by research scholars at various centres of studies.