# DOCTRINAL ASPECTS OF SIKHISM
## AND OTHER ESSAYS

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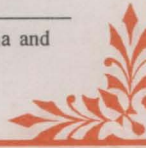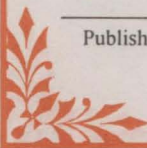
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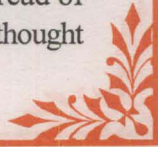# FOREWORD
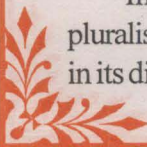
This is a compilation of my lectures in Sikhism and other
related subjects delivered over the last two years or so.

In the essays on Sikhism, I have focussed on certain *new*
doctrinal aspects of Sikh religion in continuation of the
philosophical postulates analysed in my earlier Works : *The
Sovereignty of the Sikh Doctrine* and *The Doctrine and
Dynamics of Sikhism.*

Sikhism, being an institutional religion, has both universal and
historical dimensions, and not being a 'closed' system of thought
and praxis has to develop on both of these levels. I have stressed
in the following articles that Sikhism is neither an ethnicity-specific
nor a region-specific religion; from this angle the *existential
concerns of the Sikhs* need to be distinguished from the *universal
concerns of Sikhism* as a world religion.

The global civilization of the third millennium would, it seems,
be based on the concept of *spirit* analogous to the way in which
the modern Western civilization of the past few centuries of the
second millenium evolved on the Enlightenment notion of *reason*
as its foundational principle presumed to be operative in nature,
thought, history and society. Sikhism, being essentially a religion
with *spirit* as its foundational category, can play a significant role
in evolving the 21st century society and the third millennium
civilization.

In the other essays also, there is the continuing thread of
pluralism which is one of the main aspects of postmodernist thought
in its different varieties.

The essays in this Work are not written from the angle of postmodernism, though the postmodernist discourses constitute the background of these studies. I have, rather, sought to go beyond postmodernism in which context I have stressed the concept of *spirit* in its new connotation different from its old, dogmatic meaning.

**Jasbir Singh Ahluwalia**
**13 July, 2001**

# CONTENTS

# SIKHISM AND THE 21ST CENTURY SOCIETY AND CIVILIZATION

I am indeed grateful to the Centre for South Asia Studies, University of California, Berkeley, and, in particular, to Dr. Steven M. Poulos for giving me the great honour of delivering inaugural lectures in the newly established annual lecture series dedicated to Sardarni Amrit Kaur Ahluwalia whose illustrious life was a worthy life devoted to the ideals and values of Sikhism. I am sure, this annual feature-The Amrit Kaur Ahluwalia Lecture in Sikhism-would go a long way towards re-discovering-and re-interpreting-the essentials of Sikh religion in the 21st century context. I feel very privileged on this occasion.

Sikhism-one of the five major world religions-has the unique distinction of being the only major religion that arose in the second millennium. Though a religion of the second millennium, it is a religion for the third millennium.

Arnold Toynbee has observed that Sikh religion had the potential of ushering in a new higher civilization qualitatively different from the earlier Indic and Hindu civilizations. The potential of Sikh religion, its elan vital, can play a dominant role in shaping the 21st century society and the third millennium civilization that would be in its fundamental postulates different from the modern Western civilization.

Modern Western civilization which, in a sense, gave rise to a particular kind of 'modern' (distinguishable from postmodern) world view and vision, evolved on the basis of certain fundamentals that made it different from medieval and ancient civilizations on

the one hand and would, hopeably, distinguish it from the post-modernist 21st century and the third millennium global civilization on the other hand.

The most significant and revolutionary breakthrough in old (premodern) modes of thinking came about with Cartesian dualism of mind and matter, which with one stroke rendered material reality both insulated against and liberated from non-material reality, thus paving the way for exploration of material phenomena in terms of their own internal, autonomous patterns, principles and laws, without any reference to the so-called transcendental ones. Philosophy of empiricism stressed that reality was knowable to man only through the senses and apart from the sensory made, man has no other intuitive, mystical or revelational access to reality. The unkowable–that not knowable through the sensory mode-became indistinguishable from nothingness, leaving it to the mystics to lend any substance, attribute or meaning to this 'nothingness' (*shunya*). On another level, this new (secular) mode of thinking brought in the philosophy of humanism, which asserted that it is man who is the measure of all things and not any 'outside' transcendental reality or principle. The normative in man's life is historically given and not transcendentally determined-this was claimed by different varieties of historicism : evolutionary, dialectical, etc. Existentialism postulated that particular 'existence' of the individual is prior to and more significant than the 'essence' standing for the ideals that are treated only as secondary abstractions from the given particularities; the transcendental absolutes are thus totally knocked out from man's reckoning of what is significant in life. Freudian psychology would like us to believe that it is not God Who created man, but man who created God as a projection from within the sub-conscious repressions.

The dualism (both ontological and epistemological) implied in the above concepts was based on the postulate that (knowable)

reality is of material nature, with a rational structure, having an atomistic composition; independently existing (material) objects and phenomena could be known objectively, that is, independently of the subject, through reason with its analytic-reductionist methodology. This gave rise to the metanarrative (in postmodernist terminology) of *reason* as the main foundational principle of modern Western civilization. In earlier civilizations, *faith* had held promise of redemption of the soul in other-worldly life; modern Western civilization postulated that deified *reason* would ensure amelioration of the conditions of man and society in this very world. But this did not happen. *Reason* (in the Enlightenment sense of the term) presumed to be operative in nature, thought, history and society could not deliver the goods. As discussed in the essay *Beyond Postmodernism,* the inadequacy of *reason* was exposed by *reason* itself.

This necessitates what is termed as "the paradigm shift" or the breakthrough of a new problematic in our thinking. This would not mean a negation of *reason* but going beyond it, to the realm of *spirit*.

As religion is the realm of the revelations of Spirit from time to time, mankind is looking upon religion in a new way : as a quest for the Spirit of religion, flowing in different faiths, as distinct from dogma hardened in different religiousities.

In the process of ushering in a new holistic world view for the postmodern global society of the 21st century, Sikhism can play a vital role both on metaphysical and sociological levels. Sikhism is essentially a religion of *spirit* with a holistic vision on epistemic level.

The basic category of Sikhism is *spirit* and not Vedantic *being* (Brahman); the Absolute in Sikh religion is not only *Sat* (being), *Chit* (consciousness) and *Anand* (bliss)-as in Vedanta-but also *Karta Purakh* (Creator). The Absolute, aboriginally

indeterminate abstract Being (*Ik Onkar*), *qua* Creator (*Karta Purakh*) becomes Self-conscious Creative Spirit. God, as such, comes to have determinate relationship (*Satnam*) with His creation (nature, man) which reveals Him. In the holistic vision of Sikhism God, nature and man are integrally bound to each other.

A number of qualitatively new metaphysical points—with revolutionary sociological implications—are involved in the Sikh concept of the Absolute as the dynamic Spirit. For the first time in the history of Indian speculative thought, Sikh metaphysics brought in the conception of historical time, of the historicity of time.*

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* The characteristics of Hindu civilization—stability; unchangeability; cyclical-devolutionary view of history; hierachy; and other-wordly nomization-flow from the spatial conception of time, in the Bergsonian sense, involved in the notion of substance as a *being* subsisting eternally in its self-same state in the passive, unaffecting time. When time is divested of its historicity, to be in time does not mean to be subject to change; so Brahman could subsist in its state of self-same, unchanging oneness, while being (immanent) in time and space. Brahman is timeless not in the sense of time-transcendence but in the sense of being eternal, that is, eternally self-same (*being*) in (passive, spatial) time. Thus the Vedantic immanence of Brahman qua Being means the unchangeability not only of the Absolute but also of phenomenal reality. Hence the static, that is, stable, enduring character of Hindu civilization. If on the other hand phenomenal reality is to be thought of dynamically, then, that would mean restoration of historicity to time, so that to be in time could mean to be subject to change and development. The time-transcendence of the Absolute (*Akal Murat*) as such becomes a pre-condition not only for the Being-in-itself of God but also of His Descent into time (history). Such a conception of the Absolute on the basis of the historicist notion of time makes room for dynamic view of phenomenal reality as envisaged in the Sikh concept of creation. That is how the causal relation of the Absolute Spirit (*Karta Purakh*) with phenomenal reality (in terms of creation which, in a sense, is Self-determination of the Spirit in time) involves the historical view of time as against the Vedantic notion of its spatiality. The social dynamism of Sikhism is, in a sense, an expression of the underlying historical view of time.

Guru Nanak, the first of ten Prophets of Sikhism, used a very significant expression *Aad Jugad* in his composition *Japji*.

To distinguish eternity of time from its createdness, *Aad* refers to logical beginning and *Jugad* refers to temporal, historical beginning. Spirit descends in time, in history, in historical time, which in technical language, means the Self-determination of the Spirit (in and through the created world) in time, in history, in historical time.

The Self-manifesting Spirit is revealed in different religions from time to time; Hence, no religion can claim to be the full and

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*[contd. from last page]*

As the spatial conception of time is nothing but a denial of its historicity, so in Vedantic thought the causal relation of Brahman with phenomenal reality could be conceived only in such terms of appearance, reflection, manifestation, configuration, modification, etc., as involve the spatiality of time in the context of which there is either no change but only an illusory appearance (vivartavada) or at the most a change in form (parinamvada) in which the potential becomes the actual, the cause delivers the pre-conceived effect; Brahman maintains the substantial self-identity of its Being-in-itself in the midst of its phenomenol modification, transformation or transfiguration. In the case of parinamvada, which is common to Ramanuja's Vishistadvaita, Madhva's Dvaita, Nimbarka's Dvaitadvaita and Vallabha's Shuddhadvaita, the change being only in the form, there is no real evolution, growth and development, no emergence of new quality or novelty.

If in Shankara's vivartavada phenomenal *becoming* is only a matter of illusion caused by maya, in parinamvada it represents an inferior, secondary, transient reality of derivative nature. Such, then, is the nature of the world of time and space in the Vaishnva (theistic) schools of Vedanta, while for Advaita Vedanta the wordly reality is only a phenomenon of illusory appearance caused by maya which superimposes sensory forms onto Brahman.

Basing itself on the spatiality of time, the classical Hindu tradition of religious thought had equated reality with eternity in its concept of *Sat* : the real is eternal in time and the eternal alone is real. The world of time and space, being subject to the processes of becoming-origination and development, preservation and disintegration-is, accordingly, deemed as untrue and unreal in itself; at the most it possesses secondary, derivative reality.

final revelation. Guru Nanak stresses, in *Japji*, the inexhaustability of the attributes of the Divine and the relativity of the human modes of perception, and figuratively expresses this idea in this way : The brave sees God in the form of Might; the intellectual comprehends Him in the form of Light (of knowledge); the aesthete perceives the Divine in His aspect of Beauty; the moralist envisions Him as Goodness, etc.

Different revelations of the Spirit are, says Guru Nanak, like the variety of different seasons which refer back to the same Sun :

ਸੂਰਜ ਏਕੋ ਰੁਤਿ ਅਨੇਕ
ਨਾਨਕ ਕਰਤੇ ਕੇ ਕੇਤੇ ਵੇਸ

*Numerous are the seasons emanating from the one sun*
*Numerous are the guises in which the Creator appears*

For Sikh religion, all revelations of God are equally co-valid, having been given to man relative to the variables of time and place. This rules out any room for dogmatic assertion of fullness and finality of any single religion's revelation as well as religious totalitarianism which is not accepted in Sikhism. Though Sikhism embraces the other-worldly concerns of man as well as the this-worldly concerns of society and state, it is not a totalizing ideology.

All revelations being relatively co-valid, no 'ism'-religious or secular-can claim to be the sole way to God, the exclusive path to salvation.

Guru Amar Dass says;

ਜਗਤੁ ਜਲੰਦਾ ਰਖਿ ਲੈ ਆਪਣੀ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਧਾਰਿ
ਜਿਤੁ ਦੁਆਰੈ ਉਬਰੈ ਤਿਤੈ ਲੈਹੁ ਉਬਾਰਿ

*The World is ablaze, O Lord! shower your benediction.*
*Through whichever door it can be delivered*
*Save it that way*

This accounts for the basis and significance of religious pluralism in Sikhism. From here it follows that unity of different

religions-or the global ethnic-need not to be artificially conceptualized on the basis of the lowest denominator common to all religions; it can rather be realized spontaneously on the basis that different religions are different stages of the revelation of the one and same divine Spirit manifest in different forms in different faiths. The descent of the divine Spirit in time is, in a sense, the ascent of man in his spiritual development.

The conception of religious pluralism, envisaged in Sikhism, provides a positive basis not only for co-validity and co-existence of different faiths in dynamic interaction with each other, but also for co-equality and co-existence of different religious and ethno-religious communities and their co-participation in the national body-politic of their respective countries. Here co-participation of the religious, ethno-religious or simply ethnic groups or-of the minorities based on religion, region, ethnicity, culture etc.-means co-participation in their corporate capacities, through their own political organizations, representing the social collectivities with their respective self-identities, which is no case should be diluted, homogenized or sublated into an over-arching 'secular' nationalism of the Western type adopted and adapted in the third world countries.

Coming back to the question of the Sikh revelation of the Divine, the Spirit-in-history realizes itself in 'peoplehood' the sociological category of which, in the Sikh parlance, is known as the Khalsa.

ਅਕਾਲ ਪੁਰਖ ਕੀ ਸੁਰਤ ਏਹਾ
ਪ੍ਰਗਟਿ ਅਕਾਲ ਖਾਲਸਾ ਦੇਹਾ

*(This verily is the phenomenal form of the Timeless Who manifests Himself in the corporate body of the Khalsa.)*
—Prehlad Singh, author of a *Sikh Rehatnama*

ਖਾਲਸਾ ਮੇਰੋ ਰੂਪ ਹੈ ਖਾਸ
ਖਾਲਸੇ ਮਹਿ ਹਉ ਕਰੋ ਨਿਵਾਸ

*(The Khalsa is my determinate form I am immanent in the Khalsa).*

—Guru Gobind Singh

Spiritual aspect of the Divine sovereignty is revealed in the Holy Word* (*Guru Granth*) and the temporal aspect of the sovereign Spirit becomes diffused in the body-politic of *Guru Panth.* (The Hegelian Spirit reaches its fullest manifestation in the institution of the nation-state which he identified with the Prussian state; on the other hand, in Sikhism, it is the 'peoplehood' and not the nation-state, which is the vehicle for sovereign Self-realization of Spirit). Here is a new mode of the Divine revelation on societal level. The conception of the Absolute (God, Brahman, Idea, etc.....) becoming manifest in space (nature), or in the Word, or in the soul, has been recurring in both Western and Indian philosophy. But the idea of the Spirit Self-determinating in history and then getting diffused in the Khalsa, in peoplehood, appears for the first time, through Sikh metaphysics, in the history of speculative thought of the world. The Khalsa here does not mean a particular community in a particular form, in a particular region; it, rather, means commonwealth of enlightened human beings at a higher level of spiritual growth-a Divine Brotherhood of those who in the language of Guru Nanak are *sachiar* (embodiment of truth and

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* The Sikh conception of the Word is qualitatively different from the Hindu and the Christian view. In Sikh thought, the Spirit, besides becoming inmmanent in the societal category *Khalsa*, also becomes determinate in the Word *(bani)* which, as such, is elevated and revered as the eternal 'living' Guru in the form of Sri Guru Granth. Christian thought holds that "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God." The Word became *'flesh',* that is, incarnate in the *person* of Jesus Christ *who,* as such, is the focal point of the faith and worship and not the Bible, the scripture. The Hindu conception of *Shabdabrahman* postulates that the primodial sound-*Om* as the auditory symbol of *Brahman*-diffused in the cosmos was heard by the *rishis* who verbalized it in the form of the Veda.

truthful living) and in the language of Guru Gobind Singh are *jujhar* (the socially committed and active for righteous cause). Here was a new revolutionary concept in the history of the world : the Divine in humanity and humanity in the Divine.

The Absolute *qua* Spirit pulsates the cosmos; the Divine pulsation holistically binds man and nature in unity and inter-connectedness. Man and nature are no more seen as external to each other, being involved in inter-dependent network relationship, reciprocally conditioning the life of each other. Guru Nanak stresses this kind of relationship at the end of his composition *Japji* :

ਪਵਣ ਗੁਰੁ ਪਾਣੀ ਪਿਤਾ ਮਾਤਾ ਧਰਤਿ ਮਹਤੁ

*(Air the Guru; Water the Father; Great Earth the Mother)*

The conception of inter-relatedness of man and nature places tremendous responsibility on Sikhism for addressing the problems of safety and protection of earth and its ecosystem, of life on this planet.

The human spirit partakes of the divinity of the Absolute Spirit. That is how the human spirit is sovereign in its inalienable dignity, worth and freedom. This Sikh thought, in a sense, heralded the ideals enshrined in the preamble to the United Nations Charter which, interalia, reaffirms "faith in the fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations, large and small."

# INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE AND INTER-COMMUNITY UNDERSTANDING IN THE CONTEXT OF ETHNIC AND ETHNO-RELIGIOUS PROBLEMS
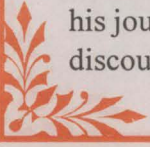
*(A Sikh Perspective)*

As observed by Marcus Braybrook of the World Congress of Faiths, the year 1993, marking the 100th anniversary of the World's Parliament of Religions at Chicago, has "heightened awareness of interfaith activity.......(being).......one sign of the new postmodern global society that is emerging."

This awareness reflects a new approach to interfaith dialogue as well as a renewed sense of responsibility on the part of different religious traditions towards the challenges that society faces today, particularly ethnic tensions, ethno-religious confrontations, and religious fundamentalism.

Inter-religious dialogue today is directed towards comprehending the self-identities of different religious traditions *from their own angles,* in their own endogenous perspectives, thereby endeavoring to bring about inter-community understanding and accommodation on the basis of recognition of and respect for the autonomies of different groups of people, their traditions, their beliefs, their moorings, their life styles, etc.

The Sikh tradition of inter-religious dialogue originated with Guru Nanak himself, the first Prophet of Sikh religion, who during his journeys *(udasis)* in the Indian sub-continent and beyond discoursed with his contemporary saints and sufis, scholastic

exponents and practitioners of other faiths. The essence of his discourse with the *Sidhas* (*Nath Yogis*) at Achal Vatala in the Punjab (or at the Sumer-Kailash-mountain, according to Puratan Janam Sakhi) is expressed in his well-known compositions, *Sidhgosht*. While the Yogis attempted to convert the Guru into their folds through theological debate as well as by display of their supernatural, occult powers, the founder of Sikhism exhorted them to be true yogis by realizing and practising the true spirit of their faith. Guru Nanak made similar exhortations to the followers of other faiths in his endeavour to make them re-discover the internal significance of their beliefs and rituals, without discarding their chosen path. This is how Guru Nanak envisioned a pluralist type of inter-faith dialogue as one of the means to dissolve the rigidities of religious exclusiveness and the concomitant religious antagonism and to bring about inter-religious understanding and inter-community accommodation, unity and harmony.

The pluralist conception of inter-religious dialogue that characterizes the present-day interfaith praxis stands in sharp contrast to the unitarian conception which led to a number of related and unrelated phenomena : aggressive evangelism, assimilation, homogenization, fundamentalism, etc. The old concept involved the reductionist approach that sought common denominators (as distinct from recurring archetypal ideas) in different religions; the presumed common denominators or traits were, then, sought to by synthesized into a 'common' religion, or atleast 'common' ethic. Inter-religious harmony and unity was attempted to be erected on such presumed 'common denominators', 'common' religious elements or 'common' ethical principles. In being compared for common characteristics, religions, in effect, were made to compete with each other. This reductionist approach suffers from certain epistemological flaws. The logical basis of reductive methodology is the notion of logical symmetry of systems, their time-

transcendence, which makes all the systems contemporaneous in a single, all-embracing frame of reference wherein the systems turn out to be reversible and reducible to one another, revealing essential unity (common denominators) in apparent diversity. For Hinduism, Vedantic thought in its generality constitutes such a frame of reference for all thought-systems of India.

Such common denominators actually turn out to be nothing more than abstractions, with apparent universality but with no determinate content. On the basis of such presumed commonness between different religions, the majority religions, in the name of comparative study of religions, tend to assimilate and appropriate into themselves the minority religions. This is how Sikh religion has been treated as a species of the Vedantic genus by stretching the connotation of the *Mul Mantra* terms-*Ik Onkar, Satnam, Akal Murat,* etc.-back to one or the other system of Upanishad thought. These terms, showing apparent similarities with those of the earlier Vedantic schools, were not seen in their integrality in the perspective of the paradigm shift brought about by Guru Nanak in the evolutionary course of spiritual consciousness of mankind.

Tendentious stress on certain concepts and elements supposedly common to Sikhism and Vedantic system of thought ends up in treating Sikh religion as a species of Vedantic genus, an updated version of Hinduism; the (revealed) originality, the doctrinal sovereignty*, of Sikhism is, thus, denied in the search for the so-called common denominators. The issue of relatedness

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* Ontological and epistemological categories of Sikhism are qualitatively different from the Vedantic and other thought-systems of India. The Sikh conception of the Absolute; definition of reality; concept of time, and ontological status of phenomenal world are radically different from their counterparts in earlier systems. As against the fundamental concept of *being (sat)* of Vedantic metaphysics, the basic category of Sikhism is *spirit* contradistinguishable from the Vedantic concept of supreme reality

of Sikhism to Indian heritage is turned into its (hypothetical) rootedness in earlier religious-philosophic traditions. Radical social ideology of Sikhism is, this way, made to stand on conservative philosophical foundation. The point is that a religious tradition must be approached in terms of its own self-definition, in terms of its self-defined identity. This requires an unmediated, experiential insight (through socio-religious osmosis) which is not possible in the case of the 'outsiders', whatever be their cereberal brilliance.

The old reductionist conception of inter-religious relationship was anti-historicist. Each religion has a universal and a historical dimension. The specifics of the time and place in which a religion arises and develops leave their imprint on the beliefs, rituals and customs of that religion. The historical dimension also contributes towards the evolution of the religious tradition-a process without which the tradition ends up as a static system inhibiting freedom of the human spirit by tethering it to an obsolete dogma. Historical

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as *Brahman* (Being). The Absolute in Sikhism is the Self-conscious Spirit. Vedantic (isotropic) time is eternity, a beginningless and endless (uncreated) continuum in which a thing continues in its self-same state of *being* eternally. From here follows that the Real is eternal and the eternal Real. The world of phenomena, being transient, does not, as such, qualify to be *real*. On the hand, Sikh metaphysics involves the concept of anisotropic time in the form of historical time, being a dimension in which the Spirit *becomes* determinate reality. Guru Arjun says that God created not only matter but also time.

(ਓਅੰਕਾਰਿ ਉਤਪਾਤੀ, ਕੀਆ ਦਿਨਸੁ ਸਭ ਰਾਤੀ)

Hence the Nanakian expression *Aad Jugad,* wherein *Aad* refers to logical beginning and *Jugad* means historical beginning (the beginning of eons). From here the definition of reality also becomes different from the Vedantic conception. Apart from the Absolute Reality, the phenomenal world, having been created in (historical) time, is also real. The noumenal is real and eternal; the phenomenal is real, though transient. These original concepts and their irreducible connotations, interalia, constitute the doctrinal sovereignty of Sikhism.

variables-language, script, racial milieu, cultural ethos, social strata, economic modes, territorial factors, etc.,-condition the process of evolution of religious traditions; some of these variables become integral components of the self-identities of these traditions. However, there has been a tendency on the part of some scholars to see the incorporation of historical variables into religious traditions as their exogamous growth and not endogenous development; the externally acquired characteristics relative to the historical variables, are, then, differentiated from the internally developed aspects. No doubt, distinction can and should be made between these two kinds of characteristics : the externally acquired contingent characteristics and the characteristics that are, or have become, internal, integral parts of the tradition. Where historical variables enter into the mediational process in and through which the universal becomes a historical determination, the characteristics of the religious tradition so acquired become its constituent aspects and integral components of its self-identity.

This point is immensely relevant in the context of certain trends of Sikh studies by Western scholars who in their interpretation of the evolution of Sikhism from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh treat it as a 'transformation' due to certain external contingent factors and so distinguish the original Nanakian identity of Sikh tradition from the subsequent 'transformed' Khalsa identity. In other words they treat this process as exogamous and not of endogenous nature. The point is not to minimize the role of external, historical variables; the point, rather, is that some of these historical variables, entering into the mediational process in and through which the universal in Sikh religion has evolved into a particular historical determination, have become integral parts of the Sikh tradition and constituent aspects of the Sikh identity the emergence of which has been of the nature of continuity-in-charge. In any understanding of Sikhism, in terms of its own *self-defined identity,* this nature of its

evolutionary process has to be kept in view.

**Recognition of self-defined identities of different religious traditions is a significant characteristic of the present day trends in inter-faith dialogue based on pluralist-historicist (holistic) view of reality.**

The pluralist-historicist conception of inter-religious dialogue postulates that different religions represent different stages of the evolution of spiritual consciousness of mankind-a viewpoint which may not be easily acceptable to certain religions that hitherto have been claiming that they express the full and final revelation of the Absolute. Implicit in this claim is not only religious exclusivism betraying an aura of superiority, but also a pre-supposition that spiritual consciousness of mankind is static and does not ascend to higher stages of speculative thought.

In its pluralist vision, Sikhism does not claim to be the full and final revelation of the Divine, of ultimate reality, of absolute truth. As I mentioned in my earlier lecture, Guru Nanak in his composition *Japji* refers to the infinity of the attributes and aspects of God not exhausted-and inexhaustible-in my single revelation.

A pluralist acceptance of the validity and legitmacy of different faiths in their distinctive identities implies positive acceptance of the group-identities of different individuals and communities as co-equal entities. Says Guru Arjun :

ਸਤੇ ਸਾਂਝੀਵਾਲ ਸਦਾਇਨਿ

ਤੂੰ ਕਿਸੇ ਨਾ ਦਿਸਹਿ ਬਾਹਰਾ ਜੀਉ

*All are co-equal partners in Thy Commonwealth.*
*With none treated as alien.*

This provides a sound perspective for inter-community understanding as well as for participation, in polity, of different communities in their *autonomous corporate capacities* without being reduced into a homogenized mass.

Contemporary social reality is characterized by the

emergence, in militant forms, of ethnic and, ethno-religious contradictions that have taken precedence over class contradictions. Ethnic tensions, ethno-religious conflicts have become sharpened; ethnic 'cleansing' is being pursued with fundamentalist aggressiveness.

The ethnic and ethno-religious contradictions, directly and indirectly, impinge upon the problem of inter-community understanding and accommodation. As such, it would be fruitful to study the problem from the angle of ethnicity, from the standpoint of ethnic and ethno-religious nationalism, as distinct from 'secular' nationalism.

Contrary to the earlier postulate and belief (classical Marxist) that ethnic contradictions would be subsumed under or sublated into class contradictions, the converse has happened in the past few decades : class contradictions are now getting mediated through ethnic contradictions, making the problem of ethnicity much more complex.

The traditional approach, in its different variants, to the problem of ethnicity is flawed-and hence a failure-owing to its dualistic, dichotomous premises inherent in the three long-cherished myths that stand exploded. For the last 150 years or so, we had nurtured the belief that it was class contradictions that constituted the dialectics of social reality, and that economic determinants would resolve class contradictions. It had further been, all along, contended that with the resolution of class contradictions the ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious and regional problems of the minorities would also inevitably get dissolved. This belief was based on the postulate that the problems of the minorities were essentially of economic nature and were accentuated by class contradictions inherent in the society, and further that the 'contents' of the movements and struggles of the minorities were basically 'economic', while their outward expression took on the ethnic,

cultural, religious, 'forms'. Economic relations, corresponding to the mode of production, were considered as the base with the factors of ideology, political system, legal forms, and cultural, religious, ethnic, linguistic consciousness deemed as part of the superstructure determined by the economic base. This one-way causality implied the base-superstructure dualism which became the bed-rock of classical Marxism, notwithstanding the concept of parallelogram of forces postulated by F. Engles. In other words the root cause of all superstructural phenomena-in which was counted the given ethnic consciousness-was attributed to the economic factor alone. But the ethnic experience of even the developed Western countries shows that this is not wholly true. The economic factor is important but the identity consciousness of the minorities and their urges and aspirations for corporate self-expression transcend the economic factor.

Another myth also stands exploded. At one time it was believed that the forces of modernization, industrialization, urbanization, professional mobility, etc., would in the long run result in a kind of social homogeneity liquefying the linguistic, religious, ethnic and cultural distinctiveness of different communities. But the processes of modernization have, rather, accentuated self-awareness of the minorities about their distinctive beings. Modern information technology-internet, television, etc.-while imposing global stereotypes on the one hand, is also, one the other hand, providing unlimited avenues for projection of the local, the particular, the indigenous, thereby facilitating self-expression and self-assertion of the ethnic factors across the bounds of the nation-states, which as such, are no more in a position to contain within their boundaries, their internal ethnic mobilization.

The third myth of the Western-type nation-state, hailed once as the great absorbent of all extra-national identities-ethnic, cultural, religious, linguistic-also stands collapsed. Secular nationalism, as

the ideology of the nation-state evolved in the West and transplanted in some of the third world countries, contended that the all-encompassing, over-arching national identity would liquefy and dissolve all other identities or at least the latter would be marginalized as subordinate and satellite identities. The nation-state with its ideology of totalitarian nationalism-as it arose in the West and later on was adopted in the developing countries of the East-is regarded as the highest possible and ultimate political structure of eternal nature. It is forgotten that the nation-state as much as, say, the Greek city-state-is only a historically determined political structure that arose in the phase of capitalist development of society in the West. Certain historical specifics invested the nation-state, in its earlier evolutionary course, with a unitarian-totalitarian orientation. This totalitarianism claims total, absolute allegiance of the individual to the nation-state to the exclusion of his all other allegiances : to ethnicity, religion etc. Secondly, here the individual, rather than the group, is taken as the unit of political community that is sought to be built on a homogenized social base. Thus the stress is on the individual's assimilation into the national body-politic, rather than on the corporate integration of the groups qua distinctive entities. In this totalitarian nationalism there is little room for the institutions and structures of the minorities. This totalitarian nationalism is complemented by unitarian polity. This is how the monolithic polity comes to be identified with the nation and the nation is taken as a homogenized society. Diversity is, then, tried to be reduced into unity which is taken as conformity. Assimilation is aimed at in the name of integration. Any group-linguistic, religious, cultural, ethnic-that resists such homogenization is dubbed as fundamentalist; corporate interest-articulation by a minority is pronounced as communalism. Resistance to identification of monolithic polity with the nation is condemned as secessionism. It is this kind of unitarian-totalitarian state that Dr.

S. Radhakrishanan-one of the greatest thinkers of the present century-condemns as the God-State in his well-known work : *Eastern Religions and Western Thought.* The worship of the God-State is, then, called patriotism in secular idiom.

The modern secularism, or secular nationalism, qua the ideology of the nation-state, is dualistic in nature and approach. Out of the 'modern' humanist ideologies, since the sixteenth century, grew a general view that man's life, his realm of reality, derived its sense and significance, value and validity, sanctity and legitimacy not from any outside or transcendental source but from within the manifold of phenomena, from within the concrete existence of man.

It was in this philosophical and ideological backdrop characterized by ontological (mind/matter) and epistemological (subject/object) dualism and dichotomy that the process of secularization in the West differentiated the secular domain of man's this-worldly activities-social, cultural, economic, political and even ethical-from the religious domain which at best was treated as a realm in which man could, if he so desired, have an 'affair' with God to be experienced, like sex, in the privacy of one's individual life! As is obvious from the above the Western differentiation of the secular from the religious, or in other words, Western secularism, is based on the dualism, divorce or dichotomy of the two domains.

The Western model of secularism has seen sought to be adopted in some of the Third World countries, with some adaptations such as equidistance of the secular state from religions; acceptance by the secular state of co-existence of different religions, and constitutional rights not only for practising religion in one's own private life but also for its propagation, which, ipso facto, means propagation in public life as well. The point is that Western model of secularism has certain unresolved inherent

contradictions. Owing to these inherent contradictions, the nation-state with its typical ideology of (dualistic) secularism is, ab initio, incapacitated to comprehend objectively and resolve amicably the ethnic problems, nor is it capable of reconciling the national identity with the ethnic, linguistic and religious identities, particularly of the minorities. Modern nation-state has appropriated unto itself a godly status, godly authority as well as godly egoism dressed up as secular nationalism. This national egoism of deified nation-state claims absolute, totalitarian authority over men and matters in the name of sovereignty of the state. Sovereignty is an attribute of man and not of an organization whether religious (church) or political (state). In the 21st century society and civilization there should be no room for the exiting type of deified states. National sovereignties should be recognized as interdependent on the one side, and as co-shareable, constitutionally and politically, by the constituent communities-as distinct from the nations–in the new pluralistic dispensation of the new century.

The concept of nation-state is becoming, day by day, outdated, thanks to the globalization and corporativisation of national economies; with gradual relaxation of trade barriers the day is not far off when territorial boundaries would also become meaningless. The new political organizations of the future, replacing the existing exclusivist nation-states, would be of the nature of 'system-within-system'-political, economic, social and culture–in a global network of relations.

The collapse of the myths, discussed above, necessitates a new approach : a holistic approach in contrast to the existing dualistic one.

From the holistic angle, *true* secularism (as against the *false* self-consciousness, in Hegelian-Marxian sense, of the present nation-state in the sense of secularism) would be based not on the dichotomy of the secular and the spiritual domain but on their

complementarity, with relative autonomy (as stressed in the Sikh doctrine). Secondly, national identity should be looked upon as an *abstract universal* determinating itself as *concrete universal* through diverse ethnic, linguistic, religious and other communitarian identities. The national identity in itself is an indeterminate *oneness* which becomes a determinate *whole* with the incorporation of communitarian identities which *substantiate* the abstractness of the national identity. Thirdly, from the holistic viewpoint, different identities are of the nature of whole-within-whole; if one identity is a part in relation to a larger whole; it is also simultaneously a 'whole' in relation to other identities deemed as its integral 'parts'. This holistic concept of 'whole-within-whole' transcends the traditional whole-part dualism which, for instance, is reflected in the differentiation of national and regional languages, or in the majoritarian culture and the minoritarian sub-cultures.

Fourthly, different identities being of the nature of 'whole-within-whole', the resultant relationship turns out to be not only of complementarity but also of multivalency. In this context I propound a new concept of *identitive multivalency* in the sense that each identity is both conceptionally and empirically bivalent/multivalent. For instance Punjabi identity (ethnicity) is multivalent in that it binds together at least three different religious collectivities-Hindu, Muslim and Sikh. The Punjabi ethnicity has, as such, three determinate ethno-religious forms; Punjabi Hindu identity, Punjabi Muslim identity, and Punjabi Sikh identity. The distinctive Hindu, Muslim and Sikh identities ethnically re-inforce and complement each other, while religiously these are differential, each having its own distinctiveness. While Punjabi ethnicity provides *diffused* group consciousness to the Hindus, Muslim and Sikhs going across religious and national boundaries, ethno-religious identity provides *cohesive* group consciousness to the members of each religious community. The concept of identitive multivalency that I am

introducing implies simultaneous multiple identities which should be encouraged as such, for in the event of the contradictions between diverse identities becoming militant and antagonistic due to the variables of time and space, the latent forces of simultaneous multiple identifications can neutralize to a very large extent the militancy and mutual antagonism of ethnic, ethno-social, ethno-religious and ethno-political denominations.

The concept of identitive multivalency for becoming a living reality necessitates the praxis of pluralism-religious, social and political. Religious pluralism does not simplistically mean co-existence of different religious traditions and communities; what it really means is the co-validity of all religious revelations. As discussed earlier, no revelation can be elevated as full and final expression of the ultimate reality and truth. This would provide an abiding basis for mutual accommodation of different religious traditions and communities. With theomachy gone, there would be no room for religious or ethno-religious antagonism and intolerance. In this context inter-religious dialogue, with its new pluralist-historicist approach, can play an effective role.

Social pluralism means a tapestry-like concept of society with no direct, or indirect, latent or manifest prospensity towards homogenization; homogenization in secular garb is more dangerous than its naked theo-ethnic variety.

Political pluralism means not only a federal system of polity but also the praxis that upholds the rights of each group-ethnic, ethno-religious, ethno-social, etc.-to participate *in its corporate capacity* in the national body-politic of a country; corporate participation means institutional participation of different communities, (particularly those who, like the Sikhs, are both religious and political communities) in the state structures.

In the 21st century society ethnic, ethno-religious, ethno-social and ethno-political consciousness would play significant role-

both positive and negative. Positively, ethnic consciousness, in general, would be a significant constituent factor in evolving multi-focal, pluralist dispensation of the future. Negatively, if suppressed by unitarian-totalitarian trends and forces, ethnic, and in particular ethno-religious consciousness, would assume sharper militant, and even more acute violent forms, threatening peace, harmony and amity.

[The above two lectures were delivered on 18, 20 April, 2000 at the University of California (Centre for South Asia Studies), Berkeley, USA].

# SIKHISM : A RELIGION FOR THE THIRD MILLENNIUM

Sikhism-one of the five major world religions-has the unique
distinction of being the only major religion that arose in the second
millennium. Though a religion *of* the second millennium, it is a
religion *for* the third millennium having (an unrealized) potential
for ushering in a new global, postmodernist civilization qualitatively
different from the 'modern' Western civilization.

Islam and Christianity also, in their prime times, had brought
about their respective civilizations, but these were uni-centric,
religiously, socially and politically. For the uni-centricity of
*Christian civilization,* the focal point was the *Christian faith*
that claimed to be the full and final revelation of reality and truth,
with the concomitant claim of being the exclusive path to God.
Salvation meant salvation through the Christian door. Similar was
the contention of Islamic civilization. Modern Western civilization,
claiming to be secular, had substituted *reason* for *faith*. Euro-
centric in orientation, modern Western civilization also postulated
that *reason*, with its reductive-analytic method, can fully and finally
unravel the ultimate (material) reality in terms of universally valid
laws and theories which could be unified into a single over-arching
theory with other theories and laws logically getting deduced from
the central one. Such was the faith-both religious and scientific-in
the uni-centric monolithic conception of reality.

The uni-centricity of the Christian, Islamic and modern
Western civilizations implied homogenization on social level and
unitarianism-totalitarianism on political level. The new global

civilization of the third millennium would, hopeably, be pluri-centric. Sikhism, with its inherent religious, social, cultural, economic and political pluralism, can provide ideological postulates for the new pluralist world civilization.

We have celebrated in the year 1999 the 300th anniversary of that divine moment in the flux of time-the creation of the Khalsa Panth in the year 1699 by Guru Gobind Singh—that ushered in a new praxis, the full potential of which awaits to be realized in the postmodern global society and civilization of the 21st century.

For playing its historic role in the shaping of the 21st century society and the third millennium civilization, Sikhism, first of all, would have to re-discover its essential values-liberalism, humanism and universalism-and to re-interpret them in the present-day context.

Liberalism is an integral, essential part of the Sikh value pattern. Says Guru Arjun, the fifth Prophet of Sikh religion :

ਕਾਟੀ ਬੇਰੀ ਪਗਹ ਤੇ ਗੁਰਿ ਕੀਨੀ ਬੰਦਿ ਖਲਾਸੁ ॥
*The fetters around the feet are sundered*
*The Guru has emancipated me.*

—*Guru Granth Sahib,* P. 1002

Sikhism liberated man-his inner spirit that had become encrusted-from dogma, ritual, obscurantist belief. What is more important is that though Sikhism embraces man's this-worldly concerns as much as his other-worldly salvic concerns, it is not a totalitarian ideology; it is not a totalizing creed subjecting man to the bondage of ritualism from pre-natal to post-death stage. The Sikh doctrine has not prescribed canonized Sikh jurisprudence; formalized Sikh economics, or dogmatised Sikh dress, or the clergy-determined prescriptive behaviour, eternally valid for all times, in all places. Doctrinally, the clergy as a class is not accepted in Sikhism which does not admit of any mediation between the Sikh and his Guru and God. There is a direct bond, a direct

communion, between the faith-followers and his God. This is the connotation of the expression *Waheguru ji ka Khalsa.* There being no annointed clergy in Sikh religion, there is no Church-like authority or institution with inherent right to interpret the Scripture, to excommunicate a Sikh from the community and to prescribe a code of conduct for a Sikh who is directly responsible for his deeds to his Guru and God. There is no theocrat, no clerico-cracy. The Akal Takht jathedar is not a theocrat or a vice-deity presiding over the temporal affairs of this sacred institution of Sikhism; he is a *sewadar*, or at best a spokesman of the voice and will of the community articulated through intra-community deliberations in different forums, particularly the democratically elected Sikh institutions.

Sikhism is a humanistic religion which accords primacy to the innate human spirit partaking of the divine Spirit; this is man's primary identity which in sociological form was expressed by Guru Gobind Singh as such :

ਮਾਨਸ ਕੀ ਜਾਤ ਸਬੈ ਏਕੈ ਪਹਿਚਾਨਬੋ

*Recognize all humanity as one in Spirit*
—"Akal Ustat" *in Dasam Granth*

The secondary identities relating to country, region, creed, language, ethnicity, etc., are also important as the human essence-the primary identity-becomes *determinate* through such identity-relationships which, as such, need to be well-recognized and respected in social and political reckoning. The Sikh conception of humanism is distinguishable from the old, classical concept that had made man the measure of all things-and not any outside transcendental reality or principle-on the basis of the dichotomy of the human (the terrestrial) and the transcendental. The new conception is based on the holistic vision that recognizes an integral bond between the human and the Divine. Man's worldly activities have their own autonomy and significance but existence derives

its meaning, its purpose, its sacredness, from its relationship with the Divine.

Another pillar of Sikh value pattern is its universalism. Sikh religion is universal in two senses of the term. First, Sikhism is not an ethnicity-specific, region-specific religion. The different ethnicities of the first five Sikhs initiated into the Order of the Khalsa, through the sacrament of holy *amrit* by Guru Gobind Singh, mean that this religion is not bound down to a particular ethnicity : Punjabiat. Guru Gobind Singh in his *bani (Akal Ustit)* refers to different peoples, in terms of their ethnic identities, co-worshipping God. Contemporary ethnicized (Punjabised) form of Sikhism is just one of the possibly many more determinate forms of Sikh religion flowering out in other ethnic contexts; new ethno-religious *species*, developing out of the parental *genus,* would really make Sikhism a universal religion. Sikhism is also not tied down to a particular region, though the Punjab is the natural habitat of Sikhism where it has grown during the last five hundred years. The whole of earth planet being revered as 'mother' in Guru Nanak's *Japji,* there is no specific 'holy land' or 'promised land' conceived, as such, in Sikhism.

Sikhism is 'universal' in another sense also. Its essential concerns-daily remembered in the Sikh prayer as *sarbat da bhala*-are universal, taking the entire humanity in their reckoning. Due to circumstantial reasons, the existential-social, economic, political-concerns of the Sikhs in the Punjab, since the first Sikh reformation originating in the last quarter of the 19th century, have taken precedence over the universal concerns of Sikhism, which now must come to the centre stage, particularly the concerns of ecology; depletion of natural resources; sustainable models of growth; human rights; gender equality, the empowerment of the lowest, suppressed, marginalized strata of society, etc. This is the primary issue for the long over-due second Sikh reformation which

has to address itself to the following internal problems. First, the process of de-brahminization of Sikh society-started by the first Sikh reformation-needs to be completed for liberation from caste-discriminations; growing ritualism; individualistically oriented 'mystical' meditational forms, etc. Secondly, the gradual growth of the 'Sikh clergy'-which has no doctrinal sanction or basis-and its increasing influence in religious, political and academic matters must be uprooted, De-clericalization is an essential imperative of the second Sikh reformation. The necessity for de-regionalization and de-ethnicization of contemporary Sikhism has already been highlighted above; without this two-fold process, Sikhism would be a universal religion only as a religious rhetoric and not a reality.

The relationship between religion and politics in contemporary Sikh praxis also needs to be re-defined. The *miri-piri* concept, which is traditionally understood as the unity of religion and politics, does not mean coalescence or merger of the two, or subordination of either of the two domains to the other; this concept also does not mean manipulation of the secular institutions by the ecclesiastical ones or *vice-versa.* In essence, this concept means that the temporal concerns of society and state are doctrinally within the embrace of Sikhism as much as the spiritual concerns of man. But the two domains are like the two banks of a river; in other words, the relationship between the two is of the nature of 'differentiated unity', and not monistic unity. The relationship between the secular and religious institutions should be coordinated afresh after the principle of differentiated unity. In this context the nature of the authority of Sri Akal Takht also needs to be properly comprehended. Sri Akal Takht is a symbol-and not the seat-of the worldly authority, the temporal sovereignty, vesting in the Khalsa Panth, Guru Panth. Guru Gobind Singh, while vesting the spiritual aspect of the Divine sovereignty in the Adi Granth, thereby institutionalizing it as Guru Granth, had bestowed the temporal

aspect of the Divine sovereignty upon the Khalsa Panth, making it Guru Panth. Sri Akal Takht is a symbol of the temporal authority which vests in the Guru Panth and is exercisable, on practical level, through democratically elected institutions. The *Panch Pradhani* mode also does not mean that the so-called Head or High priests, the Takht jathedars, can appropriate unto themselves the power, the authority, the temporal sovereignty, vesting in the Guru Panth [When there is no distinction between the high and the low in the Sikh doctrine, then, how can there be a category of 'head priests', 'high priests' over and above the other (low!) priests? In fact there is no priestly class in Sikhism].

At best the *Panch Pradhani* mode can have significance in the sense of the *sangat*, attuned to the Divine in the holy presence of Guru Granth, spontaneously choosing five *gursikhs* for deliberating upon or resolving some issue, but without acting as theocrats.

The point is that the contemporary Sikh praxis has to be updated through the second Sikh reformation, if the Sikh community has to play a participatory role in evolving the 21st century global society and the third millennium civilization.

Sikhism has still to realize its historical mission of ushering in a new, higher civilization-a mission bequeathed to the community of faith-followers by the Guru and God.

[Presentation made at the International Seminar on *Sikhism : A Religion for the Third Millennium*, at Punjabi University, Patiala, on March 27-29, 2000.]
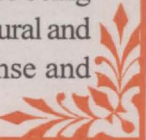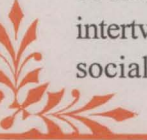
# A CONCEPTUAL STUDY OF
# THE SIKH SCRIPTURE

## *Self-determination of Divine Spirit in the Word*

The term *scripture* ordinarily refers to a holy written text (or a corpus of texts) supremely revered in religious tradition by a community of faith-followers for whom it is a divine book, of divine origin (as in Judaism, Hinduism, Christianity, Islam and Sikhism); or it may have acquired divinized status and authority in the course of historical development of a religious tradition (Buddhism). The term *scripture* is usually not confined to only the written texts, for in many religious traditions holy texts were orally passed on from generation to generation before getting committed to the written form; the oral transmission of the Vedas has taken place for more than three millennia. The first book of the Hebrew Bible did not get its written form until about the fifth century B.C. Further, the umbrella term *scripture* in many religious traditions goes beyond oral or written text to include mythical, legendary, metahistorical and historical accounts of the development of a religious tradition, ritual and legal codes, the "remembered" or "heard" sayings of prophets, parables, exalted prayers and apocalyptic visions.

For most religious communities that possess, particularly, written holy texts, their scriptural attributes and meanings are of *a priori* nature, innate and immanent in the text; the inexhaustibility of the scriptural attributes and meanings account for legitimation of diverse comprehensions and interpretations. A scripture being intertwined with the life of a community, on religious, cultural and social levels, comes to be invested with meaning, sense and

significance, by the historical experiences of the community also, particularly where a text, originally in oral-aural form, has acquired scriptural status (singly or as an addition to the already existing corpus of holy texts) gradually over a long period of time.

A scripture as a dynamic force is not simply an object of veneration, and worship; it is, in one way or the other, internally and integrally related to the scriptural community. In Sikhism, the revealed Word (*bani*) is *instantiated* in the community-this being the connotation and signification of the expression *Guru Panth*. The Hebrew Bible, apart from other components, is also a record of God's covenants with the Jews; rather, God's covenants with Abraham, Moses are made *determinate* in the Hebrew Bible, which is what makes it a divine scripture, much more than a record of existential, historical experiences of the Jewish community.

The point is that the reflexive relationship between a community and its scripture is significant both for the development of the religious tradition and the self-understanding of the scripture by the community. This is how the scripture becomes a living experience, an experiential reality, for the community.

The question of self-understanding of the scripture by the scriptural community is correlative to the question of self-identity. World religions, particularly the institutional ones like Sikhism, have both universal and historical dimension. In its historical dimension, a religion is, at least in its original phase, culture-specific. As such culture-specific categories, constituting the *emic* (inside) interpretation, are significant in the self-understanding of the scriptural meaning by the community concerned, as also for its self-defined identity. Cross-cultural categories, that is, *etic* (outside) exegetical categories are also important in relating the self-defined identity of a religious tradition to other religious identities and traditions.

The study of religions in terms of *scripture* as a constitutive

category brings out different paradigms of religious traditions. Belief, docrine and theology are considered as the dominant Christian categories expressing, and distinguishing, the Christian identity. These categories in contrast to, say, the culture- specific, or more precisely ethno-cultural categories of Hinduism, are, 'universal', that is, trans-ethnic, trans-cultural, relating to the missionary nature and orientation of Christianity encompassing different peoples, in different lands, having different ethnicities, cutlures and languages.

The distinguishing categories common to different traditional forms of Hinduism—which refer back to the underlying scriptural concept of the over-arching authority of the Vedas-are ritual practice, observance of *dharma* (canonical law), regulations about purity and impurity, blood lineages, commensal customs, etc. Sikhism evolved its own model, its own new paradigm, of religious tradition, based on its characteristic categories emanating from its unique conception of the Word.

The concept of the Word is the most fundamental category in classificatory study and analysis of scriptures of different religions: the Word not only in its delimited form in written or oral holy texts, but also in its nonvocalized form. In Sikhism the Word includes not only *gurshabda, gurbani*, but also *anhad shabda.* Pre-Nanakian Indian religious thought envisions the Word as the *essence* of reality, while in Western thought there has been the pre-dominant Pythagorean postulate that all things are *essentially* numbers or ratios thereof. Indian thought, therefore, has an inherent proclivity towards mysticism in contrast to Western philosophy's rationalistic orientation. Diverging from both of the above general thought-patterns, the Sikh scripture-Sri Guru Granth Sahib-opens with a new expression *Ik Onkar*-a Number-Word ensemble, the metaphysical implications of which differentiate Sikh speculative thought both from traditional Indian and Western ontology.

Christian thought holds that "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God": The Word became *flesh*, that is, incarnate in the *person* of Jesus Christ *who*, as such, becomes the central point of the faith and worship and not the Bible, the scripture. The pre-existent Word becomes incarnate not only in the *person* of Jesus Christ but also *generally* in the community of Christians and *institutionally* in the Church, *qua* the body of Jesus Christ, which, as such, comes to be seen as embodiment of the Holy Spirit.

The category of *embodiment* is the key to understanding the conception of scripture in Hinduism.

The Hindu conception of *shabdabrahman,* in generality, means that the indeterminate Absolut Brahman is embodied in the primordial Word; the Word, as such, is considered the "body" of Brahman, the ultimate reality, wherein is immanent the blue-print of created, manifest reality. The Word, being the embodiment of Brahman, also, as such contains the blueprint, the prototypal structure of created, visible reality. The Word is embodied in the Veda, being the generic name for the corpus of the holy Hindu texts and not merely the four Vedas. However, the transcendental Word is not exhausted in its delimited (phenomenal) scriptural forms. The transcendental blueprint of reality, inherent in the Word, through the mediation of its phenomenal, scriptural form, is embodied (replicated) in Hindu society, the (hierarchized) structure of which, as such, comes to have an *a priori* nature and origin. In brief, Brahman is *embodied* (though not exhausted) in the Word which in its turn, is *embodied* in the Veda, *embodied* in a particular sacred language (Sanskrit), embodied in a particular people (the Aryans) in a particular land (Aryavrta). That is how the identity-defining categories of Hinduism are of ethnic, ethno-cultural character rooted in its conception of *shabdabrahman*.

If *embodiment*, as noted by many scholars, is the central

constitutive scriptural category of Hinduism, *self-determination* is the corresponding category in Sikhism. The indeterminate Absolute (*Ik Onkar*) in its determinate form (*Sat Nam*) descends in history, in historical time, *qua* dynamic Spirit (*Karta Purakh*). The Spirit becomes Self-determinate in history in two forms: the temporal aspect becomes determinate in the corporate being of the Khalsa, while the spiritual aspect becomes determinate in the Word, (*shabda, bani*). The *gurbani* (the divinely given *shabda* scribed in the Sikh scripture, Sri Guru Granth Sahib) is the determinate dimension of the Word expressing the transcendental reality in determinate form. The Absolute in its determinate form-*Nam*-does not remain inexpressible in words :

<div align="center">

ਅਖਰੀ ਨਾਮੁ ਅਖਰੀ ਸਾਲਾਹ

....

ਅਖਰਾ ਸਿਰਿ ਸੰਜੋਗੁ ਵਖਾਣਿ

−ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ

*In words His Name is prehended*

...    ...    ...    ...    ...

*(In words His predicates are sung*
*In words is expressed the union with God)*

—*Sri Guru Granth Sahib*

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But the scriptural words (*bani*), though divinely given, do not circumscribe the inexhaustible Word or the Divine with infinite attributes and qualities. That is why, stresses Guru Nanak, though we know Him through the medium of words, He still transcends them and is not exhausted in scriptural texts, past or present. The Sikh revelation, as such, does not claim to be the full and final expression of God.

The conception of the Word being the determinate form of the Divine in its spiritual aspect, revealed through the Guru-medium, in sharp contrast to the Christian notion, makes the *bani,* the scripture, as the focal point of the Sikh faith : not the *person* of the

Guru, but his *revelatory word :*

ਬਾਣੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗੁਰੂ ਹੈ ਬਾਣੀ

–ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ

*(The Word is the manifest Spirit of the Guru,*
*the Guru is immanent in the Word.*
—*Sri Guru Granth Sahib)*

In Sikh religion, the Word does not become incarnate in *flesh,* in bodily form. It is, rather, the Spirit that becomes determinate in the Word *(gurbani)*; it is the Guru who in his spiritual being is immanent-present-in the *bani*, which therefore is envisioned as the eternally living Guru.

The **revelatory** nature of the Word (Sri Guru Granth Sahib) is another significant aspect of the Sikh scripture. As I wrote in my book *The Sovereignty of the Sikh Doctrine*, human mind has access to reality through four (traditional) modes of knowledge: sensory experience, discursive cognition, intuition, and revelation. In the first two modes there remains the subject-object duality, that is, the distinction between the knower and the known. Hence, religious experience, which transcends this distinction, does not take place in these two modes as maintained by religionists. While mysticism involves intuition, spiritualism (particularly in the God-oriented higher religions as against the nature-religions) bases its self-certifying validity on revelation. Revelations are of various types. In one type the revealed Word has no transcendental source, but is immanent in the cosmos and is revealed to, that is, heard by the sages. This is how the Vedas were revealed *(Shrutis).* The other type is that in which there is a transcendental source from which emanates the revelation. Here the revelation may be direct or indirect. The Quran is not a direct revelation by God, but an indirect one, that is, it was revealed to the Prophet of Islam, Hazrat Muhammad, through an angel Gabriel at Mount Hira. On the other hand the Sikh scripture claims to be a *direct* revelation

to the Gurus by God Himself. The Gurus in their verses again and again stress that they acted only as a *medium* for transmission of the Divine Message.

The Janamsakhi story of Guru Nanak having been "taken in a vision to God's presence," when he disappeared for three days while bathing in the river *Baeen,* is a mythopoeic way of saying that the Sikh Prophet received direct revelation from the Lord Himself in the form of the Word (*shabda).* Says Guru Nanak :

ਜੈਸੀ ਮੈ ਆਵੈ ਖਸਮ ਕੀ ਬਾਣੀ

ਤੈਸੜਾ ਕਰੀ ਗਿਆਨੁ ਵੇ ਲਾਲੋ ।
*(O, Lalo, I utter The Word as*
*I receive it from the Lord)*

It is this conception of the directly revealed (determinate) Word-distinguishable from the Hindu *sphota* and the Neoplatonic logos-that elevates Sri Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikhs scripture, to the status of the eternal Guru expressing the Divine Spirit that descended in history through the revelatory medium of the Sikh Prophets :

Among the sacred scriptures of the world Sri Guru Granth Sahib is unique in that it was compiled and authenticated by Guru Arjun, the fifth Prophet of Sikhism and acquired scriptural and transcendental status-eternally living Guru-by a formal investiture of spiritual authority at the hands of Guru Gobind Singh, whereas the holy Books of other religions attained to this distinction only gradually through building up of tradition in the long course of time.

[The Presidential Address delivered at the ICPR-sponsored Seminar on *Religious Scriptures (A Philosophical Study in Global Perspective)* on April 3, 2001 at Punjabi University, Patiala.]

# THE SIKH RENAISSANCE
# THE FUTURE APPROACH AND ITS REACH
# TO THE WESTERN WORLD
## (RESUME)

Over 500 years ago in sub-continental India arose Sikhism-one of the five major world religions-as a unique renaissance and resurgence of the human spirit. The spirit of man, realizing afresh its kinship, its integral bond, with the Spirit Divine, liberated itself out of the obsolescent, dogma-encrusted existence and came into its own efflorescently, as a dynamic force, a creative impulse. The elan vital of Sikhism had great potential for ushering in a new civilization qualitatively different from the earlier Indic and Hindu civilizations, thereby raising humanity to a new level of cultural and civilizational progress. In its universal dimension Sikhism introduced a new concept of man, of society and state, and in its historical dimension this religion awakened medieval Indian society out of its collective amnesia, its inertia, and shook it out of its bondage to the dead past.

But the vision of Sikhism for a new civilization, for a new post-feudal, trans-capitalist, socio-politico-economic dispensation could not be realized owing to the feudalization of the Sikh movement soon after the Banda Bahadur period, with the correlative processes of the brahminization of Sikh society and vedanticization of the Sikh doctrine.

The futuristic vision of Sikhism has become all the more relevant and significant for humanity in the 21st century and the third millennium. Sikh religion with its holistic world view can and

should play a leading role in evolving the ideology of the global civilization and in shaping its institutional super-structure with the Khalsa as the embodiment of the Spirit-in-history–a concept introduced by Sikh philosophy for the first time in the world's speculative and sociological thought.

Sikhism which once arose as a mighty renaissance movement, a revolutionary force, a dynamic praxis, for paving the path of self-sublimating, self-realizing salvation of the soul in the world hereafter, as well as a new dispensation on earth (**halemi raj** in the language of the fifth Prophet of Sikhism, Guru Arjun), is today in need of an internal reformation and renaissance. The first Sikh reformation arose in the last quarter of the 19th century in the context of a deep crisis after the loss of political power in the year 1849 coupled with the correlative processes of feudalization of the Sikh movement, brahminization of the Sikh society and the vedanticization of the Sikh doctrine. At that time the very physical survival of the Sikhs was overshadowed by a question mark. No wonder, then, that the existential concerns of the Sikhs-social, cultural, economic, political-took precedence over the universal concerns of Sikhism. This lopsidedness that has continued for over 100 years has to be rectified so that the universal concerns of Sikhism, referred to earlier, come back to the centrestage. The first Sikh reformation also led to a symbiotic relationship between religion and politics, between religious and political institutions, resulting in exploitation of the one by the other and **vice-versa,** depending upon the exigencies of the given situation. This symbiotic relationship, forged on a mistaken, distorted concept of **miri-piri** unity, needs to be immediately brought to an end, so that the religious and the political praxis operate, autonomously, in their respective domains. The concept of **miri-piri** unity in essence means that Sikhism embraces the other-worldly spiritual concerns of the soul as much as the this-worldly temporal concerns of man,

society and state, but without coalescence of the religious and the political power, authority and institutions. The **miri-piri** unity does not mean a monistic unity but a differentiated unity. The trend towards emergence of clergy in contemporary Sikhism, including the Takht clergy-appropriating unto itself authority, power and jurisdiction which do not doctrinally and historically vest in it-needs to be forcefully countered. The clergy* as a mediatory class or institution is not envisaged in Sikhism, there being a direct relationship between a Sikh and his Guru and God **(Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa).** The growing role of the clergy, particularly of the Takht clergy, is leading not only to ritualization of contemporary Sikh society but also to suppressing and repressing the essential liberalism of Sikhism. Sikhism blended a spiritual vision of life with the spirit of enquiry (ਖੋਜੀ ਉਪਜੈ ਬਾਦੀ ਬਿਨਸੈ) and a liberated state of mind (ਕਾਟੀ ਬੇਰੀ ਪਗਹ ਤੇ ਗੁਰਿ ਕੀਨੀ ਬੰਦਿ ਖਲਾਸੁ ।।). This catholicity of outlook-an essential element of Sikh liberalism-is threatened by the growing clout of the clergy which, as a class, breeds on self-appropriated authoritarianism with inherent tendency towards intolerance, sectarianism and dogmatism. Recognition of and respect for **difference**; acceptance of the Other; co-validity of multiple viewpoints-these are essential aspects of the Sikh value pattern.

Another aspect of the internal Sikh reformation and

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* There being no anointed clergy in Sikh religion, there is no Church-like authority or institution with inherent right to interpret the scripture, to excommunicate a Sikh from the community and to prescribe a code of conduct for a Sikh who is directly responsible for his deeds to his Guru and God. There is no theocrat, no clerico-cracy. The Akal Takht jathedar is not a theocrat or a vice-deity presiding over the temporal affairs of this sacred institution of Sikhism; he is a *sewadar*, or at best a spokesman of the voice and will of the community articulated through intra-community deliberations in different forums, particularly the democratically elected Sikh institutions.

renaissance relates to the evolutionary relationship between the universal and the historical dimension. A living religion, particularly of institutional type, has to, synergically, develop in both universal and historical dimension. Without the universal dimension developing simultaneously, an institutional religion **dries up** as a sect; and without the historical dimension, it **ends up** (at best) as an abstract thought-system. In the case of Sikhism, after the Guru-period, the synergical, evolutionary unity of the universal and the historical dimension broke down. This break-down leads to an agonizing question : Has the universal in Sikhism exhausted itself in one particular historical determination in the form of ethnicized Sikhism in its contemporary Punjabi form ? Or whether in future, there would evolve many more historical determinations of the universal in Sikhism? This question relates to the historical variables of region and ethnicity. As stressed earlier, Sikhism, essentially, is neither a region-specific nor an ethnicity-specific religion. The Punjab is the natural habitat of the Sikh community but not in the sense of the 'promised land' or (exclusively) the holy land. Deregionalization of contemporary Sikhism is an essential aspect of the second (internal) Sikh renaissance.

Sikhism is also not an ethnicity-specific religion. De-ethnicization of contemporary Sikhism is also essential for the second Sikh reformation, if this religion is to really become a universal religion. The mere presence of the Punjabi/Indian Sikhs in different countries-the Sikh diaspora-does not mean that it has already become a universal religion. De-ethnicization of contemporary Sikhism is also necessary for it to become a universal religion. Christianity arose within the Jewish milieu, Jewish tradition, Jewish ethnicity. But St. Paul took Christianity beyond its original Jewish milieu, tradition and ethnicity. A similar development is required for Sikhism. **In this context, the historical role of Siri Singh Sahib Bhai Sahib Harbhajan Singh Khalsa Yogiji in**

implanting Sikhism in American milieu and ethnicity is commendable. The American Singhs-the American followers of Yogiji-constitute a historical experiment towards universalization of Sikhism in contemporary context. The Punjabi/Indian Sikhs in North America also, transcending their nostalgia about the Punjabi Sikh identity, should culturally contribute towards the making of the American Sikh identity. Religiously unifocal, but culturally multifocal : that is how contemporary Sikhism would have to evolve to realize its world historical mission.

In realizing the world historical mission of Sikhism the present state of Sikh studies would also have to be kept in view. Over the past few decades, Sikh studies abroad by western scholars have been done from the Christian perspective which has also conditioned the approach and methodology of the Indian Sikh scholars overawed by the western scholars. In fact, the intellectual agenda of the meta-narrative of Sikhism has been set by the western scholars with the indigenous Sikh scholars remaining bogged down in reacting to the Sikh discourse of the western scholars. The Sikh scholars would have to go beyond their present reactive role to a really pro-active role in setting the ideational agenda of discourse about Sikhism. This is essential for two main reasons. The Christian and the Sikh perspective constitue, epistemologically, two different frames of reference, the categories of which are not symmetrical*. Secondly, a religious tradition needs to be approached in terms of

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* For instance, (as mentioned earlier) the Sikh conception of the Word is qualitatively different from the Christian view. In Sikh thought, the Spirit, besides becoming immanent in the societal category **Khalsa**, also, becomes determinate in the Word (*bani*) which, as such, is elevated and revered as the eternal 'living' Guru in the form of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. Christian thought holds that "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God." The Word became '*flesh*',

its own self-definition, in terms of its self-defined identity. This, epistemologically, requires an unmediated experiential insight-through socio-religious osmosis-which is not possible in the case of the 'outsiders', whatever be their cerebral brilliance or methodological novelties.

There are some of the urgent issues that contemporary Sikhism would have to address, before it re-starts on the path of realizing its world historical mission. It is imperative for the Sikh renaissance today to re-discover its essential values, to re-focus its vision, to update its praxis. This is how Sikhism would be able to impart its futuristic vision to the ideology of the new world civilization in the offing. This is how it would be in a position to play its role in the evolution of the institutional web of the 21st century society and the third millennium civilization. This is how the Khalsa once again would become the motor force of history : the Spirit-in-history.

[Lecture delivered at the International Conclave, under the auspices of The Sikh Dharma Domain of the Western Hemisphere, Espanola, New Mexico, U.S.A. on 25th August, 2000].

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*[Contd. from last page]*

that is, incarnate in the *person* of Jesus Christ *who*, as such, is the focal point of the faith and worship and not the Bible, the scripture. That is why the western studies of the Sikh scripture are so off the tangent, for the concept of the Divine Spirit becoming determinate in the Word (*bani*) is incomprehensible in the Christian perspective in which the process is reversed: the Word becoming **embodied** in the **person** of Jesus Christ.

# CREATION OF THE KHALSA
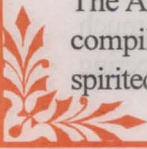# ESSENCE AND SIGNIFICANCE

## I
## INTRODUCTION

Sikhism, the youngest among world religions, appearing in the 15th century medieval India, played a great revolutionary role on metaphysical, social, cultural, economic and political levels, marking a significant watershed in the history of civilization. With its new conception of man, society and state, Sikhism contained the seeds of a new civilization in world history, particularly in sub-continental India, radically distinct from the earlier ones.

Sikhism, a unique 'revealed' religion originated with Guru Nanak (1469-1539 AD) who was succeeded by nine other Prophets-Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708 AD) being the last and tenth Prophet. It is a distinctive monotheistic faith envisioning one supreme God who is Creator also.

Sikhism endeavoured for a new dispensation characterized by the values of liberty, equality, justice, tolerance and non-violence, discarding discriminations of all kinds on grounds of creed, caste, class, race, region, sex, etc. God is realizable by man in his very earthly, household life, through spiritual enlightenment, moral responsibility, intellectual catholicity and social commitment.

The Sikh scripture, Sri Guru Granth Sahib (earlier known as *Adi Granth*), is unique among the scriptures of different religions. The Adi Granth was prepared by the fifth Prophet himself who compiled holy compositions of the earlier Gurus as well as of like-spirited Hindu Saints and Muslim Sufis. Later, Guru Gobind Singh

added to the *Adi Granth* the hymns of the ninth Prophet (with one couplet of his own). Before passing away, Guru Gobind Singh bestowed *'Guruship'* on the *Adi Granth,* making it *Guru Granth*, that is, the embodiment of the spirit of the Gurus. Sri Guru Granth Sahib–the divine Word–thus is revered and worshipped as the eternal "living" Guru by the Sikhs. The Sikh scripture contains 5894 holy hymns in 31 *ragas* (classical musical measures) of the Sikh Gurus, Hindu Saints and Muslim Sufis-36 in all-from the length and breadth of (sub-continental) India, embodying the spiritual enlightenment and religious consciousness, from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century, with continuing significance and relevance for the liberation of man and amelioration of society.

When Guru Nanak appeared on the horizon, the Indian society had already become static and decadent; dogma and ritualism had eaten into the vitals of great Indian religious traditions. The prevalent scenario was marked by caste-based social discriminations, economic exploitation and political oppression. Encounter of Hinduism and Islam on Indian soil had led to fermentation of new ideas, seen in the Hindu Bhakti and Islamic Sufi movements, as well as to a vertical division of Indian society that aggravated the disparities and inequities on horizontal level. The attempts at a "synthesis" by blending the common factors in the two faiths could not succeed owing to the inherent contradictions in the two characteristic modes of thought.

What was needed was a new way of thinking, going beyond the Hindu-Muslim polarity on different levels. Herein lies the revolutionary role of Sikhism in ushering in a new mode of thought that radically changed the old stereotypes-ideational, social, economic, cultural and political. Man re-discovered his innate sovereignty and dignity; a new dynamism was injected into society. The this-worldly concerns of humanity came under focus as much as the other-worldly concerns of the soul. The dormant, slumbering

spirit of man realised its kinship with the Divine Spirit. The stirred-up human spirit found its expression in the form of the Khalsa-being the vehicle of the Divine Spirit in history-created by Guru Gobind Singh in the year 1699 for realising the divine mission of *sarbat da bhala.* (The welfare of all humanity). While creating the Order of the Khalsa, Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Prophet of Sikhism, expressed the quintessence of the faith in the following Prophetic words :

ਮਾਨਸ ਕੀ ਜਾਤ ਸਬੈ ਏਕੈ ਪਹਿਚਾਨਬੋ

*(Recognize all humanity as one in Spirit)*

This is a message that has become all the more significant for the evolution of the 21st century society and civilization.

II

## CREATION OF THE KHALSA

A unique cosmic play, the 300th anniversary of which falls in 1999, unfolded itself at Sri Anandpur Sahib, the city of bliss. Located in hilly surroundings, Anandpur was founded by the ninth Prophet of Sikhism, Guru Teg Bahadur, in 1664. In this historic town is situated one of the five Sikh Takhts (the symbolic seats of temporal authority of Sikhism).

For unfolding the *Bachittar Natak* (cosmic event) at the mound (where now stands Takht Shri Keshgarh) at Sri Anandpur Sahib, Guru Gobind Singh chose the first day of lunar month of *Baisakh* (The Baisakhi day) that fell on March 30 in 1699 AD-this year being celebrated on April 14. The beginning of the month of *Baisakh* symbolizes renewal and regeneration, ripening and fruition. Earlier, it was on this day that Gautam realized enlightenment and became the Buddha, heralding a new era in Indian civilization qualitatively different from the prevalent Hindu civilization, Guru Gobind Singh purposely chose this day for ushering in a new dawn, a new chapter in world history, a new phase of world civilization, envisioned by the first Prophet of

Sikhism, Guru Nanak. The Guru had asked the faith-followers from all over India to assemble at Sri Anandpur Sahib on the chosen day. The huge congregation became mysteriously innervated when the Guru with a divine glow in eyes and a naked sword in his hand, gave a thundering call for a devout Sikh to come forward to offer his head, then and there, for the sake of *dharma*. Guru Gobind Singh was putting to test his followers' readiness for sacrifice of life-a sacrifice of the mundane life sublated into the Life Divine. Guru Nanak himself had laid down the test :

ਜਉ ਤਉ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਖੇਲਣ ਕਾ ਚਾਉ
ਸਿਰ ਧਰਿ ਤਲੀ ਗਲੀ ਮੇਰੀ ਆਉ

*(If you seek to play the game of love, then, enter upon the path with your head upon your palm)*

At the third call of the Guru, according to the tradition, Daya Ram (a *khatri* by caste) from Lahore (now in Pakistani Punjab) arose to offer his head to the Guru who took him into an adjoining enclosure. At the subsequent calls of the Guru, came forward Dharam Dass (a *jat*) from Hastinapur near Delhi in northern India; Mohkam Chand (a washerman) from Dwarka in Gujrat in western India; Himmat Dass (a cook from *jheevar* caste) belonging to Jagan Nath Puri in Orissa in eastern India, and Sahib Chand (a low caste barber) from Bidar in Andhra Pradesh in southern India; they were also taken into the enclosure. The five self-sacrificing Sikhs had undergone a sacramental 'passage', a death-like experience for their celestial vision of, and inter-face with, the Spirit-Destroyer and Creator at the same time.

ਨਮੋ ਸਰਬ ਖਾਪੇ
ਨਮੋ ਸਰਬ ਥਾਪੇ

*(Salutation to the Destroyer of all, Salutation to the Creator of all.)*

(Guru Gobind Singh, *Jaap Sahib*)

Clad in new yellow garments with blue turbans, radiating dynamism and determination, they were brought back before the congregation that burst into resounding words of Sat Sri Akal (immortal and ever-present is the time-transcendent Spirit). The Guru, then, amidst recitation of the Divine Word, embodied in the sacred hymns, stirred with a double-edged sword, the water, in a steel vessel, sweetened by sugar plums, and thus prepared the baptismal nectar (*amrit*)-the elixir of courage and compassion-that was administered to the five Sikhs who came to be known as the Beloved Five (*Panj Pyare*). They, with appellation of *'Singh'* added to their names, became the first five initiates of the Order of the Khalsa created by the Guru through the sacramental nectar. Guru Gobind Rai became Guru Gobind Singh when he got baptized by the Beloved Five. The act of the Guru seeking baptism from his baptized followers, apart from revealing the democratic ethos of Sikhism, shows that God, the Guru and the follower become one in spirit (ਆਪੇ ਗੁਰ ਚੇਲਾ): the moment of baptismal transformation becomes the moment of transanimation. This was a sacrament of resurrection, of spiritual ascent of man. The cosmic play at Sri Anandpur Sahib also pointed to the process of descent of God (qua immanent Spirit) in time. The spiritual ascent of man and the historical descent of the Spirit, in a sense, mark, under the generic category of the Khalsa, the evolution of sovereign man in direct communion with the Divine Sovereign. *(Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa)*.

The Spirit, through the Guru medium, descends in history to become its operative principle, its dynamic teleology. The spiritual aspect of the Spirit (spiritual sovereignty) becomes determinate in the Divine Word revealed to the Gurus; the *Adi Granth,* thus, becomes Sri Guru Granth Sahib (the Sikh scripture). The temporal aspect of the Spirit (temporal sovereignty of the Divine) becomes manifest and diffused in the generic category of the Khalsa. Guru

Nanak's Panth becomes the Guru Panth, the Khalsa Panth:

ਅਕਾਲ ਪੁਰਖ ਕੀ ਸੁਰਤ ਏਹਾ

ਪ੍ਰਗਟਿ ਅਕਾਲ ਖਾਲਸਾ ਦੇਹਾ

(ਪੂਹਿਲਾਦ ਰਾਏ)

*(This, verily, is the phenomenon form of the Timeless Who manifests Himself in the corporate body of the Khalsa)*

Prehlad Rai, author of a *Sikh Rehatnama*

ਖਾਲਸਾ ਮੇਰੋ ਰੂਪ ਹੈ ਖਾਸ

ਖਾਲਸਾ ਮਹਿ ਹੋ ਕਰੋ ਨਿਵਾਸ

(ਗੁਰੂ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ)

*(The Khalsa is my determinate form I am immanent in the Khalsa)* Guru Gobind Singh

The baptismal sacrament at Sri Anandpur Sahib was also a cosmic act of regeneration, an experience of sublimation through sublation, that is, dissolution. What was annihilated by the double-edged sword-symbolising the destructive and the creative aspect of God Almightly-was the past *Karma* (deeds done under self-delusion) and its effects and imprints on the psyche that, seeping down into the sub-conscious and unconscious layers of mind, solidify into stereotypes, *(Sanskars)* for the present and the future deeds. What was created, through sublation of the past *Karma,* was a liberated state of mind, no more under siege of the spirit-less customs and conventions, of empty ceremonies and rituals, of degenerating dogma and obsolescent orthodoxy. The partaking of the baptismal nectar awakened the dormant, slumbering spirit of man who rediscovered his divinity, his sovereignty, his humanity (ਮਾਨਸ ਕੀ ਜਾਤ ਸਬੈ ਏਕੈ ਪਹਿਚਾਨਬੋ) proclaimed by Guru Gobind Singh at the creation of the Khalsa; this meant obliteration of all caste-based differentiations; all hierarchical disparities; all gender-related discriminations, all creed-centred differences.

On another (empirical) level,  the baptismal sacrament

institutionalized the evolution, the endogenous development, of the faith-followers into a political community with a corporate identity, besides the individual identity predicated by the five baptismal symbols. Through this institutionalized corporate identity, the Guru wanted to create a mighty force in world history-as a temporal vehicle of the Spirit-for introduction of a new societal order, free from evil, injustice and inequity, free from political discriminations and economic disparities, free from creedal exclusiveness. What was aimed at through the founding of the Khalsa, through the motor force of a new dispensation with a distinctive corporate identity, was the creation of a new world order characterized by pluralism-religious, cultural, economic and political.

Though the five baptismal symbols define the individual identity of a baptized Sikh, yet their connotations are universalistic in nature. The five baptismal symbols are known as the five *Kakaars* (the five K's) : uncut hair; comb; steel bracelet; short drawers and sword. These five *Kakaars,* making the visible individual identity, are symbols and not rituals or totems; their ritualistic wearing, without realising and imbibing the underlying spirit, is homologous to Brahminical tradition of putting on *tilak* (sacred mark on the forehead) and *janeu* (sacred thread) rejected by Sikhism. The uncut hair symbolise the integrality of being, emphasized by the postmodern holistic view, as against the old dualistic view. The comb stresses the value of cleanliness and purity in personal and social life. The steel bracelet stands for the experiential presence of the Divine, Whose beginningless and endless infinity is represented by the circular shape of the symbol. The wearing of short drawers connotes chastity as well as the Sikh rejection of the ascetic tradition that equated nudity with the natural condition of man; this symbol also stands in sharp contrast to the Brahminical practice of wearing unstiched lower garment

(dhoti). The sword is not a combat weapon for offensive or defensive action; it is rather, a symbol of liberated being, of sovereignty of man, homologous to the right of a sovereign people to keep the arms. Being symbols, what is important is not their external ritualistic display on the body, but the inculcation in the mind of their significance, their essence, animating the attitude, the deed, the very life of the faith-followers. These are the symbols reminding their wearer that he is to be *sachiar* (truthful living) in his obligation towards God; a *jujhar* (fearless fighter for a righteous cause) in his obligation towards society and a *rehat-dhar* (imbiber of enlightened code of conduct) in his obligation towards the community. These qualities together constitute the indivisible wholeness of the life of the Khalsa and its members; when the emphasis on the third obligation becomes accentuated at the cost of the two other ones, the five symbols become rituals emptied of their sense and essence.

The five baptismal symbols have deep significance on ethical, social and political levels; they imply a new proxis for individual and social life.

The sociological significance of the baptismal ceremony of *amrit* lies in its being a revolutionary way to dynamic equalitarian society. The baptismal *amrit* provided a new normative principle, process and channel to the lower classes for vertical mobility in their own right, without any sense of guilt about their respective self-identities, which, as such, were no more required to be suppressed and sublated into simulated behaviour-patterns of the higher caste group. Says Guru Nanak :

ਨੀਚਾ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਨੀਚ ਜਾਤਿ

ਨੀਚੀ ਹੂ ਅਤਿ ਨੀਚ

ਨਾਨਕ ਤਿਨ ਕੇ ਸੰਗਿ ਸਾਥਿ

ਵਡਿਆਂ ਸਿਉ ਕਿਆ ਰੀਸ

ਜਿਥੈ ਨੀਚ ਸਮਾਲੀਅਨਿ
ਤਿਥੈ ਨਦਰਿ ਤੇਰੀ ਬਖਸੀਸ
*(The lowest of the low castes,*
*The lowliest of the lowly,*
*I seek their kindship-*
*Why emulate the (so called) higher ones*
*Thy elevating Grace is*
*Where the down-trodden are looked after).*

The lower castes and classes were, as such, provided an opportunity of vertical mobility upto the highest level. The new normative principle of social organisation, introduced by the baptismal *amrit,* made people realise their essential humanistic identity with a sense of horizontal solidarity as co-equal members in the Order of the Khalsa which does not admit of fixed, stratified role performance, nor the caste-based differentiation of connubial and ritual functions.

The mission of the Khalsa, for which it was created under the Divine Will (ਆਗਿਆ ਭਈ ਅਕਾਲ ਕੀ) *qua* a community of the *sachiar*, the *jujhar,* the *rehat-dhar*, was not simply individual salvation in the world hereafter, or even individual redemption in the world here and now. The universal societal concerns of Sikhism-as distinct from the existential concerns of the Sikhs at any given point of time and place-constitute the mission of the Khalsa presaged by Guru Arjun, the fifth Prophet, in the following words :

ਸਭੇ ਸਾਂਝੀਵਾਲ ਸਦਾਇਨਿ
ਤੂੰ ਕਿਸੇ ਨਾ ਦਿਸਹਿ ਬਾਹਰਾ ਜੀਉ
*(All are co-equal partners in Thy commonwealth, with none treated as alien)*

Here was a message for ushering in a new value-pattern, a new dispensation, based on the fundamental principles of equality, justice and compassion, liberty and fraternity; this was a Divine

Manifesto for a new civilization on the pillars of humanism, liberalism, universalism and pluralism. Dualism of mind and matter, and epistemic dichotomy of subject and object-that have characterized the Western civilization of the past few centuries-are both transformed into the unifying life of the "Spirit-in-history"-a concept that provides a new normative basis for the emergence of the postmodern civilization, the first intimation of which, appearing in the Sikh thought over 500 years ago, became phenomenally manifest in and through the creation of the Khalsa about 300 years ago at Sri Anandpur Sahib.

### III
### PHILOSOPHICAL POSTULATES

In the world's speculative thought, Sikh philosophy, in the medieval age, introduced a new revolutionary idea of far-reaching implication and futuristic significance. God in Sikhism is not merely indeterminate Being, but also Creator Who created material world as well as time. Metaphysically this implied non-acceptance of the Vedantic eternity of time, which meant the continuation of a thing in its original self-same state of being (*Sat*) eternally, without change, development or evolution. Further, God is also envisioned in Sikh metaphysics as the creative, dynamic Spirit (*Karta Purakh*), becoming determinate (*Sat Nam*) in time, in history.

Much later, Hegel described the modern State (identified with the Prussian military state) as the highest expressional form of the Spirit. The democratic import of the Sikh concept stands in contrast to the tendency towards autocracy and totalitarianism inherent in the Hegelian notion.

The traditional modes of revelation of God known to religion and metaphysics are immanence or reflection in space (nature); indwelling in soul and manifestation in the Word. With Sikh philosophy appears, for the first time in religious and speculative thought of the world, a new revelatory mode: the concept of

descent of God in time, that is, the Spirit-in-history. The cosmic event (*Bachittar Natak*) at Sri Anandpur Sahib in 1699 AD marks the sacrament of the Divine descent *qua* the dynamic Spirit immanent and operative in history-the Khalsa, in its generic sense, being the vehicle of the Spirit.

Sikhism visualized a revolutionary re-structuration of society, as a step towards a new civilization distinct from the earlier Indic and the Hindu civilization in India, in particular. The Brahminical system had absolutized the concept of fixity in social organisation, wherein the place of each caste, with predetermined role-structure, as well as of the individual in the caste, was considered to be fixed *a priori* in hierarchical order given by the law of *Karma*. This system by transforming (in the language of Marx) "a self-developing social state into a never changing natural destiny", ensured stability and passive equilibrium, but at the cost of internal dynamism and evolutionary elan. Seen in this context the role of a Hindu Avtar is a periodical restoration of the balance, whenever the passive equilibrium of society gets disturbed. (This involves the cyclical-devolutionary view of time-a species of spatial time-in which history is seen not as an ongoing directional process, but as a series of the flow and the ebb occurring in cyclical periodicity). The Sikh Guru is not an Avtar, not only on the ground that God is not conceived of as incarnating Himself in human form, but also for the reason that he is the initiator of a new way of life in the dimension of directional time. (Path=*Panth*), involving innovative structural changes in society.

Brahminical society permitted only 'positional mobility' of the lower castes in the hierarchical structure through a cultural process named 'sanskritization' by M.N. Srinivas; a lower group having circumstantially gained power or wealth would try to emulate the customs, manners, rituals and even caste-denominations of the higher caste for being accepted at a higher rung in the hierarchical

ladder. As observed by M.N. Srinivas, this process of sanskritization meant only "positional change for the lower group without any structural change in the system". In fact, sanskritization in a way reinforced the principle of fixed, hierarchy, in so far as it meant vertical mobility within the caste system. It was, further, retrogressive in that it diverted the lower stratum from self-acquisition of status and respectability in its own right, without losing the self-identity in the borrowed feathers of the higher class.

Sikhism played a revolutionary role on the sociological level in re-structuring society on equalitarian basis by rejecting the concept of hierarchical fixity as the tradition-honoured principle of social organisation which had received its axiological legitimation from the caste-system, which, in turn, had the law of *Karma* as its metaphysical basis.

The new revolutionary normative principle, introduced by Sikhism and institutionalized in the Order of the Khalsa, provides for a new kind of vertical mobility that *ipso-facto* involves an ongoing process of re-structuration of open society on equalitarian basis-a process that stands in sharp contrast to sanskritization that permitted selective vertical movement, while ensuring the foundation of the hierarchized, closed system of caste-based society and the concomitant caste-system.

[First published by the Anandpur Sahib Foundation, Chandigarh, on the occasion of the Khalsa Tercentenary Celebrations in 1999].
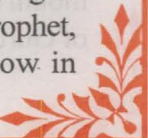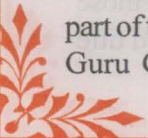
# UNDERSTANDING THE DASAM GRANTH

*(The Dialectic Sublime of Guru Gobind Singh)*

Next to Sri Guru Granth Sahib-the Adi Granth compiled by the fifth Prophet of Sikh religion-the Dasam Granth, 'the Book of the Tenth Guru', has been revered most by the Sikhs. The Dasam Granth has remained, for over hundred years, a dominant (unresolved) issue in Sikh studies, thanks to its baffling variety of contents; mind-boggling diversity of genres, languages, dialects and diction (Sanskrit, Braj, Punjabi, Persian and Arabic); musical meters and verse-forms; range of images, symbols and myths stretching back to India's hoary past. Thematically, the Dasam Granth contains compositions some of which are spiritual, mythological, metahistorical, historical, autobiographical, and according to some scholars, even apocryphal. It is rich in spiritual vision, metaphysical concepts, ethical precepts, martial spirit, and heroic deeds involving gods, goddesses and demons. All this makes it a unique metaphor of India's composite heritage, as well as a subject of seemingly unending debate and discussion, and now of political polemics for reasons which are not even remotely related to its significance.

The spiritual status of being the Sikh scripture vests in Sri Guru Granth Sahib, though the Dasam Granth is also highly revered, particularly as it contains the *bani* of Guru Gobind Singh including *Jaap Sahib; Savaiyyas* and *Chaupai* which are integral part of the Sikhs' daily regimen of devotional recitation.

The intellectual-scholarly tradition had remained an integral part of the Sikh praxis during the Guru period. The tenth Prophet, Guru Gobind Singh, had developed Paonta Sahib (now in

Himachal Pradesh) as a great centre of his multi-faceted activities including creative writings-spiritual, metaphysical, heroic, etc. Besides writing his own compositions at Paonta Sahib, the Guru had as many as fifty two court poets engaged in re-interpreting the myths, epics, legends and tales that constituted India's rich composite heritage. This tradition continued when the Guru shifted from Paonta Sahib to Anandpur Sahib. These voluminous writings, composed by the Guru as well as those sponsored and patronized by him, weighed nine *maunds* and were known as Vidyasagar. The Granth included *Jaap Sahib, Akal Ustit, Bachitra Natak, Chandi Charitra; Var Sri Bhagauti Ji Ki, Khalsa Mehama, Zafarnama* (Persian), and some other shorter hymns written by the Guru, besides compositions such as *Gian Prabodh, Chaubis Avtar, Shastra Nama Mala, Hikayatan* as well as the controversial *Charitropakhyan* (the trickeries of women) etc., believed to have been penned by his court poets. This great treasure of mankind was washed away in the flooded Sirsa stream at the time of evacuation of Anandpur Sahib by Guru Gobind Singh in the year 1705.

In the post-diaspora period, the efforts of Bhai Mani Singh in salvaging whatever could be gathered from different sources resulted in the first recension of the Dasam Granth, followed by another by Baba Dip Singh-most of the contents being common in the two recensions. The first Sikh reformation, spearheaded by the Singh Sabha movement in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, yielded another recension-the current one-published in 1902.

However, opinion among Sikh scholars has remained sharply divided about the authorship and authenticity of certain compositions in the Dasam Granth. The compositions with the signature title *Sri Mukhvak Patshahi 10* (sacred word from the mouth of the Tenth Sovereign) are generally accepted to be those of Guru Gobind Singh himself; some have the abbreviated title

*"Patshahi 10"*, while some others are without such indications; the compositions in the last category have evoked controversies about their both authorship and authenticity and also a feeling of 'uneasiness' among the orthodox Sikh circles. On doctrinal level, "uneasiness" is felt about *Chaubis Avtar* narrating the twenty four incarnations of Vishnu, including lengthy narratives on Lord Rama and Lord Krishna, on the mistaken notion that these accounts imply worship of Hindu gods, contrary to Guru Gobind Singh's acknowledgement in *Jaap Sahib* and *Akal Ustit* of the absolute reality of the time-transcendent God alone Who does not incarnate Himself in bodily form. Some self-styled scholars view these as the latter-day interpolations due to Brahminical inroads into Sikhism and as such want such compositions to be excised out. What is not realized is that there is, rather, an under-current of de-deification of the *Bhagvat Purana* conceptions of Lord Rama and Lord Krishna, stress being on their heroic, marvellous deeds for upholding righteousness. In fact, the *Rama Avtar* account ends on a note that the author has refrained from reckoning the *dramatis personae* in absolute terms of who was righteous and who not- such being the dialectic of righteousness, the *leela* of *dharma* versus *adharma*. Those who look askance at the *Rama Avtar* narrative perhaps do not know that the *Savaiyya* daily sung in the Gurdwaras *(Paein gahe jab te tumre.....)* is from this very composition. And the daily evening prayer *Chaupai-Hamri Karo hath de rachha*-occurs in *Charitropakhyan* which is looked down upon in orthodox Sikh circles on the ground that this 'apocryphal' work presents women as immoral beings in contrast to the Nanakian concept of exalted womenhood. But this composition depicts wiles of men also. The point is that this narrative portrays the dialectic of human nature, *as it is,* in its both positive and negative aspects. Writes Dr. Gopal Singh about this work : "there is an undertone of moral grandeur informing this work throughout and a devotional attitude towards beauty, whether

physical, moral or spiritual." *(Thus Spake the Tenth Master).*

In fact, it is not only the dialectic of human nature, but the Dialectic Sublime that informs both the "contents" and the "forms" of the compositions in the Dasam Granth. The Dialectic Sublime is the archetypal mode uniquely employed by Guru Gobind Singh in expressing reality-spiritual, historical, human. If the Guru praises God as the Sun of suns-Absolute Light-he also, on the other hand, salutes Him as Abysmal Darkness as well. Writes Gopal Singh in his *Thus Spake the Tenth Master* : "While depicting the goodness of God, the Guru also identifies Him with the ravisher of beauty, the drunkard, creator of doom."

The signification of the Dialectic Sublime of Guru Gobind Singh can be well comprehended in the context of the Vedantic conceptualization of the Absolute Reality in terms of *neti neti-***not this, not that.** Guru Gobind Singh, contrastingly, envisions the Absolute Reality in terms of **"yes this, yes that"**-"this" and "that" being the dialectical opposites. Unlike in the Vedantic thought, in the vision of Guru Gobind Singh, the dichotomies and dualities, contradictions and contrarieties, differences and diversities are not dissolved into the abstract One; these are, rather, brought alive as constitutive aspects of reality-a view akin to contemporary postmodernist conception. This Dialectic Sublime, characterizing Guru Gobind Singh's vision, is the key to the understanding of the true signification of the *diverse* compositions in the Dasam Granth.

Sri Guru Granth Sahib provides the sovereign doctrinal identity of Sikhism, the Dasam Granth *relates* this distinctive identity to the composite Indian heritage.

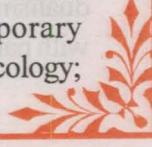[Courtesy : *The Hindustan Times,* New Delhi, May, 28, 2000].

# THE GREENING OF GOD

The ecological crisis that burst into consciousness so forcefully in the 1980s has brought humankind face to face with an unprecedented situation in which the very existence of life-of all organisms-in the lap of mother earth seems to be in danger of extinction.

Disturbance of ecological rhythm of cyclical processes and forces of nature; ozone depletion exposing the earth's surface to ultraviolet radiation; pollution of the atmosphere with continual emissions from the burning of fossil fuels; global warming; climatic changes; denudation of forest cover; ingestion of the vegetables and foodgrains contaminated by excessive use of pesticides and harmful chemicals in production-increasing fertilizers-these are just some of the man-caused phenomena, being the byproducts of urbanization and industrialization involving ruthless exploitation of nature for production.

**It took billions and billions of years for life in its most elementary-unicellular form-to emerge on the earth planet; again, it took many more long spans of time for the unicellular organism to evolve into the most complex form of human life. But it took just three centuries for man to destroy his environmental habitat, thereby inviting his own destruction, along with apprehended extinction of other species.** (Some of the species have already gone into oblivion).

Ecological concerns have, thus, become the most crucial concerns of humanity, today, reflected in contemporary environmental discourse in which the terms such as deep ecology;

social ecology; ecosystem; ecofeminism, biodiversity; sustainable development, etc., figure most prominently. These environmental concerns were articulated at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit; the Convention on Biological Diversity, signed by 155 states at the Summit, focussed attention on degradation of biodiversity to counter which were recommended strategies and approaches for models of sustainable development. **But the blitzkrieg of globalisation seems to be moving in the opposite direction.**

The term ecology, coined in 1866 by the German biologist Ernst Haeckel, refers back to the Greek expression **oikos**, meaning "household". The earth, verily, is the household for all of its offsprings-all the species-who are not only integrally interlinked among themselves but also interlocked with their environment-nature-in a holistic relationship of interdependence.

Forgetting this network (holistic) relationship of interdependence, man has cut himself off from nature. When ordered out of the Garden of Eden, God said to Adam and Eve : "Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it" (The first book of Moses called *Genesis* in The Old Testament). Adam and Eve, faithfully, obeyed the Divine command to multiply to an extent where the over-populated world—6063 million persons at the beginning of the present century-seems to be bursting at the seams! And man took the other command literally, rather than symbolically; he sought to subdue the earth, treating it as *inanimate* matter. He discovered the laws of nature, transformed them into technologies that used natural resources as raw material for production-production not for satiating the human needs but for the insatiable capitalistic profit-making avarice.

Man differentiated himself from nature treating himself as 'subject' and the latter as 'object', both ontologically (Cartesian dualism) and epistemologically (Kantian dualism). Thus all bonds with nature, with the mother earth, were sundered. **In an Oedipus-**

like situation, man in ruthlessly exploiting and plundering nature, in a sense, raped the mother earth, tearing off its ozone cover above and denuding it of its forest clothing below! The head-on Fall towards ecological disaster, then, followed inexhorably.

**But this must not happen.**

The first and foremost categorical imperative to avert this imminent disaster is the attitudinal change, a paradigm shift, in our approach to and treatment of nature, different from the wrongly understood and practised orthodox Biblical view that bestowed on man absolute dominion over nature. **Herein lies the significance of the multi-faith Assisi Declaration that called upon the religions of the world to put ecology uppermost on their redemptional agenda and to realize integral relationship between faith and ecology.**

As stressed in Indian religious and philosophical traditions, and particularly in Sikhism, nature is not inanimate matter dissociated from man and his destiny on earth. There is pulsating presence of the Divine in nature; man and nature partake of the Divine Spirit which is immanent and dynamically operative in both. There is integral, holistic relationship between man and nature, as stressed by Guru Nanak in his **Japji** wherein the first Prophet of Sikhism hails the familial relationship by calling air as the Guru, water as the Father, and earth as the Great Mother.

This ecological relationship makes this planet as the real Household for all living organisms, all living beings. (As mentioned above, the word ecology is derived from the Greek **oikos**, meaning "household").

This holistic relationship conforms to 'systems-thinking' in postmodernist epistemology for which all things from the terrestrial to the transcendental reveal integral interdependent relationships constituting wholes-within-wholes; a whole, not reducible into

atomistic parts, is a "part" in relation to its larger contextual whole in a never-ending series of wholes-within-wholes. This systems-thinking approach realizes integral interdependent bonds between man and nature in a reflexive relationship in which the destiny of the one is intertwined with the destiny of the other. **Biodiversity of nature, as such, comes to be seen in a new light : not simplistically as the physical condition for survival of life, but as a significant constituent of life.**

On practical level, the new approach necessitates evolving of new modes of biotechnology that, being qualitatively different from the nature-devastating technology of the industrial era of the past three centuries, would ensure sustainable development, using, but still replenishing, natural resources for future generations.

While conceptualizing God as beyond all colours, we still ascribe to Him colours of our choice : blue, saffron, etc. But if God has any intrinsic colour, it would be green. God is greenery, and the greenery God.

[The Presidential Address delivered at the National Symposium on *Plant Diversity and Its Conservation* on 14 February, 2001 at Punjabi University, Patiala].

# A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO ETHNICITY

The dialectic of unitarianism and pluralism, which constitutes the primary contradiction of social reality in the world today, has brought to the foreground ethnic, ethno-social, ethno-religious, ethno-political contradictions in place of class contradictions. Contrary to the earlier postulate and belief (classical Marxist) that ethnic contradictions would be subsumed under or sublated into class contradictions, the converse has happened in the past few decades : class contradictions are now getting mediated through ethnic contradictions, making the problem of ethnicity much more complex.

The traditional approach, in its different variants, to the problem of ethnicity is flawed-and hence a failure-owing to its dualistic, dichotomous premises inherent in the three long-cherished myths that stand exploded. As I wrote elsewhere for the last 150 years or so, we had nurtured the belief that it was class contradictions that constituted the dialectics of social reality, and that economic determinants would resolve class contradictions. It had further been, all along, contended that with the resolution of class contradictions, the ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious and regional problems of the minorities would also inevitably get dissolved. This belief was based on the postulate that the problems of the minorities were essentially of economic nature and were accentuated by class contradictions inherent in the society, and further that the "contents" of the movements and struggles of the minorities were basically "economic", while their outward expression took on the ethnic, cultural, religious "forms" Economic

relations, corresponding to the mode of production, were considered as the base with the factors of ideology, political system legal forms, and cultural, religious ethnic, linguistic consciousness deemed as part of the superstructure determined by the economic base. This one-way causality implied the base-superstructure dualism which become the bed-rock of classical Marxism, notwithstanding the concept of parallelogram of forces postulated by F. Engels. (I have elaborated this point in my book, *Marxism and Contemporary Reality,* Asia Publishing House. New York, 1972). In other words the root cause of all superstructural phenomena- in which was counted the given ethnic consciousness- was attributed to the economic factor alone. But the ethnic experience of even the developed Western countries shows that this is not wholly true. The economic factor is important but the identity consciousness of the minorities and their urges and aspirations for corporate self-expression transcend the economic factor. Corporate self-expression of the minorities-ethnic, ethno-religious, ethno-social, ethno-political necessitates pluralism an religious, cultural, economic and political levels.

The concept of religious, social, cultural and political pluralism implies unity-in-differentiation which goes beyond the much publicized Indian concept of unity-in-diversity. The concept of unity-in-diversity* is interpreted as a common thread, a common

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* The concept of unity-in-diversity is, in a sense, based on a postulate different from the one that is inherent in the idea of dialectical unity (Hegelian-Marxian). The concept of unity-in-diversity partakes of the archetypal view that in the heart of ultimate reality there is unity, harmony, which becomes manifest in diversity (of nature, society and thought). On the other hand the concept of dialectical unity pre-supposes another archetypal mould of cognition that there is contradiction, inherent in the womb of ultimate reality, which through the oppositional process strives to realize a synthesis which in turn is informed by another kind of contradiction whereby takes place the ongoing process of evolution in nature, society and thought.

denominator, present in diverse traditions; euphemistically it is called "Indianness". But the concept of unity involved in the notion of unity-in-differentiation should be understood as the quality of the whole constituted by its autonomous constituent parts; the relationship between the whole and the "parts" being of the nature of whole-within-whole.

Social and cultural pluralism has down the ages ensured inner unity, harmony and balance of Indian society, though at different times this pluralistic orientation of Indian society, had had to face challenges from the unitarian-totalitarian trends and forces in different forms and garbs. If Brahminism sought hierarchized homogenization of Indian society on the caste basis, political Islam in India attempted a kind of differentiated homogenization in terms of Dar-ul-Islam and Dar-ul-Harb. Today, diverging from the earlier conception of pluralistic nationalism certain forces in our country are dis-orienting the dynamics of nation-building, taking it towards all-inclusive homogenization of composite Indian society in the name of what they call ethnic nationalism. In this exercise the earlier concept of secularism, which aimed at ensuring a united India with social and cultural pluralism as its significant dimension, is also being distorted into an instrument of unitarianism. The resultant nationalism may have external conformity but not internal unity-in-diversity. With the sharpening of the dialectic of pluralism and unitarianism, today, the unity is becoming homogenization and the diversity is turning into divergence. This is a most unfortunate phenomenon marking the national scenario today. The composite cultural traditions are getting differentiated more and more into mutually exclusive sub-traditions which in their turn are becoming identified separatively with different religious, social and ethnic groups. These groups under the pressures of (real or feared) homogenization gravitate towards seeking and preserving their respective self-identities in these differentiated traditions, whereas

earlier they would realize their moorings in common composite traditions. Further, if certain forces in the majority community are trying to ethnicize the national polity, then, on the other hand there is a tendency, in reaction, on the part of certain elements among the minorities to politicize their ethnicity, that is, their ethno-cultural, ethno-social, ethno-political identity in militant tones. This is how ethno-cultural, ethno-social, ethno-religious and ethno-political contradictions are gradually becoming the primary dialectic of contemporary social reality in India today, pushing the class-contradictions to the secondary position.

Before coming to the point of the place and role of ethnicity in the 21st century society we may attempt to define this term in the context of the above discussion. Ethnicity is a configuration of certain factors such as culture, language, religion, racial traits, common historical experience, the collective unconscious, recurring archetypal symbols and motifs, regional acquisitions, etc.

Two characteristics of such ethnicity, defined as a configuration, are noteworthy. First, no configuration is static in the sense of remaining self-same in all places and in all times; its nature is dynamic. No configuration remains static also for the reason that new variables acquired from time and place enter the make-up of the whole. The presence and operation of the variables in the configuration of ethnicity has led some analysts to treat it not as inherent, innate group consciousness rooted in the collective unconscious, but as a functionally determined mobilization.

The second characteristic of ethnicity in the sense of configuration is that it (configuration) is of the nature of structure-in-dominance in the sense in which this expression has been used by Louis Althusser : Various autonomous elements of the structure are assymmetrically related to each other, one element being dominant in the totality now and another element gaining ascendency in a changed context.

Fostering of ethnic consciousness is essential not only for developing multi-focal, pluralist world systems but also a sense of belongingness, a feeling of kinship, among members of contemporary communities confronting the de-humanizing, de-personalizing processes of globalization which, in a sense, are continuation of the ethos of capitalism that tended to replace social relations with commodity relations among the human beings.

Ethnicity, historically, has also played a role in transmitting group values, in imparting **value** to the **fact** of existence. This role becomes all the more necessary in the present-day computer-dominated world.

Today man's existentialist freedom is being swallowed up by a different kind of determinism-computer determinism-which is reducing existence into digitised data; this is a kind of determinism worse than its earlier varieties-theological, mechanistic and dialectical-in the sense that the latter forms, while diluting man's autonomy, still entailed one or the other type of value-system derived from the divine, natural or historical imperatives. Computer determinism may be defined as the computer-done information-processing, decision-making activities in which the human factor-the matrix of values-is eliminated.

[*Resume* of the Presidential Address delivered at the International Conference on **Ethnicity in the First World, the Third World and Ex-Communist Countries** organised by Punjabi University, Patiala, in collaboration with International Political Science Association, on 6-8 January 2000].

# FOLKLORE AND CULTURE STUDIES
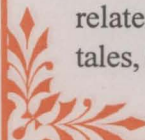# IN 21ST CENTURY

*(Problems of Approach And Methodology)*

I

Religion is sometimes defined as a symbolic organization and representation of transcendental, divine reality (revealed or intuited) in terms of (epistemic) categories, such as God, soul, which come to be seen as having ontological status. Analogously, science is considered as a symbolic representation of phenomenal reality in which abstract concepts are used for organising empirical data. Correspondingly, folklore may be defined as a symbolic representation of phenomenal reality in which myth, legend, folk tale, ritual, dream, etc., serve as symbols of organising the experienced reality (inner/outer), as well as a symbolic mode of communication between different levels of consciousness, as also between the inner and the outer world. Culture, of course, is a larger concept that includes value-system, ethos, persistence of the archetypes not only from the collective unconscious of the community but also from its historical experience.

Traditional approaches and methodologies involved in the studies of folklore and culture, being dichotomous, are becoming outdated in the context of the postmodernist ontology and epistemology.

The dominant dichotomy that has reigned so far in folkloristics relates to the primitive versus the non-primitive. Folk legends, tales, songs, myths, rituals, etc., are seen as symbolic discourse

and narrative of the primitive peoples; homologously these are envisioned as products of the primitive levels of consciousness as, for instance, in Freudian psycho-analysis. A folk tale originating at, and representing a primitive level, is, then, seen as moving both horizontally and vertically; horizontally it travels to other lands, acquiring variables *enroute,* while in its upward vertical movement it gets mediated-and refined-into the great tradition of culture of which it either becomes an integral part, or just subsists as a vestigial element from the past.

The primitive is, sometimes, sanctified as the primordial. And the primordial is contrasted with the variable, (changing). This gives rise to another dichotomy. The primordial (innate) characteristics and attributes of the human nature-the matrix of folk symbols, according to some folklore scholars-are counterpoised to the changing attributes of the human nature, conditioned by the variables of time space. (Marx, denying ahistorical, primordial characteristics of the human nature, saw it as an ensemble of social relations).

The primordial/variable dichotomy is cleverly employed to differentiate the high-pedestal *universal* aspects of culture and the particularistic (low-pedestal) aspects of the culture of a community or region. This leads to another binary opposition of universal culture (which is a camouflage for the Western-dominated culture aspiring to become global culture, thanks to the blitzkrieg of electronic media and cyber technology) and local, regional, minoritarian cultures.

Coming to the question of methodology, folkloristics has not fully gained its autonomous being, with independent methodological categories, owing to its hitherto one-way dependence on psychology, linguistics, history and literary critical theories. In fact the predominant tendency has so far been to draw upon folklore material to substantiate, or to counter, postulates and hypotheses

of other disciplines. To quote just one instance : it is one thing to study folk legends, myths and rituals from Freudian angle for getting insights into the world of folklore, but quite another thing to read Freudianism into folk tales, that is, to super-impose Freudian categories (subject) onto the folklore material (object).

On philosophical level, this question relates to the subject-object (epistemic) relationship. For Kantianism, discrete, unorganised material is schematized into phenomenal forms through the "mould" of the **a priori** categories, given by the (epistemic) subject : On the other extreme is the view of radical empiricism (as distinct from Humean empiricism) that categories (organizing relations) are inherent in the phenomena themselves.

Both views are epistemologically flawed. A category is neither an **a priori** mould or mode of the subject (the knower) nor an inherent property or product of the object (the knower). A category, rather, is a product of the inter-relationship of the subject and the object. (I propounded this view in my book *Marxism and Contemporary Reality, 1973*). This conception of "category" seems to be endorsed and strengthened by the postmodernist stress on interrelationships, interconnections, characterizing the web of reality constituted by wholes-within-wholes stretching from the terrestrial to the transcendental. This postmodernist holist vision transcends the old dichotomous and dualistic models of the world of folklore and culture : the primitive versus the non-primitive; the primordial (constant) versus the contingent (variable); the universal versus the particularistic; the native, the local. Folklore as a symbolic organization and representation of experiential reality is an autonomous whole within an another autonomous whole : culture; the two wholes are intertwined, mutually conditioned and always synergically in a state of becoming-a process in which the past (*prakriti*) inheres in the present (*sanskriti*) without robing the former of its authenticity and the latter its creativity and novelty.

This network conception of reality rejects the notion of folklore being the common substratum out of which evolve the refined ('sanskritized' in the language of M. N. Srinivas) classical, elitist forms of high culture.

A sublime example of the blending of the 'folk' and the 'classical' into an integrative pattern, is there in Sri Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh scripture, that contains *bani* in both the classical musical forms and the folk traditions such as *alahunian*, thereby establishing the correlativity and synergy of the two aspects of culture-folk and classical-without any hierarchical division or status.

## II

Now a few words about Punjabi culture. Modern electronic media, cyber technology, etc., have opened the floodgates of the hegemonic Western cultural influences, adulteration of authentic cultural forms and mushroom growth of "populist" hybrid varieties being marketed as folk culture-*pop bhangra* being just one instance. Pan-Indian, 'national' culture is also impinging, more and more, on regional cultures, thanks to the pervasive impact of T. V. channels. But these modern media and technologies also provide immense avenues for the retrieval, revival, preservation and projection of the regional, local, minoritarian cultures, with prospect of the dichotomy of the national versus the regional vanishing sooner or later.

The roots of Punjabi culture stretch back, in time, to the Indus Valley civilization and even to earlier periods. Territorially the vast land once known as *sapat sindhu* has been the natural habitat of Punjabi culture where it evolved with its distinctive self-identity in the midst of interminglings of all sorts. But unfortunately Punjabi culture became a victim of both temporal and spatial shrinkage. We do not go beyond Baba Farid now (12th–13th century. C. E.). Territorially, the Punjab has continually suffered political divisions and sub-divisions; worse still, cultural frontiers have

become subject to political boundaries.

The Punjabi culture which once was a geo-historico-ethnic entity has today become a denominational entity owing to its identification with the Sikh community-a process in which Sikhism, in the Punjab, has become ethnicity-specific faith, notwithstanding its doctrinal claim of being a universal religion. The process of shrinkage would have to be reversed to restore and revive the geo-historico-ethnic complexion of the Punjabiat, of the Punjabi culture. The region stretching from the river Yamuna to the river Oxus in Central Asia once pulsated as a single cultural zone with the Punjabi culture occupying the centrestage. With the rigid geo-political boundaries melting under the impact of globalization of national economies, a rare opportunity is knocking at the door for re-creating the cultural zone from the Yamuna to the Oxus, with dominant role of Punjabi culture therein.

[The Presidential Address delivered at the International Seminar on *Folklore and Culture Studies in the Twenty First Century* at Punjabi University, Patiala].
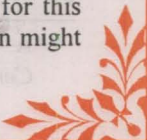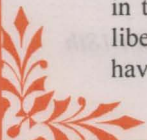
# CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF 21ST CENTURY IN WRITING THE HISTORY OF PUNJAB

The problem of writing the history of Punjab vis-a-vis the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century raises the basic question of what is meant by history, particularly in the post-modernist context.

History is not a chronicle of events, a narration of happenings, or a compilation of empirical data; it is also not a linear sequencing of occurrences. What is essential in history-writing is a perspectival view of discrete data. The so-called "facts" of history are not monad-like entities subsisting in themselves. The "truth" of history is, in a sense, a perspectival view of historical "facts" seen in a network of multi-dimensional relations. Different epochs, different communities, different peoples have different perspectives, which are not static. For instance, the year 1857 of Indian history is a mutiny for some people, while some take it as India's first war of independence.*

For Marxism, history is not a chronology of ruling dynasties

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* The truth is that India's first war of independence was won in 1761 when Jassa Singh Ahluwalia conquered Lahore and wrested back the Punjab which had then been annexed by Ahmad Shah Abdali into the Afghan empire. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia having been crowned as *Sultan-ul-Qaum* got a coin struck indicating the above historical truth : *Sikka zad az Jahan ba fazal-i-Akal; Mulk-i-Ahmad grift Jassa Kalal* (By the grace of the immortal God, is this coin struck at Lahore in the country of Ahmad seized by Jassa, the Kalal). But for this liberation of the Punjab from the Afghan empire, this region might have been lost for ever, at least for centuries together.

but of ruling classes involved in class-struggle till the end of history, that is, till the end of class-differentiated society.

In a sense, history is more than a perspectival view of historical reality, it is rather a perspectival resurrection of the past. It is in perspectival resurrection that the past loses its "pastness" and becomes a part of the present-the past experienced as a living presence. That is how the historical past remembered in the daily Sikh prayer becomes a living presence everyday for the faith-followers.

The past as a living presence implies the inherence of the past in the present, without becoming a straitjacket for the latter. The inherence of the past in the present, as such, means the immanence of "spirit"-of elan vital of a people-in the outward phenomena of history.

If history is, in a sense, the collective response of a people to its situation, then this response is conditioned by the inherent elan vital. From this angle, history of the Punjab of the last 500 years, or more specifically Sikh history of the past five centuries, still remains to be written-a history that would perspectively view and present the legends, events and happenings as pulsations of the elan vital of Sikhism.

The elan vital of Sikhism-its doctrinal postulates, its social dynamics, its value-pattern-had the potential of ushering in a new higher civilization different from the earlier Indic and Hindu civilization as observed by Arnold Toynbee. Some contemporary sociologists** have expressed the view that during the medieval age in India, some post-feudal bourgeois relations could be seen developing in the womb of the feudal society. The revolutionary anti-feudal thrust of Sikhism down to the period of Banda Bahadur provided ideological analogue to the embryonic growth of trans-

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**A. I. Chicherov, *India : Economic Development in the 16th-18th Centuries,* Moscow, 1971, p. 236.

feudal dynamics which could have laid the foundation of a new higher civilization, the metaphysical and sociological seeds of which were immanent in original Sikhism. Why this potential of Sikhism did not flower out in the form of a new higher civilization is a question for historians as well. The historians have also to address the question as to why the embryonic growth of bourgeois forces (as the harbinger of modern industrial society) got aborted in India, which as such remained plunged into medievalism when Europe was entering the modern age through bourgeois industrial revolution. In other words, why did the elan vital of the Sikh movement got encrusted after the period of Banda Bahadur? Why did the Sikh revolution regress into feudal relations, feudal ethos? Such questions will have to be addressed in a perspectival history of the Punjab of the last 500 years.

Unfortunately, far from conceiving such a perspectival history of Punjab, there are clearly visible orchestrated attempts at **dehistoricizing the history of Punjab-and of Sikh history in particular**-in the name of deconstruction of legends, myths, which are symbolic self-perceptions of the people concerned.

There are some other unresolved historical paradoxes relating to the Punjab's history that need to be addressed by modern historians, particularly the stereotyped, conventional metanarrative of the partition that blames the divide-and-quit policy of the British and the intransigence of the Muslim League for the vivisection of India in 1947. This metanarrative also contends that the Sikhs-recognized as the third party, along with the Hindus and Muslims-could not carve out their own historical destiny owing to their small numerical strength. The truth is that right upto the Cabinet Mission Plan (1946), the British endeavoured to keep India united but with institutionalised corporate participation-backed by constitutional sanctions-of the three major communities in the polity of free India; this was not acceptable to the Congress leadership

in the given context of the Hindu-Muslim divide the roots of which stretched back to the very nature of the reformation processes in India which arose on communitarian lines but developed along centrifugal communal curves. The Sikh leadership with its bivalent relationship with the Hindu and the Islamic dispensation could have played a bridge-building role, but failed to rise to the occasion. The Sikh leaders, while crying for a united free India, had burnt their boats with their unwarranted anti-Muslim outbursts, thereby losing both bargaining position and bridge-building potential. The theatre of the Absurd can legitimely stake a claim over the utterances of some of the Sikh leaders in this refrain : "We would make supreme sacrifices for keeping India united. Pakistan would be built over our dead bodies! But if Pakistan is to be conceded, we also need a bite of the cake!!" The Sikh leadership, obsessed with its anti-Muslim sentiment, at every crucial juncture, foreclosed its political options-and its political leverage for bargaining position-by instant rejection of the Communal Award, the Cripps Plan and the Cabinet Mission Proposals. Thus, the Sikh leadership could play only a reactive role, incapacitating itself for a proactive role, essential for self-determination of one's historical destiny.

The point is that the metanarrative of the partition and many other unresolved problems require a fresh look in the perspective of the 21st century.

[*Resume* of the Inaugural Address delivered at the Thirty-Second Session of Punjab History Conference on 17-19 March, 2000 at Punjabi University, Patiala].
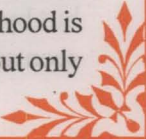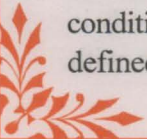
# GENDER EQUALITY

Despite the ascendency of the feminist movement over the past fifty years, backed by U. N. International Women's Decade (1976-85) during which three U. N. Conferences in Mexico City, Copenhagen and Nairobi were held, gender equality is nowhere near realization in the true sense of the expression.

The intended empowerment of women through their 33% representation in the Panchayati Raj institutions; various enactments of legal provisions including addition of section 498-A in the Indian Penal Code making cruelty by husband (or his relative) to his wife an offence; the setting up of various State organs such as a separate Department of Women and Child Development at the Centre, National Commission for Women, Central Social Welfare Board-all such measures, besides Constitutional equality, have, in actuality, done precious little for amelioration of the general conditions of women in India. There is, rather, phenomenal increase in atrocities and violence against women, as is clear from the ever-rising cases of dowry deaths; female foeticide, etc., which make non-sense of the political rhetoric of our march towards gender equality and non-discrimination.

The feminist discourse has not even succeeded in defining as to what constitutes the female liberation : whether her economic independence; legal equality; her human rights; empowerment; or sexual liberation from tabooed morality. These could be the **necessary** conditions for gender equality and but not **sufficient** conditions for emancipation of women. Even now womanhood is defined and understood not in terms of her **whole being** but only

in terms of **her body, her sexuality, her physical form.** Still, she is not allowed self-willed, free expression of her sexuality which is, rather, subjected to male-determined norms of chastity and purity. This compelling, coercive conformity, in a sense, means a female's alienation from her own sexuality which, then, becomes a "commodity". In this process of reification, in Marxian terminology, a woman's physical form gets, in a sense, alienated from her essence, from her individuality. The reified form is then fetishized; it is only as a **fetishized form** that a woman appears as autonomous, as independent; this fetishist deceptive independence leads to another form of alienation—alienation from her social context of inter-personal relationships. This "commoditification" of female sexuality not only makes it a "commodity" in itself but also an **instrument** in the marketing of other goods through modern electronic visual media, in which the female body is exploited in being erotically associated with all the goods displayed in T.V. advertisements, fashion shows, beauty contests, modelling, etc.

Looking historically at the problem, some myths about the gender inequality stand exploded. The recent results of the genome project, decoding the genetic code, have provided scientific evidence that gender difference is not rooted in genetic constitution of man and woman which is same in either case. The classical Marxist theory propounded by F. Engels that gendered division of labour arose when population settled in the form of stationary agricultural communities, leading to masculine domination first in the field and then at home, has also turned out to be flawed as the (now collapsed) socialist dispensation also did not result in woman's equality and emancipation. This has led some thinkers to contend that gender inequality is produced not by **relations** of **production** but by **relations of reproduction** in which the female body is seen as just a **receptacle** for conceiving and delivering life, with

man's dominational role in fertilizing the egg and, thus, really producing and protecting life after birth. The new phenomenon of surrogate mothers letting out their wombs for cloning of babies-made possible by latest techniques-has all the potential for further **debasement of the female,** apart from abnormal, deformed babies that might be delivered out as such.

Contemporary feminist theories, whether based on genetic constitution, relations of production or relations of reproduction, remain insufficient, as these do not adequately take into reckoning the role of culture and religious traditions, which on existential levels are all gender-differential, despite idealization, and even idolization, of womanhood in theory.

The pre-Aryan cult of Mother Goddess reverberates in various religious-cultural traditions of India in many diverse forms which idealize woman as personified *shakti* (power, life force). In Sankhya philosophy, it is the creativity of womenhood that is hypostatized as active *prakriti* in relation to passive *purusha.* But when the soul-God (atma-Paramatma) relationship came to be patterned and envisioned in terms of wife-husband relationship, then, the *prevailing,* rather than the ideal, *context* of the female-male relationship started conditioning the individual-God relationship; the given context of female-male relationship, invertedly, became the analogue of the man-God relationship and in turn this divinized analogue became the normative pattern for the existential woman-man relationship. The bivalency of this analogue has generated gender-differentiality in our culture. Self-negation; self-surrender, self-sacrifice became, as such, the supreme "value" for *atma* before God and for a wife before her husband, whose love is, then, to be adoringly sought by the latter as a *dasi,* as a willing slave ever-ready to offer her self, her entire being, for her (divine or human) consort. In this context, one can realize the revolutionary praxis of Guru Nanak who not only

denounced the condemnation of womanhood by the social system, but more than that rejected the very gender-differentiated paradigm of the soul-God *bhakti* relationship. He introduced a new paradigm of divine relationship between the individual and God, and analogously between woman and man: one in spirit, though two in form *(ek jot doe murti).* With one conceptual stroke, Guru Nanak replaced the relationship of bondage by that of reciprocal bond, of equality, in which there remains no fear, no awe, no domination of the husband (divine or human) : *eh kinehi chakri jit bhau khasm na jae.*

The point is that the gender-contradictions inherent in our culture and religious traditions and practices need to be recognized and boldly challenged.
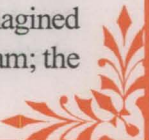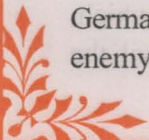
[The Presidential Address delivered at the National Symposium on *Gender Equality and Development : Challenges for the New Millennium* on 23 February, 2001 at Punjabi University, Patiala].

# THE SELF AND THE OTHER

The Self in its generalized form means aggregation or configuration of soul, mind and body, with different thinkers singling out, or giving priority to, one or the other constituent of selfhood. Plato identified the Self with soul, while Descartes took it as the "thinking I". Some philosophers envision the Self, as a substratum, a container, of the physiological faculties and processes. There are some other theorists for whom the Self is stream-like consciousness with no underlying thread or principle of continuity. However, almost all of the philosophers, particularly since the 17th century in the West, differentiate the (determining) Self from the (determined) Other. They not only trace back the dilemma of the human condition, but also the origin of the social, economic, political and cultural problems of society to the chronic contradiction between the Self and the Other. Religion also has been grappling with this contradiction.

By definition, all that is not Self, non-Self, is deemed as the Other-the unknown, the unknowable. The fear of the unknown and the awe of the unknowable conditions the response of the Self towards the Other; the Self when unable to fraternize, overcome, or sublimate the Other, tends to demonise it. On spiritual level, the Devil, the Satan, the **Asur**, is posited as the Other : the opposite of God. On sociological level this tendency takes many forms, depending upon the variables of time and space : The Philistines of the Old Testament narratives; the Jew in Nazi Germany; the bourgeois in communist utopia; the real or imagined enemy across the border; the **Kafir** in religio-political Islam; the

**malechha** in Hindu caste system and the **manmukh** in Sikh ethics-these are some of the forms of the Other who are to be wiped out!

In this encounter between the Self and the Other, the paradox lies in the point that the Self for its self-determined identity requires the Other, for the very idea of identity means identity in relation to something **other** than itself. This paradox in life, in a sense, begins (as medical science tells us) when a three-month old infant for the first time starts **recognizing** his mother and other immediate members of the family as distinct from **other** persons; implicit in this nebulous perception of distinctness is also the diffuse distinctiveness of his own being. From here originates the dialectical relationship between the Self and the Other that persists throughout one's life and spills over to societal levels. Once the infant nebulously perceives this two-layered distinctiveness, he also seeks a **bond** with his mother and other immediate members of the family, whom he starts recognizing as his **own** different from the other. Conceptualizing this dialectical phenomenon, we can say that the Self on the one hand posits its identity in differentiation from the Other, and on the other hand, seeks re-bonding with that from which it has separated itself off initially. The Self, as an object, sets itself apart from the Other so as to re-relate itself as subject with the latter. How the Self re-relates itself with the Other-in diverse, contradictory forms-has been the perennial problem of man and society, both on subjective and objective levels.

Overwhelmed by the merciless forces and elements of nature, man (the Self) propitiates them (the Other) in different forms of nature worship; the next step in this direction is the deification of the elements of nature. The deified elements of nature-Indradevta, Varunadevta, etc.-are gradually subsumed under an absolute category : God as the supreme Deity, the Other of which, obstinately, re-appears, as mentioned above, **qua** the Devil, the

Satan, the **Asur.** On actual, practical religious level, the community of the faith-followers draws a line between the insiders and the outsiders. The outsiders are then sought to be brought onto the Self-proclaimed righteous path to God through preaching, persuasion, inducement, allurement or coercion. The non-conformists-the Other-are, then condemned to hell in the other world and to the ghetto in this world.

On psychological level, the Self (the Freudian ego) suppresses the norm-breaking libidinal impulses, as the Other, necessitating their suppression. The repressed Other subsisting in the subconscious and unconscious layers of mind gets either sublimated expression in creativity (sensuous Ajanta paintings; almost nude yakshis-female-figures-excavated at Sanghol near Chandigarh; sexual imagery of some bivalent strands of Bhakti poetry) or de-sublimated manifestation in pathological states of personality.

This tendency, on sociological level, takes the form of homogenization of the Other : the minorities, ethnic communities, tribles, etc., treated as being outside the majoritarian mainstream to the extent to which such sub-totalities seek to preserve their identities, their differential lifestyles and values. This phenomenon is, in a sense, a case of the polarity of the Self and the Other inherent in the Kantian dualism of the transcendental ego and the things-in-themselves. The Kantian Self, in the sense of transcendental ego, super-imposes its inherent, innate structures on the things-in-themselves. This is how we get the structured, mediated, forms of experience of the world. In a goggles-like manner that colours what is viewed, the Self, in imposing its structures on the reality-in-itself, determines the Other. The Kantian Self incarnates itself on political level in the form of modern nation-state which seeks to determine, to structure, to homogenize the Other-the sub-totalities.

In brief, what starts as an infant's perception of recognition gradually takes the form of a distinction between the Self and the Other, changing into difference and differentiation which, when not accepted, invite intolerance and hostility; suppression and annihilation.
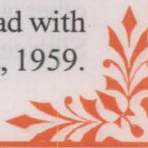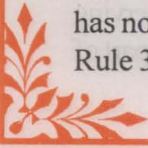
But a turning point seems to have arrived in postmodernist thought. It is being realized that when the Self can be constituted only under the condition of difference and differentiation, then, the Other is necessary for the very **being** of the former. The dialectical (contradictory) relationship gives way to reflexive (mutually conditioning) relationship. This new relationship accords respectability, legitimacy and autonomy to the hitherto considered Other-the minorities, ethnicities etc. Autonomy of particularity and heteronomy of societal totality seem to be emerging as the basis of the third millennium civilization. But the homogenizing trends inherent in globalization seem to be bringing in, from the backdoor, the old polarity of the determining Self (the needs-determining multinational companies) and the determined Other (the consumers under the illusion of being the choosers, the King); the new polarity is more complex, more dangerous. So between the Self and the Other who would have the last laugh?

# SHOULD THE RIGHT TO DEFINE A SIKH BE SURRENDERED TO THE STATE?

Ever since the coming into being of the Delhi Gurdwaras Prabandhak Committee Act in 1971, that confined the definition of a Sikh to a **keshadhari** Sikh, a debate has been going on within the Sikh community for modifying the relevant provisions of the 1925 Sikh Gurdwaras Act, relating to the Shiromani Gurdwaras Prabandhak Committee, so as to deprive the **sahjdhari** Sikhs of their present right to both elect and be elected as members of the S. G. P. C.

Unfortunately right from the very beginning this debate has been off-the-tangent. The argument given in favour of amending the definition of the expression 'Sikh' is that the non-Sikhs by declaring themselves as **sahjdhari** can get themselves registered as voters for purposes of elections to the general house of the S. G. P. C. But no statistical evidence has so far been adduced to show as to whether any non-Sikh under the guise of a **sahjdhari** has ever manouvered himself elected as a member of the S. G. P. C.; or whether in any constituency a sizable number of non-Sikh voters have ever registered themselves **sahjdhari** Sikhs to the extent of influencing the result of the S. G. P. C. election in that constituency. In this mostly unenlightened debate, it is forgotten that in the event of a question arising as to whether a person is a Sikh or not, he is required-for being deemed a Sikh-to file a declaration to the effect that he is a Sikh, that he believes in Sri Guru Granth Sahib, that he believes in the ten Gurus and that he has no other religion : Section 2 (g) of the 1925 Act, read with Rule 3 (1) of the Sikh Gurdwaras Board Election Rules, 1959.

The filing of a wrong declaration can be made really deterrent.

The fact of the matter is that the whole controversy is being carried on from the angle of real or imagined threat to electoral gains in the S. G. P. C. elections and not from the angle of ensuring that the right kind of persons should elect and be elected as members of the S. G. P. C. **There is certainly a sound point in the argument that only those who are keshadhari Sikhs should be eligible to be registered as voters for electing those entrusted with the management of the Sikh shrines. But the argument should not be stretched beyond this point to knock out the sahjdharis from the Sikh community.**

At present, as mentioned above, a **sahjdhari** is treated as a Sikh under section 2 (10 A) of the 1925 Sikh Gurdwaras Act. Under section 49, a **sahjdhari** is entitled to be an elector of the S. G. P. C. general house; under section 45 (1) even a **sahjdhari** Sikh can be elected to the S. G. P. C. house-a condition being only in the case of a **keshadhari** Sikh to be **amritdhari** also for contesting the election. So the 1925 Act treats the (traditional) **sahjdharis** as part and parcel of the Sikh community, which in its characteristically liberal approach has not closed its doors on **non-keshadhari, non-amritdhari** Sikhs. Implicit in this approach is the postulate that **sahjdhari, keshadhari and amritdhari** are three evolutionary stages in the spiritual development of a Sikh in that order. Those at the lowest stage should, through missionary work, be brought up to the higher stages, without ostracizing them out from the Sikh folds or condemning them as **patit.**

Traditional **sahjdharis** are those who are born in such non-Sikh families as have come under religious influence of Sikhism. Apart from such non-keshadhari Sikhs, there has cropped up a new category of the Sikhs who, though born in Sikh families, do not keep unshorn, long hair and beard, but, nevertheless, for all other purposes, are devout Sikhs professing Sikh religion, observing Sikh ceremonies and considering themselves as an integral part of

Sikh society. Quite a large number of the Sikhs who have gone to other countries belong to this category. The problem is how to treat the old category of traditional **sahjdharis** as well as this new category of Sikhs, who do not keep hair and beard. How to cope with this existential reality?

This brings us to the question of the scope and domain of the Gurdwaras legislation, and of the State. A Gurdwaras legislation would be well within its legitimate domain and scope if it seeks to lay down as to who, among the **votaries of Sikh religion**, will be eligible as **voters for electing members of the S. G. P. C.** for management of the Sikh shrines; the Act can also legitimately prescribe as to who, among the voters, can be **candidates** for elections. In other words, the legislation can lay down conditions and qualifications for being the elector and the elected. But surely, it can be neither the domain nor the scope of the Act, that is, of the State in actuality, to determine as to who is and is not a follower of Sikhism. This, in fact, is the domain of the religious tenets and tradition. If a person by exigency of birth or by voluntary adoption professes a particular religion, and there is in existence a well-established tradition within that religion, which recognizes the way in which that person professes the religion as the standard way, or as one of the standard ways, of professing that religion, then, that person has to be treated as a follower of the religion concerned. On the level of existential reality this can be the only (two-fold) criterion for determining as to who is or is not a Sikh : (a) the professing of Sikh religion by an individual, and (b) the existence of religious tradition, backed by religious tenets, recognizing him as such.

The point is that we have to realistically cope with the existential reality by distinguishing between the **voters for the S. G. P. C. elections** and the **votaries of the Sikh religion,** including those who are traditional **sahjdharis** as well as those who do not keep long hair and beard or do trimming, though cutting hair is

certainly an undesirable practice. But this practice should be tackled through propagation of the Sikh tenets, and not through ostracizing them out from the Sikh community, legislatively. **The simple, sensible and realistic solution of the present controversy** would be to altogether delete the definitional expressions **'Sikh', 'Sahjdhari** Sikh', **'Keshadhari'** Sikh' and **'Amritdhari** Sikh' from the 1925 Sikh Gurdwaras Act and to incorporate, in their place, the term 'Voter' eligible to be registered as such for the S. G. P. C. elections, provided he, professing the Sikh religion, keeps (uncut) long hair and beard. The deletion of the present definitional terms from the 1925 Act is also essential- **this is most important, though ignored, aspect of the debate-** ffrom the angle that the right to define a Sikh can not be surrendered to the State. If the Sikh leadership in 1925, and then in 1971, committed the unpardonable sin of surrendering this right to the government, atleast, now we should not go on repeating the commission of the sin.

Guru Ram Das, the fourth Prophet of Sikhism, has in his *bani* described as to who is a Sikh *(Guru Satgur Ka Jo Sikh Akhaye.....)* The right to define who is or is not Sikh falls in the domain of the Sikh tenets and tradition, and not that of the State.

Can the followers of any other religion in the world-Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, etc.-ever think of surrendering such a right to the State, that is, to government. Tomorrow, Canadian Sikh citizens, not satisfied by the statutory definition of a Sikh here in India might ask their government to define, afresh, the term Sikh. Or the Pakistan Sikh Gurdwaras Board might ask the Pakistan government to define the expression Sikh in that country. The enlightened Sikh opinion must assert itself organizedly, forcefully and effectively against the surrendering of the right to define a Sikh to the State or any of its organs.
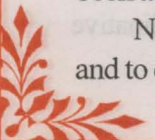
# UPDATING INDIAN CONSTITUTION IN
# FEDERAL PERSPECTIVE

The setting up, by the Government of India, of 'The National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution', in June, 2000, with the objective, *inter alia,* of making it respond to the "changing needs", provides a welcome opportunity not only for an appraisal of the Centre-States relations over the past fifty years, but also for restoring the original federal spirit and substance of the Constitution and re-orienting it further along federalistic lines. The notification issued by the Centre makes it clear that the basic structure of the Constitution, including the institution of Parliamentary Democracy, has to be kept intact while suggesting changes therein.

The Supreme Court of India has observed that federalism is an aspect of the basic feature of our Constitution (AIR 1994 Supreme Court 1918). It may be recalled here that the Objectives Resolution adopted by the Constituent Assembly on January 22, 1947 envisaged that the Union would have only those three powers of Defence, Foreign Affairs and Communications conceded to it by the Cabinet Mission, with autonomous States having all residuary powers. However when the Constitution, after 1947, was finalized and adopted by "We, the people of India", notwithstanding its federal form, its inherent orientation tilted towards unitary polity. Over the past fifty years or so, there has been a consistent erosion of the original federal features.

Now is the time to mobilize the forces committed to federalism and to create a climate of opinion for updating the Constitution in

federal perspective. Federalization of national polity is essential from four angles : coordinative and complementary strengthening of the Centre and the States; imperatives of plural nature of Indian society; empowerment of the people, going beyond their mere enfranchisement, and the challenges of globalization. The high-sounding orchestrated myth that unity of India could be ensured and reinforced by unitary polity, erected on homogenized social base, stands exploded. Realization has dawned that socio-economic tensions and disparities have arisen due to super-imposed over-centralized planning and discriminatory attitude of the Centre towards the States over the decades. The totalizing, tendentious polity, which is correlative to unitarianism, has resulted in assertive, aggressive ethnic reactions, ethno-religious confrontations that often take on militant, fundamentalist-secessionist forms; these can be best resolved only in a true federal set-up. Secondly, the plural, composite character of Indian society-particularly when the minorities of different types have become self-conscious about their respective identities-necessitates recasting of Indian Constitution to make it reflective of this historical reality. Thirdly, constitutionally prescribed devolution and decentralization of power, authority and resources is necessary for the empowerment of the people at the grass-roots level. Fourthly, globalization is leading to changing equations between economic zones and political divisions; this process impinges upon the Centre-States relations which can not remain static.

The unitary distortions of Indian Constitution during the last 50 years should be rolled back in favour of a multi-focal federal polity; the present *subordinate* relationship of the States with the Centre should be changed into a *coordinate* relationship of co-sharing power, authority and resources leading to real coordinative federalism.

Federalization of national polity, in a sense, means transforming the present subservient, *subordinate* relationship between the Centre and the States into *coordinate* relationship in all forms and at all levels : political; legislative; economic; administrative-executive, etc. The demand for autonomy of the States in federalized dispensation is, in essence, re-structuring of the Centre-States equations into *coordinate* relationships. (The kind of autonomy demanded by the J & K Assembly is on a different footing and should not be confused with the question of autonomy spelt out here.) The provisions in the Constitution need to be amended and updated accordingly.

The first and foremost imperative is to incorporate the expressions 'federal' and 'plural Indian society' in the Preamble to the Constitution.

The Centre should not have the power to wipe out, destroy or dilute the ethnic self-identities of the constituent States. For this purpose, a specific proviso to the above effect should be added to Article 3 of the Constitution.

Constitutional provisions empowering the Centre to dissolve a State Government and/or its assembly need to be deleted. When there is no provision for the President to take over the Central Government in the event of failure of constitutional processes and of law and order, etc., there is no reason why the States should remain under constant threat of the Presidential rule. The situation in the State should be dealt with in the same way in which it is envisaged to be handled in the case of the Union Government. Articles 356 and 365 should as, such, be done away with as also Articles 256 and 257 which are not in consonance with federal principles.

A Constitutional provision should be added that the federal set-up would not change into a unitary system, as at present, even during the Proclamation of Emergency (in rarest circumstances).

Responding to the imperatives of the plural Indian society and regional concerns, the Rajya Sabha, being the Council of States, should be reconstituted with all the States having equal representation therein, irrespective of the factors of size and population.

To make parliamentary democracy really substantive, the recognized political parties should have in the State legislatures and the Lok Sabha institutional representation in proportion to the votes polled by them, besides their individual candidates successful in the elections.

For making Constitution respond to the "changing needs", it is essential to re-draw the Union List, Concurrent List and State List on federal lines, with residuary powers vesting in the State Legislatures. The original State List should not only be restored but also strengthened to cope with the imperatives of empowerment of the people and of the forces of globalization. The legislature of a State should have exclusive jurisdiction to legislate in respect of the State List matters.

Entry No. 41 relating to trade and commerce etc., should be shifted from the Union List to the Concurrent List, otherwise the State economies, remaining at the mercy of the Centre, would be thrown out of the orbit of global economies.

The institution of Governor in a State also needs to be radically changed, so that instead of being, in fact, a representative of the Centre, he should become and act as the constitutional head of the State.

The centralized planning, super-imposed from above in a unitary system, has failed to deliver the desired goods. Further, the near-absence of financial autonomy of the States; inadequate funding resources, and unbalanced distribution of the Union resources among the States have not only made them totally dependent upon the Centre, but have also incapacitated them to

chalk out their own planning priorities, with assured funding backed by Constitutional, statutory provisions. As such, the fiscal relations between the Centre and the States need to be radically transformed on federal lines. The States should be allocated additional sources of revenue, besides their statutory share in the Central revenues (divisible pool). The criteria for apportionment of shares among the States also needs to be rationalized so that the tilt against certain States, like Punjab, is balanced.

The rejection of the one-Party monolithic system in favour of multi-Party coalition system of government at the Centre is significant and symbolic. The massive mandate of the people is, in essence, a rejection of the unitary system. This shift has brought about a coalition ideology. This is a turning point in our political history. This is the people's mandate for a shift from unitary system to really federal system as envisaged in the original Constitution of India. For the first time since 1947, the regional parties have so effectively and so dynamically become co-partners in political power at the Centre. This is a new, healthy experiment in which emergence of tensions between the national parties, between the national and regional parties, as also between the regional parties, is but natural. Such tensions can be best resolved in a truly federal set-up.

The Punjab has been in the forefront in raising a strong, balanced voice for realizing true federal structure in response to the "changing needs" of the times; though at times this sober and *sehaj margi* demand, articulated by the mainstream Akali Dal has often been misunderstood, misinterpreted. It appears certain vested interests are again bent upon wrapping up the Anandpur Sahib resolution in confusion and controversy. What is being read into this historic resolution by its opponents is not there and what is there has been little read even by most of its protagonists. The 1973 draft of the Anandpur Sahib resolution was passed by the

executive committee of the Shiromani Akali Dal *for approval* by the general house which has inherent right to accept, amend or reject the executive committee's draft proposals. It certainly had *deliberately kept* ambivalent and multivalent expressions. For instance, it demanded that Punjab and other States should have the right to frame their own *aaeen* (Urdu expression for Constitution). Efforts have been made, from time to time, to tone down and soften this expression by rendering it as 'Laws'. But the authentic text of the Anandpur Sahib resolution is that which was passed by the general house of the Shiromani Akali Dal on 29th October, 1978, at its 18th All India Conference at Ludhiana. This was the text that was authenticated by Sant Harchand Singh Longowal at the time of signing the Rajiv-Longowal Accord. S. Parkash Singh Badal had endorsed this text at the Ludhiana Conference (He was not associated with the making of the 1973 draft proposals). The 1973 draft prepared by the executive committee became superseded by (and sublated into) the 1978 text when the general house adopted this new (radically modified) text which, as such, is the anchor of the mainstream Akali Dal. This 1978 resolution seeks a true federal set-up by re-structuring the Centre-States relations.

Some people betray allergic, alarmist reaction the moment the expression *autonomy* is mentioned. They perhaps have not seen the following observation of our Supreme Court which recognises the States as partaking of 'political sovereignty' coordinatively with the Union of India :

> Political sovereignty is distributed between the Union of India and the States with greater weightage in favour of the Union (State of Bengal vs. Union of India, 1964 (1) S. C. R. 371, page 398).

The crux of the matter-political, legislative, fiscal and administrative autonomy in truly federal set-up-is embodied in the

following Divine message of Guru Arjun, the fifth Prophet of Sikhism :

> ਸਭੇ ਸਾਝੀਵਾਲ ਸਦਾਇਨਿ
> ਤੂੰ ਕਿਸੇ ਨਾ ਦਿਸਹਿ ਬਾਹਰਾ ਜੀਉ ॥
>
> *[All are co-equal partners in Thy Commonwealth, with none treated as alien.]*

The strength of the parts (States) is the real strength of the whole (Union) and vice-versa.

[The Presidential Address delivered at the inaugural session of the Punjabi University's seminar on Indian Constitution on 20th July, 2000].

# BEYOND POSTMODERNISM

Modern Western civilization arose on the basis of the grand narrative (in postmodernist terminology) of *reason,* this metanarrative was constituted by certain 'universals' which flowed out of *reason* as the central supreme, absolute 'universal'. First, there was the universal belief that the constitution of reality-whether material or social-was rational. Secondly, the rational constitution of reality-reflected in its causative structure-was fully and finally knowable through the reductive-analytic method of *reason*-a method that for deciphering and de-coding the 'whole' reduced it into its parts. Deterministic materialism, as such, was held to be the ultimate paradigm of material reality. The Hegelian postulate that 'the real is rational, the rational real' implied another 'universal' that the rational has an inherent tendency, an inherent directionality, to realize itself in time, in history. Deterministic historicism, as such, was believed to be the ultimate paradigm of social reality. Marxism contends that the dialectic of class struggle, rather than any spiritual teleology, is the motor force of this deterministic historicism, which it calls historical materialism. This deterministic historicism led to another 'universal' that the linear directionality of history, with deterministic inevitability, would lead to progress, to emancipation of humanity in a rational socio-politico-economic structure wherein there would be no room for irrational inequity and inequality, injustice and exploitation. History was seen as progressing towards this kind of *rational* social dispensation; technology was seen as the driving force of 'progress'.

But the latter half of the 20th century saw the collapse of this

grand narrative of modern Western civilization : the metanarrative of *reason*. This collapse came with the collapse of the once mighty *reason* that had since Enlightenment reigned supreme in nature, thought, history and society.

Paradoxically *reason* was knocked off of its reigning supremacy by its own egoistic claim of universal validity and capacity in knowing reality fully and finally. Microphysical particles refused to behave in a *rational* (causative) manner; they refused to reveal their simultaneous position and momentum at any given point of time. W. Heisenberg, realizing the epistemic inadequacy of *reason*-of its reductive-analytic method-in knowing reality objectively (independently of the 'subject') propounded his famous principle of indeterminacy. This was an *impasse* beyond which *reason* could not go in its comprehension of reality. The notion of the objectively 'given' reality, with *rational* structure in the traditional sense, knowable independently of the knower (the observer), stands knocked out. The knower and the known are being seen as intertwined, mutually inclusive and not mutually exclusive. It is being felt that the traditional (dualistic, atomistic, reductionist) view is incapable of revealing the essence of reality, its mystery, its teleology. A new view-holistic-is needed that would see reality in its concrete (determinate) wholeness, in terms of integrality, inter-connectedness and inter-dependence-a view that would see the whole in the parts and the parts in whole, envisioned as dynamic *becoming* and not static *being*.

This *impasse* of *reason* was, in a sense, the *impasse* of modern Western civilization necessitating a paradigm shift in thinking. The illusion of 'progress' turned out to be a self-delusion. The myth of the inevitability of (socialist) order of society stood exploded. The dream of emancipation of humanity through social engineering came out to be a nightmarish experience, thanks to the bulldozing totalitarian regimes. The autonomy of the individual–

the matrix of human rights–was eroded by overarching nation-state that refused to recognize allegiance of the individual to any other principle–community, religion, ethnicity, etc.–counterpoised as the Other. Human essence was reduced into existence, and existence was digitized into dots. The cleavage between the poor and the rich, between the elite and marginalized, among the countries as well as within most of the countries, widened day after day. The dialectic of class contradictions gave way to that of ethnic, ethno-religious and ethno-political contradictions in the context of growing tensions between secular nationalism and religious nationalism. The ideal of inter-community accommodation in a composite society stood shattered under the over-bearing weight of the State-backed processes of assimilation and homogenization; secular evangelism has proved itself to be more subtle, more complex and hence more dangerous than its ancestral 'religious' varieties. Western technology was based on the notion that lifeless, inanimate nature existed for man to be discovered (through laws of nature) and exploited (through ruthless use of natural resources) for his material progress. The end-result appears to be not 'progress' percolating down to the lowest levels of society but alarming depletion of natural resources in the absence of sustainable models of growth, and disturbance of ecological balance of nature to a point where even the very existence of life of this planet has become problematic.

This scenario led to the postmodernist "incredulity toward metanarratives" in the words of Jean Francois Lyotard and to a feeling of betrayal by the very 'universals' that had sustained mankind's hope for about three centuries. In earlier civilizations, 'faith' had held promise of redemption of the soul in other-worldly life; modern Western civilization postulated that deified *reason* would ensure amelioration of the conditions of man and society in this very world.

The postmodernist disillusionment with the 'universals' swung the pendulum to the other extreme : from the universal to the particular, the local, the discrete; from centripetality to centrifugality; from unitarianism to plurality; from unity to diversity; from the unificatory to the differential, and from homogeneity to heterogeneity.

But the postmodernist differential (differmatic) view of reality had an inherent epistemic weakness. Earlier, Buddhism with its atomistic conception of time and reality could not, for want of an organising, relational principle, develop its concept of change into a coherent conception of evolution and development; consequently change became synonymous with "momentariness."

Despite its rejection of the schemata of grand narratives, the postmodernism's differential view of reality in terms of heterogeneity, diversity, discreteness is, in a sense, a grand narrative in itself, but with an epistemic weakness. The epistemic weakness is the lack of an organizing principle necessary for holding together the differentialities. The holding-together, the inter-locking, of the differentialities is essential, for without such networking, the differential cannot attain the quality and character of determinate concreteness which is at the centre of the postmodernist creed; it is in a network of relations that the concrete becomes determinate reality : the concrete as a distinctive part of the whole constituted by inter-related parts. The new organizing principle is given by the epistemic concept of 'systems thinking', a holistic cognition of reality. 'Systems thinking' cognizes reality in terms of 'wholes-within-wholes'; a whole is a (non-static) configuration of the parts and, in turn, is a 'part' in relation to another configuration. The holistic view in the sense of systems thinking is contradistinguishable from both monistic and dualistic-dichotomous view. An organismic whole is not a coalescent, monistic unity; nor is it an aggregate of (dichotomous) parts. An organismic whole-'whole' as an organism-is of the nature of differentiated unity. But this does not mean a

regress from *reason;* not "going back" from *reason* to the *irrational* but going to the suprarational *spirit* in which the *rational* would endure as the past endures in the present in an organism.

It is not the *spirit* dogmatised in religion. It is the Self-realising Spirit which is the very creativity of the Divine; the dynamics of the cosmos; the elan vital of history; the source of values for society and the very essence of human spirit. The Spirit is not an incarnation of world soul; cosmic consciousness; demiurge; nor is it a version of Platonic Idea, Aristotelian Form, Spinoza's Substance, Hegelian Geist or Bergsonian Duree. Spirit is not something esoteric or mystical, inwardly felt in intution. Spirit is an outflowing current, and outpouring of energy, it is *becoming* in which novelty emerges in each new configuration; new qualities evolve that characterize the new wholes.

Spirit is not an entity or a being requiring an external medium for its Self-expression and Self-revelation; it, rather, *instantiates* itself in inter-connections; relations; linkages patternizing and repatternizing themselves into organismic wholes-within-wholes, constituting, as such, a holistic network of relations from the terrestrial to the transcendent. The rigid boundaries of the traditional pairs of mind and matter; soul and body; subject and object noumenal and phenomenal, melt into fluid wholes of inter-connections; the old dualistic as well as monistic conceptions dissolve into a new "network conception" of reality in terms of organismic wholes-within-wholes, of systems nesting in other systems, of relations intertwined with other relations. This is how the epistemology of 'systems thinking', of holistic cognition, has its ontological counterpart in the concept of Spirit. The notion of *spirit* in this sense would, it appears, be the foundational principle of the global civilization of the third millennium analogous to the way in which *reason* has been the foundational postulate of the modern Western civilization.

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