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ISBN 81-7380-468-0

1998
First Edition : 1100 Copies
Price : 180-00

Published by Prof. Ranbir Singh, M.A., Ph.D., Registrar, Punjabi University,
Patiala and printed by M/s Ram Printograph, New Delhi.

FOREWORD

The 300th birth anniversary of the Khalsa Panth will be observed all over the world in 1999. It is going to be a landmark in the history of the Khalsa Panth which had been created by Guru Gobind Singh on the Vaisakhi (30th March) of A.D. 1699. Before his dis-appearance from the scene in 1708, Guru Gobind Singh bestowed the pontifical office on the Khalsa Panth and the Guru Granth Sahib. To be precise, it is bestowed on the Word enshrined in the Guru Granth Sahib, which comprises hymns of the six of the ten Sikh Gurus and many a saint, belonging both to the Hindu and the Islamic traditions.

The Punjabi University, Patiala, proposes to bring out a series of books to mark the tricentenary of the Khalsa. The books will focus on the universal values of the Sikh faith and throw into relief its futuristic vision. Dr. Dharam Singh's *Dynamics of the Social Thought of Guru Gobind Singh* forms part of the project being undertaken by the University in the context of the tricentenary celeberations of the Khalsa Panth.

The book makes an analytical and interpretative study of Guru Gobind Singh's select hymns. The preceding and contemporary socio-political milieu, which had shaped the Sikh ethos and polity, is also subjected to scrutiny. Dr. Dharam Singh underlines the distinctiveness of the metaphysical doctrines that emerge from the text and takes into account the ontological and epistemological premises which, in a specific sense, set the Sikh world-view apart from that of the Indian-born and the Semitic religious traditions.

I am sure the present book will constitute a notable addition to the exsisting literature on the social philosophy of Guru Gobind Singh.

Joginder Singh Puar
Vice-Chancellor

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

There have been quite a good number of books on the life of Guru Gobind Singh including a few on his works in their individual or collective form. Most of this literature came up during 1966 or soon thereafter : 1966 was celebrated as the tercentenary of the Guru's birth. However, there has been very little work done on the philosophy especially the social philosophy of Guru Gobind Singh. The book in hand is perhaps the first full-length study of the social thought of the Guru. Another characteristic feature the of book is that it does not accept Guru Gobind Singh's social ideology as historical necessity but derives it from his metaphysical thought.

After a descriptive analysis of source materials, the book goes on to a discussion of Sikh philosophy, theology and relationship of God with the cosmos, human kind and the whole of creation. The author has based all his assumptions on the *bāṇī* of Guru Gobind Singh as included in the *Dasam Granth*, and of course on that of the preceding Gurus as contained in the Guru Granth Sahib. He takes into account the background in general Indian philosophies and the religous movements (including Islam) in the days of the Gurus, very carefully pointing out that these are but background and raw material, shaped and created anew by the Sikh Gurus. Thus, he firmaly traces the grounds of the social thought of Guru Gobind Singh in its essential basis in every aspect of Gurmat. That is why we do not have social thought in itself, it is social thought and action as it flows out of Sikh philosophy, theology and tradition.

It is this consistent pattern of love, equality, equity (through sharing and service of all), compassion and self-respect which we have seen among the most admirable achievements of Sikhism and indeed guarantee its continuance and spread. From Banda Singh Bahadur's redistribution of land to the Sikhs of Toronto joining in the philanthropic schemes to assist the underprivileged the motives and springs of action have been the divine source. That is the nature of God

and God's purpose and presence in the world as embodied in the *granth* (Guru Granth Sahib) and the *panth* (Khalsa Panth).

We have to thank Dr Dharam Singh for bringing this out in clear logical thought stated in a strong, attractive and pure English prose. His entry into the world of academics has not been easy and smooth, and he has come to academic writing the hard way. But there is sure promise as we look forward to other important works from his fluent pen and fertile mind.

Professor Emeritus of History and Comparative Religion **Noel Q. King**
University of California

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The problem of social philosophical thought generally rests on the kind of social realities and the relationships envisaged between religion and society in a particular time and clime. The relationship between the two is not only fundamental to the nature of religion but also intrinsic to the nature of society. Religion invokes a distinction between the sacred and the secular, applies this distinction to determine the status of the empirical world, and offers prescriptions for social order, individual behaviour and collective action. It determines the boundaries and contours of the secular in relation to the sacred, and in the process seeks, generally speaking, to affirm the sanctity of life. It also affirms that life's socialite forms and expressions should be infused with the values the sacred stands for. This implicitly gives expression to the spiritual affinity of the manifest world with the supreme Reality and to the relationship between the human ideal and its present reality. However, different religious traditions distinguish themselves from one another as regards their views on this fundamental relationship and their respective vision of the social structure as distinct from the present social reality.

In the West, the question of relationship between religion and society and the problem of social philosophical thought were not the subject of systematic concentrated study until the 19th century. However, they had become subject to intellectual exposition even as early as 2nd century B.C. when Plato in his *Republic* discussed the question regarding the ingredients of an ideal state. After him, Aristotle in his book on Ethics dwelt upon the question of contribution made by moral and ethical ideals to the human social life in this mundane world. The subject was touched upon in medieval Christian literature as well. The classical Christian theology answers Plato's questions of what is that always is and has no becoming, and what is

that is always becoming and never is. According to this view, however, the manifest world is a secondary and subordinate reality vis-a-vis the supreme Reality, i.e. God. Instead of creating a spiritual affinity or identification between the two, this caused a conflict between the ecclesiastical and the political authorities. Consequently, first the Church remained subordinate to the State and then a sort of dichotomy developed between the two. It is only in modern times that the need for a healthy relationship between these two has been seriously realized. The movement of liberation theology that began (in early 1970s) in the Latin American Church in the belief that the saner influence of moral values espoused by religion on practical politics is as necessary for the establishment of an equitable, just and righteous social order as is the political authority to realize the values of religion in practical social life. Thus, the advocates of this movement intimately relate Church to the human life in society, to the affairs of the State.

In the Indian context also, religion forms the basis for determining the status of man and the material manifest world. According to the Hindu Vedantic thought, they were treated just appearances *(māyā)*. No doubt, it believed the entire mankind to have been born of Brahman but Manu interpreted the "Puruṣa-sūkta" hymn of the *Rig-Veda* (X:90) to prove that human beings were born of different organs of Brahman. Hence, there could not be any equality among them. This served as basis of the consequent hierarchical division of Hindu society into different *varṇas*. The Hindu theory of *karma* states that the *karmas* of the previous births determined man's present status in life, and his present *karmas* could help his eventual release from the cycle of birth and rebirth. This theory was responsible, to a large extent, in sustaining the social stratification. As a result of it, the Indians remained attached to their respective *varṇas* but failed to develop a wider national outlook. Jainism and Buddhism, the two non-Vedic Indian religions, were anti-Brahminical in their doctrines. They did not accept social stratification based on the Vedic divine sanction. Like Brahminic tradition, both these religious traditions were ascetic in nature and thus could not evolve an egalitarian social order outside of or contrary to the Hindu Vedantic social structure.

Sikhism was born in the 15th century when religion preferred formalism and ritualism to the emancipation and truthful life in the material world. It was almost completely divorced from the social

matrix and had almost no relevance to the needs of contemporary life. Little effort was made for the cultivation of spiritual values and ethical virtues for the upliftment of man and society. On the other hand, the idea of life-negation and world-negation that itself resulted from the strong dichotomy between spirit and matter was encouraged which gave birth to ascetic and pessimistic attitude towards the mundane world. This led to morbidity in social life and moral bankruptcy among the human beings. The hierarchical division of the Indian social structure into fourfold caste oriented social groups, sanctioned by sacred scriptures (say, the *Rig Veda*) made the social situation still more deplorable. Polity was also *sans* any values. The rulers had lost all sense of duty towards the masses, and were "sunk in voluptuousness and pollution of the most revolting kind, and were immersed in the abyss of the enfeebling debauchery." (Syad Muhammad Latif, *History of the Punjab*, xi). The degeneration among the ruling class had touched such depths as to prove traitorous to the national cause by its collusion with alien powers to molest and mow the honour and lives of the ruled masses, and in the process destroy their own kingdom as well. The bigotry of the rulers was another characteristic of this polity. This unbecoming and immorally oppressive behaviour of the rulers and the inert and sluggish attitude of an ordinary Indian marked the Indian state in which Sikhism was born.

Guru Gobind Singh and the Gurus preceding him made a keen observation of this milieu. They measured the societal ordering of life in which their ideas were to be expressed. We come across several such references in their hymns. No doubt, they were primarily men of God and aimed at the mystical union of *jīva* (self) with the supreme Reality. A systematic study of society or exposition of social philosophy was not their forte. Still they interpreted their mystic experiences of the Real One in religious language of the common people through metaphors and symbols from ordinary social life. They held that realization of the Divine was not different from realization of the self, and that it was to be realized here and now. Thus, religion, according to them, was not an abstract or lifeless mysticism, but was intimately connected with the social, political and cultural needs and aspirations of man in this world. In fact, they wanted to re-establish the lives of individuals and communities on a basis that was different and distinct from the social and cultural status quo. The idea of withdrawal from world prevalent in contemporary Indian religious life

was not fully congruent with the Sikh view of ordering of life and relations in society: rather they were characterized by conflict and tension. Second, the Gurus also recognized the antagonism as it prevailed then between the ecclesiastical and political authority. All attempts at subjugation of one by the other were bound to prove disastrous. Equally disastrous was the human tendency to owe allegiance to State as mere utilitarian, secular politics instead of Religion as embodiment of truth and morality.

In order to find, among other things, an effective resolution and mediation of such conflicts and tensions, the Sikh Gurus provided religion with the social matrix. They were of the opinion that for a religion to be relevant to the needs and aspirations of contemporary man it must be embedded in society and it must embrace the whole of mankind. Religion binds man to God as well as to man. No religious tradition exhorts to bind together its followers only and to make them antagonistic to the followers of other traditions. Any religion that recommends withdrawal from the realities of the material world and that denies an equal place to all human beings among themselves and at the Divine Portal cannot be expected to work for the transformation of human life in the mundane world. Man's inner (spiritual) upliftment has to be simultaneous with his outward (social) progression. It was keeping this in view that the Sikh Gurus conceived a distinct ideology and made it the *vis-a-tergo* of their social philosophy. They pursued it with a determined will and consistent effort, and the creation of the Khalsa-Panth in A.D. 1699 by Guru Gobind Singh was the realization in practice of the ideology which was articulated by Guru Nanak. Thus, the philosophical doctrines initiated and strengthened by Guru Nanak and his successors were brought to consummation by Guru Gobind Singh in whose hands the Sikh movement reached its culmination.

Guru Gobind Singh was commissioned, on the evidence of his own testimony in the autobiographical *Bachitra Nāṭak*, by the Divine for the creation of a social structure in which evil and wickedness are eradicated and goodness and saintliness prevail. Thus, we find in his life and work an emphasis to realize the essential ontological nature of societal relationships. No doubt, the earlier Gurus also executed their spiritual doctrine in the form of some concrete social institutions viz., *kīrtan, laṅgar, saṅgat, manjīs*, and so on. However, it goes to the credit of the innovative genius of Guru Gobind Singh that the metaphysico-social ideals of earlier Gurus culminated in the creation

of the Khalsa-Panth which was merely a realization of the ideal social structure of Akalpurakh.

Keeping in view the significance of philosophical concepts as enunciated in his compositions and of his role in actualizing that spirituality in societal relations in order to build 'a brave new world', the life and works of Guru Gobind Singh have been widely commented upon. However, the literature that has so far come out is mostly concerned with the biographical and literary aspects of his life. Beginning with Sainapati's *Sri Gur Sobha*, which is the earliest and a near contemporary work dealing with the life of the Guru, and *Gurbilases* and terminating with the latest chronicles most of which came out during and soon after the tercentenary celebrations of his birth in 1969, most of this literature aims at constructing the contemporary social and political milieu insofar as it helps in dealing with different events of the Guru's life. The main emphasis here is on the historical aspect of these events. No doubt, there are sporadic and occasional references to the radical social values and ideals of Guru Gobind Singh in some of these works. For example, Dr J.S. Grewal, Professor Harbans Singh and a few others have touched upon this aspect of the Guru's personality as well, but inspite of some very good issues that they raise, their works lack any coherent and systematic attempt at bringing out the social philosophy of the Guru. Perhaps this did not fall within the scope of their works which were primarily an attempt to describe and evaluate, from historical perspective, the events from Guru Gobind Singh's life in the contemporary socio-political context.

The literature which concerns with the literary merits of the Guru's works includes some exegetical works and a few doctoral dissertations. The exegetical among these works only explain the text with a view to making it easily comprehensible to the common man and also commenting upon it relating it to the canonical literature of Sikhism and other Indian and Semitic religious traditions. In the process, they discuss many doctrinal issues as well. The other works in this category generally gloss over the biographical and doctrinal aspects and concentrate themselves only on the poetic and literary merits of the Guru's hymns.

There is another category of literature which addresses itself to the question of authenticity and authorship of the compositions included in the *Dasam Granth*. Although the Sodhak Committee of the Gurmat Granth Pracharak Sabha appointed by the Khalsa Diwan,

Amritsar, with the aim of bringing out a standardized version of the *Dasam Granth* accepted in its report published in AD 1897 the entire corpus as the genuine work of Guru Gobind Singh, the controversy has remained alive. The Bhasaur school had been the most vocal (Cf. Ran Singh, *Dasam Granth Nirnaya*) in questioning the authenticity of authorship of certain texts. Those who side with this line of thinking include Ratan Singh Jaggi (*Dasam Granth da Kartritav;* 1965), Khushwant Singh (*A History of the Sikhs*; 1963), C.H. Loehlin (*The Granth of Guru Gobind Singh and the Khalsa Brotherhood*; 1979) and some others. On the other hand, Piara Singh Padam, (*Dasam Granth Darshan;* 1968), Dharam Pal Ashta (*The Poetry of the Dasam Granth;* 1959), Bhai Randhir Singh (*Shabad-Murati*, 3rd ed., 1962), and the exegetes like Giani Bishan Singh, and Bhai Narain Singh are among those who believe the entire corpus of the *Dasam Granth* as the work of Guru Gobind Singh. There are some others who do not go into this question but accept the given text as genuine work of the Guru. Among them can be included Mahip Singh (*Guru Gobind Singh Ki Hindi Kavita*; 1986), Om Prakash Bhardwaj (*Ramavtar tatha Krishnavtar Ka Kavya-Shastriya Adhyan*; 1986) and some others. Among the modern scholars, Professor Harbans Singh, Dr. Jaswant Singh Neki, Professor Nirbhai Singh and Professor Jodh Singh can also be included in this category.

In addition to the above literature, there have been some descriptive articles and research papers dealing with the Guru's social thought. A few books and booklets have since also appeared and they are Sher Singh's *Social and Political Philosophy of Guru Gobind Singh* (1967), Gurdev Singh Deol's *Social and Political Philosophy of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh* (1976), Gurbachan Singh Talib's *The Impact of Guru Gobind Singh on Indian Society* (1966), and Trilochan Sing's *Social Philosophy of Guru Gobind Singh* (1988). These works are written either from the historical standpoint or they cursorily touch upon only some of the basic philosophical concepts. The basic contention of these authors is that the social thought of Guru Gobind Singh emerges as a historical necessity rather than as a necessary corollary of the dynamic spiritual thought derived from his predecessors' and his own hymns.

The Sikh pontificate, Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh, has been a continuous and consistent process of expounding a metaphysical doctrine which was obviously independent of and distinct from that of Hinduism and for that matter from other religious

traditions as well. Their metaphysical doctrine, with a pronounced commitment for non-dual and dynamic spirituality, also served as an ideological basis for the ideal social structure of their vision. In fact, theirs was a deliberate and distinct spiritual and practical strategy to realize their vision.

The present study of Guru Gobind Singh's social thought is an attempt to formulate the social structure of the Guru's vision, his ontological doctrine serving as its *vis-a-tergo*. Guru Gobind Singh, like his predecessors, had a pronounced commitment for the unity and dynamic nature of ultimate Reality. Consequently, he held the social phenomena to be a necessary corollary of the dynamic nature of Reality. It is not dualistic from the Real One, rather it is a manifestation of the supreme Reality and is thus in essence one with it. It follows that God Himself dwells in this world and that all His creation is true being the manifestation of the Ineffable.

Since the manifest world is real, man's active involvement in it becomes imperative. This was in contradiction of the earlier Indian philosophy of world-negation and life-negation which considered this meterial world mere *māyā* and recommended withdrawal from it. In Guru Gobind Singh's concept of man, he is in essence one with the Divine. He is the spiritual manifestation of Akalpurakh and has the potential to achieve spiritual and mystic indentification with Him which he can do by imbibing all the humanly realizeable attributes of Akalpurakh such as love, philanthropy, compassion, etc. This identification between man and the Real One has two dimensions. One, realization of the divine qualities by man while still living an active life in the mundane world means socialization of the Divine. Second, which in fact is a corollary of the first, it leads to the establishment of a just and righteous social order based on the values resulting from man's cultivation of divine qualities. The material social reality is spiritualized when it is declared the manifestation of the supreme Reality, and then the Reality is socialized when man imbibes the humanly realizeable attributes of the Divine and then expresses them in his societal relations and behaviour. Theoretically, Guru Gobind Singh declared love (*prem*) to be the supreme virtue for realizing the Divine: it is only those who love that they can realize the Real One (*prabh*), says the Guru. However, this love for the Divine is best expressed through love for His creation. Practically, this socialization of the spiritual Reality was expressed first through the

institution of *sangat* and then through the corporate indentity of the Khalsa-Panth.

The Khalsa as an individual, guided by the revealed Word (*śabda*), stands for the realized self. He is under the direct suzerainty of Akalpurkh without any intermediary. In his personal and social life he stands for the values resulting from the Divine attributes of love, philanthropy, compassion, etc. The Khalsa as the collective sociospiritual unity of the social order is the social ideal of the Guru's vision. In fact, the socialization of the Spiritual and spiritualization of the social and the mundane become synthesized in the Khalsa-Panth as initiated by Guru Gobind Singh.

In the preparation of this book we have relied both on the textual and the contextual sources. Our approach has been phenomenological and analytical while making a study of Guru Gobind Singh's select hymns and of the preceding and contemporary socio-political milieu out of which emerged the Sikh ethos and the Sikh polity. From the study of the text evolve certain metaphysical doctrines concerning the nature and attributes of the supreme Reality. Distinct as they have been from the ontological assumptions of other Indian and Semitic traditions, they serve as the *vis-a-tergo* of the ideal social structure envisioned by the Guru. However, our approach is not entirelly textual and formalistic because we have made an analytical and interpretive study of the preceding and contemporary social reality as well which has helped us fully comprehend and appreciate the social philosophy of Guru Gobind Singh.

CHAPTER II

IMAGE OF THE GURU : A BRIEF PROFILE

(a) **Prelogomena**

Sikhism evolved with Guru Nanak's teachings based as they were on his personal mystical experiences. It was at about the age of 30 that Guru Nanak (1469-1539) received revelation from the Divine : the Bein episode in almost all the Janam-Sakhis or the hagiographical life-accounts of Guru Nanak referes to the Guru's disappearance for three days. This is the period which he is believed to have spent in mystical trance and received revelation direct from God. As he came out after three days, the first words he uttered were : there is no Hindu and there is no Muslim, implying thereby the meaninglessness of the division of mankind into different religious denominations and suggesting that all humans, in essence, were one. Guru Nanak spent the remaining years of his life in sharing this revelation with mankind at large. He took out four *udasis* or preaching odysseys—up to Sri Lanka in the South and deep in the Himalayas in the North, up to Baghdad (Iraq) and Mecca (UAE) in the West and Bangla Desh, Assam and Orissa in the East—to spread this massage to areas as far as his mortal frame could carry him.

Guru Nanak appointed a successor so as to give consistency and stamina to the movement he had begun. The successor was Lahina, renamed Angad, i.e. the *aṅg* or limb of his own body. Thus, Angad became the second Nanak : "Guru Nanak imparted his light to Lahina by changing his form."[1] The idea of oneness, in spirit, of the Gurus despite their bodily vestures being different has also been reiterated by Satta and Balvand, the bards who were contemporaries of Guru Arjan and who have the rare honour of getting their *Vār* included in the Scripture. The successive repetition of this succession for nine times till Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708), the tenth and the last of ten person-Gurus, helped in consolidating the faith and tradition. Several

institutions were set up and groomed. Organizational structure was streamlined and strengthened. Concepts and doctrinal assumptions were further clarified and explained. Thus, Sikhism which began with Guru Nanak reached its culmination in the hands of Guru Gobind Singh. All the ten Gurus—from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh—are believed to be one in spirit, revealing, in continuum, the same truth.

(b) **Birth and Early Life**

Guru Gobind Singh's life has been a rare example of selfless sacrifice in the cause of righteousness and of building a new race of humanity based on the idea of ethnic equality, nourished by the feeling of love and justice in human affairs, and destined to become the model of an ideal social structure. His birth has been a rare phenomenon intended to fulfil God's own purpose.[2] However, the birth of the Guru is not to be equated with incarnation of Divine; Sikhism outrightly rejects the theory of *avtārvād* or incarnation of Divine in human or any other form. The Guru, in his autobiographical *Bachitra Nāṭak*, calls himself the son of God but he never claims any special privileges for himself on this count. He gives a strongly-worded warning to all those who might try to equate him with God,[3] and rather prefers to call himself a slave (*dās*) of the Lord.

Born on 13 *poh* 1723 Bikrami (26 December 1666), Guru Gobind Singh, as says Bhai Gurdas II,[4] was moulded in the image of God and he appeared in this mundane world as a warrior. The identification of the Guru with God is accepted in some scriptural passages also. However, this must not be misread as indentification of the person of the Guru with God : here Guru has been perceived as *sabda* or revealed Word. It can also be called self-determination. The process of this self-determination reached its culmination in the hands of Guru Gobind Singh with the formal diffusion by him of the spiritual sovereignty of Godhead into the Word (Guru Granth Sahib) *āpe sabda āpe nīsānu* and *vāhu vāhu bāṇī niraṅkār hai*—and the vesting of the divine aspect of temporal sovereignty into society—*Khālsā mero rūp hai khās*. This also emphasizes the importance attached to the institution of the Guru in Sikhism.

Guru Gobind Singh was born at Patna where his mother and some relatives stationed for a time as Guru Tegh Bahadur, his predecessor and father, was travelling across the eastern region. It is generally believed that the Guru was at the time of the child's birth travelling across Bengal and Assam. In fact, the Guru remained so

preoccupied with his missionary work that he could return to Patna only in 1670. The Guru left for Punjab soon thereafter asking his family to follow him to Anandpur. Thus, the young child, named Gobind Rai, spent the first four years of his life at Patna under the care of his mother, grandmother, maternal uncle (Kirpal Chand) and some devotees of the Guru's House. The Sikh chronicles narrate numerous anecdotes of his fondness for fun and frolic, for games he would play with boys of his age whom he gathered round him, and for his special inclination towards archery. The small acts of gallantry, compassion and piety associated with the young Gobind Rai seemed to be a kind of warming up by this commissioned soul for the battles he was destined to fight in the years to come. On the site of the house in which Gobind Rai was born and where he spent his early childhood now stands a sacred shrine—Takht Sri Harimandar Sahib—one of the five most honoured seats of religious authority for the Sikhs.

The young Gobind Rai, along with his mother and other members of his family, reached Anandpur in March 1672; Guru Tegh Bahadur was already there, busy ministering to the spiritual wants of the followers. Gobind Rai began his early education here which included reading and writing of Punjabi, Braj, Sanskrit and Persian. However, suddenly a turn came in his own life and in the life of the community he was destined to lead: he was barely nine years of age then. In early 1675, a group of Kashmiri Brahmins called on Guru Tegh Bahadur to seek redressal to the humiliation of forcible conversion they were being put to by the policy of religious fanaticism pursued by the Mughal satrap, Iftikhar Khan, in Kashmir, under order of the Mugal Emperor in Delhi, Aurangzib. They had come to Anandpur to seek Guru Tegh Bahadur's intercession. The Guru sat reflecting what to do. Gobind Rai arrived there in the company of his playmates and asked him why he looked so pensive and preoccupied. As records a Sikh chronicle, the Guru told him of the gravity of the situation, adding that a truly worthy person must come forward to lay down his life so as to redeem the situation. The innocently made bold remark that 'none could be worthier than yourself to make such a sacrifice' by the tender child of just nine years changed the entire course of events and left a deep impress on the history not only of Sikhs but of India at large. Gobind Rai's suggestion and Guru Tegh Bahadur's resolve to lay down his life should not be construed as an attempt at defending the Hindu religious symbols, rather it was an attempt at defending *dharma* or righteousness and one's right to religious freedom.

(c) Guruship : First Phase

Guru Tegh Bahadur courted martyrdom at Delhi on 11 November 1675, but before leaving Anandpur for Delhi he had appointed Gobind Rai his successor, though the formal installation took place a little later on the Vaisakhi day of 1733 Bikrami (29 March 1676), i.e. a few months after the passing away of Guru Tegh Bahadur. The young Guru received the news of his father's execution and then the slain head (the headless body of Guru Tegh Bahadur was taken by Bhai Lakkhi to his house in Raisina, near Delhi, and cremated by setting fire to his house to avoid discovery) brought to Anandpur by Bhai Jaita with rare calm and dignity. Guru Gobind Singh has made a very poignant remark in his autobiographical *Bachitra Nāṭak* to Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom, its object and impact :

> Breaking the bodily pitcher on Delhi's head,
> he sojourned on to Divine Land.
> The deed like that of [Guru] Tegh Bahadur,
> no one else has ever done.
> With passing away of [Guru] Tegh Bahadur,
> gloom overshadowed the world.
> The entire world cried in agony,
> as shouts of joy were raised in Divine Land.[5]

Immediately after taking over the pontifical office, the young Guru gave special attention to the mastery of physical skills and literary accomplishments apart from attending to the concerns of the community. He had already been receiving training in horsemanship, archery and swordsmanship, and soon he started leading forays deep into the Sivalik hill forests for chase. All accounts of the personal physical appearance of the Guru tend to suggest that he grew into a comely youth—spare, lithe of limb and energetic. Every description of his person "delineates him as a very handsome, sharp-featured, tall and wiry man, immaculately and richly dressed as a prince. Decked with a crest upon his lofty, cone-shaped turban with a plume suspended behind from the top, he was ever armed with various weapons, including a bow and a quiver of arrows, a sword, a discus, a shield and a spear. His choice steed was of bluish grey colour and on his left hand always perched a while hawk when he sat on the throne or went out hunting".[6] However, the mind of the wearer of such royal robes was ever absorbed in the Real One.

He had a natural genius for poetic composition, and he devoted his early years assiduously to this pursuit. The voluminous corpus of poetic compositions, as included in the *Dasam Granth*, attributed to him is indicative of his poetic genius. Besides, he patronized many budding as well as established poets: the tradition holds that as many as fifty-two poets flourished in the Guru's court. They composed verses relating to different aspects of spirutuality and also rendered many Indian classics into Bhakha. Guru Gobind Singh also re-told and reinterpreted several Puranic legends. In fact, his *Vār Srī Bhagautī Jī Kī*, polularly known as "Chandi di Var", which happens to be the first composition of the Guru (AD 1684), retells the story of contest between gods and demons as described in the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*. The Guru's account, his only major work in Punjabi language, is told with a shift in emphasis and detail. This, along with two other compositions of the Guru on the same subject, is aimed at infusing martial spirit among his followers to prepare them to stand up against injustice and oppression, bigotry and tyranny. Apart from composing poetry eulogistic of Divine, he concentrated on producing heroic literature aimed at infusing martial spirit among the people given for a long time to asceticism and other-worldliness. We shall make a detailed analysis of his compositions, as included in the *Dasam Granth*, a little later in Chapter IV but let it suffice that war had already commenced in the Guru's poems to inspirit the people.

The Guru shifted temporarily from Anandpur to Paonta in April 1685; in fact, Paonta is a place founded by the Guru on the right bank of the Yamuna in the present-day Sirmur district of Himachal Pradesh. The land for the setting up of this town was a gift from Raja Medini Prakash of Nahan. The Guru stayed here for about three years, returning to Anandpur in 1688. The period spent here was filled with literary creation. In the calm of Paonta, a place with excellent scenic beauty, the Guru composed verses of spiritual as well as of martial tenor. The Court-Poets with the Guru also produced a vast amount of literature—compositions as well as translations of Indian classics. However, the Guru's love for art (poetry/literature) was not for the sake of art, rather he used it as a medium to inspirit and rejuvenate the inert and degenerate communty, to activate them for ethical creativism and against the unjust and oppressive policies of the degenerate rulers of the day. To him, literature must make man aware of his essential pristine divinity, goad him to realize his inherent potential by narrating to him the stories of the deeds of the personages of the past,

and to encourage him to put that potential to use and thus achieve the same pinnacles of glory as did these personages from his heritage.

Guru Gobind Singh's poetry preaches love (*jin prem kīo tin hī prabh pāio*)and equality (*mānas kī jāt sabai ekai pahichānabo*) and a strictly ethical and moral code (cf. *Zafarnāmah* and *Charitropākhayan*). Like his predecessors, he advocated belief in the unicity of God, deprecating idol-worship and superstitious belief in futile, arid rituals and observances. He glorified sword as Bhagauti never to be used for self-aggrandizement, but to be used for securing fulfilment of God's justice in human affairs. The Guru wanted to cultivate in each human heart a deep feeling of patriotism because the small chieftains of those days had no love for their country though they could lay down their lives for the vindication of personal honour, for the love of their families or for such other partisan purposes. The fact of hill chiefs seeking help of the Mughal Emperor against the Guru also confirms the contention that there was no national consciousness left which was essential for a nation to survive and which the Guru wanted to inculcate. The Guru also used part of his time in martial exercises such as riding. swimming, swordsmanship, archery, etc. Devotees thronged to him in large numbers and young devotees in significant number volunteered to enrol themselves in the Guru's army. Thus, the Guru reiterated, for the benefit of those who cared to come and listen to him, the spiritual tenets as professed and preached by the preceding Gurus as well as a strictly ethical way of life based on these doctrinal assumption. This was not to the liking of ruling chieftains in the surrounding region because no autocratic ruler, like them, would wish to see his subjects getting awakened.

The increasing influence of the Guru among the masses and apprehension of their subjects getting awakened through the Guru's teachings made the hill chiefs apprehensive of the Guru. Some of these chieftains got together, and "taking exception to Guru Gobind Singh's teaching of equalizing all castes and feeling jealous of his growing influence, marched against him, led by Raja Feteh Chand of Srinagar (Garhwal)."[7] The Guru decided to take on these invading forces before they could attack Paonta. Therefore, he marched his Sikhs towards Bhangani, a place 11 km. away from Paonta on the bank of Yamuna. The hill chiefs were confident of the power of their combined forces which got further strengthened by the desertion of the Guru's camp by about 500 Pathans and their joining the hill chiefs. These Pathans were engaged by the Guru at the recommendation of Sayyad Badr ud-

Din Shah, popularly known as Pir Buddhu Shah (1647-1704), who had called on the Guru at Paonta sometime in 1685. These Pathan soldiers were under the command of four leaders—Kale Khan, Bhikhan Khan, Nijabat Khan and Hayat Khan. Now, with the exception of Kale Khan, who remained steadfast in his devotion to the Guru, all other Pathans deserted the Guru.[8] The hill chiefs imprudently collected their forces in the open ground on the river bed. The Guru, as wise a war-tactician as great a spiritual prophet, kept his forward troops on a higher platform and most of his forces in a grove. The battle, fought on 18 September 1688, went in favour of the Guru. Pir Buddhu Shah, along with his brothers, sons and about 700 followers, also took part in the battle on the Guru's side. As we can easily make out, the battle was imposed on the Guru who fought in defence of his principles and not for any territorial gain.

Although the Guru won this battle quite decisively yet instead of occupying a territory which was not his objective he left for Anandpur. These defeated chieftains remained hostile towards the Guru and now wanted to evict him from Anandpur as well. They resolved to seek imperial help so as to further strengthen their force and, to this effect, they sent many concocted stories describing the Guru as a dangerous rebel. The Guru also took the required steps to fortify the town of Anadpur. The continuing hostility of these Hindu hill chieftains and the repressive policy of the Mughal government at Delhi justified the preparations made by the Guru. Another battle that the Guru had to fight was against the Mughal commander, Alif Khan, at Nadaun, a place on the left bank of the Beas and about 30 km. from Kangra. It was on 22 Chet 1747 Bikrami/ 20 March 1691, and finds mention in the Guru's *Bachitra Nāṭak*. Among the other skirmishes that took place was the Husaini battle which took place on 20 February 1696. In this battle against the forces of Husain Khan, as against Alif Khan at Nadaun, the Guru came out victorious.

The period following 1694, the year when Prince Mu'azzam (later Emperor Bahadur Shah) was appointed the viceroy of north western region, including Punjab, was relatively free from the pressures of the imperial government in Delhi. It seems difficult to accept the contention that Bahadur Shah, before or after assuming the throne, was friendly towards the Guru. His liberal attitude and show of friendliness towards the Guru in the north and towards several other princes in the south was perhaps a tact of diplomacy on his part to keep good relations with such forces oppressed by his father, Emperor

Aurangzib, so as to exploit these relations to his advantage at the time of war of accession which, to him, was inevitable. Anyway, the period of his viceroyalty in the north provided a brief respite to the Guru who used it to full advantage to strengthen his Sikhs both spiritually/ morally and militarily. The Guru went out for chase regularly and hunted wild boar, tiger and such other animals. He was equally particular about holding the daily congregations where Name Divine was recited, repeated and reflected on as well as about organising camps for physical exercises such as wrestling bouts, horse-riding, swordsmanship and archery.

It was also around this time that the Guru started receiving reports against the *masands* alleging them guilty on various counts. The Masand-system, which had once functioned very smoothly and had made a very significant contribution towards the spread of the Sikh faith, had by now become almost defunct. To begin with, these *masands* were appointed on the merits of their personal piety and spiritual enlightenment. Since the office of *masands* was more or less hereditary, many descendants were not as pious as their fathers or grandfathers. Some became outrightly corrupt embezzling to themselves the whole or part of the offerings made by the devotees for the Guru. They had also become arrogant and begun to behave like the Guru: they no longer took themselves to be the Guru's deputies, rather they happened to cultivate the wrong notion that the Guru enjoyed his position because of them. Embezzlement of accounts, humiliation of some true devotees, arrogant behaviour and lack of any spiritual merits made these *masands* a serious liability. Therefore, the Guru made up his mind to abolish the institution as such. He started sending out instructions to his devotees from the beginning of 1699 not to accept the *masands*[9] or send any offerings of the devotees through them. The *saṅgats* were advised to send their offerings either direct to the Guru in person or through *huṇḍī*. Such commandments continued from the Guru for about two years after the abolition of the institution on 30 March 1699 with the creation of the Khalsa-Panth. The reiteration of this directive was intended to ensure that the Sikhs break off whatever relation they had with the *masands* and that the latter feel completely excommunicated from the Sikh society. It is with this aim in view that the Guru also directed his Sikhs to have nothing to do with the *masands*.[10]

A significant point made with emphasis in the *hukamnāmās* issued around 1698-99 has been the Guru's instruction to the

congregations to come to the Guru in Anandpur of their own, without the help of any intermediary (*masand*). The offerings generally sought are in the form of horses and weapons. A latent massage in some of these is that those coming to Anandpur should be armed. This was a precursor to the great event which took place on the Vaisakhi day (30 March) in AD 1699. The Sikhs had reached Anandpur in large numbers for the Vaisakhi celebrations, a festival of season celebrated in this part of India when the rabi crop is full ripe and the farmer is comparatively free and relaxed before he undertakes harvesting. The Guru's message to disown and dissociate themselves from the *masands* as well as to start wearing arms seemed novel to some Sikhs, but both the commandments were catching their fancy.

(d) Creation of Khalsa-Panth

The Vaisakhi day of AD 1699 occupies a place of rare importance in the history of Sikh religion and tradition. It is a very important landmark in the development of Sikh history. The details of the event that took place at Anandpur on this day are narrated, with minor variations, by almost all Sikh chroniclers. Even Sukkha Singh's *Gurbilās Pātshāhī Dasvīṅ* which is believed to have been completed in 1797 contains elaborate details. It was on this day that the Guru wanted to test if the Sikhs had by then imbibed what Guru Nanak had said: if you have the desire to tread the path of love, first put thy head on your hand and then set out on this path. He asked the huge congregation if there was a true Sikh amongst them who could offer his head to the Guru. In fact, such a call from the Guru was not something entirely new in Sikh history. Earlier, Guru Nanak had called in the same aweful tone, and it was Bhai Lahina (later Guru Angad) alone who came forward while others retreated being afraid. What the Guru had said made the audience numb for a while. They felt stunned by the strange wish of the Guru. However, the Guru repeated his call, and soon a Sikh in the assembly got up and offered himself for sacrifice. He was Daya Ram, a Sobti Khatri, of Lahore Similarly, four more Sikhs—Dharam Das, a Jat, from Hastinapur; Muhkam Chand, a washerman, from Dwarka; Himmat, a water-carrier, from Jagannath Puri; and Sahib Chand, a barbar, from Bidar in Karnataka—got up to offer their heads to the Guru in response to the latter's desire. The Guru had taken them one by one to the adjoining tent, and now brought them back before the assembled audience dressed alike in saffron-coloured raiment, with neatly tied

turbans dyed in the same hue, and swords dangling down their waists. They represented the new incarnation of the disciple. They were the saint-soldiers who had accepted death in the love of the Guru. These chosen five are called *pañj piāre* or the Five Beloved Ones in Sikh tradition and form a nucleus of the Khalsa-Panth.

These chosen five were the first to receive *khaṇḍe dī pāhul* (baptism by the double-edged sword) from the hands of the Guru. *Amrit* (lit. nectar; baptismal water) was prepared by pouring water in an iron vessal and stirring it with the double-edged sword; sugar-crystals were added to it by Mata Sahib Devan, the Guru's wife. Stirring of the sugary water with doubled-edged sword could be retelling or reinterpreting the Indian myth of churning the ocean by gods and devils to bring *amrit* out of it. The Guru first asked the chosen five to drink the *amrit* thus prepared from the same vessal. He asked them to add 'Singh' to their first names: the idea of giving one surname (Singh) to all followers of the Guru was aimed at transforming the Sikh society into a casteless one. He also bade them wear five k's, follow a certain *rahat* or code of conduct prescribed for them, and avoid certain things considered immoral and irreligious. Thus, this was first step towards the creation of a classless and casteless society of spiritually enlightened and morally uplifted beings who were ever ready to lay down their lives for the sake of righteousness. The stress on sword was not to associate the Khalsa with wanton war and bloodshed; he took to the sword, as says Professor Puran Singh, "because of a crisis of conscience".

After thus baptising these five chosen Sikhs, the Guru presented himself before them requesting them to baptise him in the same manner. It was—and perhaps still is—the first ever instance in the history of world religions when a spiritual preceptor equated his disciples to himself by first baptising the five and then seeking baptism from them. Gobind Rai, the Guru, received initiatory rites from the Five, now invested with the power as Khalsa: the Guru also adding suffix 'Singh' to his name as he had directed his disciples to do and thereafter came to be called Guru Gobind Singh. Bhai Gurdas II sings of this wondrous deed of the Guru when he says; "Hail, (Guru) Gobind Singh who is himself Master as well as disciple." This was precursor to the formal diffusion in the Khalsa-Panth of the divine aspect of the temporal sovereignty: the spiritual sovereignty of Godhead was diffused in the *bāṇī* (Word) as included in the Scripture. Following the Guru, many more came foward to receive the *khaṇḍe dī*

pāhul. In fact, it was a moment of creation whose full fructification will require the lapse of many more years.

(e) **Events leading to and following Evacuation of Anandpur**

These development alarmed the already apprehensive and caste-ridden Rajput Chiefs of small principalities in the Sivalik hills. One, they apprehended a grave risk to their religion. The Guru had completely eliminated caste among the Sikh ranks by making people of all castes sit together and drink from the same vessal. Second, the Guru was infusing martial spirit even among the so-called low castes whereas in earlier Hindu society it was the prerogative of only the Kshatris/ Khatris. These Rajput chiefs, who belonged to the Kshatri caste, felt it an insult to their community. Third, the rising military might of the Guru was considered a constant source of danger to their thrones. The Guru always maintained an armed contingent of volunteer Sikhs, and their number grew with each passing day. Fourth, they were jealous of the royal splendour of the Guru's court. Raja Bhim Chand's jealousy and his mechinations to somehow usurp from the Guru the tent, embroidered in gold and silver, and the elephant, named Prasadi: the tent was presented to the Guru by Duni Chand and other Sikhs from Afghanistan whereas the elephant had come as a gift from Raja Rattan Rai of Assam. The latter's father, Raja Ram Rai, was devotee of Guru Tegh Bahadur and, according to some chronicles, the birth of Rattan Rai is also attributed to a blessing of the Guru. Of course, all these apprehensions of the hill chiefs were uncalled for since the Guru had no intention of meddling in their religious, social or political affairs. He had shown no inclination towards usurping any territory nor did he ever invade any country.

In fact, these Hindu chieftains were inimical of the Guru's thought and ideals. More than the person of the Guru who was not at all interested in acquiring territory, they were afraid of his thought which they apprehended could shake the very foundations of their autocratic rule. Their attitude towards the Guru should certainly remind a student of history of the jealousy of the Jews towards Jesus Christ, the son of God. Perhaps no degenerate ruler willingly allows life rooted in truth whereas to the Guru one could fulfil oneself and live fruitfully in Truth alone.

These hill chiefs rallied under the leadership of Raja Bhim Chand of Kahlur : the town of Anadpur, the headquarters of the Guru, lay in the territory of Kahlur State. Bhim Chand was a devotee of the

Guru and he had once invited him to his capital Bilaspur where the Guru put up in his palace: a *gurdwārā* stands there is the memory of the Guru's visit. However, he soon got jealous of the Guru, and now conspired with other chiefs to somehow evict the Guru from his hilly citadel. They made repeated expeditions against him during 1700-04, but all of them proved abortive. They at last made a petition to Emperor Aurangzib in Delhi for help against the Guru. The heavy armed contingents, sent under imperial orders by the governor of Lahore and the *faujdar* of Sirhind, joined the armies of the hill chiefs to attack Anandpur. They laid seige in May 1705 after they felt helpless in their desire to make the Sikhs surrender. The seige continued for several months, and the Guru and the Sikhs withstood firmly the successive onslaughts notwithstanding the dire scarcity of food caused by the prolonged blockade. No doubt, the situation had reduced the beseiged Sikhs to desperate straits, but it had also added to the cup of woe of the beseigers who felt rather chagrined at the tenacity with which the Sikhs held out.

Several skirmishes continued as the Sikhs made sallies to break off the seige or drive away the enemy that tried to break open the fort and enter in. Around this time a complaint was made to the Guru that there was a Sikh, Kanahiya by name, who daily ministers water to the fallen in the battle, irrespective of friend or foe. The Guru sent for Bhai Kanahiya and asked him why he offered water to the enemy's wounded. He is said to have replied thus: "since thou have taught me not to distinguish between man and man, I see no friend or foe but I see only thy face in each one of them". They Guru was pleased with his reply and alowed him to continue with his mission. What Bhai Kanahiya did on the battlefield in early 18th century was a sort of prelude to what Red Cross has come to stand for in 20th century. This is also indicative of the Sikh stress on the values of love, compassion, *sevā* (selfless service), etc.

At last, the town was evacuated on the night of Poh *sudi* 1, 1762 Bikrami/ 5-6 December 1705. However, the beseigers betrayed their oaths and they set upon the Guru and his Sikhs as soon as they came out. An utter confusion ensued in which many Sikhs got killed, many precious manuscripts and other documents were lost, and the entire baggage was looted. It was in this state of confusion that the Guru's mother (Mata Gujri) and two younger sons—Zorawar Singh (b. 1696) and Fateh Singh (b.1699)—were betrayed by their old servant and now escort , Gangu, who instead of following the path taken by the

Guru took them to Sirhind. The *faujdār* of Sirhind, Wazir Khan, was already inimical towards the Guru, and he welcomed this opportunity of taking revenge. He had the young children executed by bricking them alive in a wall on 13 December 1705. Their grandmother also passed away the same day.

After a minor skirmish on the bank of Sirsa rivulet, the Guru managed to reach Chamkaur, about 40 km. away from Anandpur. He had with him now only about 40 Sikhs and two of his elder sons, Ajit Singh (b. 1687) and Jujhar Singh (b.1691). The imperial army was following close on his heels, and he had no alternative but to face the enemy at Chamkaur. The Guru and his Sikhs had taken shelter in the mud-house built on eminence. It was so shaped that it could very well serve as a fortress (garhī) for the time being. Here they stood up to host that comprised, according to *Zarafnāmah,* a million. During the night, the Sikhs took turn as sentries, taking whatever little rest they could afford in turn. The chasing imperial forces also seemed tired of the hot chase. They contended themselves with laying a seige for the night. The following day, on 7 Poh 1761 Bikrami/ 7 December 1705, took place a bloody and tragic battle. The beseigers tried to reduce the fort and scale the walls whereas the Sikhs inside drove them back with arrows and musket fire. However, when the arrows and powder got exhausted, the Sikhs and the Guru's sons made sallies in small batches to kill and get killed. The resistance put up by the two scores of Sikhs to a mighty 'million-strong' army testified to the success of the Guru's endeavour to destroy the demon of fear out of his men's hearts through love for God: he transformed sparrows into hawks.

The institution of Panj Piare as representatives of the Khalsa-Panth took its first major decision at Chamkaur where they asked the Guru on the night of 7-8 December 1708 to escape so that he could reconsolidate the Khalsa and work against unjust oppression and tyranny could continue. The battle on 7 December had taken the toll of two elder sons of the Guru and most of the Sikhs. The Guru bowed to the collective will of the Khalsa-Panth as conveyed through the Panj Piare and left, along with three Sikhs—Bhai Daya Singh, Bhai Dharam Singh, and Bhai Mani Singh, Chamkaur towards further south in the wilderness of the Malwa. Here the Guru's benign submission to the will of the Khalsa was complete and unconditional. It was undoubtedly an act of supreme sacrifice on the part of Guru Gobind Singh "to obey, to continue to live instead of fighting and dying, even in that hour of great personal affliction when his sons and

his dear disciple-soldiers lay slain before him.....to go and live for them, as bidden by them....."[12] Passing through Rai Kot, the Guru reached Dina from where he despatched, through Daya Singh and Dharam Singh, a letter called *Zafarnāmah*, to Emperor Aurangzib, which is a severe indictment of the Emperor and his commanders for having perjured their oaths and treacherously attacked him as soon as he had come out of the safety of fortification at Anandpur. Whereas these messengers left for the south to call on Auragzib, the Guru continued his march westwards.

The imperial forces were close on his heels when the Guru had left Kot Kapura, and he had to take position beside the lake of Khidrana to make a last ditch battle. The Sikhs were overwhelmingly outnumbered, but they gave a hard and desperate fight. The extreme cold weather conditions, scarcity of water, desperation born out of a long, futile chase and the rare valour shown by the Sikhs made the imperial troops return in defeat without realizing their aim, i,e, the arrest of the Guru. It was here that forty Sikhs, who had deserted the Guru during the prolonged seige of Anandpur and had met with derision and chiding from their womenfolk as they reached back home, caught up with the Guru and fought valiantly to wash off with their blood the slur they had earlier earned. All of them fell fighting in the bettlefield. In this way they not only atoned for their earlier sin but also won forgiveness from the Guru. These forty martyrs are known in the Sikh tradition as Chali Mukte or Forty (*chālī*) liberated ones. Only Mai Bhago, under whose leadership they had come over to the Guru, survived, and she accompanied the Guru to Nanded.

The Guru went on to Talwandi Sabo (Damdama Sahib), reaching there on 20 January 1706. The period of about nine months that the Guru spent there was comparatively peaceful and quiet. He got a fresh recension of the Adi Granth prepared: it was also perhaps at this time that he added the *bāṇī* (hymns) of Guru Tegh Bahadur to the scripture as compiled by Guru Arjan in 1604. Bhai Mani Singh, the renowned scholar and martyr, acted as his amanuensis. It was also perhaps this recension, popularly called Damdami Bir, which was given the pontifical status by the Guru in 1708. Like at Paonta and Anandpur, many poets and scholars rallied round the Guru here and began their literary activity. The large scale literary activity under the guidance and patronage of Guru Gobind Singh gave the place a new epithet—Guru ki Kashi. Mata Sundari and Mata Sahib Devan, who had during the confusion following the evacuation of Anandpur escaped to Delhi,

also came here to join the Guru.

(f) Journey to the Deccan

The *Zafarnāmah* sent by the Guru from Dina at last reached Aurangzib. It seems the truth contained in the Guru's epistle went home and he felt remorse. It is said that he forthwith invited him to the Deccan.[13] According to *Ahkām-i-Alamgīrī*, the Emperor also wrote a letter to the duputy governor at Lahore, Munim Khan, asking him to reconciliate with the Guru and to make necessary arrangements for his journey to the Deccan. However, the Guru had already made up his mind to go to South and with this intention he had earlier sent communications to the Sikhs in the South through Dharam Singh and Daya Singh and now he sent his wives to Delhi. Whatever may have been the purpose of his sojourn to South, he left Talwandi Sabo on 30 October 1760. By this date he was not yet sure of the success of the mission of Bhai Daya Singh and Bhai Dharam Singh becuase the two met the Guru at Kulait on the latter's way to the South. The Guru was around Baghor (Rajasthan) when he got the news of the death of Aurangzib. The Guru now decided to return to Punjab via Delhi. It was the time when the claimants to the throne had geared themselves up for a war of succession. Prince Mu'azzam, later Emperor Bahadur Shah, who was the eldest son and as per tradition the rightful claimant to the throne, sought the Guru's help who sent a token contingent of Sikhs which took part in the battle of Jajau. Prince Mu'azzam decisively won the battle fought on 8 June 1707, and ascended the throne.

We have nothing from the Guru's own pen to make the purpose of Guru's sojourn to South clear. The *Sākhī Pothī*, a book of travels of Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh in the Malwa, says that the Guru wanted to set up a missionary centre there. Maybe, this sojourn was aimed at preaching the Divine message to people in far off places as his predecessors had done, Or, the Guru knew that outcome of his movement against oppression and tyranny was certain to effect the fortunes of all Indians. People away from Punjab, which had so far remained the centre of his activities and which had also suffered the most, need also be awakened to their responsibility, and they should be equal partners in suffering and hardship that a long-drawn struggle entailed. It is the supporters of this theory who hold that the Guru was invited by Sambhaji Marhatta to lead their movement. It is also possible that the Guru was sure of the effect his epistle will have on

the Emperor's mind once it reached him. And, he wanted to avail of the opportunity to have negotiations with a remorseful and repentant Emperor. His struggle was not against an individual or community but againt oppression and tyranny, and if an old and feeble Emperor agrees to have dialogue and give up oppression, the effort was worth making. Whatever the reason, the Guru's own desire to travel South was now strengthened by Emperor Bahadur Shah's invitation to travel along with him.

The immediate task before the Emperor now was to quell the revolt raised by his younger brother, Kam Bakhsh, in the Deccan. He, therefore, persuaded the Guru to accompany him to the South. They crossed the Tapti river between 11-14 June and the Ban-Ganga on 14 June 1708, reaching Nanded towards the end of August. While the Emperor proceeded further, the Guru decided to stay put at Nanded. He met here a Bairagi *sadhu*, Mado Das by name, and brought him into the Sikh fold. He was renamed Gurbakhsh Singh, though he is popularly known as Banda Singh Bhadur. He gave five arrows to Banda Singh and sent him in the company of five chosen Sikhs, to the Punjab. Maybe, he wanted Banda Singh to carry on his work in the Punjab while he himself remained there to strengthen the struggle by broadening its base.[14]

Back home in the Punjab, Nawab Wazir Khan of Sirhind felt concerned at the growing proximity between the Emperor and the Guru. He mistook this diplomatic tact of the Emperor as his conciliatory treatment of the Guru. He apprehended danger to his person as well as position because he was guilty of excesses against the Sikhs, especially the execution of two minor sons of the Guru. Therefore, he charged two of his trusted men with murdering the Guru before any harm came to him. They followed the Guru and took him over at Nanded where one of them entered the Guru's chamber one evening and stabbed him just below the heart as he lay relaxing. However, before he could deal another blow, the Guru struck him down with his sabre while his fleeing companion fell to the swords of the Sikhs. Emperor Bahadur Shah, as soon as he learnt of this incident, sent an Englishman, Cole by name, to attend on the Guru. The wound had almost healed, but one day the Guru pulled a stiff bow with strength as a result of which the stitches of the wound were broken and it bled profusely. This weakened the Guru beyond cure, and he breathed his last on Kartik *Sudi* 5, 1765 Bikrami (7 October 1708).

However, before the end came, Guru Gobind Singh performed the usual ceremonies to annoint the Scripture, earlier known as Adi Granth, as his successor: thereafter it came to be called the Guru Granth Sahib. He bowed his head before the Scripture and said : "It is my commandment; own Sri Granth Ji in my place....." Thus, the line of personal Gurus came to an end. The Guru's spirit was henceforth to be found in the *granth* (Guru Granth Sahib) and the *panth* (Khalsa-Panth).

The skeleton account of the life of Guru Gobind Singh as given in the preceeding pages is an attempt to bring out, besides other things, the contemporary socio-political reality, the oppressive and fanatic attitude of the political authority and docile and submissive populace whom the constant and persistent perpetration of humiliations and insults seemed to have made entirely gutless. The Sikh Gurus tried to provide, in their utterances, a metaphysical and philosophical basis which termed all sorts of oppression, cruelty, injustice and bigotry as irreligions and instead declared commitment to equality, love, justice, universal brotherhood, philanthropy, etc. the fundamental ethical values which emanated from their metaphysical assumptions as integral to religion. They advocated these views in their compositions and then tried live these ideas through several institution like *sangat*, *langar*, etc. The Sikh thought and tradition reached its culmination in the hands of Guru Gobind Singh, and we find their frucitification in the creation of the Khalsa-Panth. However, the creation in microcosmic form of an ideal social stucture in the form of the Khalsa-Panth was not the end of the road, rather it was a beginning. The Guru had made the beginning and left behind the legacy of rich literature and heroic past to inspirit the devotees, thereby setting an example for the devotees to continue their journey—long and arduous as it is—ahead to see this moment of creation fructified at the global level.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Bhai Gurdas, *Vārāṅ*, I. 45
2. *Bachitra Nāṭak*, VI. 5 and 29
3. *Ibid.*, VI.32.
4. *Vārāṅ*, XLI. 14
5. *Bachitra Nāṭak*, V. 15-16
6. Gopal Singh, *Guru Gobind Singh*, p. 7
7. *Encyclopaedia of Sikhism*, I, p. 7

8. Interestingly, the name of Kale Khan does not occur in the *Bachitra Nāṭak* though names of other Pathans find a mention in the Guru's narration of the battle of Bhangani.
9. A *hukamnāmā*, dated 12 March 1699, addressed to the Sikhs of Machhiwara, directed them not to own the *masands*. Herein the *sangat* has been referred to as "my Khalsa". See Ganda Singh, ed., *Hukamnāme*, pp. 152-53
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 164-65, 170-71, 177 and 179
11. Puran Singh, *Guru Gobind Singh*, p. 49
12. *Ibid.*, p. 63
13. Bhagat Lakshman Singh, in his biography of Guru Gobind Singh, makes a categorical statement that the Emperor "sent a special massenger to the Guru asking him to come and see him so that he might have an opportunity of making amends for what had happened" (pp. 128-29), but this is not confirmed by any contemporary document/ work.
14. Narain Singh, *Guru Gobind Singh Retold*, pp. 305-06

CHAPTER III

CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS PRAXIS

(a) Introduction

Ideas on social order are, no doubt, socio-political in nature. Knowledge of the power-structure in society and study of political ideas are interrelated and interdependent. The latter suffers from inanition if deprived of the former, and the former would remain vague if it is without reference to the organization of social order and the prevalent myths having bearing on it. This is a general statement which holds true of all human societies, but it is all the more relevant in Indian, especially the ancient Indian, society wherein caste (*varṇa*) in which a man was born determined, to put it in the Bradleyian phrase, "My station in life and its duties". There have been instances of social exclusiveness in several other countries of the world but there it "lacked that motivating force, unity of purpose, organization, coordination, thrust and propulsive force [which the rigid caste system in India had, and] that welded the Indian castes into an elaborate and all-embracing caste system."[1] It is also, perhaps, the unique Indian features that caste system claims to have its origins and basis in the religious and spiritual thought of the people.

Written history of the Indian cultural and political life can be traced back to the days of Aryan invasions of India and their consequent settlement here, especially in its north-western parts. The excavations of Harappa and Mahenjodaro have proved that Indian civilization was highly developed in the pre-Aryan period though the modern man has failed to decisively decipher the inscriptions found there. Consequently, he has also failed to determine the extent of this development . Similarly, reference to the presence of certain *śramaṇas* (yogis or ascetics) in the *Rig Veda*, perhaps the earliest written literature extant today in the religious history of mankind, is indicative of the fact that pre-Aryan or pre-Vedic India had an organized

religious life based on its own philosophy of life.[2] The ruination of the ancient native civilization and dominance over the native religious and cultural thought seems to have been simultaneous with the political subjugation of the peace-loving natives by the aggressive Aryans. In fact, the Aryans wanted, as do all shrewd politicians even today, to dominate the natives' religion and culture because they felt it the only sure way to consolidate their political gains.

No doubt, the Aryans succeeded to a large extent in dominating the Indus-valley Civilization and they also successfully propagated the revelatory character of the Vedas which were to be the fountain of an emerging civilization, but there was also "elements other than Aryan or the Vedic which contributed to this development."[3] These indigenous and non-Aryan elements continued to surface again and again and reassert themselves. They made a significant contribution to the development of Indian thought. As a matter of fact, there was acculturation of two ethnic groups. This mutual influence of Vedic and *sramaṇic* traditions resulted in a world-view which was decidedly dominated by the Vedic tradition. Caste sysytem was one of the most significant outcome of this milieu which affected the social structure to a very great extent.

The Sāṅkhya-Yoga school of Indian philosophy is one instance to prove this point: the yogic exertion is non-Vedic and the ideal of liberation (*moksa* or *mukti*) is Vedic. Both aspects are harmoniously blended in this system. The Brahman of the Vedanta had not yet been fully conceived by the patriarchal Aryans. The indigenous society was matriarchal in character as we still find several tribes in the hilly areas and also in the eastern and southern regions of India whereto these natives had been pushed by the Aryans. Female whorhsip (*sakti pujā*), still prevalent in some parts of India, is a non-Vedic tradition.

Gradually, the roles seem to have been reeversed. With a view perhaps to dominating the cultural and religious heritage of the indigenous people, the Aryans conceived God in the male form. Since they could not afford to completely ignore the indigenous philosphical thought, they conceived Him as creator of the universe through the agency and cooperation of a female principal (*śakti*). Thus, every prinicpal deity in Vedic mythology came to have a feminine counterpart who was paid equal and in some cases even greater homage, but she was nevertheless dependent on the male deity. With the passage of time, they became mere appendages to the male gods, with the sole esception of Durgā. The worship of goddesses whether as

a counterpart to the principal male deity or as all-powerful Durgā, also known as Chaṇḍī, is in continuation of the non-Vedic tradition as it prevailed in the pre-Aryan matriarchal society. However, the emergence of Brahman as the supreme male deity pushed these goddesses to the level of mere mythological figures.

Long after the Aryans had ruthlessly routed the natives, both militarily and culturally, came another tribal wave of Semitic extraction to invade and plunder India. The latter were motivated by a stronger religious conviction. The "first contacts between India and the Muslim world were established in the south, because of the age-old trade between Arabia and India."[4] It was in the first half of the seventh century that these Arab Muslims established their trade "settlements on the eastern and western coasts of south India."[5] It was initially in the interests of trade again that they captured Sind in AD 711 followed by their subjugation of Multan. Sind remained under the Arabs for about three centuries. The conquest of Sind was, politically speaking, an isolated event, but its cultural impact was very important.

After the Afghan-Turks broke away from the Khilafat in Baghdad and subdued the Brahmin dynasties in Afghanistan and north-west Punjab, the "mountain routes to India now lay open before them and the historical circuit again became alive with the march of armies down into the plains."[6] It was after this in the tenth century that Sultan Mahmud Gauri of Ghazni invaded India and started occupying Indian territory. After Gauri's death in AD 1206, one of his slaves, Qutab ud-Din Aibak, established Muslim kingdom in Delhi. However, invasions from the north-west did not cease with the establishment of the Muslim imperial rule. The Indian people continued to suffer at the hands of these fanatic and degenerate rulers as well as those of the invading hordes who came both to plunder and maraud and to gain territory. As such, the slave kings were followed by four successive dynasties—Khiljis, Tughlaks, Sayyids and Lodhis: the last Lodhi king Ibrahim was defeated in AD 1526 by Babar in the battle of Panipat, thus claiming the Delhi throne for the Mughals.

The Arabs who happened to be the earliest Muslims who came in contact with India were not averse or hostile to Indian culture, rather they "familiarized themselves from early times with Indian literature and sciences."[7] Men of learning from India were welcome at the Khalifa's court; and on the other hand, Arab scholars came to make home in India. However, "the Turks, who followed the Arabs.....and concluded their raids of plunder by founding a cental Muslim kingdom

at the begnning of the thirteenth century, lacked their predecessors' genius for civilization."[8] They were essentially nomadic and tribal in their ways and temperament. As invaders, they indulged in mass killings, defilement of Hindu temples and carrying away of women and children. And, as rulers, they were generally harsh and discriminatory against the non-Muslims.

It was during the reign of Bahlul Lodhi and Sikandar Lodhi, who succeded the former to the throne of Delhi in AD 1488, that Guru Nanak (AD 1469-1539) founded the Sikh faith and undertook his preaching obdysseys (*udāsīs*) to propagate his ideas. Of these two kings, the latter was more fanatic. He made it a point to destroy the Hindu places of worship and was very severe and inquisitorial in his treatment of the non-Muslims. His successor Ibrahim Lodhi was defeated in AD 1526 by Babar, another invader from the north-west, at Panipat which spelt doom for Lodhi dynasty and brought untold sufferings for the Indian natives. Guru Nanak in four of his hymns, collectively known as "Bābar Vāṇī", makes touching references to the atrocities and destruction that ensued the invasions of Babar. These hymns make a fine commentary on the contemporary political situation, diagnosing the malady as well as suggesting some remedial measures. The Guru did not physically resist the invader, but he was very virulent in his condemnation of the atrocities and devastation that were caused in the train of Babar's invasion. He was equally critical of the moral bankruptcy of the contemporary Indian rulers who failed to protect their subjects.

Hamayun and Sher Shah Suri followed Babar. Sikhism was in its infancy during their regimes, and there was no interference whatsoever on their part in the affairs of the Sikhs faith. Akbar, the son and successor of Hamayun, was the most liberal of all the Mughal Emperors. He gave due respect to all religions and bore no bias against those who were not his co-religionists. The Sikh chronicles record his meeting with Guru Amar Das (AD 1479-1574), the third spiritual preceptor of the Sikh faith, at Goindwal.[10] Abu-l-Fazal in his *Akbar Nama* also records a similar meeting of the Emperor with Guru Arjan Dev (AD 1563-1606) in 1598.[11]

Jahangir suceeded Akbar on the throne of Delhi in AD 1605. Unlike Akbar, he and his successor, Shah Jahan, who ascended the throne in AD 1628, were guided by their fanatic, theocratic advisers. Consequently, they wanted to put a stop to the spread of Sikh faith. Martyrdom of Guru Arjan, the fifth Guru of the Sikhs, improsonment

of Guru Hargobind (AD 1595-1643), the sixth Guru, who had to resort to arms against the Mugal policy of religious intolerance and oppression, and summoning of Guru Harkrishan (AD 1656-1664), the eighth Guru, to Delhi are some of the instances from Sikh history to confirm the fanatic behaviour of the then rulers. Emperor Aurangzib (AD 1618-1707) who succeeded Shah Jahan, was, on the testimony of Guru Gobind Singh himself, a great warrior who stood like a rock before the enemy but lacked all ethical values.[12] It was during his regime that Guru Tegh Bahadur (AD 1621-1675), the ninth among the ten spiritual preceptors of the Sikh faith, laid down his life at the altar of truth or righteousness (*dharam*). Guru Gobind Singh (AD 1666-1708) the tenth and the last of the Sikh Gurus, fought against the government's policy of religious intolerance, social injustice and political oppression, and gave away everything for the sake of ethical values such as equality, universal brotherhood, self-respect, love, and so on.

Thus, we find that before the advent of Sikhism,[13] India confronted two different and in some ways contradictory cultures prevailing simultaneously—one represented by the acculturation of the pre-Vedic (also non-Vedic) *śramaṇic* traditions and the Vedic and Aryan tradition, and the other by Islam which became the dominant culture of the ruling power in India by first half of the fifteenth century. The former, which otherwise seemed all-absorbing because many differnt races and cultures had earlier coalesced into it, could not suck the culture of these alien invaders who belonged to a different ethnic stock and a different religious conviction. Similarly, Islam also failed to either assimilate to itself the Indian mainstream or to let the Indian values survive and thrive alongside its own.

(b) **Indian View of Social Structure**

The Vedas, which give besides other things a view of God, world, man and their relationship *inter se*, are generally believed to have been essentially religious in nature. However, a closer study of their text reveals that they contain much which is not exclusively religious and spiritual but there are also implicit and explicit comments on the nature of the material world and many other things thereof.[14]

Jainism and Buddhism belong to the *śramaṇic* religious tradition which are believed to be non-Aryan or rather pre-Aryan in origin[15] and non-theistic in nature. They do not believe in the existence of any

transcedent monotheistic God who is the creator of this manifest world or who helps *jīvas* or beings in liberating themselves from the cycle of birth and death. They call this universe *prakriti* (*pra* = without any beginning; *kriti* = creation) or primal creation. They do not consider this world or the human beings who inhabit it as relatively real in the sense Sikhism does. All human historical action in this mundane world only results in the *karmic* effects gathering on the soul. Every action, good as well as bad, has its own effect. According to Jainism, both love (*puṇya*) and hatred (*dveśa* or *pāpa*) are equally impellent forces due to which *karma* clings to the self and it is the *karma* which envelopes the real nature of the self and leads to the cycle of birth and death. Liberation from this process of tranmigration is the ultimate ideal, and the right belief, right knowledge and right conduct together constitute the way to this ideal. The perfect (*sakala*) right conduct is observed only by the ascetics whereas the householders observe only imperfect (*vikala*) conduct. The latter is only preparatory to the stage of an ascetic. Renunciation of worldly life and practising various kinds of austerities and penances with a view to torturing the body help achieve the ultimate ideal of life.[16] This encourages an attitude of asceticism and escapism from the material realities of this world.

These *śramaṇas* (ascetics) endeavoured for their own *nirvāṇa* and did not strive for the transformation or well-being of the society in material terms. There are, no doubt, references to the altruistic trends prevalent among the *śramaṇas* such as in the case of Arhat in Jainism and Boddhisattva in the Mahayana Buddhism who take upon themselves the task of saving the entire mankind along with them. The Boddhisattva "does not exert himself in religious discipline for the sake of his own weal, but for the sake of spiritual benefit of his fellow-creatures. If he would, he could.....enter into eternal Nirvana that never slides back, he could enjoy the celestial bliss of undisturbed tranquillity....."[17] However, inspite of all these self-sufficient blessings, the Boddhisattva devotes "all his energy to the salvation of the masses of the people, who, on account of their ignorance and infatuation, are forever transmigrating."[18] This service of humanity "by bestowing hope and guiding their steps"[19] is more in spiritual terms than in social context. Further, the lack of any reference to the social life of the Arhat and the Boddhisattva and their own ascetic attitude imply that they never strived, simultaneously with their spiritual endeavours, for the transformation of the material world.

Although both Jainism and Buddhism were numerically

insignificant in North-West India where Sikhism took its roots yet we do find some references to them in the Sikh scriptures and tradition. The Sikh Scripture, the Guru Granth Sahib, contains certain references to Jain ascetics, especially of the Digambar sect, which not only testify to the presence of ascetics of these traditions but also give the Sikh critical reaction to their way to life.[20] The Sikh Gurus did not agree with such ascetics as practised austerities, tortured their body and over-emphasized formalism. However, the Jainas and the Buddhists were numerically a very small community and their world-view had been so ascetic that in themselves they did not represent a distinct view of society.

The Hindu religion and culture which had had their orgin in the Vedas were, by the medieval times, divided into several schools of religious and philosophical thought. Among them the more prominent were the dualism or Dvait Vedanta (Madhva), unqualified non-dualism or Advait Vedanta (Sankara) and qualified non-dualism or Visistadvait Vedanta (Ramanuja): of course, there were some other schools of thought as well. The Sankhya school advocates the ontological dualism of *Prakriti* and *Puruśa*, the irreconcilable metaphysical realities. It compares the soul with a lame man and the *Prakriti* with the blind man. Just as a lame man of good vision mounting on the shoulders of a blind man of sure foot guides the latter in his movements, the souls guide the *Prakriti*. *Prakriti* is blind and unconscious but active, and evolves the manifold world under the guidance of the souls to realize their ends. According to this school, the individual soul (*jīva*) or the transcedental self in its intrinsic nature is different from empirical self : the latter is the self limited and determined by its body and other psychophysical organism whereas the transcendental self (Purusa) is free of all these mental modes. The transcendental self realizes its intrinsic freedom or liberation which is the ultimate end of human life when the limiting adjuncts of the psychophysical organism are completely destroyed and the self realizes its transcendental nature. Thus, we find that the empirical self is a mixture of matter and spirit (*Prakriti* and *Purusa*). It can become a liberated self only when it breaks itself completely from the shackles of *Prakriti*.

The Advait Vedanta is "the most widely known of the Hindu philosophical systems: indeed so prominent is it that it is sometimes taken to be the only Vedanta, or even the only kind of Indian Philosphy."[21] Two most prominent features of this system are its belief

in *nirguṇ* Brahman to be the only ontological reality and in ignorance (*avidya* or *māyā*) being the cause of the world of manifold distinctions to appear in accordance with man's karmic residues. It emphasizes the path of knowledge (*jñāna*) rather than that of action *(karma)* and devotion (*bhakti*) as the key to liberation. It is diametrically opposed to the Dvait Vedanta which emphasizes the absolute distinction between God, man and world, as well as the plurality of things in the world.

The most important figure in this tradition is Sankara (7th-8th century AD). According to him, everything other than Brahman is mere false appearance. He makes a distinction between pragmatic (*vivhārak*) truth and transcendental (*paramārthak*) truth. To him, this world is neither absolutely real nor absolutely unreal. To illusteat this point, he gives the example of the illusory snake which is existent in the rope. Both snake and rope are real in their empirical realms. When we mistake the rope for a snake, it implies negating the qualities of the rope and imposing upon it those of the snake. All this illusion follows from the misinterpretation of the stimulus that is presented to the physical eye. In order to find the real nature of the rope, it is incumbent upon the observer to transcend this illusion and to have the knowledge of real nature of the rope. This example can be extended to the mundane world which seems illusory so long as we are ignorant of its transcendental substance (Brahman). When the self outsteps the empirical realms, knowledge (jñāna) dawns: this is the stage of *moksa.* Sankara recommends transcendence from the empirical world for the attainment of this ideal. This resulted in an attitude of escapism and asceticism.

Unlike Sankara's unqualified non-dualism which is an abstract, static and non-functional metaphysical system considering this phenomenal world a cosmic illusion (*māyā*), Ramanuja (AD 1017-1137), the chief exponent of the doctrine of Viśiṣṭadvait or qualified non-dualism, retains independent existence of the sentient and non-sentient elements. According to him, Brahman, said in the Upanisads to be 'without a second', is a personal god characterized by 'an ocean of auspicious qualities' and worshipped with loving devotion. The selves and the universe, while distinguishable from Brahman, are not a 'second', separate category of reality but are also 'qualities' or attributes possessed by and inseparably related to him.[22] This personal god is the world-soul: unconscious matter and conscious souls in all states constitute His body. They constitute one organic whole in which sentient and non-sentient elements have their distinctive existence.

Thus, we find that the *sramanic* traditions as well as most of the Vedantic schools of philosphy in ancient and medieval India treated this material world as an unreal appearance. This gave birth to a psyche oriented towards the other-worldliness. The result was an escapist attitude towards the material reality of society. Spirituality got divorced from secular values, concern for the social praxis of right religion was either completely absent or the bare minimum. The perennial question of the relationship between faith and human existence, faith and social reality, faith and political action, and the kingdom of God and the building up of the material world had become practically irrelevant.

The idea of life-negation and world-negation in medieval Indian religious thought and practice resulted in many evils leading ultimately to the degeneration of man. Since ascetic life was preferred to the householder's life in medieval India, there was obsolutely no attempt made to raise the moral standards of the householder's life in the mundane world. Lack of moral values resulted in the social life touching its nadir. Many hymns in the Sikh scriptural literature refer to such degenerate social and religious life of those days. Those who renounced the world in quest of God or truth-realization also fell prey to this degeneration because there was no social or moral check on what they did. Gradually, the recluse lost sight of their aim, and instead they mistook the means to be the end itself. Consequently, the very spirit of religion got lost in the web of rituals and formalism.

Thus, we find that the religious life of the medieval Indian people was devoid of the social context: the divorce from social realities reduced religion to a set of arid beliefs and lifeless rituals. It failed to play its vital role of guiding the human life in society. The emergence of many sects and sub-sects such as *siddhas*, *yogīs*, *sāktas*, *et al.* represented a phase of decadence and morbidity in the moral and social life of the Hindus. All these sects and others expounded mutually opposed philosphical doctrines, and in the din of their ideological clashes the voice of truth got lost. The Bhakti Movement tried to restore a semblance of clarity to the now distorted and blurred image of Vedic tradition along with some non-Vedic elements. But even this Movement was broadly split up into two sectarian groups, one emphasizing the personal (*saguṇ*) and the other following the impersonal (*nirguṇ*) aspect of reality. Thus, it lost its thrust and could not climax in a mass movement.

The Hindu social order was horizontally divided into four

different castes. The "Purusa-Sukta" hymn of the *Rig Veda* is often cited as the divine ordinance sanctioning the origin of this fourfold caste system. The *Manusmriti* is an obvious attempt to sanctify this system. According to this view which forms the very basis of Hindu social order, men are not "in principle equal, but for ever unequal."[23] This ethnic inequality between man and man has been declared in principle and is not the result of any social or economic factors. God, unlike in Sikhism where all human being are in essence His manifestation, is not the universal father, but is the author of *varṇas*. Different *varṇas* were created, according to the above-mentioned hymn, from the different limbs of the Divine Being, and the *śūdras*, or the lowliest among the fourfold division, were created as the slaves of the higher castes. The slaying of a *śūdra* by Lord Rama for the sole 'crime' of his having indulged in religious rites not allowed to men of his caste, and the assertion of Lord Krisṇa that he was the creator of the four *varṇas* were aimed to ascribe the divine sanction of the caste system to these incarnations of Visnu who had become living realities for the masses in medieval India as against the Vedas who had then ceased to be a living force. This caste-based Hindu social structure, as it stood at the time of the inception of Sikhism, despite all denunciations of it by the saints of the Bhakti Movement, was as all-inclusive for the Hindus as it was all-exclusive for the non-Hindus.

People belonging to the so-called higher caste-groups had an inherited faith in the superiority of their caste, and this kind of complex had become the chief obstacle to mutual understanding and hindrance to the natural growth of the potentialities and capabilities of man. On the other hand, the caste ideology among the Hindus did not allow the *śūdras* and the outcastes to merge in the mainstream of social life. They were not considered worthy of meriting any social intercourse with the high-ups and the so-called twice-born.[24] The authority of the scriptures was abused to overawe those who aspired for higher status in society than was sanctioned by their caste. The resultant social ostracism denied them the essential human dignity and ethnic equality. Consequently, the natural growth of the potentialities of a considerable number of people got stifled, thus making them unable to reach the pinnacles of human glory which in a way hindered the all-round development of society as a whole.

Sexism exists as a universal system of marginalization of woman within various cultures and at every class level, although it has taken different forms in different cultures and socio-economic systems and at

different class levels.[25] The place of woman in patriarchal society continues to be subordinate to man, but her position becomes worse in the poor societies, especially in Asian countries where she suffers from the double oppression—oppression as woman and as member of the oppressed class. Such sexist discrimination against woman becomes all the worse when she happens to belong to a lower group in the caste hierarchy.

In the medieval times, she was completely denied an independent personality of her own. An independent life for her without any sort of male protection—may he be father, brother, husband or son—was unthinkable for the average medieval Indian.[26] At birth, she was considered an unwanted babe, and female infanticide was quite common. She was coerced to commit self-immolation (*satī*) at the pyre of her husband. Once again, *Manusmriti* was sought to provide divine sanction to this kind of discrimination against her. Lack of any unified or concerted thrust by the protagonists of the Bhakti Movement, who otherwise launched a protest movement against Brahmanical orthodoxy, against the discrimination failed to bring about any significant transformation in her social status.

Thus, we find that before the inception of Sikhism the rigid caste ideology formed the very basis of the structural make-up of the Hindu society along with asceticism and formalism. The caste ideology which was given a divine sanction by Brahmanical priestly class inducted permenent inequality, by birth, between man and man. It was advocated by them that God who created this world also created the four *varṇas*. The caste status retained its primacy vis-a-vis the other personal endowments of an individual such as power and pelf. All those who were opposed to this idelogy such as the highly ethical Buddhists, were ruthlessly persecuted till they either adopted the spirit of accommodation (Jainism) or became extinct (Buddhism).

(c) Muslim View of Social Structure

Islam is not only one of the major religions of the world but also an important faith in India which has swayed the minds and hearts of a large section of mankind. Having originated in Mecca aroud AD 610,[27] Islam made its first contact with India soon thereafter: the Muslims from the Arab sub-continent established their trade settlements in the southern part of India in the first half of the seventh century. Political subjugation of India by the Muslims began with the capture of Sind in AD 711 by Muhammad bin Qasim, followed by the

conquests of Mahmud of Ghazni (up to the Ravi) and others which led to the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate.[28] Although Islam differed in precept and practice from the contemporary Indian religions, it happened to influence Indian philosophies and way of life in a significant way.

The Quran, the holy Scripture of the Muslims, is claimed to be an indirect transmission of the Word of God revealed to Prophet Muhammad through archangel Gabriel. This revelation came not all at once but in parts large as well as small. Its provisions govern all the transactions of Muslim daily life and local laws as well as Muslim worship. Thus, it serves as the source of all Islamic thought—both spiritual and social. However, it is not a systematic philosophical treatise on different subjects touched upon in it. The strain of certain thoughts runs through many verses at many places whereas certain other themes have been mentioned only once or twice. Moreover, the variety of themes in it treats of man and his life in their totality comprehending each aspect of them. All these themes are not discussed separately, rather they are combined together in a flowing discourse like various colours in a spectrum. It is not just a Book containing spiritual incantations, but it comprises a "message and programme of reconstruction of the entire life, body and soul, given to a people who were asked first to adopt it in their own lives and then to carry it to others, through a leader who was also given timely instruction to guide his people and lead the movement to success."[29]

Unlike Hinduism which it confronted in India, Islam is strictly monotheistic: "unity of God is the pivotal point round which all doctrines and teachings of Islam revolve. Take out this element of Muslim faith and the whole structure of the Religion would collapse."[30] A statement which is central to the ontological doctrines of Islam reads thus—"*lā ilāha ill allah wā Muhammadun rasul-allah.*" Translated into English, it would read: "there is no god but God, and Muhammad is an Apostle of God." Whereas the second part of the statement is to highlight the unique position of Muhammad, the first is a clear and uncompromising affirmation of monotheism. The Supreme Lord in Islam is a personal being who at various places in the Quran speaks in personal terms. He is also not without attributes, but the plurality of attributes does not affect His unity: His essence is indentical with His attributes and there is no logical distinction between them. However, inspite of being personal and with attributes, He is not immanent or visible. He is Unseen, but this belief in the

Unseen is taken on faith because it is not a provable proposition. "The Quran never tries to prove the Unseen: it assumes that the awarness of the Unseen is inseparably ingrained in man."[31]

The idea of Divine unity rejects the theory of Divine incarnation accepted in Hinduism. It is proclaimed in the Quran, even and anon with augmented emphasis, that a finite incarnation of Allah is an impossibility: God never appears in human or any other form. Allah is the Unique, Self-Subsistent Creator of the entire universe. Just as the affirmation of One God (*tauhīd)* is the crux of Islam, so too any abberation in this belief, i.e. by putting anything or any one on the same level as God, is the greatest sin (*shirk*).[32] None can be co-equal or co-eternal with Him, and "the Prophet's extensive vocabulary of vituperation is never exhausted in attacking those who associate gods with God."[33] With the rejection of *avtārvād* is rejected the worship of idols and men, of stars and planets.

This supreme One of Islamic conception is solely responsible for the creation of the entire sentient as well as non-sentient phenomena. In the Islamic scriptural literature, Abraham says that "My Lord is He who giveth life as well as death,"[34] which implies that He and only He has a divine power, without any other means, to give life and death. All the creatures are incapable of giving life to any non-living being.[35] However, the concept of creation in Islam is different from the one in Sikhism. Whereas the latter proclaims that the Divine manifests Itself *qua* Spirit in the material phenomena, the former does not accept such an essential unity between the Creator and the creation, but maintains the transcendental nature of Allah. Allah is always distinct from his creation though the latter is within Allah. He has created the entire phenomena out of Himself and it is within Him. At the same time, however, He retains His trascedental nature. This seems to be the central point of departure from Sikhism.

In the Islamic view, "Adam is simply mud [non-living] in his origin, i.e. he was lifeless inorganic substance.....and became lifeful due to the command of Almightly Allah as whenever He wants for a thing to be created He only ordains "Be" and the things comes into existence."[36] It means that Allah wills the creation, but remains distinct from it. Consequently, duality between the Creator (*qādar*) and the creation (*qudrat*) continues irrespective of the fact that the latter has been willed into existence by the Divine. It is in this very context that al-Ghazali, the famous Muslim theologian, says that Allah is neither without nor within the world.[37]

Thus, Islam believes the entire created phenomena, including man and the mundane world, to be the creation of the Divine, but it stops short of spiritualizing the social and the mundance in that it retains duality between the Creator and the creation. However, it does not shun the material world by considering it mere delusion. The functions of the priest and the sovereign were concentrated, at least in the initial stages of growth and development of Islam, in one and the same person. Muhammad was alike the prophet of Allah and the temporal ruler of the Arabs. His successors, the Caliphs, also united in themselves the twin functions of the king and the spiritual chief. This implies that Prophet Muhammad and his successors did not shun their worldly obligations, rather they combined them so well with their spiritual office.Thus, the well-being and betterment of society were justifiably inter-related with the upliftment of spiritual and moral life of man.

The concept of the unity of Allah (*tauhīd*) who willed everything to life making no distinction between one man and the other serves as the ontological basis for the Islamic vision of equality of human beings in the social structure. The ideas of the spiritual unity (the *ruh* infused into the lifeless matter is the same) and ethnic and social equality of mankind are based on the same ontological doctrine. Islam declares all men equal, irrespective of their birth, rank or profession. All men are the progeny of Adam who was a human being. Islam does not recognize any caste system, nor does it subscribe to any specific priestly class. "Every Muslim is his own priest and every spot of land is his mosque to pray and to worship Allah."[38] In this way, it is able to free itself from the caste inequality and such other evils as Hinduism in India had been a prey to.

Performance of five daily prayers is another requirement enjoined upon the followers in Islamic theology. These prayers could be said by the faithful individually, but the public prayer was preferred because it helped keep alive the sense of corporate unity of the community. It was also perhaps because of this very reason that the pilgrimage to Mecca was made obligatory for every Muslim. The five daily prayers where the Imam, who generally leads the prayer, stood before the community of hundreds of the faith assembled in the mosque served more than one purpose. It made the faithful emulate every movement of the Imam who was their spiritual as well as social ideal. Such prayer-meetings also served as the drill-ground where people learnt to assemble, to move in a body and to follow the commander. These meetings were

attended by all, the rich and the poor, the high and the low, who prayed to Allah kneeling in the same fashion on the same floor. This helped create among them a feeling of brotherhood and equality.

Following directly from the command to pray is the Quranic command to pay the poor tax: perform the prayer and pay the poor tax. This tax, one-fortieth of the income, was to be paid in kind or cash or in any other equivalent. It was payable annually on oxen, cows, buffaloes, sheep, goats, horses, mules, asses and gold and silver, provided the property was of a certain amount; as five camels, thirty oxen, forty sheep, five horses, two hundred dirhams, or twenty dinars.[39] This religious injunction to contribute a certain amount of one's income towards a common fund gathered for philanthropic purposes created in the donor a feeling of fellowship and brotherhood which forms the very basis of ethical values of love, compassion and altruism.

The spiritual precepts of the unity of God (*tauhīd*), communal prayers (*namāz*), pilgrimage to Mecca (*haj*), and paying the poor-tax (*zakāt*) form the basis of the social thought of equality, fellow-feeling and philanthropy. Although these very social premises exhort man to act and behave with love and compassion, keeping righteousness his aim, there are certain more specific instances in the Quran where we find man being exhorted to do ever good. Combination of the office of emperor with that of the priest was also aimed at ensuring moral standards of all secular activity. In fact, morality was to be the domineering value in politics so as to ensure righteousness in state activity and to make the ruler an ideal for the masses.

However, this true Islamic vision of society and social structure could not be realized in India. Even as early as the Sultanate period, there was "an attempt for the complete imposition of the *shari'at* rule, and the royal chroniclers tried to give Islamic garb to a politically expedient action."[40] During the Mughal rule also the pendulum swung, with the sole exception of Akbar's reign, towards Islamic orthodoxy, especially during the reign of Aurangzib, the last of the great Mughal rulers. Destruction of places of worship of other religious communities, imposition of the protection tax (*jizīā*) on the non-Muslims, and forcible conversion to Islam were some of the factors which distorted the social structure as envisioned by the Prophet. Instead of ethnic and social equality, universal brotherhood, compassion, justice and altruism, social discrimination, oppression and persecution were the order of the day during the Mughal

ascendency in India.

(d) **Emergence of the Sikh Social Structure**

Guru Nanak (AD 1469-1539), the founder of the Sikh faith, found the Indian society of his day sharply divided into different religious denominations, caste groups and races. Besides Hinduism and Islam, the two major religious traditions of the day, there prevailed then several more religions, their sects and sub-sects, and in the conflicting din of these the voice of truth, the spirit of religion got lost. External formalism passed for inner purity, and the means were taken to be the end itself. People had become forgetful of God, the creator and sustainer of the entire universe, and had instead started worshipping numerous idols and images of gods and goddesses. So much so that God or God's will was given out as the cause behind division of humanity into different hierarchical groups.

In the eyes of Islam, non-Muslims were atheists (*kāfir*) and their conversion, even though forcible, to Islam or persecution was considered a service unto Islam. Extermination of idolators by conversion or slaying in a Muslim country was prescribed by three out of four schools of Islamic law.[41] Values of love and compassion had been replaced by the sense of bigotry and fanaticism. The spiritual unity and social equality of the entire mankind as envisaged in their scripture were practically confined to Muslims alone, and even among them there were some 'more equal than the others.'

Hinduism was an amalgam of various sects advocating conflicting world-views. They generally believed this mundane world to be unreal (*mithiā*) and thus recommended withdrawal from it with a view to achieving emancipation from it. This attitude of world-negation gave birth to asceticism and created among them a sense of secondary for this material world. This was perhaps the reason responsible for the degeneration that had set in in the social and political life of India. The caste system, with divine sanction behind it, cast further stranglehold on the smooth progression of society.

Buddhism, though a religion of Indian origin, was almost non-existent in the north western parts of India at the time of Guru Nanak. Jainism, especially the Digambar sect of it, is referred to by Guru Nanak in some of his hymns. Like Buddhism, it is also a non-Vedic, atheistic and *śramaṇic* faith, and recommends life-negation and world-negation. There were numerous *yogīs*, *nāths*, *siddhas*, *et al.* who were engaged in the trickery of *tāntras* and *mantras*. It was a phase of degenration for these sects.

Guru Nanak felt that for a religion to be valid and relevant to contemporary man it must be embedded in society and it must embrace the whole of mankind. Any religion that recommends life-negation and world-negation and that denies an equal place to all human beings among themselves and at the Divine Portal cannot be expected to work for the transvaluation and transformation of the secular life in this mundane world. Man's subjective spiritual upliftment has to be simultaneous with the moral transformation of society in general because the former works for the creation of the latter and it is only in the latter set-up based on the values of justice, equality, love, self-respect and philanthropy that the former can survive and thrive.

Guru Nanak made an intensive study of the contemporary social *milieu* and felt that the establishment of a just and equitable society of his vision was not possible by a mere reformatory pach-up work: it needed drastic, revolutionary changes. Since social exclusivism and inequality were in-built in the very constitution and mechanism of the caste system sanctified by the scriptural authority of the Vedas, it was imperative for any movement aiming at the establishment of a new world-order to do away with the caste-ridden society. All other movements which began within the broader framework of Hinduism ended as mere sects of Hinduism (e.g. Kabir-panthīs) or appendages of the caste society (e.g. Lingāyats) despite their anti-caste stance. Therefore, Guru Nanak felt that the chances of success of a movement against social exclusivism and hierarchism, racial arrogance and discrimination and persecuation on religious and eithic grounds, were in direct proportion to the separate identity it was able to establish outside the society ridden with all these problems both at the ideological and organizational levels.

It was keeping this in view that Guru Nanak conceived a distinct ideology and made it the *vis-a-tergo* of his social philosophy. The succeeding Gurus pursued it with a determined will and consistent effort, and the creation of the Khalsa-Panth in AD 1699 by Guru Gobind Singh was the realization of the ideology in practice which was perceived by Guru Nanak. The Khalsa Brotherhood, as created by Guru Gobind Singh, was a model of the just, equitable, self-respecting, loving and altruistic society envisioned by Guru Nanak.

The Sikh Gurus conceived the ultimate Reality to be without any co-eternal or co-equal. The Real One is referred to as *ikoaṅkār* in the Sikh scripture. The unity of Reality is central to the Sikh ontology. Sikhism believes the One to be the sole creator, preserver and

destroyer of all sentient and non-sentient beings, and nothing ever happens outside the Divine Will. It creates all beings and things not from any external matter, but manifests Itself *qua* Spirit in the entire created phenomena. Thus, the created beings are seemingly distinct and separate from their Creator yet they are in essence one with Him, thereby giving an ontological basis for the ethnic equality among the human beings.

The spiritual unity of mankind resulting from the universal fatherhood of Reality implicitly enjoins upon all beings to be just and loving towards one another. Since each being is the spiritual manifestation of the Divine, to harm, exploit or persecute a being without there being any justifiable cause is a sacrilege against the Divine. We should love and respect all others, irrespective of their place in the social stratification or their religious denomination, as manifestations of the Divine. All men are essentially equal among themselves as well as in the eyes of the Ultimate. Service of mankind is termed as service to the Divine, and there has been a lot of emphasis on the significance of *sevā*, or selfless voluntary service to others, both in the Sikh Scripture and the tradition.

Thus, the Sikh Gurus envisioned an ideal man and an ideal social structure. Both man and the material phenomena, accoding to them, are realities, relative realities though. This precept provides for their essential unity with the Divine on the one hand, and spiritual unity and ethnic equality among the entire mankind on the other. Since man is, in essence, divine, truthfulness in his thought and deed is declared the highest, higher than the Truth Itself. Cultivation of moral and ethical values is necessary for man's spiritual progression. Man is required to lead a worldly life, the normal life of householder recognizing one's duties and obligations to his parents, wife, children, relatives and kinsmen as much as to the larger society to which he belongs and yet at the same time remaining dutiful and faithful to his faith and its discipline. A Sikh does not believe in the hierarchical division of mankind attributed to the Vedic authority and instead has full and firm faith in the universal fatherhood of God (Iśvara) and the universal brotherhood of mankind. Equality of and love for mankind, peace and justice in human affairs, and theophilanthropic tendency in general human behaviour are some of the ethical vīrtues man must cultivate. He also believes human body and the world at large to be the abode of the Real One, and thus ever strives for the welfare and betterment of both. Sikhism is quite emphatic on its rejection of all

kinds of penances and austerities (the commonly employed means for the torture of body by *siddhas*, *yogīs* and mendicants from different sects including the Sufis), asceticism and celibacy (which resulted from the renunciation of the world believed to be *mithiā* or *māyā* in some traditions). Thus, the Sikh ideal of man expects of him to live a householder's life in the world, but his entire life is devoted to realizing all the humanly realizeable attributes of the Real One.

This, however, must not be mistaken as an attempt at transcending the social reality. This world is the abode of the Divine and He, in His immanent aspect, is referred to as saviour of the saintly and annihilator of the evil and the wicked. Thus, it is the Divine Will that the saintly qualities of righteousness, justice, love, equality, mercy and philanthropy should prevail in human affairs in the world. The forces which hinder the establishment of such an ideal social structure must be fought against and overcome by a true Sikh. The Sikh advice is to make a peaceful resistance to begin with and make the supreme sacrifice if necessary, but if such means fail, it is perfectly justified and valid to move one's hand to the hilt of the sword. A word of warning, however: this struggle must have no selfish motives and be for the cause of *dharma* or righteousness.

The moral and spiritual upliftment of man and the creation of a social situaltion conducive to such upliftment have to be simultaneous. The Sikh Gurus did not merely preach their precepts; they at the same time lived those precepts in their lives so as to serve as models for their followers to emulate. Their hymns as included in the Guru Granth Sahib serve as the ideational basis of the social structure of their vision. The construction by Guru Hargobind of the Akal Takht, the supreme temporal authority for the Sikhs, in AD 1606 besides the Harimandir, the modern-day Golden Temple and the most sacred of the Sikh spiritual seats, and his wearing two swords (one symbolic of *mīrī* or temporal authority and the other of *pīrī* or spiritual authority) emphasized that the vision of an ideal social order as cherished by his predecessors and himself can be and has to be realized in this very world. Before him, Guru Arjan and later on Guru Tegh Bahadur laid down their lives for the sake of freedom of belief and righeousness in human affairs.

There had been, no doubt, conscious and deliberate attempts on the part of the earlier Gurus to build up the Sikh community as distinct and different from the Hindus and also Muslims for that matter, but it goes to the credit of Guru Gobind Singh that he

transformed the Sikhs into a corporate community of the Khalsa, enjoining upon all to have the appellation 'Singh' and wearing the five k's. He did so presumably to make all the Sikhs look alike among themselves and distinct from the Hindus and Muslims. In fact, this corporate community of the Khalsa or Khalsa-Panth was to serve as a model of the Sikh ideal of a classless, casteless and just society based on the values of love, freedom, self-respect and theophilanthropy.

Love and peace have been the watch-words of a true religion as defined by Guru Nanak and other Sikh Gurus, but also, any attempt to deny man the essential virtues of equality, freedom and self-respect must be opposed. Such oppressive and immoral forces must be fought against and subdued. That is perhaps why Sikhism does not equate peace with inaction or non-violence because, as says Sir Zafarulla Khan in another context, "peace in its true meaning does not comprise solely physical security or absence of war and conflict."[42] This condition is only a limited and passive aspect of the much wider concept of peace. When a person or a group of persons gives up faith in the divine unity and ethnic equality of mankind, the desire for peace comes in direct conflict with human rights. The Sikh advice is not to create such a situation, but if such a circumstance is enforced on him, he must not own to anybody's fear and compromise on values and principles for the sake of keeping peace: peace is, no doubt, of profound significance and is based on the doctrine of equality and universal love, but justice in human affairs and self-respect are higher values for which even the price of peace is not considered too high. In fact, justice universal love, equality, fairness, consideration and cooperation lead to the dawn of eternal peace. However, whenever these values get threatened, man must resist this threat though this resistance must be peaceful and non-violent to begin with. However, resort to arms is declared valid and advisable if all other means fail.[43] This resistance, however, must not be for the sake of selfish motives but for the sake of righteousness or *dharma*. It is somewhat like the Quranic teaching which recommends man to "fight in the cause of Allah against those who fight against you, but do not transgress.....Fight until persecution ceases and religion is freely professed for the sake of Allah again."[44]

When Guru Hargobind and Guru Gobind Singh took up arms to flight against the unjust, oppressive forces, it was a step fully in conformity with the values of peace and love held and preached by Guru Nanak and other Sikh Gurus. One, this fight was not inspired by

any selfish motives but was for the sake of righteousness or *dharma*. Second, values of equality, universal love and justice are more important, and they cannot be sacrificed for the sake of keeping peace. In fact, no long-lasting peace is possible unless man learns to respect these and such other values.

The Sikh view of a peaceful and just social order entails respect for the rights of others and non-exploitation of others. To deprive others of their rights ought to be avoided, says Guru Nanak, as scrupulosly as the Muslims avoid pork and as the Hindus consider beef a taboo.[45] Guru Tegh Bhadur, the ninth spiritual-preceptor of the Sikh faith, reiterates the same sentiment when he exhorts man neither to hold anyone in fear nor to own to the fear of anybody.[46] The first part of Guru Tegh Bahadur's above statement implores man not to create conditions where one dominates or demeans the other whereas the latter part of this statement exhorts man, with equal emphasis, not to compromise with such a situation where human dignity and human rights come in direct conflict with the desire for keeping peace because such peace would be immoral and short-lived, This characteristic in the Sikh behaviour is applicable to one and all. The rich and the powerful do not have the right to be treated differently. The Sikh Gurus declare it a necessary virtue for all, the Hindus and the Muslims, the rulers and the ruled.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Jagjit Singh, *Perspectives on Sikh Studies*, p. 6
2. See G.S. Pande, *Studies in the Origins of Buddhism*, pp. 251-61
3. C. Kunhan Raja, "Pre-Vedic Elements in Indian Thought", in *History of Religious Philosophy*. Ed. S. Radhakrishnan, p. 31
4. M. Mujeeb, *The Indian Muslims*, p. 27
5. *Ibid.*, p. 21
6. Harbans Singh, *Guru Nanak and Origins of the Sikh Faith*, p. 41
7. Tara Chand, *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture*, p. 66
8. Harbanse Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 40
9. Four hymns on pp. 360, 417, 417-18 and 722-23 in the Guru Granth Sahib are collectively called "Bābar Vāṇī" (Babar's sway). This title seems to have become popular from the use of this term (*bābar vāṇī*) in one of these hymns. The title as such does not exist in the Scripture.
10. For a detailed account of the Emperor's visit to the Guru at Goindwal, see Sarup Das Bhalla, *Mahima Prakash*, Vol. II, pp. 240-43. According to this Sikh chronicle, the Emperor refused to step on the silks spread out for him by his servants, and instead he preferred to walk to the Guru's presence bare foot. Here he ate, along with other common people, out of the Guru-ka-Langar or the community kitchen.
11. H. Beveridge, *The Akbarnama*, vol. III, p. 1115
12. Guru Gobind Singh, *Zafarnamah*, 89-94
13. Origins of the Sikh faith go back to Guru Nanak (AD 1469-1539) who was

followed by his nine spiritual successors, the tenth and the last personal Guru being Guru Gobind Singh (AD 1666-1708). The latter, before his demise, bestowed the pontifical office for all times to come on the *granth* (Guru Granth Sahib or more precisely on the revealed word as contained therein) and the *panth* (Khalsa-Panth).

14. Jodh Singh, *Sikh Sidhant; Sarup te Samratha*, p. 18
15. L.M. Joshi "Historical Survey", in *Buddhism*, p. 2.See also G.C. Pande, *op. cit.* 317 and Hira Lal Jain, *Bhartiya Sanskriti Mein Jain Dharam Ka Yogdan*, pp. 342-43
16. Muni Shiv Kumar, *The Doctrine of Liberation In Indian Religions*, pp. 100-01
17. Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, *Outlines of Mahayana Buddhism*, pp. 278-79
18. *Ibid.*, 279
19. S. Radhakrishnan, *Religion and Culture*, p. 31
20. Cf. Guru Granth Sahib, I, pp. 356, 835, 1285 and 149-50
21. *Abingdon Dictionary of Living Religions*, p. 4
22. *Ibid.*, p. 798
23. Max Weber, *The Religions of India*, p. 144
24. The word *dvij* (twice-born) occurs in the Manusmriti, X.I. Up to the age of eight all (including the *śudra*) are equal. After the initiation ceremony which a *śudra* child is denied, the *dvij* learns the allotted vocations and is thus quite different from the person not initiated. It is by the initiation ceremony that he is born again, thus being called a *dvij* or twice-born. For more details, see M.V. Patwardhan, *Manismriti : The Ideal Democratic Republic of Manu*, pp. 149-50
25. Rosemary Ruether, "A Feminist Perspective", in (Virginia Fabella and Sergio Torres, eds.) *Doing Theology in a Divided World*, pp. 65-66
26. *The Manusmriti*, V., 148 and IX. 3
27. W. Montgomery Watt, *Islam and the Integration of Society*, p. 5
28. M. Mujeeb, op. cit., p. 20
29. Abdul Haq Ansari, "Faith and Practice: Theology and Ethics", in *Islam*, pp. 11-12
30. S.A. Akbarabadi, "Islam and Other Religions" in *Islam*, p. 104
31. Abdul Haq Ansari, op. cit., p. 9
32. Michael Victor and Paul Jackson, "Pillars of Islam", in *The Muslims of India: Beliefs and Practices*, p. 4
33. S. Khuda Bakhsh, *Essays Indian and Islamic*, p. 13
34. The Quran, II: 258
35. See Majid Ali Khan, *Islam on Origin and Evolution of Life*, p. 86
36. *Ibid.*, p. 88; and see also and Quran, II: 117
37. *Ibid.*, p. 96
38. S. Khuda Bakhsh, *op. cit.*, p. 18
39. See Lane Poole, *Arabian Society*, p. 14
40. George Koovackal and Paul Jackson, "The Spread of Islam", in *The Muslims of India: Beliefs and Practices*, p. 121.
41. Harbans Singh, op. cit. 42
42. Sir Zafarullah Khan, "The Fundamentals of Peace", in *Religion for Peace*. Ed. Homer A. Jack, p. 85
43. Sikh history and tradition stand witness to this. The martyrdoms of Guru Arjan, Guru Tegh Bahadur and numerous other Sikhs testify to the Sikh code that a serious peaceful endeavour be made, in the first instance, to subdue the forces of evil. Taking to the arms is the last resort, in that situation a fully valid and justified resort. Cf. Guru Gobind Singh, *Zafarnamah*, 22
44. The Quran, IX: 191, 193-94
45. Guru Granth Sahib, I, p. 141
46. *Ibid.*, IX, p. 1427

CHAPTER IV

TEXT AND THE DISCOURSE

(a) Introduction to the Dasam Granth

The *Dasam Granth* i.e. the *granth*[1] or Book of the *dasam* or Tenth Master (Guru Gobind Singh), as distinguished from the Adi (or, Guru) Granth which was compiled by Guru Arjan in AD 1604 and which was apotheosized as 'Guru' by Guru Gobind Singh himself just before his passing away in AD 1708, is the sacred anthology which, as believed in the Sikh tradtion, contains poetic compositions of Guru Gobind Singh.[2] These sublime verses were composed by the Guru at different times and places, but most of them were written before 1704 when he had to evacuate Anandpur, with the exception of *Zafarnāmah* which he composed and despatched to Emperor Aurangzib from Dina Kangar (in the modern-day Faridkot district of the Punjab) in AD 1705 and a few other smaller compositions which he might have composed after the evacuation of Anandpur or during the breathing spell at Damdama Sahib (Talwandi Sabo), in the present-day Bathinda district, during the fall and winter of AD 1705-06.

Tradition holds that many manuscript copies of these compositions were current during the Guru's own lifetime. It is also believed that the Guru himself got some manuscripts prepared.[3] Some devotees also made copies for their personal use. However, the number of compositions and their order were not indentical in these anthologies. The original manuscripts were possibly lost in the aftermath of evacuation. The first authentic and comprehensive volume was compiled by Bhai Mani Singh (d. AD 1737), a devoted follower of the Guru, sometime between 1716 and 1737 by tracing and collecting whatever could be salvaged or whatever had been preserved with certain Sikhs who had retained copies of some of the *bāṇis* with them.

However, there is uncertainity about the present location of this

recension. In its absence, the discrepancies in the text of the extant recensions continued to cause many a misgiving. An effort was made by the Gurmat Granth Pracharak Sabha, Amritsar, in order to remove these misgivings. The work was entrusted to this Sabha (established in 1885) by the Khalsa Diwan, Amritsar. The Sodhak Committee appointed by this Sabha collected thirty-two different recensions which were studied by prominent scholars and theologians. Formal discussions were held at the Akal Takht, Amritsar, for eight months during June 1895-February 1896,[5] and a Report based on these deliberations was prepared. The Report, published in AD 1897, stated that the entire volume was the work of the Guru.[6] As a result of the deliberations of the Committee, a recension of the *Dasam Granth* was brought out in 1902 by the Wazir Hind Press, Amritsar, which is generally believed to comprise as authentic a version of the text as possible.

The entire *Dasam Granth* is rhymed poetry consisting of prayer, psalms eulogising Akal, autobiography, heroic tales from the Puranic mythology and epic literature of India with an obvious emphasis on their reorientation and reinterpretation, an Epistle of Victory addressed to Emperor Aurangzib, and so on. The script used throughout is Gurmukhi, though the language for the most part is the medieval Hindi of the Eastern Gangetic plains, also known as Braj, with the exception of *Vār Srī Bhagautī Jī Kī* (popularly known as *Chandi di Var*) and a hymn in Ramkali *rāga* or measure (*mitra piāre nuṅ*.....) which are in Punjabi language, and the *Zafarnāmah*, along with the following *Hikāyats*, which is in Persian, The following is the list of compositions included in the *Dasam Granth* :

1. *Jāpu*
2. *Akāl Ustati* (In fact, there is no such title at the head of this *bāṇī* which ends with the words "*ustat sampuraṇaṅ*" or the eulogy concludes, Since the entire composition is a eulogy of the Akal, or the Ultimate Reality, it is called *Akāl Usati*
3. *Bachitra Nāṭak*
4. *Chaṇḍī Charitra Ukti Bilās*
5. *Chaṇḍī Charitra*
6. *Vār Srī Bhagoutī Jī Kī*
7. *Giān Prabodh*
8. *Chaubis Autār*
9. *Brahma Avtār*
10. *Rudra Avtār*

11. *Rāmkali hymns*
12. *Swaiyye*
13. *Srī Sastra Nām Mālā*
14. *Pākhyān Charitra*
15. *Zafarnāmah*
16. *Hikāyats*

Of these the *Chaṇḍī Charitras*, *Chaubīs Autār*, *Brahmā Avtār* and *Rudra Avtār* are sometimes counted part of the *Bachitra Nāṭak*, as *Hikāyats* are that of *Zafarnāmah*, thus reducing the total number of compositions in *Dasam Granth* from sixteen to ten.

(b) **Authenticity of Authorship**

Of the compositions included in the *Dasam Granth*, a few bear the authentic phrase "*srī mukhvāk pātshāhī* (also written as *pātisāhī*) 10" or the holy Word from the mouth of the Tenth Master. These are *Jāpu*, *Bachitra Nāṭak*, *Swaiyye* and *Zafarnāmah.* Some other compositions have only "*pātsāhī* 10" or the Tenth Master at their head. These are *Akāl Ustati, Vār Srī Bhagautī Jī Kī'* Giān Prabodh, *Chaubīs Autār, sabdas* or hymns in Ramkali measure, *Sastra Nām Mālā* and *Pākhyān Charitra.* There are also certain texts which bear no such title. *Chaṇḍī Charitra Ukti Bilās, Chaṇḍī Charitra, Brahmā Avtār, Rudra Avtār,* and *Hikāyats* fall in this cetegory. This difference has been one of the reasons which have led many scholars to conclude that not all of these compositions are Guru's own. Dharam Pal Ashta has given some very cogent and convincing arguments to infer that "all the parts of the *Dasam Granth* were composed by Guru Gobind Singh himself.....If at all, any of the court poets had any hand in the composition of the *Granth,* it was purely of the nature of an amanuensis. It is quite possible that the Guru dictated his poems to his court poets. This does not necessarily mean that they had composed any part of the *Granth*.....It may, therefore, in the end, be said with confidence that the *Dasam Granth* is the work of Guru Gobind Singh himself and of no body else." Even the S.G.P.C., in its publication *Shabad-Mūrati* by Bhai Randhir Singh, has accepted the entire literary corpus included in the *Dasam Granth* as Guru Gobind Singh's own. Earlier, the Sodhak committee, comprising the known Sikh scholars and theologians of the day had also given a similar opinion : their argument, as has later on been taken up by Taran Singh in his famous treatise on different exegetical schools (*Gurbāṇī dīāṅ Viākhiā Praṇālīāṅ*), given here is that just as *bāṇī* or hymns of the Gurus

following Guru Nanak have been elucidation and explanation of what the latter had written, the verses of Guru Gobind Singh should also be read in the same context. The *Report* specifically refers to his compositions with Puranic background as exegetical of the Puranic and other mythological references in the hymns of Guru Granth Sahib. Maybe, the Guru also wanted that the Sikhs should not have to seek guidance and help of Hindu scholars to fully comprehend the connotations of mythological allusions in the Scripture. He retold such stories to bring out their meaning in the Sikh context.[8] Thereafter, scholars like Giani Bishan Singh, Trilochan Singh, Piara Singh Padam, *et al.* also opined that the entire text in the Granth is from the Guru's pen. Harbhajan singh (*Gurmukhi Lipi men Uplabdh Hindi Kavya Ka Alochanātamak Adhyan*) and Mahip Singh (*Gurū Gobind Siṅgh aur Unkī Hindi Kavitā*) also accept the entire given text as genuine and authentic.

There are, however, certain scholars who question the authenticity and authorship of some of the compositions. The Bhasaur school (for example, see Ran Singh, *Dasam Granth Nirnaya*) was the most vocal in this category. Loehlin also feels that "the writings included in the *granth* of the Tenth Guru were composed at different times by Guru Gobind Singh and his band of fifty-two poets and translators."[9] Similarly, Mohan Singh Diwana (*History of Panjabi Literature*) and Khushwant Singh (*A History of the Sikhs*) hold that certain compositions in the *Dasam Granth* are not the Guru's own but of his court poets. Of them, Mohan Singh Diwana simply passes his judgement without giving any arguments in support of his contention, and that is perhaps why he later on changed his stance. Ratan Singh Jaggi is also one with this school of thought and doubts the authorship of some of the compositions as included in the *Dasam Granth.*[10] Dr Jaggi seems to have erred in his interpretation of certain compositions of the *Dasam Granth* from the Puranic perspective because these compositions are not mere adaptations from the Puranic literature but its reinterpretation in the broader framework of Sikh metaphysical thought. However, the learned scholar himself seems on unsure ground because he accepts the same compositions as Guru's own in his *Guru Gobind Siṅgh di Bāṇī Vich Sutantartā dī Bhāvanā* (1967). His latest, *Dasam Granth Parichaya* (1991), simply glosses over the controversy and discusses the given text.

We have referred to this controversy only briefly and avoided any detailed discussion on it because the subject does not fall within the

purview of our work. Howver, we have made comments wherever required so as to make our position clear and point out the weakness in the stand taken by certain vested interests that the authorship of some of the compositions in the *Dasam Granth* cannot be attributed to the Guru. Our stand on this point, based as it is on our understanding of the text after decoding the symbols and myths used therein, is supported by the SGPC and the Akal Takht. The former's publication (Bhai Randhir Singh's *Shabad-Murati*) makes a cogent argument against those who question the authenticity of authorship of certain compositions. Although the Akal Takht has not so far issued any edict as regards this controversy yet its involvement in the decision of the Sodhak Committee is obvious since all the deliberations were held at the Akal Takht. However, this confirmation of the authenticity of authorship is in no way an attempt at equating the Dasam Granth with the Guru Granth Sahib : whereas the latter enjoys the unique position of the Guru-Eternal (Sabda-Guru), the former is only the Guru's poetic pastime though it has the doctrinal identity with the former. Thus we deem the given text as the genuine work of Guru Gobind Singh. Moreover, we limit our study of the text only to a select few compositions such as *Jāpu*, *Akāl Ustati*, *Bachitra Nāṭak* and *Zafarnāmah* the authoship of which is universally accepted as genuine. We have, of course, taken help from the text of many other compositions as well to substantiate our views.

(c) Discourse on the text

(i) *Jāpu*

The *Jāpu* is the opening composition of the *Dasam Granth* and is part of the daily regimen of Sikh prayer. It is also one of the *bāṇīs* recited at the time of the Sikh baptismal (*amrit*) ceremony. This indicates towards the fact that it might have not only been composed before AD 1699 but also become by then popular among the Sikhs as a hymn of prayer: it was on the Baisakhi day (30 March) of AD 1699 that Guru Gobind Singh created the Khalsa-Panth by making his followers take the baptism of the double-edged sword. The view that it was composed during the breathing spell at Damdama Sabib in 1705-06 stands contradicted by tradition itself.

The *Jāpu* is an introductory invocation in the *Dasam Granth*. In fact, the word '*Jāpu*' is the noun form of the Sanskrit *Jāp* which means 'to utter in low voice, whisper, mutter (especially prayer or incantation), to invoke or call upon in a low voice.[11] Thus, the *Jāpu* is

the prayer of the Sikhs meant to be recited in the ambrosial hour of the morning. It comprises 199[12] verses of which 78 are in the vocative mood invoking the Akal and saluting Him overtly or covertly whereas the remaining 121 are descriprive in nature and describe the ultimate Reality. All these 199 verses, comprising about 950 names[13] of the Real One, are in the form of rhymed couplets. Sometimes both the lines in the couplet describe Reality in negative terms but at times the non-qualified aspect is fully balanced with the positive attributes of the One. This turns the composition into a beautiful necklace in which the beads of positive and negative attributes of Reality have been so intimately and artistically joined together that as a work of art it becomess a rare spacimen of the Guru's vocabulary and poetic ingenuity.

The *Jāpu* being an invocation to the ultimate Reality is placed in the *stotra* poetic form because it contains a eulogistic description of Reality, in both positive and nagative terms. The origin of such eulogistic incantations can be traced back to the *Rig Veda*, the earliest extant literary source in India. The tradition developed further in Puranic and other religious literature, and we have several such independent *stotras* available today. These *stotras* contain a eulogistic description of the attributive qualities of the Deity. It is in this context that some exegetes have compared the *Jāpu* with the *Viṣṇu Sahaṅsarnāmā* and called it the 'Akal Sahansarnama'. Of course, there are some basic differences between the two. For example, the *Viṣṇu Sahaṅsarnāmā* describes the power, beauty, etc., of Visnu in a qualified (*saguṇ*) manner whereas the *Jāpu* provides more space to the non-qualified (*nirguṇ*) aspect of Reality though in the overall entirety there is an attempt at a harmonious blend of both the *saguṇ* and the *nirguṇ* aspects.

Man has since time immemorial conceived for his worship the Deity in one form or the other, and this conception has not, true to human nature, remained the same but has changed in differenct climes and times. So we find the description of Deity conceived in many different forms and names from Vedic times to the Bhakti Movement in medieval India. For the sake of convenience, we can divide the entire metaphysical thought into two broad cetegories—*nirguṇ* (without attributes) and *saguṇ* (with attributes), though both these are expressions of the same Real One. Before the advent of Sikhism, the main exponents of these schools in India were Śaṅkara and Ramanuja, respectively. Ramanuja's *Viśiṣṭadvaitvād* or qualified non-dualism

conceives God as an object of worship (*iṣṭdeva*) whereas Sankara emphasizes the impersonal unity of Reality. Ramanuja's *iṣṭdeva* or Deity is *saguṇ*. According to him, the Deity, the individual self and the world are real elements of difference (*viśesa*) and attributes. His metaphysical system of *bhedabhed* (identity-in-difference) conceives Brahman as the material and the efficient cause of all individual selves and the non-sentient objects. However, he accepts the independent and distinct reality of the *jīva* thereby negating the absolute nature and unitary character of God.

On the other hand, Sankara who appeared on the Indian scene before Ramanuja is an advocate of the *nirguṇ* school. His non-dualism (*advaitvād*) negates the phenomenal qualities in Brahman and not the transcendental ones. He negates the empircal qualities because they impose limitations. In the Upanishads, we find that at many places the personal aspect of Reality is stressed and the impersonal one is either disregarded or not mentioned at all, but at several other places we find Reality described through impersonal terms. However, Sankara in his commentaries gives impersonalistic imterpretation of the concept of Reality. He also believes in the reality of the impersonal Being : all else is declared *māyā*.

Sikhism makes an attempt to synthesize both the impersonal and the personal, transcendental and immanent, *nirguṇ* and *saguṇ* aspects of Reality, without suppressing either one. It believes that "the underlying unity of the unmanifest (*nirguṇ*) and the manifest (*saguṇ*) is One (*ek*)."[15] The innumerable beings in the empirical world are manifestations of the Real One. These manifestations are not independent or separate from It. They are implicit in and necessary expressions of It. They in no way limit the independent and unitary character of Reality. In the Sikh scripture, the Guru Granth Sahib, we find many instances where both the personal and the impersonal aspects of the Real One have been harmonized in the same hymn. Thus, we find in Sikhism a harmonious blend of the earlier *nirguṇ* and *saguṇ* schools, with a reorientation and reinterpretation of several concepts therein so as to finally arrive at a justifiable and rational metaphysical system.

While describing the Reality, the *Jāpu* lays stress on Its unitary charcter (*namastaṅ su ekaī*). This idea of the oneness of Reality is the basic and essential precept of Guru Gobind Singh's metaphysical system. However, this Real One is a dynamic spiritual continuum and not a static reality like that of Sankara's conception. It manifests, *qua*

Spirit, of Its own free will in the world of phenomena. Thus, on the one hand, the entire phenomenal world becomes spiritualized, and, on the other, the transcendent Reality becomes immanent and gets socialized.

The succeeding waves of negative attributes which roll on one after the other in the entire text go to suggest that Reality, in Its impersonal, transcendent aspect, is far above comprehension of the rational faculty of man. It has no outward physical appearance (*chakra chihan*), no *varṇa* or caste, no specific garb (*bhekh*) or signs of palm-lines (*rekh*) which are the signs that help man recognize or distinguish anybody (*Jāpu*, 1). Thus, It remains ever indescribable for man. However, Reality in the *Jāpu* is not conceived as only an inscrutable Being. It manifests Itself in the immanent phenomenal world. It is *arūp* (with form) but at the same time It is *sarab rūp* as well, *anām* (without name) but *sarab nām* also, *ek* (One) yet *anek* (many). It is one, *anām* and *arūp* in its transcendent state, but becomes many, *sarab nām* and *sarab rūp* when it manifests qua Spirit in the immanent material phenomena. This self-manifestation of the Divine is an act of grace to offer man companionship so that he "does not have to understand, but only to accept and adore" It.[16] It is this divine companionship which continues to urge and goad man to try to describe the Indescribable.

The Real One has been given names taken from the empirical world. These are the attributive names indicating the attributes latent in It, and not imposing these attributes on It. Let it be made clear here that this does not at all imply the anthropomorphic view of Reality. Sikhism rejects this view because it "takes personal God as a superhuman personality.....and it suffers from the frailties and weaknesses of human personality."[17] On the contrary, these attributes are theomorphic because these are nothing but the personified manifestation of the Real One.

A total of ten different poetic metres have been used in this composition which are: *chhapai*, *bhujaṅg prayāt*, *chāchrī*, *charpaṭ*, *rūāl*, *madhubhār*, *bhagwatī*, *rasāval*, *haribolmanā* and *ek acchhrī*. There have been twenty-two changes of metres in the entire text though there are some metres such as *chhapai*, *rūāl*, *rasāval*, *haribolmanā'* and *ek acchhrī* which appear only once whereas *bhujaṅg prayāt* is used six times, *chāchrī* five time and *charpaṭ*, *madhubhār* and *bhagwatī* twice each. *Bhujaṅg prayāt* contains the maximum number of verses (65) followed by *bhagwatī* (41), *chāchrī*

(32), *madhubhār* (17), *haribolmanā* (14), *charpaṭ, rūāl* and *ek acchhrī* (8 each), *rasāval* (5) and *chhapai* (1). Most of these metres are short, crisp and fast. Tradition holds that in earlier times the Sikhs used to mould the manner of their strick-work (*gatakā*) to the racy style of these metres—an instance of mixing spiritual with temporal in the life of a Sikh.[18]

Words from several different languages have been used in the *Jāpu*. On the one hand, there are words from Indian languages such as Sanskrit, Sadhukari, Hindi and Punjabi. There are also words from Arabic and Persian languages. Since most of these words are the attributive names of the ultimate Reality, they also absorb in themselves the traditions, feelings and beliefs of these different religions, both Indian and Semitic.

(ii) Akāl Ustati

The *bāṇī* (composition) following the *Jāpu* in the *Dasam Granth* is the *Akāl Ustati* : though it is not so named in any of the recensions of the *Granth*. The composition is, in fact, untitled, but it carries at its end the words "*ustati sampuraṇāṅ*" (*ustati* or eulogy concludes). Since the text is a eulogy of the ultimate Reality, referred to here as at many places in other works of Guru Gobind Singh as Akal, the composition has come to be known as *Akāl Ustati*.

There is no internal or external evidence to determine the date and place of its composition. However, the fact that a certain section of it, i.e. ten *swaiyyās* comprising verses 21-30, is traditionally recited at the time of the Sikh baptismal ceremony leads us to believe that the text or at least a part of it was composed before AD 1699, the year when the Sikh baptism of the sword was initiated. Some scholars also hold that the "*Akāl Ustati* was composed not at one time: its different parts were rather composed at different times and were later on compiled together."[19]

The *Akāl Ustati* comprises 272 verses, the last verse being incomplete,[20] and is composed in twelve different metres which are *chaupaī* (10), *kabitt* (44), *swaiyyā* (20), *tomar* (20), *laghu narāj* (20), *bhujaṅg prayāt* (30), *pādhrī* (38 including the last incomplete verse), *toṭak* (20), *narāj* (20), *rūāmal* (20), *dīragh tribhaṅgī* (20) and *dohirā* (10). Of these metres, *kabitt* and *pādhrī* are repeated thrice and *swaiyyā* is repeated twice. The language of the *bāṇī* is Braj with occasional interspersing of words from Arabic and Persian.

Like the *Jāpu*, a part of the *Akāl Ustati*, i.e. ten verses (21-30)

which are in *swaiyyā* metre, is traditionally recited at the baptismal Sikh ceremony. Unlike the *Jāpu*, however, the *Akāl Ustati* deals with more than one theme such as the nature of Reality, meaning of religion, futility of formalism and rituals, spiritual unity and social equality of mankind, and validity of all religious traditions. Of course, these themes overlap one another, especially the theme of the nature of Reality is found almost in every part of the composition.

According to the *Akāl Ustati*, the Reality is *ādi ekaṅkārā*, i.e. the Primal One. Such a unity of Reality, in Its unmanifest and transcendent form, is *alakh* or indescribable (3) and *abigat* or *avigati*, i.e. incomprehensible or inexpressible (9). It is *triguṇa atīt* or free from three *guṇas* or attributes (14). However, this *ādi ekaṅkārā* also called *ādi purakh* (Primal Being) wills Itself to manifestation and becomes immanent in all places and beings—*lok chatur das joti prakāsī* (1) and *sarab joti ke bīch samānā* (8). Thus the *triguṇa atīt* Reality becomes *sarguṇ samet* or with attributes (14).

This metaphysical premise leads to two social correlates. Reality is one and in Its immanent form It manifests Itself in every being and everything. This manifestation of the Divine in the phenomenal world lends it spirituality and thus makes it a reality, relative reality. Thus, God-realization is possible only by realizing His presence in all beings and at all places. But man, in his ignorance, indulges in rituals, pilgrimages, idol-worship, penances, austerities, etc. The *Akāl Ustati* is an indictment of such acts of formalism which are declared futile insofar as the object of self-realization or God-realization is concerned. The latter is declared possible only though love—*sāch kahoṅ sun lehu sabhai jin prem kīo tin hī prabh pāio* (29). Love here does not stand for either an abstract idea of the Divine or any specific individual. It envelopes the entire creation because all are His creation and are in spirit one with Him. Guru Gobind Singh is very specific when he says that the same Divine *joti* pervades in all beings. So all men are one irrespective of their different social and religous denominations (85-86).

Thus, the unity of Reality and essential spirituality of the phenomenal reality serve as the *vis-a-tergo* for the development of a social philosophy. Ethnic equality of man is derived from the spiritual unity of mankind. Love, justice, equality, philanthropy, self-respect, peaceful coexistence, etc. are some of the social values which follow from this spiritual precept: these social values are latent in and are not

imposed on the metaphysical thought. In fact, this part of the *Akāl Ustati* can well be deemed to sum up the overall social philosophy of Guru Gobind Singh.

(iii) **Bachitra Nāṭak**

"Bachitra Natak Granth" is the title which can possibly be given to the group of compositions which includes *Bachitra Nāṭak* (the autobiography proper of Guru Gobind Singh) *Chaubīs Avtār*, *Brahmā Avtār* and *Rudra Avtār* (stories of the twenty-four incarnates of Visnu, and those of Brahma and Rudra) and the *Chaṇḍī Chritras*.[21] This is suggested by the endorsement made at the conclusion of almost all these compositions (at the end of the fourth chapter in the case of *Chandī Chritra Ukti Bilās*) to indicate that a certain part of the "Bachitra Nāṭak Granth" comes to an end. The word "*Nāṭak*" in the title does not stand for drama as the word is generally taken to mean in its modern usage. The Guru seems to have used it as a synonym of the term *līlā* or the wonderful performance.[22] This becomes evident from the use of word by Guru Gobind Singh in the *Bachitra Nāṭak* as well as *Samayasār Nāṭak*, *Hanumān Nāṭak*, *Rāmāyana Mahā Nāṭak*, and so on. These earlier works describe the wonderful, and in some cases miraculous, deeds of characters from Hindu mythology. The compositions included in the "Bachitra Nāṭak Granth" also narrate the marvellous deeds of Guru Gobind Singh (*Bachitra Nāṭak*), Visnu's incarnations (*Chaubīs Avtār*), incarnations of Brahma (*Brahmā Avtār*) and Rudra (*Rudra Avtār*), and Chandi (*Chaṇḍī Chritra*). Of course, while narrating the deeds of these incarnates and of goddess Chandi, Guru Gobind Singh was not merely reproducing the earlier extant versions of the myths, but he was attempting to reinterpret them in the contemporary social context.

The first narrative composition in this section is the autobiography of the Guru (*Bachitra Nāṭak*). It comprises a total of 471 verses in fourteen cantos and composed in twelve different metres such as *chaupaī* (162), *bhujaṅg prayāt* (113), *resāval* (90), *dohirā* (38; the figure includes, two verses of *dohirā chāranī* also), *narāj* (33), *madhubhār* (12), *swaiyyā* (11), *toṭak* (6), *pādhrī* (2), *tribhaṅgī* (2), *chhapai* (1) and *arill* (1). There have been a total of 115 changes in metre which shows the author's deep and thorough understanding of prosody. *Chaupaī* is the metre used more often because it "is the most suitable for descriptive and epic poetry and is commonly used in longer compositions."[23]

Like any other autobiography, this is also an incomplete life-

story going as far as the advent of Mua' zzam (later Emperor Bahadur Shah) on the scene at the head of a large armed contingent (canto 13). Maybe, the Guru had wanted to update the work by relating further experiences of the present when it had receded into the past, but the following years were very hectic and agonizing in which he had to fight against the superior military might of the hill chiefs and the Mughal government of Delhi, evacuate Anandpur, sacrifice all his four sons, and so on. Thus, he could never find time to record for posterity the most eventful years of his life.

There is no external or internal evidence availble to determine the date of the composition. It is generally believed to have been composed at Anandpur some time before the Vaisakhi day (30 March) of AD 1699 when the Khalsa-Panth was created by the Guru because this event and the events thereafter are not mentioned in the text. It must be some time after Prince Mua'zzam moved with his army on July 13, 1696, to attack the Guru at Anandpur because this is, in historical chronology, the last event dealt with in the text. The language is mainly Braj, with occasional words from other languages such as Avadhi and Rajasthani. Description of battle-scenes, which constitute eight of the total fourteen cantos, is just superb. The onomatopoeic words resound the clatter of swords and spears.

The composition can broadly be divided into three parts, i.e. invocation to the Almighty (cantos 1 and 4), genealogy of the Guru beginning with the mythical past of the Sodhi clan and terminating with the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur, his father and the ninth spiritual successor of Guru Nanak (cantos 2-5) and the Guru's birth in this world with a special mission assigned him by the Akalpurakh and his several encounters with the hill chiefs (cantos 6-13). More than merely giving genealogy, the concludes the narrative with a message: mutual strife and infighting are sure to cause ruination of a nation, community or family.

The Real One eulogized in this composition is called variously Sri Kharag, Teg, Khag, Bhagauti, and so on. Thus It is perceived, besides being the creator of everything in the phenomenal world, as an embodiment of *śakti* which annihilates hordes of the wicked. Lest this be mistaken for a mere abstraction, Guru Gobind Singh depicts Reality as concerned with the affairs of this world: the Real One had been sending messengers on to this earth so as to hold man back from demonic tendencies and to lead him on the path to spiritual and moral progression. It is with the specific purpose of protecting the saintly

and annihilating the wicked that Guru Gobind Singh's life is commissioned (VI. 43). The events of the Guru's life in this world stand testimony to his endeavour to fulfil the task assigned him by the Divine. Thus the Reality of Guru Gobind Singh's perception is not above or indifferent to what happens in the human world but is ever active for the spread of righteousness, justice, love and equality.

Chaṇḍī Chritra Ukti Bilās, also known as *Chaṇḍī Chritra I*, and *Chaṇḍī Chritra,* also known as *Chaṇḍī Chritra II,* are also part of the "Bachitra Natak Granth." They story of Chandi in both these versions has been taken from the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purān*. So is the story of *Vār Srī Bhagautī Jī Kī*, popularly known as *Chaṇḍī dī Vār*, another composition of the Guru. They are the renderings, with variations in emphasis and interpretations, in Braj (Punjabi in the case of *Chaṇḍī dī Vār*) by Guru Gobind Singh, in different poetic metres, of the war fought by Chandi, named Bhagauti, Kalika, Durga, and Chandika as well, against the demons who had routed and virtually dispossessed the godly powers.

Let one point be made clear here lest the Guru's choice of this literary resurrection of the Chandi myth should be misunderstood: the Guru, in his *Chaṇḍī Chritra,* recalls Chaṇḍī and does not invoke her:[24] the invocation to Sivā, in *Chaṇḍī Chritra Ukti Bilās*, must not be misunderstood as invocation of the goddess (Sivā is also the name given to the wife of god Siva) but there Siva has been used as an attributive name of the Ik. Guru Gobind Singh does not postulate any *avtār* or incarnation being equal to the Real One. The Puranic narrative from where the Guru selects the *adbhut* (wonderful) *kathā* or *līlā* (story) of Chandi has for the Guru no historical or religious meaning nor does he ever deify the goddess in his compositions. In fact, all the invocation to the goddess by various gods in the Puranic account are absent from the Guru's considerably condensed version.

The Guru's choice of Chandi vis-a-vis other goddesses and gods in the Puranic acconts seems quite conscious. In the entire Puranic literature, Chandi is the only goddess which has her own individual status and identity whereas all other goddesses are dependent on their spouses or consorts or lovers. She is also the only goddess who subsumes the many and various powers of the gods who individually and collectively lacked the strength to face the challenge of demons. The full independence of Chandi's character, "her ability to challenge and quell evil, her power to embrace all of life—birth and death, creation and decay, that attracted the imagination of Guru Gobind

Singh. This role of the goddess fitted in well with his own design to renovate and regenerate an effete society. He made her into a paradigm to overcome weakness and cowardice and to abolish unjust political authority and social inequalities and to forge a new structure based on the values of egalitarianism, justice and freedom.[25] It is, therefore, clear that the rendering of the Chandi narrative by the Guru is not a pure adaptation of the mythical Puranic story. Here Chandi is not a mythical person, but a symbol of the Divine *śakti*. The heroic deeds of Chandi are rendered by the Guru in images from everyday life.[26] The intermixing of the extraordinary with the ordinary creates an uncommon artistic effect. A special message seems latent in this aesthetic design, i.e. every being, be he/she high or low, is endowed with the natural energy of Chandi. He or she has the inherent potnetial to re-enact the Chandi legend in this very life and in this very world.

It is this Divine *śakti* called Chandi which exhorts the Guru to fight against the intolerant orthodoxy of the hill chiefs and religious fanaticism of and political oppression by the Mughal ruler, and it is the same *śakti* which enables the Guru to declare that resort to sword when all other means fail for annihilation of evil and erstablishment of the righteous social order is fully justified (Cf. *Zafarnāman* 46).

Of these, the *Chaṇḍī Chritra Ukti Bilās* is divided into eight chapters and comprises 233 verses. The opening section, comprising only twelve verses, is an invocation to the Divine and a brief introduction to the context of the events to follow. The second section deals with Chandi's battle with the final victory over Mahkhasur demon. The following five sections are the narrative of several battles Chandi had to fight with the commanders of Sumbh and Nisumbh, two brothers, and finally with them. Chaṇḍī comes out victorious in all these battles and the last section declares the re-establishment of the sway of gods. The gods, according to Guru Gobind Singh, are not superhuman or supernatural beings, but he defines the gods as those who do good deeds whereas the ones who do evil deeds are declared domons.[27]

A liberal use had been made in this composition of *swaiyyā* (134) and *dohirā* (80), with a sprinkling of *sorṭhā* (7), *kabitt* (7), *toṭak* (2), *punhā* (2), and *rekhtā* (1) metres. Although there is an internal reference in the text (verse 231) to suggest that the Guru composed it in *kabitt* metre and that the dominant rasa is *rudra*, yet all verses are not, as we have detailed above, in *kabitt* and *vīr rasa* is equally dominant with the *rudra*. The language is Braj, with some odd words

taken from Arabic and Persian as well.

Chaṇḍī Charitra, another composition about the exploits of Chandi, comprises eight sections and 262 verses. The Guru does not begin this composition, as in the case of almost all of his other works, with an invocation to the Divine, but he takes the reader direct to the field of action. As in the preceding *Charitra*, the Guru here also tells the story of Chandi and her battles, describing in detail all the incidents interlading them with similes and metaphors. Of course, the details here do not strictly conform to the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇ* which forms the source of this story. The Guru has endeavoured to retell and reinterpret the events so as to renovate and regenerate an effete society. Each verse, each line and, in fact, each syllable of the *Charitra*, which gives vivid and lively pictures of the field of battle and various fighters, breathes the fire of life in the dead, inspires the cowardly and kindles new courage in the blood of both the reciters and the listeners.

Guru Gobind Singh has used a total of eighteen different metres in this composition, changing the metre 57 times. The maximum use has been made of *bhujaṅg prayāt* (70) and *rasāval* (69). Other metres used include *narāj* (21), *chaupaī* (20), *dohirā* (14), *belī brindam* (11), *rūrāl* (9), *saṅgīt madhubhār* (9), *madhubhār* (8), *saṅgīt bhujaṅg prayāt* (7), *rūāval* (6), *kulkā* (4), *toṭak* (4), *bijai* (2), and *sorṭhā, saṅgīt narāj, bridh narāj* and *manohar* (once each).

Similarly, *Vār Srī Bhagautī Jī Kī* deals with the exploits of Chandi or Bhagati, but this composition is in *vār* literary genre and is the only longer composition by the Guru in Punjabi language. As in the case of other literary *vārs*, both martial and spiritual in content, this one is also in *paurī* poetic metre, with only a few *dohirās*. The *Vār* comprises a total of fifty-five *pauṛis*, or stanzas, the first also serving as a prelude to the *ardās* or the Sikh prayer.

Following the *Chaṇḍī Charitras* is a group of three works about the different incarnation of Vishu, Brahma and Rudra—*Chaubīs Autār*, *Brahmā Avtār* and *Rudra Avtār*. The tradition to write in regional languages and in Puranic style about the *avtārs* of Visnu had set in much before Guru Gobind Singh.[29] In the thirteenth century, Emperor Durlabh Narayan of Kamta in eastern India got the Mahabharata and the Ramayana rendered, under his patronage, into regional languages. In the fouteenth century, translations of these works were made in Oriya. Sankaradeva (AD 1449-1568) of Assam rendered these texts, along with some others, into Assamese. In

Maharashtra, Jñānadeva (eleventh century) and Eknath (sixteenth century) rendered the *Bhāgvadgītā* into Marathi. Surdas (*Sursāgar*) and Tulsidas (*Rāmacharit-mānas*) also fall in this line. In the Sikh tradition itself, Sodhi Miharban, son of Guru Arjan's elder brother Prithi Chand, had also composed *Chaubīs Avtār Kathā*.

Guru Gobind Singh might have felt the popular interest in the Avtar literature. His *Chaubīs Autār*, so also the *Brahmā Avtār* and *Rudra Avtār*, is part of this folk tradition, though Guru Gobind Singh's narrative is marked with a difference. He has not made simple adaptations of Puranic accounts: there is difference in detail as well as in emphasis. Moreover the Guru does not deify any of these incarnations as he considers them the creations of the supreme Reality. In all these compositions, he invokes only the Primordial Being, and none of these incarnations. For example, in the "Ramavtar" and "Krishnavtar" which constitute the bulk of the *Chaubīs Autār*, the Guru portrays both Rama and Krishna as bold and fearless humans who are shown to have been born to defend *dharma* and annihilate wickedness, and no supernatural aspect of their lives is given prominence.

These compositions, retelling the narratives of Puranic incarnations, are also a part of the "Bachitra Natak Granth" because both the *Chaubīs Autār* and *Brahmā Avtār* end with an indication to this effect. There is no such indication at the end of the *Rudra Avtār*: In fact, there is nothing to suggest that the composition, as available in the *Dasam Granth*, concludes here. Maybe, this is an incomplete work.[30] We consider it along with the other thematically allied compositions as part of the "Bachitra Natak Granth". Taken together, these *Avtārs* constitute a little more than one-third of the *Dasam Granth* as a whole.

The *Chaubīs Autār*, the longest of the trio, is about the twenty-four (*Chaubīs*) incarnations (*Autār*) of Visnu, a Puranic god. Among these twenty-four, the story of Krishna is the longest (2492 verses), followed by that of Rama (864 verses) and Nihkalanki (588). Other accounts are quite brief. At the head of this composition, Guru Gobind Singh has prefixed what might be called a prologue to the work and which contains the Guru's view on the doctrine of incarnation. This is something very appropriate as well as important because otherwise the reader might have mistaken the author to be a believer in the theory of incarnation. Herein the Guru declares that the Primordial Being, also called Bhavani, is the sole creator of the entire phenomenal world (3).

All beings are the manifestation, in spirit, of the Creator (35). All these twenty-four incarnations and Visnu himself are also the creation of that Akalpurakh but they failed to realize Him (7). Thus, this prelude forewarns the reader that the following narrative is not the work of a devotee of any of these incarnations but his aim is just to inspire and exhort the reader to fight, as did these Puranic personages, for a righteous cause—*dharam yudh ke chāi*.

Similarly, *Brahmā Autār* and *Rudar Avtār* give the life-stories of the seven incarnates of Brahma and two of Rudra, respectively. The *Brahmā Autār* also begins with the Guru's comment that Brahma, after he fell a victim to egoity (*garab*) having written the Vedas, was directed by *kāl* or the supreme Reality to take seven births in human form on this earth and serve mankind; only then could he free himself from the process of transmigration. These introductory verses reveal the supreme power of Kal (God) who is omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient. Everything in this phenomenal world including Brahma and his incarnations are governed and regulated by the supreme power. The *Rudra Avtār* has also a similar beginning where in Rudra is said to have been directed by the Absolute to take human birth because he had become proud of his meditations on the Divine. In this way, all these three Puranic gods and their incarnations have been declared creation of the Supreme and not His co-equal or co-eternal. They perform under His will, and being thus attuned to the Divine Will they are enlightened beings and they strive for the establishment of the "godly" sway on this earth.

Thus, the "Bachitra Natak Granth", comprising the autobiographical part, the Chandi narratives and *Avtārs*, is specific on the unitary nature of Reality which is transcendent and formless, and is never born in human or any other form. It is absolute and supreme, and everthing in this phenomenal world works according to Its will. However, the Divine manifests Itself *qua* Spirit in the entire phenomenal world. In this way, all these incarnations are Its creation or spiritual manifestation, and not Its co-equal or co-powerful. The Guru does not, in any of these texts, deify any of these gods or their incarnations. He retells these Puranic legends because he felt that all of them were human beings, determined and charged to fight for the establishment of *dharma* and eradication of wickedness. He indentifies the aim of his own life with that of these puranic personages. All of them were sent on to this worldly life in order to eradicate the prevailing evil and establish *dharma* or righteousness (*Cf. Chaubīs*

Autār, 2). Similarly, Guru Gobind Singh declares in an emphatic tone that he himself is not the Absolute nor is he Its co-equal, but a slave to It or Its son (Cf. *Bachitra Nāṭak*, VI. 29 and 32). He has been directed to take birth on this earth in order to protect mankind from wickedness and evil and to establish *dharma* or righteousness in this world (Cf. *Bachitra Nāṭak*, VI. 29). This Divine manifestation in phenomenal world and the Divine concern for the betterment of this world, transform the transcendent, formless Reality into an immanent, personal Deity. This has also given birth in Sikhism to the idea of spirtual unity of mankind. The values of equality, love, justice, righeousness, altruism, etc. in social affairs are also derived from this precept.

(v) Zafarnāmah

The *Zafarnāmah* (the Epistle of Victory) is the letter, in verse, written by Guru Gobind Singh and despatched from Dina Kangar[31] to emperor Aurangzib who then happened to be in Deccan. Guru Gobind Singh, it is said, received a communication, perhaps an invitation, from the Emperor, but no such document is extant today. The Guru, however, turned down the invitation and instead wrote back to him this letter, in chaste Persian, which is mainly a homily on keeping one's word. The first part, comprising 12 couplets, is an invocation to the Akal seeking His blessings to resolve his difficulties. The second part, titled *dāstāṅ* (couplets 13-111) is the letter proper addressed to the Emperor.[32] Herein the Guru compliments the Emperor for being an expert swordsman, an excellent rider, generous to his co-religionists, prompt to kill the enemies, firm as a mountain in the battle, etc. (80-83). However, at the same time, the Guru chides him for breach of faith and perjury. He reminds the Emperor that he had agreed to evacuate Anandpur on an assurance of 'safe conduct' given by his generals. In fact, they had taken this oath on the Quran. However, they did not keep their word and this prompts the Guru to call the Emperor *paimān-shikan* or oath breaker (45) and invites him to Dina Kangar promising him a 'safe passage'. The Guru's assurance (59) to the Emperor that the Brar chiefs of the Malwa region wherein lay the village Dina Kangar would not harm the Emperor because they were all his disciples and would do nothing against his wish[33] refers to the historical fact that the Malwa area was under the complete sway of the Guru. He also warns the Emperor that this treacherour behaviour on his part will prevent him from being accepted at the Divine Portal irrespective of all other virtues that he possesses (82). The Guru

further tells the Emperor that inspite of all the losses which the Guru had to suffer his will is still unconquered (78) and that he is morally stronger than him.

We find in the *Zafarnāmah* that Guru Gobind Singh acknowledges Aurangzib's personal piety and religous orthodoxy in private life. However, religion to Guru Gobind Singh is not a mere esoteric value, something unrelated to man's societal behaviour. Outward worship and inward piety are futile if devoid of moral character. The Guru stood for the socialization of the spiritual on the one hand and spiritualization of the social on the other, thereby transforming religion from a set of arid and lifeless rituals into a way of life. It is here that he finds Aurangzib lacking. He was unjust and fanatic towards the common man and practised treachery and perfidy in the battle-field.

Another longer composition in the *Dasam Granth* is *Charitropakhayān* or *Pakhayan Charitra,* besides several smaller ones like *Gyan Prabodh*, *Sastra Nam Mala* etc. The *Charitropākhayān* Comprising 404 *charitras* or tales, is a treasure-house of practical wisdom. The main thrust of these tales, all of them moralistic in tone, is on a virtuous and noble life by cultivating fidelity in marital life and worshipping the Real One. One given to infidelity, drinking, gambling untruth, and such other vices suffers in the end. Although several scholars are very vocal in their opposition as regards the authoship of this work yet the morals taught herein are certainly very relevant and helpful in the modern-day life. Their charge of vulgarity sounds ludicrous when viewed against what we see on the visual media today. On the other hand, their relevance to the modern-day world facing diseases like AIDS is quite obvious.

The above study of the selected texts from the *Dasam Granth* reveals the Guru's perception of the Divine as well as of this world, besides his vision of an ideal social structure. The *Jāpu* and the *Akāl Ustati* are mainly eulogies of the Akal or God of his perception. In the latter work, the Guru has also given his preception of this world as well as of the futility of rituals devoid of a practical purpose. The *Bachitra Nāṭak*, including the *Chaṇḍī Charitras* and *Avtārs*, stresses the need for socializing the spiritual.

The incarnations of Visnu, Brahma and Rudra are all born with the specific aim of eradicating evil from this mundane world and establishing a social order where values of righteousness, justice, equality and love prevail. The Guru has retold and reinterpreted these

accounts not to deify these personages but to appreciate their moral courage to challenge the opporessive and unjust system. He singles them out as models of moral force and martial prowess. For example, Chandi of Guru Gobind Singh's conception does not live in the isolation of her heavenly abode. Her passion for challenge, the fierceness of contest and the alacrity with which she vanquishes the demons transform her into a martial heroine of this very world. The *Zafarnāmah* recommends the use of violence to eliminate the forces hindering the process of socializing the Spiritual.

The Guru identifies the aim of his own mundane life with that of these mythical and legendary characters whom he never invokes or deifies but only recalls. All these Puranic personages are declared human beings as he himself is because none can be co-equal or co-powerful with the Real One who is the creator of all. Recitation of such Puranic accounts, as retold by the Guru with changes in content as well as in emphasis, embodying courage and rational opposition to oppression enabled the Sikhs to give a sustained resistance to the prevailing unjust and oppressive rule. Consequently, the Sikh faith became a strong political force within half a century of Guru Gobind Singh's passing away and a State in another half century.

(d) Meaning and Social Significance of Myths and Symbols

The word 'myth' in English has its root in the Greek term '*mythos*' which in its orginal meaning "meant word, news, language, message, but could also mean an *event* and *history*."[34](Emphasis added). In the Indian context, myth stands for a 'Puranic tale, history of Puranas, ancient tale, tale with hidden meaning.[35] Similarly, mythology in the general sense is taken as a scientific and historical study of myths, but often used in a wider sense to mean a body of myths given in a particular religious tradition. In the specific ancient Vedic tradition of India, mythology is the 'study of the Puranas, history of Puranas,[36] but it is also used with a wider connotation for a body of Puranic myths and legends. The Puranic accounts are not historical records in the strict sense of the term. In this context, it may be pertinent to point out that the word 'history' used here is not to be taken in its modern sense because the entire Puranic corpus is hagiographic in nature.

The myths of one country, region, community and age differ from those of another, but there are also certain common characteristics among them.[37] A myth is a traditional account going

back to a mythopoeic age which represents a certain stage in the development of human thought. It must so express or coincide with the contemporary spirit as to be willingly accepted by it and become common property. It is generally in narrative form, but it differs from ordinary tale because it is believed to be substantially true at least by those among whom it is first repeated. In most cases, a myth is etiological insofar as it grows up or is invented to explain certain phenomena, beliefs and customs. Most of the myths and mythical personages are of a highly complex character, and are compounded of elements varying in origin as well as in stage of mythical development. These personages are either gods, divine incarnations or other superhuman character. The events and circumstances narrated therein are supernatural and extraordinary, but they are not purely imaginary and are interlaced with human experience: there are some primal beliefs in myths which with the passage of time change into blind faith.[38]

Myth is different from legend. A legend must have, however remote and partial, a historical, factual basis whereas a myth can be an invention of imagination but is grounded in human experience. For example, the legends of Rama, Krishna and other *avtārs* in the *Chaubīs Autār* are legendary in nature because they are believed to be historical personages. However, their persons were so exalted and elevated that the medieval Indian populace used to deify them and thus make them just mythical. In these cases, the historical element has been so overshadowed by the miraculous and the supernatural that they have assumed the status of legendary figures in the hagiographic accounts of the Puranas.

Coming back to the definiton of the myth, we find that the terms 'event' and 'history' are very significant in the context of Guru Gobind Singh's social thought because he has tried to restore the relative reality of the phenomenal world. For Guru Gobind Singh, myth is not just refering to imaginary beliefs as are given in the Puranic thought-structure symbolizing the transcendental Reality. For him, myth is an idealized thought which is not to be taken as cut off from this world. According to him, myth is to be interpreted not only cosmologically but also anthropologically—and better still, existentially. Myth may, as says Rudolf Bultman in a different context, "account for the present state and order of the world by speaking of a primeval war between the gods.....and tell us of the other world in terms of this world, and of the gods in terms derived from human life.[39]

In this sense, we find that in the compositions of the *Dasam Granth* myths are rooted in the temporal world which mirrors the Eternal (Akal). Most of the literature in earlier Hindu thought, available in the form of Puranas, is hagiographical expositions of Vedantic thought. No doubt, Guru Gobind Singh got these legendary figures and events from the Puranic literature, but he transformed them to substantiate his viewpoint. In the process, he demythologized the prevalent Puranic myths and created some new myths in his compositions. His treatment of the myths is a balanced exposition, giving equal emphasis to both Eternity and temporality. Perhaps, this is one of the most significant contributions of Guru Gobind Singh in the field of myth-making in order to transform the consciousness of the people. His aim seems to delink the consciousness of his followers from the other-worldliness of the Puranic beliefs and myths and connect it with the new myths created by him in his compositions: these new myths are grounded in this world.

Guru Gobind Singh was very well familiar with the Indian mythology, and he makes use of it in abundance in his compositions to propound his philosophical thought. Most of the myths and legends used by him are from the Puranic literature. However, the Guru is well aware that these deified personages or divine characters of Puranic myths and legends are hypostatized make-beliefs. These events generally narrate moral struggle between the godly and demonic forces in which the former overpower the evil. The popularity of such myths and legends among the masses had developed among them a notion that only the intervention of such mythical and legendary characters could help re-establish righteoushess in human affairs in the mundane world as it happened in the Puranic tales. Guru Gobind Singh did not completely discard these myths, but realizing their popularity among and deep impact on the masses reinterpreted them with a view to relating them to contemporary realities of life and its problems. We can well call it in Bultmann's sense a process of demthologization which Guru Gobind Singh put in practice in his lifetime.

For example, the myth of Chandi from the *Mārkaṇḍeya* Purana has been taken up by the Guru in three of his compositions—two *Chaṇḍī Charitra* and *Chaṇḍī dī Vār*. Unlike in the Puranic tales, he does not deify or invoke her. The exploits of Chandi are narrated not to glorify her divine character but to infuse among his followers the spirit of Chandi, i.e. the will and determination to fight out evil and restore righteousness in human affairs. Similar to this

demythologization is the Guru's interpretation of certain legends. Many of the divine incarnations in the Puranic literature discussed by the Guru in his compositions (Cf. *Chaubīs Autār*) had been historical personages in the past who became folk heroes because of their righteous conduct and dauntless chivalry in their nature. They were held in high esteem, but gradually their exaltation reached a stage when people started invoking and deifying them. Guru Gobind Singh moulds them with a view to reinterpreting them in the light of his thought-structure. In this process, certain earlier myths and legends are freed from their mythical garb, and some new myths are created.

Guru Gobind Singh believes in the non-dual unity of Reality which never incarnates in human or any other form. So he refuses to accept the protagonists of these Puranic tales as gods/goddesses or divine incarnates. That is why they are never deified in his compositions. On the other hand, the Guru treats them as human beings, enlightened enough to perceive the One in the manifest plurality and thus strive for restoring righteousness. He wanted every man and woman, high or low, to realize that he/she was inherently capable of doing what Chandi, Rama, Krishna or anyone else in the Puranic literature did. In fact, he aimed at inspiring man to achieve the seemingly impossible: he took it as a challenge to enable the sparrows outdo the hawks. Thus, Guru Gobind Singh created a new myth which becomes evident in the creation of the Khalsa-Panth.

While creating the Khalsa-Panth, Guru Gobind Singh abolished the prevalent custom of the baptismal of *charanpāhul*. He replaced it with a new baptismal nectar (*amrit*) to be ceremoniously given to the initiate at the time of the initiation. This new *amrit* was to be prepared by putting some water in a steel cauldron. As the tradition goes, some sugar crystals were added to it by Mata Sahib Devan as it was stirred by a double-edged sword (*khaṇḍā*) by the Guru who simultaneously recited certain specific hymns. While initiating this new process of preparing the *amrit*, Guru Gobind Singh perhaps had in mind a Puranic myth: the churning of the ocean[40] by the gods and demons with a view to taking out *amrit* which is believed to make one immortal. The Guru also gave *amrit* to those baptised as members of the Khalsa-Panth or Khalsa Brotherhood so as to make them oblivious of death and challenge the forces of evil even in the face of death. In the closing hymn of the *Chaṇḍī Charitra Ukti Bilās*, Guru Gobind Singh seeks the divine blessing to do ever good, and to be ever ready

to fight for and die in the cause of good. When he immersed himself in the Khalsa, he wanted the Khalsa also to be ever ready to do good and fearlessly face even death in the cause of righteousness. In fact, death is not shown as reprehensible in the *bāṇī* of Guru Gobind Singh: he likens it to the merging of one light with the other. When the human spirit (*joti*) merges with the supreme Spirit, it becomes eternal or immortal. Those who die in the cause of *dharma*, their *ātmān* or spirit merges with the supreme (*paramātmān*) Spirit: thus, they became immortal.

The word 'symbol' also comes from Greek '*symbolon*' which means contract, token, insignia, and a means of identification. In its orginal meaning, symbol represented a greater whole by means of a part. The part as a sort of certificate guaranteed the presence of the whole, and a concise meaningful formula indicated the larger context. However, this is not to be taken to mean that symbol and reality are different from each other. The symbol "does not refer to something else. A reality appears in it—in "other of itself"—which is there and present but not fully exhausted by this appearance."[41] However, the symbol requires the association of certain conscious ideas in order to fully express what is meant by them. Thus, it can perform both the exoteric and esoteric functions.

The use of symbols in spiritual poetry is of particular significance. Some of the metaphysical concepts cannot be comprehended unless expressed in a symbolic language. In fact, the function of the symbol is to represent a reality or truth and to reveal it—instantaneously or gradually. This relationship between symbol and reality is both direct or intimate and idirect or distant. Symbol has a referential character and it refers to the reality: in this sense, a certain distance between them always remains and they are never identical though they are closely related. However, short of complete indentification, various degrees of intensity exist between the two, thus making the relationship quite intimate. Sometimes ancient and medieval myths are also used to make a particular supernatural ideology comprehensible. The characters and events in these myths are used as symbols to represent the otherwise inexpressible metaphysical reality and other concepts. In fact, sometimes it becomes rather difficult to draw a line between a myth and a coherent complex of symbols brought together in story form.

Guru Gobind Singh has used numerous signs (singifiers) and

symbols in his compositions so as to make his metaphysical concept intelligible in human language. The former contextualize the meaning in a given culture and region whereas the latter are used to decontextualize it from space and time so as to comprehend the transcendental Reality. The symbols are used for the twin purpose of representing and revealing the reality. The numerous attributive names given by Guru Gobind Singh to the personal unity of Reality serve this purpose. For Example, the Guru names Akalpurakh as Sarabloh (All Steel)—*sarab loh kī racchhā hamnai.* This is a fictitious name used as a symbol to denote the *śakti* inherent in Him. This *śakti* is two-fold: to annihilate the evil and protect the righteous. That is perhaps why it is the two-edged (*khaṇḍā*) and not the one edged sword (*saif*) which is used for preparing *amrit* and which stands at the top of the Sikh standard. It is once again *khaṇḍā* which stands in the middle of the Sikh emblem, the circle or *chakra*[42] being symbolic of the whole manifest world which itself reflects Eternity, and the two swords representing the *mīrī* and *pīrī* aspects of human life.

The use of these and such other symbols and myths has been conscious and with a particular design in mind. The supreme Reality of the Guru's conception is not just transcendent and impersonal reality: It is personal and immanent as well. In its latter aspect, the Guru gives it several attributive names. Since the Guru teaches man to endeavour and realize the Divine in the mundane world, he wants man to constantly feel nearness to Him. Thus, he called the Real One Bhavani and also made the Khalsa ever wear a sword as one of the five mandatory symbols. The Khasa who is ever near to Bhavani is fearless of death when he fights in the cause of *dharma.* This not only relates to but also makes us easily comprehend the Guru's overall design in the reinterpretation of certain Puranic myths, use of peculiar signifiers and symbols for the Real One, and the creation of the Khalsa. Guru Gobind Singh wants to create an ideal social structure based on the values of equality (derived from the spiritual unity of mankind), love, mercy, philanthropy, etc. For the realization of this aim, he required mankind to follow his footsteps: they should dauntlessly face death fighting for righteousness (*dharma*). These myths and symbols help in psychologically preparing and morally inspiring man in the realization of Guru's aim.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. "Granth" in Sanskrit, means "an artificial arrangement of words.....verse, composition, treatise, literary production, book in prose or verse, text (opposed to *artha*, meaning).....the book or sacred scripture of the Sikhs containing short moral poems....." See Monier Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p. 371
2. There is a controversy among scholars regarding authorship and authenticity of certain sections of the *Dasam Granth*. It does not come within the scope of this work to discuss and resolve this controversy becasue we are primarily concerned with the contents as a given fact.
3. According to Kesar Chhibbar, *Bańsāvalīnāmā Dasāṅ Pātshāhiāṅ Kā* (pp. 135-36), the *Dasam Granth* was compiled in AD 1698 under the Guru's own supervision. The Guru at this moment is also said to have refused to include his compositions in the Adi Granth (later on Guru Granth Sahib) saying that the real *granth* is the Guru Granth Sahib and that his own work is a poetic pastime. However, this volume seems to have got lost in the turbulent period that followed.
4. Bhai Mani Singh wrote a letter in April 1716 (for a photocopy of the letter, see *The Sikh Review*, April 1955), to Mata Sundari, the widow of Guru Gobind Singh, stating that he has been able to trace parts of "Krishnavtar" and *Charitropākhyāṅ*. It implies that he was still working on the compilation of the *Dasam Granth*. In the light of this, the year 1713 for the compilation, as given by Surindar Singh Kohli ("Dasam Granth" in the *Encyclopeadia of Religion*, Vol. IV, p. 241) and others does not hold good. They base their argument on the date given at the end of a recension of the *Dasam Granth*, popularly called "Bhai Mani Singh Vali Bir" , now available with Raja Gulab Singh Sethi of New Delhi. Dr Jaggi also disagrees with this date, but on a different plea. He feels that the date is in different ink and a different hand. See *Dasam Granth Parichaya*, p. 3.
5. *Report* of the Sodhak Committee (1898), p. 17
6. *Ibid.*, p. 4
7. *The Poetry of the Dasam Granth*, p. 18
8. *Report, op. cit., pp.* 2-3
9. *The Granth of Guru Gobind Singh and the Khalsa Brotherhood*, p. 18
10. *Dasam Granth da Kartritav*, p. 195.
11. Monier Monier-Williams, *op, cit.*, pp. 411-12
12. The *Dasam Granth* recensions published by Bhai Jawahar Singh Kirpal Singh and Co. Amritsar, and Bhai Chatar Singh Jiwan Singh, Amritsar, give the total number of verses to be 198 and 199, respectively: incidentally, both these volumes declare on their title-page that their text is compared with and checked against the text approved by the Sodhak Commuttee. Bhai Randhir Singh, *Shabadarath Dasam Granth Sahib*, gives the number of verses as 196.
13. *The Granth of Guru Gobind Singh*, op. cit., p. 20
14. See V. Prakasam's paper on *Jāpu* presented at the seminar (2-3 March 1990) organized by the Gobind Sadan Institute for Advanced study in Comparative Religion, New Delhi.

15. Nirbhai Singh, *Philosophy of Sikhism*, p. 95
16. C.H. Loehliu, *op. cit.*, p. 22
17. Nirbhai Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 106
18. See Bhagat Singh Hira's paper on *Jāpu* presented at the seminar (2-3 March 1990) organized by the Gobind Sadan Institute for Advanced Study in Comparative Religion, New Delhi.
19. Dharam Pal Ashta, *op. cit.*, p 37
20. Different scholars have given different arguments to explain it away. Some feel that a part of the text might have got lost in the turbulent days that followed the evacuation of Anandpur. However, a school in Sikh hermaneutics (Damdami Taksal) hold that Akal being essentially indescribable the Guru consciously left the compostion incomplete to convey the impression that no eulogy of the Akal can ever be complete. See, Gurmukh Singh, *Akal Ustati*, p. 19
21. There are, however, a few scholars who do not consider the Chandi literature and a part of the *Bachitra Nāṭak* as authentic. We have already referred to this controversy in the preceding pages
22. Dharam Pal Ashta, op. cit., p. 42
23. Punjabi Sahit Kosh, pp. 268-69
24. See Guninder Kaur, "Durga Recalled by the Tenth Guru" in *The Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol. XVI, No. 1&2, Spring-Augumn 1988, p. 64
25. Ibid., p. 69
26. For example, Chandi flings down the demons as a confectioner dunks the sweet-balls (*barās*); she tramples down the enemy as an oil-man crushes the oil-seeds; she beheads the enemy-soldiers as a carpenter chops off trees; the blood split by her sword runs down the field like the coloured water splashed on the ground when the dyer's basin gets broken; and so on and on.
27. *Bachitra Nāṭak*, ll. 15
28. See Dharam Pal Ashta, *op. cit.*, p. 54
29. Om Prakash Bhardwaj, *Ramavtar tatha Krishnavtar ka Kavya-Shastriya Adhyan*, p. 234
30. Ratan Singh Jaggi, *Dasam Granth Parichaya*, p. 92
31. Dina Kangar is a small village in the present-day Faridkot district.
32. According to one school, the following eleven *Hikāyats* also form part of the *Zafarnāmah* text. The Sodhak Committee referred to earlier is also of this opinion. See, *Report*, p. 3. These *Hikāyats* are, in the main, adaptations of certain Puranic legends, and were believed to have been enclosed by the Guru with the *Zafarnāmah*. There is, however, another school which does not accept the following eleven *Hikāyats* as part of the *Zafarnāmah* (Cf. Piara Singh Padam, *Dasam Granth Darshan*, p. 133). We have limited our discussion to the Epistle proper, leaving aside these other *Hikāyats*.
33. Piara Singh Padam differs in his interpretation of these verses. According to him, Emperor Auranzib after he learnt of the excesses committed against the Sikhs, wrote to the Guru asking him to wait for the Emperor at Dina Kangar because the Brar chiefs in the region were subordinate to him (the Emperor). For detailed discussion,

see Padam's *Zafarnama.*

34. Heinrich Fries, "Myth" in *Sacramentum Mundi—An Encyclopaedia of Theology* (ed. Karl Rahner), Vol. IV, p. 152
35. A *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p. 524
36. *Ibid.*
37. For details of these common characteristics some of which are given in the text, see "Mythology" in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* (ed. James Hastings). Vol. IX, p. 117
38. Vijayendra Sanatak, "Introduction" in Usha Puri Vidyavachaspati, *Bhartiya Mythic Kosh*, p. 7
39. Rudolf Bultamann, "New Testament and Mythology" in Hans Werner Bartsch, *Kerygma and Myth : A Theological Debate*, Vol. I. p. 10
40. *Sumandar manthan* (churning of the ocean) has also been called *manas manthan* or churning of the human *mana* in Puranic literature. The good and evil tendencies are present in each one of us: the fact has been explained through the myth of Kashyap *rishi* whose two sons are named *deva* (good) and *daint* (wicked). A thorough churning of human *mana* can bring forth the primordial essence of man, i.e. his essential divine nature.
41. Jorg Splett, "Symbolism" in *Sacramentum Mundi, op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 199
42. A simile used in the *Svetasvatara Upanishad* (I.4) compares the whole manifest world with the *Chakra* or wheel. For details on the subject, see Padma Sudhi, *Symbols of Art, Religion and Philosophy*, pp. 11-40.

CHAPTER V

PHILOSOPHICAL RATIONALE

(a) Reality and Its Nature

The ultimate Reality is difficult to comprehend in Its entirety. The very fact of Its being transcendent (*nirguṇ*), limitless (*athāh, anant*) and beyond time and death (*akāl*) takes It beyond the finite faculties of human intellect. However, this has not deterred man from making attempts at comprehending It. There have been great minds in this world who have at different points of time in history tried to comprehend the nature of God. The perceptions of these enlightened beings differ from one another because of the differences in the degrees of their spiritual development and because of the differences in the socio-cultural and physico-psychological environments in which they lived.

In Sikhism Guru Nanak, the founder of the faith, made an attempt at comprehending the Reality and then explaining to others whatever he understood of it. He is believed to be one such blessed being who had the mystic vision of Reality.[1] He travelled widely to explain his vision of the supreme Reality to individuals in their homes, to groups in their hermitages and to crowds gathered at pilgrimage centres. His hymns also try to explain that vision. His successors who inherited his spiritual light also made their contribution in this direction. Their perception of the Divine is not different from one another though there is change in emphasis with Guru Gobind Singh with whom the line of personal Gurus or spiritual preceptors comes to an end and in whose hands the Sikh spiritual movement reached its climax.

In the Sikh scripture, the Guru Granth Sahib, which contains hymns of Guru Nanak and five of his successors (Guru Angad, Guru Amar Das, Guru Ram Das, Guru Arjan and Guru Tegh Bahadur) besides a number of Hindu saints and Muslim holy men, the supreme Reality is revealed through the revelatory experiences of the Gurus who had the first-hand experience of It[2] in their mystic state of consciousness. For

them, the supreme Reality is self-evident, and thus no proof is required to establish Its existence. Guru Arjan makes it rather explicit when he says that the supreme Reality (*Nānak kā pātisāhu*) becomes apparent (*dīsai jāharā*).[3] Guru Gobind Singh also emphasizes in one of his hymns that the Real is obviously apparent.[4] The Sikh Gurus take the Real to be so obvious, so outstandingly visible that they make no effort, or rather feel no need, to prove Its existence. In fact, they take It to be the only ontological reality in existence in the real sense. They find It manifest in the material phenomena around us: it is perceived to be present in all directions and everywhere. The entire material phenomena is the manifest aspect of the supreme Reality, but this manifest reality is only a relative reality in the sense that the entire material reality known or knowable to human intellect does not fully exhaust the supreme Reality. In other words, the supreme Reality is not limited to the material, manifest reality nor is It limited by It. Because of this and certain other reasons which we shall take up for detailed discussion in the following pages, we cannot equate or identify the material phenomena with the supreme Reality though it is, in essence, one with It. The concept of Reality in Guru Gobind Singh's philosophy may further be explained with the help of the following characteristics.

(i) Unity of Reality

There is in the Sikh Canon much emphasis on the unity of Reality. Plurality of deities is straightaway rejected. The Guru Granth Sahib and the *Dasam Granth* begin with the word '*ikoankār*': in fact, it is this word with which opens every composition in these sacred volumes. The *hukamnāmās* or edicts issued from time to time by Guru Gobind Singh to his followers also begin with the term *ikoankār*. This frequent use of the word is suggestive of the significant and central place the concept of unity occupies in the Sikh ontology.

The word *ikoankār* is compound of three words, i.e. *ik*, *oaṅ*(or *om*) and *kār*. The word *oaṅ* stands for the supreme Reality. In the Upanisadic literature, the word *om* has been used to convey the means of meditation as well as the object of it. We find an affirmation of this view in Ranade who says that in the Upanisadic literature the word "*om* is described as not merely the supreme means of meditation but also the goal to be reached by the meditation itself."[5]

However, in the Sikh Canon, this word is invariably written with a prefix '*1*' as well as with a suffix '*kār*'. The prefix '1' is very specific and certain in its meaning as there can be no ambiguity about the meaning

of a numeral. Different words or phrases could be interpreted differently by different persons to give them different meanings, but not the numerals the meaning of which "is fixed for all. To denote the oneness of the ultimate Reality, therefore, Guru Nanak uses the numeral '*1*'."[6] It may, however, be made clear that the numeral used here is not merely an arithmetical numeral but has a metaphysical value which symbolizes the unitary nature of Reality. Thus, this addition of the prefix to earlier Hindu terms *om* or *oaṅ* stands for the Sikh stress on the oneness of the ontological Being.

The use of the suffix *kār* to the term *om* or *oaṅ* is not a new innovation in Sikhism : the term *oaṅkār* had earlier been used in the *Māṇḍukeya* and other Upanisads,[7] but the use is significant because it implies creation thereby bringing about the *sagun* aspect of the transcendent Om.[8] The term *kār* has also been taken as *ākār* according to one theological point of view.[9] This latter interpretation, however, seems to be unnecessary for two reasons : first, the prefix ā to *kār* is not there in the text and is unjustifiably imposed on it, and second, this makes no change whatsoever to the meaning of the word. As we said, the suffix *kār* is indicative of the creative aspect of *Om* or *oaṅ* who does not remain static but becomes dynamic as creator and sustainer of the manifest material world. In the words of Sher Singh, "God is creator, the sole cause manifesting through Will and manifested as Word in a subtle form and as World in a gross form."[10] There are numerous references in the hymns of Guru Gobind Singh to the effect that the Real One is the sole creator (*sarab kartā*) and preserver of all (*sarab pāle*). We shall take up this creative aspect of Reality a little later in this chapter, and it will suffice to say here that the spirit (*joti*) of the ultimate Reality is a 'form of forms' (*samastī sarūpe*) and all-pervasive (*samastul niwāsi*). Thus, the word *ikoaṅkār* taken together would mean the One Reality which has created the entire manifest phenomena and which simultaneously permeates through it.

Guru Gobind Singh, thus, inherited from Guru Nanak and other predecessors the concept of the Real as the one spiritual continuum solely responsible for the creation, preservation and possible reabsorption in Itself of the entire phenomenal existence. However, at the same time, he continued interpreting and re-interpreting this perception so as to make it more intelligible to human mind and more relevant to human life. The Being (Reality) of this formulation is both transcendent and immanent, and he has taken great care to stress the equality of both the aspects: neither is superior to or more important

than the other. Moreover, this immanence of Reality in the variform beings and things of the material world does not, in any way, affect either Its unitary or Its transcendent nature.

Guru Gobind Singh is very specific about the unitary nature of Reality. He stresses this aspect of the nature of Reality time and again in his compositions. He begins his *Akāl Ustati* with an invocation to the Real One—*praṇavo ādi ekaṅkārā*. The ultimate Reality is one, and there is none else: those who are given to dualism are a confused lot.[11] This Reality is always one Spirit and never incarnates (in human or any other form).[12] It is in this very sense that the Guru calls Reality *abiyakt rūp* (unmanifest), *ādi purakhu* (primordial eternal consciousness), *abiyakt tej* (unmanifest effulgence), *abigat abināsī* (unmanifest and beyond death). However, this refers only to the transcendent aspect of the unity of Reality.

Lest this emphasis should be misunderstood as the Reality being an entity entirely different from or unrelated to the immanent world, the Guru has perfectly balanced the two with equal emphasis on the immanent aspect of It. We find in his verses passages refering to Reality's transcendent and immanent aspects alternating regularly.[13] However, when the Guru says that the Reality is immanent in all beings and at all places (*sarab joti ke bīch samānā/sabhhūṁ sarab ṭhaur pahichānā : Akāl Ustati*, 8), it does not affect or change Its unitary character. Rather it implies only the socialization of the Divine and spiritualization of the manifest phenomena. The unity of Reality remains intact, and the Guru makes very explicit remarks to this effect, when he says in his *Jāpu* that Reality is one (*ek*) but It becomes visible in a variety of material forms (*anek*)—*anek haiṅ/ phiri ek haiṅ* (43). However, these external gross forms fall a victim to *kāl* after a brief interlude in the material world. The body, made of five elements, perishes, but the inner essence either takes to other body or once again becomes one with the Reality.[14]

Inspite of this co-essential oneness between the ultimate Reality and the material manifest reality, the latter as an independent entity cannot be and is not identical with the Reality. From the standpoint of knowledge, Guru Gobind Singh calls Ik the nearest of all (immanent in the surrounding material phenomena) as well as the farthest of all—*sabh te dūri sabhan te nerā* : *Akāl Ustati*, 4. For an ignorant person, the ultimate Reality is the farthest because he fails to see through the apparent duality between It and the manifest reality. On the other hand, the realized self can discern unity behind the diversity, and for him

ultimate Reality is quite close and obvious. The unity of Reality and the ontological unity of *Ik* with the material world are central to the Guru's thought, and all other concepts follow from it.

(ii) **Dynamism of Reality**

Guru Gobind Singh lays as much stress on the dynamic and unitary nature of reality as on the energy that underlies it. The Reality of the Guru's conception is not static as is the Purusa in the Sankhya-Yoga system, nor is īt passive like Brahman of Śaṅkara's conception. The static metaphysical system of Śaṅkara considers the created elements as mere shadows or copies (*māyā*) whereas the dynamic spiritual continuum of Guru Gobind Singh's conception stresses the real historical dimension of the development of consciousness, social ideals and human society as a whole. The dynamic nature of Reality here implies Its creative aspect. In the context of Guru Gobind Singh and other Sikh Gurus, the term creation is used in a qualified sense. The original meaning of the term stands for creation of something previously non-existent. But here the terms *kartā* (doer) has been used for the Supreme solely responsible for the creation of diverse forms of the manifest world and its myriad forms which are ever in flux and in a process of creation and annihilation. All these are only partial manifestations of the dynamic Reality governed by the creative principal *hukam*. Guru Gobind Singh, however, uses the terms *kāl* more often than *hukam*. Whereas *hukam* implies the principle of dynamism, *kāl* stands for both the principle and the very stuff of dynamism.

The proof of the dynamism of ultimate Reality is to manifest Itself through the creation of universes, worlds, things and beings which collectively may be referred to as relative reality. *Ikoaṅkār* alone is the *kartā purakh* yet It is itself uncreated and *ajūnī*, unborn and beyond birth and death. It must be borne in mind that the Sikh Gurus did not consider Brahma, Visnu and Rudra (Siva) as independent creator, sustainer and destroyer, respectively, nor did they accept them or any one else as incarnations of *Ikoaṅkār*. They rejected *avtārvād* or the theory of Divine incarnation as it prevailed then in some Indian religious traditions. In the latter, the Divine incarnate was identifiable with the Divine Itself though the incarnated self was born like any other human being, lived for a certain span of life in historical time, and then passed away. These incarnates are generally shown as taking human form at certain stages of human history ostensibly to help mankind successfully face the challenge of demonic forces in contemporary

social and political milieu. On the other hand, the Sikh Gurus rejected this theory of Divine incarnation though they did not deny Divine interference through the human beings (who served as instruments of His will) in the affairs of mankind so as to restrain it from evil and lead it to righteousness.

Guru Gobind Singh, in his compositions, considers these so-called divine incarnations at best as perfected humans only who could help emancipate man from social and moral ills. They do not exhaust Divinity in themselves. On the other hand, their claim to be the Reality rather than a part of the manifestation of Reality is declared a mistaken notion which earns a rebuff even from the Reality Itself. In the *Bachitra Nāṭak.* Guru Gobind Singh takes up the idea of creation of this world as well as of the beings who inhabit it. The first beings created by the Akalpurakh turned demonic (*daint*), a metaphor used by the Guru for those who forgetful of the Creator started considering themselves as self-sufficient units independent of Reality, and thus took to evil. Then were created some higher humans, referred to here as godly (*devtā*) which for Guru Gobind Singh is a metaphor for the realized selves, who also soon became forgetful of their real selves and instead started considering themselves co-equal with the Creator. It becomes apparent from this that all the created beings in this world as in others are His creation,[15] though a sizeable part of these created beings may, in their ignorance, mistake themselves as co-equal with the Creator. Since God is ever showing man the path that leads to Him, implicit in this is also the divine urge to establish righteousness, but we shall discuss it in detail in the next chapter.

However, the act of creation by the Akalpurakh is different from that of human creator. For example, a potter needs wet and well-kneaded earth to create and shape earthern vessels. But Akalpurakh needs no extraneous material to shape myriad forms of manifest reality. He creates out of His own being—*sarab bisav rachio suyambhav* : *Jāpu*, 79. Thus, the eternal conscious Being is immanent in the manifest multiple units and this causes their ontological identity, though seemingly they are distinct as manifest forms (*rūp*). Just as Akalpurakh needs no extraneous material for creation, so the act of creation is carried out by the Real One not under any extraneous compulsion but of His own will and is sustained under the self-regulative creative principle called *hukam*. Guru Gobind Singh, however, prefers the term *kāl* which literally means both time and death. Whereas death symbolizes only the destructive aspect, time includes the creative aspect as well. It thus

refers to the dynamic principle of creation, sustenance and destruction. The term *kāl* as death has also a mythical connotation as it was frequently used in the Puranas and other mythical works as personification of Death. Our concern here, however, is mainly with the ontology of *kāl* which is the very stuff of Reality and is operative in the societal relations.

While discussing the creative aspect of Reality, it would be pertinent to refer here to the all-inclusive nature of the supreme Being. There are frequent references in the verses of Guru Gobind Singh to suggest that nothing is outside Reality which includes and permeates through all the phenomena. The Divine permeates through every living being from the smallest insect to the huge animal—*hast kīṭ ke bīch samānā : Akāl Ustati*, 1. Even gods and demons (these terms have been used by the Guru as metaphors for the good and the evil persons, respectively) also emanate from the creative force of the Akalpurakh, and as such cannot be called independent of Him. Like other beings, the gods and the so-called *avtārs* also are the manifestations of Him, but never equal to or identical with Akalpurakh. They can at the most be called higher humans because of their being enlightened and realized selves. Being subject to *kāl,* i.e. time or death, they make their appearance in this phenomenal world only for a specific time in history, and are finally subsumed unto *Kāl.*

The Guru emphasizes that these spiritual preceptors in no way exhausted the whole Reality, rather they were only partial, periodical and ephemeral manifestations of It. The Guru also contradicts the belief prevalent among certain religious traditions that these preceptors could serve as intermediaries between mankind and Akalpurakh. The Guru seems to have a twin purpose in the removal of the notion of such intermediary forces: he wanted to make man directly responsible and answerable to Akalpurakh for whatever he did in this mundane world, and secondly, to make him strive and struggle, rather than being parasitic dependent on the intermediacy of these forces for their spiritual as well as social elevation and well-being. It was perhaps the absence of this sort of thinking which had made Indians lose their sense of initiative and self-reliance and consequently turning them into victims of foreign subjugation. For Guru Gobind Singh, the idea was not only a natural corollary of his metaphysical thought but also served the historical necessity of contemporary times. It is significant that for the new brotherhood (Khalsa-Panth) he founded he chose the name Khalsa, literally 'Lord's own directly, without intermediaries."[16] But of that later.

No doubt, both the godly and the demonic beings are His creation. Millions of Indras, believed in Hindu mythology to be the king of gods, are taken by Guru Gobind Singh to be among His creation. Akalpurakh manifested His own *līlā* at intervals through Muhammad, Dattatreya, Gorakh, Ramanand, Rama, Krishna and many other such saintly beings who served as His manifestation.[17] Guru Gobind Singh is very emphatic on this point, and he says in his *Chaubīs Autār* that all the material beings that are there in this manifest world contain within them the spiritual spark of the same divine Unity—*jitik jagat ke jīva bakhāno/ ek joti sabh hī mahi jāno.*[18]

There is no place where Akalpurakh does not permeate : He is here and there, on the earth and in the sky—*īhā harī/ūhā harī°; jimī harī jamān hari* : *Akāl Ustati*, 53—in the fire, air, water, earth and everywhere—*agnī bāi jale thale mahi sarab thāne niwās*: *Akāl Ustati*, 188. The entire manifest phenomena is not only the creation of Akalpurakh but is also internally related to its Creator. Manifest world is only a part of the ultimate Reality, and a part though not equal to the whole is certainly related to it. Just as rays of the sun and waves of the sea are not equal to the sun or sea, yet are essentially one with them, so the created beings who emanate from the creative act of Reality though not the co-eternal with Reality are yet a concrete determination of Reality as spirit in historical time. Guru Gobind Singh uses in one of his compositions an extended metaphor to suggest the relationship between the creation and its Creator. Just as millions of sparks arise as separate particles from a single fire but fall back within the fire; as innumerable grains of dust rise when heap of dust is swept but after some time fall on that very heap; as countless waves rise out of a single stream but being water they fall back in water again; similarly all animate and inanimate things of this manifest world emerge from the ultimate Reality, and will finally merge with that very Reality.[19]

This essential oneness of the creation and the Creator leaves no place for dualism. The Guru rejects both the static metaphysical system of Vedanta and the Semitic concept of the transcendental (impersonal) nature of God. They Sankhya theory of dualism between Purusa and Prakriti is also rejected. Unlike these metaphysical systems, the Sikh dynamic ontology, on the one hand, encompasses the 'otherness', of created elements within the all-comprehensive structure of non-dual Reality, and, on the other, identifies with Itself, *qua* Spirit, all sentient and non-sentient elements. These latter are visualized as manifest units of the Real One. Thus, the entire manifest phenomena become

intrinsically one with Reality and is realized as relative reality.

This essential unity between the two leads to the conclusion that behind all this manifest diversity can be seen the non-dual unity of the metaphysical Reality. When the One becomes many as a result of self-willed manifestation, the non-dual character of Reality is not affected. Guru Gobind Singh says in unequivocal terms that the ultimate Reality, even in Its unmanifest aspect, subsumes all the diversity of manifest forms, and when these manifest forms become explicit, they still retain their ontological unity with the supreme Reality. In fact, all this diversity is the Creator's sport and will finally be subsumed within the Real One. The Divine Being is one, manifests Itself in diverse forms as a result of Its dynamic, all-inclusive nature which happens to be self-regulative, and in the end becomes one again.

(iii) Synthesis of the Personal and the Impersonal

The essential unity between the creation and its Creator leads to another postulate, i.e. the reconciliation of the transcendent and immanent aspects of Reality. The supreme Reality in Its unmanifest (*nirańkar*, *nirgun*) state is transcendent, but It becomes immanent in the material reality as a result of Its self-manifestation. We agree with Kapur Singh when he says that this universe is "nothing but God in becoming."[20] Lest this should mislead one to believe that this will make God, who was, is and will ever be *sach* (Truth), mutable, we must clarify that here "becoming" stands for the manifest phenomena which, in essence, is Divine.

There have been in the compositions of Guru Gobind Singh efforts at reconciling the unmanifest or impersonal with the manifest or personal aspects of Reality. At many places in the Guru's hymns a single verse and sometimes a single term contains both the personal and the impersonal aspects of Reality. For example, in the *Jāpu*, he refers to Reality as the *ādipurakh* or primordial Being which refers to Its impersonal aspect followed immediately by the terms *ūdār mūrati* or the benevolent Being which refers to Its manifest or personal aspect. Again, the opening verses of the *Akāl Ustati* present a fine synthesis of the personal and the impersonal aspects.[21] Herein Reality is called *ādipurakh*, *abigati* (unmanifest and beyond comprehension), and *abināsī* (not subject to death and decay). All these refer to the impersonal aspect of Reality, but in these very verses, the Guru also perceives the *Ik* as manifest in everything, on earth, in water and the sky. The Ik is declared to be permeating through all the fourteen realms

of the universe.

Looked at from the perspective of impersonal unity, Reality is without form (*nirańkār*) and without attributes (*nirgun*), and thus becomes unintelligible or icomprehensible to the rational faculties of man. It is in this context that Guru Gobind Singh perceives Reality as without any mien, colour, caste and dress, but simply as self-effulgent light.[22] The Ik is *akāl* (indestructible), *arūp* (without form), *nirdhāt* (not made of five material elements of earth, air, fire, water and ether) and so on. However, this impersonal aspect has been fully balanced and harmonized with the personal unity when the Guru calls It benevolent, merciful, sustainer, protector, etc. Reality of Guru Gobind Singh's conception is both beyond appreciation and without any form (*arūpe*) yet clearly manifest and comprehensible everywhere (*samastul niwāsī*). All manifest realities bear forms (*samastīsarūpe*) of the ultimate Reality though the latter Itself has no physical form or name.

This attempt at the reconciliation of the personal and the impersonal aspects of Reality leads us to two precepts. One, the nature of Reality is non-dual and transcendent on the one hand, and dynamic, creative and immanent on the other. The self-manifestation of Reality into myriad manifest forms is indicative of Its dynamic nature. Second, the manifest forms being emanations of the ultimate Reality are not essentially different from the latter although the two are not identical either. This second precept, in this way, provides reality to self and society which has been the marked characteristic of the Sikh faith and which reached its culmination in the creation of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh.

This reconciliation and harmonization of the personal and impersonal aspects of Reality was also an ontological necessity with Guru Gobind Singh. Reality in Its impersonal aspect is abstract because of being unmanifest. In this unmanifest and abstract state, it is not possible for man to comprehend It fully with the help of reason. Man can look at, analyse and comprehend the semblance of the manifest form, but he will not, with all his knowledge of the world, be able to comprehend and explain its inner essence. Since ultimate Reality is beyond human categories of understanding, Guru Gobind Singh expresses It in negative terms. His intuitive experience of the Real One makes him aware of the limitations of rational understanding with concepts, symbols, metaphors, etc. However, he expresses Reality only with those negative terms which imply positive assertion of the Being. Guru Gobind Singh calls it *alakh* (invisible) and thus *akath*

(indescribable), *agochar* (suprasensuous), *akhaṇḍ* or *anakhaṇḍ* and *anaṅgi* (indivisible), *abhañje* (indestructible), *anāme* (nameless), *adhāle* or *apāre* (limitless), *akath* (ineffable), and so on. Almost all these and many such other attributes given to Reality are not possible to be rationally described or elaborated. The import, however, can be comprehended by discerning minds.

One requires three things to enable oneself to see—physical form of the object, and efficient medium (eye) and light. In this case, Reality does not have any physical form and thus cannot possibly be seen by the physical human eye. The light required for this purpose is the inner enlightenment, and the Reality being *joti* or spirit, only the discerning minds can see It with their inner eye. However, such an impersonal unity of Reality cannot be the object of our devotion and obeisance. Man gives It some personal attributes to turn It into the medium of our devotion and to make It comprehensible. Guru Gobind Singh takes these personal attributes from contemporary social, cultural and political life. We shall take it up for detailed discussion a little later in section (b) of this chapter, but it must be mentioned here that man easily understands the socio-morphic attributes of Reality, and his attempt to cultivate these qualities in his own life elevates him to the level of God and thus become mystically identified with Him. It is this ontological unity between man and God that Guru Gobind Singh refers to when he says that God *(hari)* and the realized selves *(harijan)* are both one.

(iv) **Synthesis of Kal and Akal**

The Sikh Gurus before Guru Gobind Singh have generally used the term *hukam* to denote divine will or the self-regulative principle. *Hukam* in relation to Reality as creator may be called the self-regulative principle. There is no extraneous agency to direct Reality in the act of creation. The entire activity in the manifest world goes on as per the *hukam* or the Divine law. Nothing ever happens here outside that *hukam*. Guru Gobind Singh does not contradict this, but he prefers the term *kāl* to *hukam*. If the latter means only the principle of dynamism, the former is both the principle and the very stuff of dynamism. If *hukam* implies the presence of *hākam* (the temporal ruler or chieftain), the term *kāl* also implies the *akāl* or *sarabkāl*, i.e. the metaphysical Reality responsible for creation, preservation and annihilation of the entire manifest material reality. The Guru has also used the term *aisu* for the divine will. The terms *aisu* literally stands for order, command or will, and the Guru uses it both as divine will[24] and in its secular sense.[25] It is,

however, the term *kāl* which is repeatedly used by the Guru for the dynamic principle.

Since Guru Gobind Singh accepts the dynamic view of Reality, the Reality of his conception transcends *kāl* as well as is immanent in it. The Guru calls Reality Akalpurakh, i.e. the *purakh* or being who is *akāl*. Reality is *akāl* in the sense that It transcends temporality and that It encompasses *kāl* (*kāl kāle*). It is neither exclusive of time nor timeless. But the Guru qualifies the term *akāl* with the suffix *purakh*, the creative principle which implies the immanent nature of Reality. This suffix refers to the creative aspect of Reality as a result of which It manifests Itself in everything in the material world. Although these manifest forms in the material world are evanescent, yet they are in essence one with the indestructible Akalpurakh. Thus, the Reality is immanent in all the manifest phenomena and has innumerable existentially functional attributes (*karam nām*) though Its real name is infinite spiritual continuum. There is, thus, in the Guru's view a reconciliation between the Reality's transcendent aspect, which is beyond *kāl* and which subsumes *kāl*, and the immanent aspect which, in its manifest form, is subject to *kāl*.

Since Reality manifests Itself in history, all events in history are therefore real. It would also imply that our social life in the mundane world is also partially real. This will give rise to the growth of history in historical time. *Kāl* or time thus recognizes the social facts in the course of history. This was a singular contribution of Guru Gobind Singh to the social philosophy of the land. The Guru transmutes the mythical time into a living reality in history by creating the Khalsa. He attributes the creation of the Khalsa-Panth to the *hukam* or *aisu* of the Divine.[26] It was specifically for the spread of righteousness and annihilation of evil. The cultivation of righteousness and negation of evil are the primary theomorphic attributes which must be imbibed by a realized self, the Khalsa in micro form. In this sense, the Akalpurakh and the Khalsa (the realized selves) become one in essence (*Wāhigurū jī kā Khālsā*) though the latter, unlike the former, remains subject to *kāl*.

(v) Ontic Unity Between the Creator and the Creation

Sikhism does not consider this created world a mere *māyā* (illusion). The Indian religious heritage which Sikhism inherited declared this material world, including human beings and their deeds in historical time, as unreal, although it treated *jīvātmā* (soul) as real. However, Sikhism believes this manifest world to be real, relatively real. It also

believes in an internal relationship between the Creator and the created beings, thereby leading to a mystical unity of the two.

Guru Gobind Singh's hymns touch upon the theme of this relationship between the ultimate reality and the manifest reality at a number of places. With the help of an extended metaphor in the *Akāl Ustati* he has tried to explain that all beings are the creation of Akalpurakh, and after they have spent an ordained period in this world they merge into Him. He tries to emphasize the same sort of relationship with the help of images of water and waves, light and darkness. The waves are inherent in the water; they are formed of it and then merge into it.[27] The same is true of the light and darkness: one is born of the other and is then subsumed by it.[28] The manifest material phenomena is born of the ultimate Reality and is finally merged into it.

Thus, there is an ontological identity between the creation and its Creator. Man has to realize this identity of essence. Since all men are manifestations of one primordial Being (*joti*), they are identical in essence. This is the basis of the spiritual unity of *jīva* and other elements of *samsār*. The seeming differences among men of different ethnic and religious groups are delusive (*anek ko bhramāo hai*), whereas they are in reality one (*mānas sabai ek hai*).[29] Since all human beings are one in essence, any discrimination on the basis of caste, class or creed is against the Divine law. This ethnic and social equality of man leads to mutual love which, according to Guru Gobind Singh, is an unifying principle of social relationships. Devotional love for one God results in mutual cooperation, harmony and sense of respect for others.

Thus, we find that Guru Gobind Singh perceives the nature of Reality as *ik* (one)—a metaphysical unity of Reality which is all-inclusive. It is both impersonal and personal. In Its impersonal aspect, It is unmanifest and thus *nirañkār* and *nirgun*. So It remains incomprehensible to the rational faculties of man. In Its impersonal and transcendent nature, It is not subject to *kāl* : rather It swallows or transcends it. On the other hand, in Its personal immanent nature, It permeates through temporal processes, thereby making it immanent in historical time which in turn makes the society and all action in society as real. This immanence of Reality in material phenomena implies that It is dynamic in nature. It is the sole creator of the entire material phenomena. This act of creation implies the Divine manifestation in the mundane reality, but only the discerning mind can see the unity behind the diversity of the phenomenal world. However, these two facets—one

and many, transcendent and immanent, impersonal and personal—of the fluxional nature of Reality are reconciled and synthesized in the compositions of the Guru.

(b) **Reality : Its Attributes**

An attribute is a quality proper to or characteristic of a person or thing. As, for example, hardness is an attribute of steel and sweetness that of sugar. It is also used as a symbol often associated with the person or thing in question. For example, sword and scales are attributes of justice. In other words, an attribute represents or indicates an essential quality of a being either in its literal or in its symbolic sense. In the latter sense, however, the symbol and the reality which it symbolizes are not completely identical in meaning. The symbol does not fully exhaust the meaning, and several shades of the reality remain outside that.

Reality in Sikhism, as we have discussed in the preceding pages, manifests Itself everywhere, in water and on earth—*jala thala mahīal kīo pasārā* : *Akāl Ustati*, 1. Also, there is an equal stress on the impersonal and personal unity of Reality. It is difficult for our rational faculties to comprehend the impersonal, transcendent Reality. So Guru Gobind Singh has tried to explain It with the help of numerous negative adjective. However, to conceive Reality as an object of devotion, man tries to give it some personal attributes. These attributes given to the personal aspect of Reality do not, individually or collectively, fully exhaust what It stands for, but they do help the devotee in his understanding of and yearning for self-realization through *nām-simran* or constant remembrance of the Divine Name. All These attributes are theomorphic because these are personified expressions of the personal unity of the Ik.[30]

The attributes used by Guru Gobind Singh for the impersonal unity of Reality are, as we said earlier, mostly negative in nature. The impersonal Reality is unmanifest. It is not possible for reason of man to either comprehend or describe It in toto. The Guru often calls It *akāl*, i.e. not within the limitations of time. In the temporal world man is recognized by his physical appearance, his name, surname, *varṇa*, caste or sub-caste, his complexion, his dress and the lines on his hand or foot. But the unmanifest Akal has none of these. Guru Gobind Singh calls Reality without body or form (*akāe*), without specific name (*anāme*), without a dwelling-place (*adhāme*). As a result of Its self-existent nature (*anaṭhaṭṭ*), It has no family lineage or parents, friends or foes—*satra*

mitra jih tāt na mātā (*Akāl Ustati*, 4) nor does beget any family of children and grandchildren (*na potrai na putrai*). Since the nature of Reality in the Guru's conception denies any duality and stresses Its unity, it implies the presence of no *sarīk* or associate as co-equal or co-partner (*nirsarīk or nirsāk*). Since there is no empirical or rational method to comprehend the incomprehensible, the Guru declares It unfathomable (*agādhe*), limitless (*anant*), boundless (*abādhe*) and invisible (*adīsai, adrisai*). All these negative attributes are indicative of limitations of human mind to grasp the all-embracing Reality. Yet the Guru tries to define It because he feels, knows and is sure that the *ikoaṅkār* is, that It is not void or nothingness but is positively existent. These negative expressions imply positive assertion of His being or existence. This conviction comes through the human soul which being a ray of the same light is certain of the Source and is not only destined but also eager to go back to It, to be one with It. In man, the noblest of the species, this sense of oneness develops with desire to love and worship the fountainhead of his existence.

However, such an impersonal unity of Reality cannot be the object of man's worship. It was one of the arguments of Ramanuja against Sankara's *nirguṇ* Brahman which escapes all attributes of the phenomenal world. To turn this unfathomable and indescribable unmanifest Reality into an object of man's worship, due stress must also be laid on the personal unity of Reality as on object of devotion and worship. Since the Deity depicts personal relationship with the devotee, It is called personal unity. Such Deity reacts sympathetically towards the devotee and is responsive to his supplications and prayers. So man conceives Reality as loving and caring for mankind, and he speaks about It though images and metaphors drawn either from his social life in the mundane world or from historical and mythological allusions.

As such, man qualifies the impersonal unity with some personal attributes which are theomorphic in nature. He seeks to posit all the Divine ideals in the mortal beings that were attributed to the impersonal Unity. We are mainly concerned with those attributes which have social and political import. Attributes borrowed from Indian and Islamic traditions have been transmuted within the framework of Sikh thought. They are to be interpreted within the structure of Sikh canonical literature.

Some of these attributes used by Guru Gobind Singh are taken from Indian mythology, but he has demythologized the myths and given them a new connotation within the format of Sikh philosophy. The

attributes derived from the names of some tribal gods, etc. have also been given a new orientation in the Sikh context. They are simply an expression of the personal unity of the devotee with the object of worship hypostatized as god or goddess.

All these attributes relate to the 'becoming' aspect of Reality, i.e. when the Light (*joti*) manifests itself in the material phenomena and becomes all-pervasive light (*sarabjot*). Since man himself is part of this 'becoming' he started giving attributes to the nameless (*anāme*) Reality only after the self-expression of the Divine. In other words, Reality existed prior to the attributes ascribed to the personified forms of the non-dual, dynamic Reality. So, it will not be possible for man to conceive the attributes without conceiving what they stand for. These attributes, therefore, cannot be an arbitrary imposition but they are an expression of the dynamic character of Reality. They are inseparable from and latent in It and become explicit only after the self-manifestation.

After man realizes that the attributes given to Reality relate to Its manifest aspect, i.e. after the *zāt* (essence) or *sarabjot* manifests in *sifat* or *guṇ*, he first thinks of the relationship between the supreme Doer (*kartā purakh*) and the created beings (*pasārā*). This is followed by the desire for a moral order in this *pasārā* which, broadly speaking, stands for human affairs in the manifest world. There are always some evil propensities present in man which hinder the establishment of a moral order, of an ideal social structure. A counter force or martial element is needed to overcome such evil forces. Akalpurakh possesses all the necessary martial qualities to overcome evil and to re-establish the ideal social order. That is why sometimes supposedly ideal political rulers in the mundane world have been hypostatized as gods. Apart from taking some of the names used for Reality in past history and mythology, Guru Gobind Singh has used attributes which imply or symbolize the Reality's relationship towards human beings, His will to establish an ideal social structure and His endeavour to annihilate all evil forces which hinder that development.

Guru Gobind Singh takes several names from the Indian tradition whom the Hindus used to worship as the trinity representing three aspects of Brahman or as incarnations of some gods and goddesses. Since Hinduism believed in the idea of Divine incarnation, certain characters from history and mythology such as Rama, Krishna et al. were taken as the incarnations of Reality. Brahma, Visnu and Siva form the Hindu trinity whereas Indra, Chandi, Sivā, Bhagauti, and several

other such names are of gods and goddesses taken from Hindu mythology. The Guru has not used them either as Divine or Divine incarnates or gods, but either as the *śakti* of the Divine or as heroic manifestation in the material world. For example, Chandi, also known by the names of Durga, Kālikā and Bhagauti, is depicted in Puranic literature as a Divine incarnate who fights against the *asuras* (demons) on the side of the *surās* (gods). However, in the compositions of Guru Gobind Singh, the name becomes synonymous with the Real One or with the divine energy (*śakti*) of the Real One. When the Guru invokes, in his *Chaṇḍi Charitra Ukti Bilās*, Sivā, another name of Chandi in Hindu mythology, seeking blessing to do ever good and to be ever ready to die for the sake of righteousness, "Sivā" does not stand for that Puranic character but for the ultimate Reality Itself.

There are numerous references in the hymns of Guru Gobind Singh to the Hindu trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. There are also frequent references to Rama, Krishna and such other incarnates. However, the Guru demythologizes them and attributes them existential connotations. As Sikhism rejects the very idea of Divine incarnation and none can be termed as His equal, the Guru denies them their divine status and brings them equal to His varied partial manifestations. He compares Brahma, Vishnu, Siva or Indra with other elevated mortals who though rich and powerful are ultimately subject to kal—*brahm mahesur bisanu sachī pati anti phase jama phāsi paraiṅge* : *Akāl Ustati*, 28. He does not give Indra a place given him in the Hindu mythology where he is the king of gods; according to the Guru, there are many Indras who sweep His portal—*kaī Indra bār buhār* (*Akāl Ustati*, 40). Krishṇa, the mighty hero of the Hindu mythology is one among the many small and insignificant beings—*kete krisna se kīṭ koṭai upāi* (*Akāl Ustati*, 96).

The Guru does not intend by this to denegrate any religion or its prophets : he is only emphasizing the unity of Reality which is the very basis of Sikh ontology. None is His equal but all are His manifestation. This idea of the Guru forms the basis of social equality as envisaged by him in the Khalsa-Panth because all human beings, according to this view, are ontologically identical with Akalpurakh and equal to one another. They manifest the very essence of Akalpurakh but do not exhaust Him. Secondly, this obliterates the institution of any middlemen supposed to help man on his spiritual path and he is related direct to the Akalpurkh : the term *Khālsā* which is Arabic in origin also stands in revenue records for the estates which are under the direct suzerainty of the King.

Accepting the dynamic nature of Reality, Guru Gobind Singh holds that One becomes many in consequence of Its self-manifestation. He therefore calls Him *kartā* (creator), *srab kartā* (creator of all), *samastoprāj* and *sarab thāpe* (creator sustainer of all). He says that this manifest visible world (*sarab*) is the manifestation (pasārā) of the non-dual primordial cause (*oaṅkār*)—*oaṅkār te srisṭi upārā* (*Bachitra Nāṭak*, II. 10). If *kartā* is one attribute of the *kirtam* (functional) aspect of the dynamic Reality, the Guru has used several other attributes indicative of His role as sustainer and annihilator of His own creation (*utkarakh* and *ākarakh*). Having created the entire world (*sarab bisav*), He sustains it as well—*kartā karīm soī rāzak rahīm oī* (Akāl Ustati, 85). He is called *sarab pālak* and *sarab pāik* (nourisher of all). He is the beneficent Giver (*dātā diāl*) and benevolent to all (*sarab diāle*), especially the poor (*ghrībul parastai*). He is an epitome of generosity and kindness (*udār mūrati, karuṇālaya*). He annihilates the inimical elements (*ghanīmul shikastai*) and the wicked forces (*dusṭ bhañjan*), and removes the sorrows and sufferings of His creation. The kind and benevolent Lord not only creates the manifest world but also sustains it by protecting the saintly and destroying the wicked.

Material reality is the manifestation of the Divine and has no independent existence of its own. It is sustained by the Real One who has created it, and it owes it existence to His will. The entire manifest reality is in the end reabsorbed unto the ultimate Reality. This shows that the manifest forms are not essentially distinct, but are, in essence, one with it. Thus, annihilation of the manifest form signifies the end only of its external form which is gross and not of the inner essence (*dhāt*) which is divine in nature and which thereafter either takes to other form or is absorbed into its Source. However, this happens, as does everything else, in His will.

The two attributes of *nirbhau* (*abhī*, *nirbāk*) and *nirvair* (*nirsarīk*) which follow from this omnipotence of Reality should appropriately be understood. Although they are negative in character (*nir* = without; *bhau* = fear or externally imposed discipline; *vair* = rancour) yet they apply more to the personal unity of Reality. His fearlessness stems from the fact of His being all-powerful. He is the essence of all manifest forms (*sarab prān*) but He Himself is *anaṭhaṭt* (self-existent or self-caused). Since He is dependent on none and all else is dependent on Him, He is fearless. Second, He acts under instructions of no outside agency. The self-manifestation of Reality is self-willed. That is why Guru Gobind Singh calls Him *ātam bas*. Since there is no co-

eternal to the Divine and since all beings are His own creation and in essence His own part and also equal to one another, He is inimical towards none. This rancourlessness must not, however, be confused with indifference because the Akalpurakh of Guru Gobind Singh's conception is compassionate and is with all (*sarab sāthe*), yet He does favour the saintly (*sant ubāran*) as against the demonic whom He annihilates (*duṣṭ saṅghāran*).

Sustenance of the manifest reality also implies the establishment of a moral order therein. The evil propensities in man result in binary opposition between the forces of goodness and those of evil. Since man is ontologically an element of Akalpurakh, he is essentially good and possesses moral scruples and values but under the influence of his five evil propensities i.e. *kām*, *karodh*, *lobh*, *moh* and *ahaṅkār* he is often led astray and falls a victim to evil. This is the root cause of struggle between his good and evil propensities at the individual level. These are magnified in the societal relations as well. Thus, they become an obstacle in the way of realization of the ideal social order. However, when forces of evil endeavour to dominate, Akalpurkh deputes certain enlightened beings to act as His tools or agents to favour the good in this moral struggle. This deputizing, however, must not be misunderstood as Divine incarnation. Guru Gobind Singh is very specific on this point. While talking, in his *Bachitra Nāṭak*, of his own deputizing by Akalpurakh for a special mission, he declares that he is just a slave of the supreme Being and must not be equated with Him. He warns his followers that those who call him *paramesar* (the Almighty God) shall suffer the pangs of hell : *je ham ko paramesar ucharia hi/ te sabh naraki kuṇḍ mah pari hai* (*Bachitra Natak*, VI. 32). He also tells of several such moral agents deputized by God in the past, but who unfortunately mistook themselves to be the Akal Himself and thereby defied His command—*sabh apanī apanī urjhānā/ pārbrahm kāhuṅ na pachhānā* (*Bachitra Natak*, VI. 28).

Guru Gobind Singh takes some Puranic legends to rewrite and reinterpret them in some of his poetic works. For example, in Guru Gobind Singh's philosophical thought, 'Chandi' as Puranic goddess has no reality. To him, those who do good are gods and those who do evil are demons. Chandi becomes in his compositions a symbol of Divine power and acts as moral agent in this struggle between the good (gods) and the evil (demons). Bhagauti is the other name of Chandi or Durga, but it stands in Sikh tradition for sword as well. In its latter sense also, Bhagauti is symbolic of Divine power acting as a moral agent for the

annihilation of evil and in defence of righteousness. It is in this sense that Bhagauti is invoked by the Sikhs in their daily prayer (*ardās*) which begins with the opening stanza of Guru Gobind Singh's *Var Srī Bhagautī Jī Kī*. Other variants, in Punjabi, of *bhagautī* (sword) are *kharag, asi, khag, khaṇḍā, loh, sarabloh, kripān, kirpān,* etc. Guru Gobind Singh has used all these attributes, directly or indirectly, for the Divine power. The *Bachitra Nāṭak* opens with an invocation to *Srī Kharag*. Here the word *Kharag*, with *srī* prefix which in Indian tradition is used as an honorific before a name, stands for the divine. But in the following stanza of the same composition, the *khag* or *kharag* becomes a moral agent symbolic of the Divine power which annihilates the *dal* or group of the *khal* or wicked—*khag khaṇḍ bihaṇḍan khal dal khaṇḍan*. Similarly, Guru Gobind Singh uses Sri Asipan and Sri Asidhuj an epithet for Mahakal with sword in hand, as attributes of the Supreme Energy. In this (*Chaupaī*), the Guru seeks the blessing and help of Shri Asidhuj in the annihilation(*Saṅghar*)of the demonic (*asikh*) on the one hand, and elevation (*ubārī*) of the saintly (sikh) on the other : if one seeks shelter with you, O Asidhuj, all those inimical towards one get annihilated—*je asidhuj tav saranī pare/ tin ke dusṭ dukhit haiv mare* (*Kabiovāch Benatī Choupaī*, 21). In a *Savaiyyā* Sri Asipan has also been used as an attribute of the Real One—*Srī asipan kirpā tumarī kari mai na kahyo sabh tohi bakhānyo*. Similarly, Loh (steel) and Sarabloh (All-steel) also stand for the Divine at several places in the hymns of Guru Gobind Singh.

Divine morality is, as says L.R. Farnall, a reflex of human ethics raised to its highest imaginable power. So the conception of a moral deity as guardian of moral order in the mundane world is human rather than cosmic. All the ideal ethical qualities required for the establishment of a perfect moral order in society are attributed to the Divine, and all those which hinder this process are denied of Him. Guru Gobind Singh uses several ethical attributes for Akal which he has taken from our social life. There are certain relations in family and in society at large whom we love and whom we simultaneously consider our ethical ideal as well as our patron or protector in social life. These material realities are naturally imperfect vis-a-vis the Divine who alone is the perfect being (*param purakh*), but we envision them as or expect them to be as perfect as the Perfect One.

The Guru conceives in the personal Unity the attributes of lover, friend, nourisher, protector and annihilator of enemies. These personal relations indicate the Divine concern for the well-being of man and

society, and His love for all such relations. In the patriarchal Indian society father was the head of the family, and he was expected not only to look after the needs of the family but also protect it from any outside threat. Guru Gobind Singh uses for the Divine the attributes of *pitā* (father) as well as of *mātā* (mother : the symbol of pure love) because it is the latter who gives birth to man and brings him up. In the Sikh Canon, there are numerous instances where human being is said to be the child of the Real One. In his *Bachitra Nāṭak*, Guru Gobind Singh calls himself the *sut* (son) of Akalpurakh. The Guru also addresses Him as a dear friend (*mitra piārā*). In this hymn, the Guru expresses his love for Akalpurakh with the help of an analogy of the romantic legend of Hir and Ranjha and says that the mystical union with the Dear Friend even in the most adverse circumstances (*yārare dā sānūṅ sathar chaṅgā*) is better than dualistic mental state in the most favourable physical surroundings (*bhaṭh kheriāṅ dā rahiṇā*). Here, the nearness to or union with lover is given prominence over and above all material, worldly comforts and gains.

Guru Gobind Singh conceives God as the patron of all beings. He is called the *azīz-ul-niwās*. He patronizes all those who submit to His will because it is only through this that the establishment of an ideal social structure is possible. He is *udār-mūrati* (benevolence incarnate) and *karuṇālaya* (house of mercy). He is kind to all (*sarab diāle*) and provider of livelihood (*rozī dihind*). He is the respecter of the poor (*gharīb niwāz*) and relation of helpless (*dīnabandhu*).Thus, we find the Deity conveived by Guru Gobind Singh as containing all the attributes of personal relationships of father, mother, lover, friend, well-wisher, patron, etc. They symbolize the personalized form of the impersonal unity.

The very fact that the supreme Being is immanent also implies socialization of the divine. To Guru Gobind Singh, He is "the highest as well as the lowest member of society. He is king of kings—*rājan rāj* and also the poorest of the poor—*raṅnkān raṅk.*"[31] This strengthens the case for social equality without regard to economic position, social or political status or birth in a so-called high family. And the concept of common divine patronage of all militates against social distinction based on ethnic origin, class or caste. The process of the socialization of the Divine which began with Guru Nanak, was conceptually stabilized by his successors and which got institutionalized in the hands of Guru Gobind Singh, also resulted in assigning several political attributes to the Real One. The idea of an all-powerful, saviour God might have

emanated from the people's belief in the supposed benevolence or theophilanthropic nature of the kingship. Guru Gobind Singh calls Him *rājān rāj* (king of kings) and *shāhān shāh* (emperor of emperors). The king is the ruler of a certain specified territory, but the True King is the ruler of all.

Guru Gobind Singh has in this way used several social, political, and mythological attributes for the ultimate Reality, but this personal Deity is in no way a social and political being. These attributes do not, and cannot comprehend It in Its totality but only symbolize the immanent nature of the transcendent Reality. Our discussion of the philosophical rationale provides a logical basis for reaffirmation of social phenomena which were relegated to the background in the pre-Nanak period. The Sikh Gurus evolved a dynamic view of Reality which implies social realities as its manifestations. We shall take up this problem in the next chapter in ramifications.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. In almost all the Janam-Sakhi traditions Guru Nanak is believed to have disappeared during the last days of his stay at Sultanpur Lodhi in the Bein river, and during this while he had a mystic vision of the Real One. Some of his hymns, as included in the Guru Granth Sahib, refer to his having seen Him. Cf. Guru Granth Sahib, p. 8 (*sach khand vasai nirańkār/ kari kari vekhai nadari nihāl*) and pp. 764-65 (*darsan dekh bhae nihkeval.....*). However, Guru Nanak also finds that *nirańkār* or formless Reality manifests in all beings. Cf. Guru Granth Sahib, p. 931 (*jo dīsai so āpe āpi*) and p. 663 (*sabh mahi joti joti hai soi*). All these references indicate that the Guru had a mystic vision of the Divine.
2. The supreme Reality in Sikhism is not either personal or impersonal, but a synthesis of the two. In the following discussion of Reality, we have to refer to both the personal and impersonal aspects of Reality according to the demand of the context. So we have used two different pronouns to denote a particular aspect of Reality in the given context. We have used the pronoun 'He' while refering to Reality's personal and devotional aspect whereas pronoun "It' has been employed to indicate the impersonal, transcendent aspect.
3. Guru Granth Sahib, IV. p. 397
4. *Jāpu*, 146
5. R.D. Ranade, *A Constructive Study of Upanisadic Philosophy*, p. 246
6. Bhai Jodh Singh, "Sikh Philosophy" in *History of Philosophy Eastern and Western*. Ed. S. Radhakrishanan, Vol. I, p. 516
7. Cf. Bhai Jodh Singh, *Japujī Satīk*, p. 1
8. Cf. Sohan Singh, *The Seeker's Path*, p. 2. Herein the learned author explains the term "*oamkār*" as a compound of *oam* and *kār*. According to him, "*Oam* consists of three letters o, a and m—o standing for *urdham*, i.e.

above; a for *adham*, i.e. below; and m for *madham*, i.e. between. Thus, the word, Oam means that which is above, below and between, i.e. the entire universe." He reads the suffix *kār* as *ākār*, and explains it as "the visible expanse, or simply the expanse."

10. Sher Singh, *Philosophy of Sikhism*, p. 168
11. *Akāl Ustati*, 85
12. *Bachitra Nāṭak*, I. 3
13. Several instances could be quoted in support of this contention from the *Jāpu* alone. In this *bāṇī*, Guru Gobind Singh has used the diction which consists mostly in substantives (given as the names of the Real One) and epithets (which are the attributes of the One). Herein the Guru refers to Reality as *anāme* (nameless), *akāe* (formless), *adhāme* (belonging to no particular place), *akāl* (not subject to *kāl*), *et al.* on the one hand, and *rahīm* (compassionate), *karīm* (benevolent) *rajāk* (provider of livelihood), *ajīzul niwāz* (protector of the good), and so on the other. In some verses, these two aspects are referred to side by side. Cf. *Jāpu*, 43 (*anām haiṅ/ nidhān haiṅ*), 49 (*anaṅgī anāme/ samastī sarūpe*), 56 (*anūpe arūpe/ smastul niwāsī*), and so on.
14. *Jāpu*, 77
15. Cf. *Bachitra Nāṭak*, VI. 6-28
16. F. Steingass, *Persian-English Dictionary*, p. 442
17. *Bachitra Nāṭak*, VI. 6-26
18. *Chaubīs Autār*, 34
19. *Akāl Ustati*, 87
20. Kapur Singh, "Introduction" in *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*. Tr. Manmohan Singh. Vol. II, p. vii
21. *Jāpu*, 75
22. *Ibid.*, 1
23. *Bachitra Nāṭak*, VI. 60
24. *Ibid.*, VI. 4; VI. 64. See also, *Chaṇḍī Charitra Ukti Bilās* 6
25. *Chaṇḍī Charitra Ukti Bilās*, 138
26. *Bachitra Nāṭak*, VI. 29
27. *Akāl Ustati*, 87
28. *Ibid.*, 88
29. *Ibid.*, 86
30. Nirbhai Singh, *Philosophy of Sikhism*, p. 105
31. Sher Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 215

CHAPTER VI

DIMENSIONS OF SOCIAL THOUGHT

(a) Meaning of Social Reality

In the previous chapter we have concluded that social phenomena are essentially a part and parcel, manifestation *qua* spirit of the supreme Reality. Now we propose to discuss the meaning of societal relations as a reality.

Man is not only the central figure in the whole universe but is also the superior creation among the entire sentient and non-sentient units. He is superior because he possesses more developed consciousness and is capable of becoming self-conscious. All religions and philosophies revolve around him, and no religion or philosophy can exist or be complete without refering to, analysing and establishing the nature and purpose of human life in the mundane world. Man is a social being and he does not and cannot live and develop in isolation from other human beings. The gregarious nature of man leads to the formation of social groupings or institutions such as family, society and state. There may be different opinions as regards the reasons behind man's sociability such as the theory of social contract (Hobbes, John Locke and Rousseau), the regulative force of socialization of Libido (Sigmund Freud), etc. but no system denies the basic fact of man's sociability.

The sociability of man, which includes his social relations and ideals, might have been explained differently by different scholars in the West, but the Indian approach has mostly been subordinated to the realization of the supreme Reality and the conceptual ideal called *mukti* or *mokṣa*. In this approach, the social phenomena, including man and the material world, used to pale into insignificance. It goes to the credit of Guru Nanak and his successors that they restored relative reality of the social phenomena and made the latter relevant to the spiritual ideal of man. Before them, the Indian thinkers held the entire world of phenomena, including various social groups and political organizations,

as illusory and unreal. That is why whatever is found written on social institutions in ancient India is meant "as guides to rulers and their advisers rather than books on social or political philosophy."[1] On the other hand, in the West, the *Republic* of Plato is considered the first great treatise on social philosophy[2] followed by a steady flow of writings on social and political nature of man and of human society.

In philosophy, we try to view particular objects in relation to the whole which they form part of. In social philosophy, we concentrate our attention on the social unity of mankind, and seek to interpret the significance of the social aspects of human life with reference to that unity. Although sociology and ethics also deal with man and his life in the mundane world, social philosophy is not identical with either. Sociology is a positive study of the social relations whereas ethics emphasizes the normative aspect of man, and is primarily concerned with the normative principles of human conduct in society. As distinguished from them, social philosophy dwells upon man as its basis and "builds up an ideal of social unity. Therefore, it lays more emphasis on the reality of social relations and ideals. Its main emphasis is on social aspect of human life with a view to creating an ideal of social unity."[3]

Social philosophy is not concerned with the discovery of facts because it accepts them from other sciences, rather it tries to interpret them so as to articulate a social ideal. It is, like ethics, a normative study of man as a social unit in the context of the spiritual unity of the social structure. It is normative because it studies social thought and pattern with its focus of concern on social ideals: it does not merely describe but prescribes an ideal.[4] It is also "a reflective study of man arising from his experience and life in society. It is his judgement and evaluation of his social experience in his encounters with other persons. Rather, it is his judgement and evaluation of his social facts in the light of values and ideals."[5] Since religion is concerned with man's social life, religious beliefs, ideals and aspirations are also taken up by social philosophy for interpretation though they directly belong to metaphysics, ethics and sociology.

Social philosophy thus concentrates on the social unity of mankind, and in the process tries to interpret the significance of social aspects of human life in relation to that unity. It also takes into account the specific ideals and aspirations of man in society. Since the pursuit of these ideals implies the social context of human life, human social relations and human action in historical time also fall within the purview

of social philosophy. In this process, it also endeavours an integration and harmonization of the personal (which is divine in essence) and the social aspects of human life. We, now, propose to concentrate on man who manifests Reality as a social unit in the social structure.

(b) **Man as Social Phenomenon**

In the Indian religious tradition, Vedas are the earliest written source. The Upanishads which are continuation of the Vedic thought speculate that this phenomenal world is the sportive play created with divine energy (*śakti*). It is, thus, illusory in nature. The Madhyamika school of thought that followed also held a somewhat similar view regarding the status of social phenomena. It was of the opinion that "everything that has a cause (origination) was bound to be unreal."[6] Gaudpada and Sankara also seem to advocate the same view: according to them, everything except Brahman is unreal and just an appearance (*māyā*). They considered Brahman the only reality and reduced the empirical world to an illusory appearance.

The Hindu belief that Brahman is the only reality and that all the created beings in the material world are only appearances resulted in undue emphasis on the other-worldliness. Thus, there was a trend towards asceticism and renunciation of this 'unreal' world. The ascetics and the mendicants, who had nothing at stake in the social world, had virtually become the spiritual mentors of medieval India. The moral and ethical degeneration that was found in the medieval Indian society was mainly due to this kind of ideological commitment. The 'spiritual mentors' who were themselves a mere social cascuta accepted and let the common man accept passively whatever happened to the social and political fabric of the nation. Since this mundane material world was in no way considered helpful, rather it was believed to be a hindrance, in realizing the ultimate ideal of human life, i.e. *mukti* or *mokṣa*, the common man gave up all interest in the affairs of society. It was also the result of this ascetic attitude that he took in a gutless way the atrocities perpetrated upon him by the so-called twice-born in his own tradition and by the fanatical alien rulers coming from the Islamic tradition.

Since man and the material world he lived in were accepted as unreal, all human historical action performed therein was also deemed to be unreal and irrelevant. The caste a man was born in was declared more important than the deeds done by him in his lifetime. For example, a *śūdra*, however righteous, just and pious, could never aspire for spiritual enlightenment and self-realization. The Bhagvadgita, also

called the essence of the ancient Vedic and Upanishadic culture, lays down *karma yoga* as one of the three means (*jñāna yoga* and the *bhakti yoga* being the other two) for the realization of the supreme ideal of human life. Unfortunately, this *karma yoga* (philosophy of action) was mistaken by the medieval Indian for mere *karma kāṇḍ* or ritualism. As regards the pursuit of the ultimate end of human life, emphasis had been on formalism and ritualism, and the values of justice and righteousness in the deeds done by man in this material life were deemed irrelevant in this pursuit. In fact, in the *milieu* inherited by the Sikh Gurus renunciation of the world was considered a necessary prelude on the path to the spiritual ideal of man. Negation of life and the world, rather than their affirmation, made up for true religiosity because they believed in the complete divorce of spirituality from the social praxis.

Islam which was comparatively a late entrant in the conglomeration of religions in medieval India differed in its ontological and social tenets from Hinduism as well as from other Indian religious traditions. It believed in the dynamic view of life which encourages man to struggle within the social realities of the world. It advocates that life is to be lived in society with all the social and political responsibilities. As compared to Allah, the Muslims give secondary importance to the worldly life. It is obligatory on the part of the true Muslim to abide by the Divine will and continue living in the society strictly in accordance with Allah's will. It considered this mundane world as worth living. It accepts the human soul and *qudrat* at large as manifestations of the Qadir. Thus, spirituality of Allah's essence (*zāt*) in the form of Divine Light is immanent in every created being including the human beings. This implied the presence of an element of spirituality in the social phenomena because man (and *qudrat* at large) as social unit manifests the *zāt* of Allah.

However, Sufism, a somewhat liberal sect of Islam as it prevailed in this part of India then, had also developed other-worldly attitude : it was perhaps because of the impact of Vedanta and Buddhism. The Sufi saints who incidentally had a close contact with the native Indians declared "the empirical world as unreal, mirage and evil." and the gross human body a sort of cage or prison for the soul or *rūh*. Torture of the gross body and discarding of the material world were declared necessary for the emancipation of the *rūh* from this world and for its coming closer of Allah. According to this view, both human body and the material world were considered a hindrance in the way of man's

approximation to God. Instead of working for the well-being and development of the gross human body, austerity and torture were recommended.

Thus, the dominant attitude of the medieval Indian life was that of life-negation and world-negation. This has been caused, broadly speaking, by man's wrong notion that the social phenomena were devoid of any spiritual essence and were, therefore, *mithiā* or unreal. It resulted in withdrawal from the strife in human life in this mundane world. The spiritual and moral values of ethinic and social equality, love, justice, altruism, etc. suffered as a consequence. Personal humiliation, social injustice and political oppression and exploitation were accepted as the fact of life by the will of God, and this world, sordid and wailful, was advised to be shunned. The indignities and exploitation that masses in the medieval India suffered from were, in a way, the result of this attitude.

There were, of course, some sporadic attempts at stemming this tide of life-negation and world-negation. The Bhakti Movement in medieval India is one such example. Although the votaries of this Movement could not come out of the confused vortex of Hinduism thereby limiting it to just a renaissance movement within Hinduism, yet they tried to reach and restore the pristine glory of social and material culture. Most of what they said was denunciation of orthodox Hinduism, of Brahmanism. There were some among them who deviated from traditional Hinduism in their spiritual content and social values although they could not completely break away from it. Alongside these attempts at spiritual rejuvenation of the Indian people, there were also some sporadic attempts at curbing the violent oppression and tyranny let loose by the alien invading hordes who were then trying to settle down permanently in India. However, these attempts, both in the spiritual and the mundane fields, lacked consistency, direction and stamina. In fact, these latter were either dynastic or feudal in character.[8] The movement of resistance to religious orthodoxy and oligarchy, to religious formalism and social inequality and political oppression became a people's movement and acquired a consistency and stamina only under the direction of the Sikh Gurus.

(c) Affirmation of Self—the Sikh View

The new worldview (*weltanschauung*) brought forth by the Sikh Gurus, characterized as it was by a this-worldly shift in the realm of religion, enabled man to accept this material world and all human

activity in historical time as real. Of course, this-worldly shift in emphasis as suggested in Sikhism did not deny religion its spiritual and mystical meaning. In fact, it is the metaphysical doctrine of Sikh theology which forms the *vis-a-tergo* of the Sikh social thought. This action-oriented metaphysics of the Sikh Gurus goaded man to cultivate in his own life as well as in the social fabric as a whole all the anthropomorphic attributes of God and thereby transform himself into a God's knight and this manifest world into an abode of moral and spiritual struggle (*dharamsāl*) where the qualities of love, equality, fraternity, justice, and self-respect prevail.

Sikhism believes, as we have discussed in Chapter V, in the non-dual and dynamic nature of Reality. However, this non-dual Unity in Its transcendent state is only "unmanifest effulgent spirit"—*abiyakt tej anabhau prakās* : *Akāl Ustati*, 121. It is not made of the five elements (*anubhūt aṅg* : *Jāpu,* 87). Guru Gobind Singh tries to explain this aspect of Reality with the help of numerous negative attributes. He also calls it effulgent light (*prakās*) or eternal Light (*achal prakās*) or the Light of light (*tej teje*). This formless (*niraṅkār, arūpe*) and transcendent Reality becomes immanent when this Spirit manifests Itself through Its symbolic expression of light or the Light becomes manifest in all other lights. This is how, as says Guru Gobind Singh, the *param joti* (supreme Spirit or light) becomes *sarab joti* (universal spirit or light) and the *paramātam* (supreme Soul) becomes the *sarabātam* (universal soul).

This spiritual manifestation of the Divine, however, is not selective or exclusive. All beings, irrespective of their class, caste, rank, colour, creed, or breed, are His manifestation. He pervades in the elephant (*hast*) as well as in the ant (*kī*), and of course especially brightly in the human beings. It is like the Hegelian thought in keeping with the Indian metaphysics that the Guru perceives the Divine presence in all beings—both human and non-human, sentient and non-sentient. However, since man is acknowledged to be the supreme creation in the universe, it is during the human birth that the soul can aspire for and attain union with the supreme Soul.[10] In his *Akāl Ustati* , the Guru gives a long catalogue of beings, both virtuous and wicked, the high and the low, who, according to him, are spiritual manifestations of the Divine. In this catalogue are included the beggar and the benevolent (11); the god and the demon (12); the reader of the Quran, the Puran and the *Kokśāstra* (a manual on sex); the believer and the infidel (13); the house-holder and the ascetic , the celibate and the promiscuous (14); the taker of nectar, honey and alcohol, the rich and the poor (16); doer of evil and of good

deeds (17); and so on. They are good or wicked because of the deeds they do here and now: those who do good deeds are gods and those who perform wicked deeds are demons. [11]

According to this view, it is the inner *joti* or *atman* as an essence which is the manifestation of the Divine. But its outward coating (*deh, sarīra*) remains gross as it is composed of five perishable elements. This precept of the Divine nature of human soul leads us to two natural conclusions, i.e. the immortality of human soul vis-a-vis the evanescent nature of human body and, second, the social unity and equality of mankind based on the precept of its Divine unity. The soul which is a particle of the Divine is immortal. It comes into the world with the birth of a being : it is only when Akalpurakh places the *joti* or spirit in body that man is born in this world.[12] The body though gross and mortal is nevertheless significant because it serves as a vehicle or means for the Divine particle based therein to try and merge with its original Source. Although Sikhism does not reject the doctrine of *videh-mukti* or liberation from the cycle of birth and death after the dissolution of body, it simultaneously stresses the doctrine of *jīvan-muki* or liberation while still embodied. In the latter sense, the body serves as a means to enable man realize the Real One in this very life which, in other words, is complete identification with the Divine Will. It is, of course, after the body, made of elements, perishes with death that the soul which is essentially divine merges for ever with the Divine.

The difference between the mortal, gross body and the immortal, subtle soul, which is divine in nature, is made clear by Guru Gobind Singh when he refers in his *Bachitra Nāṭak* to the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur : the latter broke the pitcher (a reference to the bodily death) in Delhi and the soul went on to the Almighty—*ṭhīkar phori dilīs siri prabh pur kīā payān* : (*Bachitra Nāṭak*, V. 15). However, this body is important because it is through this body that the divine particle called soul sparkles forth. The Guru makes it very specific that this divine effulgence shines forth in all the beings whether it is a small insect or a huge animal like the elephant—*hast kīṭ ke bīch samānā* (*Akāl Ustati*, 1).

The idea of man being in essence the manifestation of Divine has been illustrated by Guru Gobind Singh with the help of some beautiful metaphors and similes. Just as light, with the dawn of the day, merges unto itself the darkness thereby illuminating everything, and the darkness dissolves itself so completely into the light that it loses all its trace, so Reality manifests Itself in all beings (*utkarakh*) and in the end

all these beings completely and finally submerge themselves into the Reality (*ākarakh*).[13] While refering to this creative (*utkarakh*) aspect of Reality, the Guru does not separate different castes, classes or creeds from the larger human community in which all groups share the same radiant origin but still maintain a relative distinction of their own: he perceives the Akalpurakh in a Hindu invisibly rendering the Gayatri *mantra* and in a Turk (Muslim) giving a loud call. All those born of egg (*aṇḍaj*), foetus (*jeraj*), sweat (*setaj*) and earth (*utbhuj*) are manifestation of the Divine—*jih aṇḍaj setaj jer rajaṅ* (*Akāl Ustati*, 151).

It is in this context of intrinsic and essential oneness of man with the Divine that Guru Gobind Singh identifies man with Akalpurakh—*hari harijan dui ek hai* (*Bachitra Nāṭak* : VI. 60). This oneness makes man real like his Creator because the living force (soul) within is Divine in origin and nature. This doctrine differs from the Islamic view wherein Allah infuses *rūh* in the non-sentient matter but still remains transcendent from the manifest material reality. It is also different from the Hindu doctrine of incarnation (*avtārvād*) according to which the Divine Himself takes to human or other form.

These precepts of Divine manifestation and the essential oneness of man with the Divine are the *raison d'etre* of the doctrine of the spiritual unity and ethnic equality of mankind. All beings having been the spiritual manifestation of the One are equal not only in His eyes but also among themselves. The only and the best way to serve Him is to serve, without any selfish motives attached to the service and without any favour towards or bias against those to be served, His immanent manifestation in the mundane world. The feeling of altruism or philanthropy (*sevā*) is deeply associated with that of love which is another prominent value that man must cultivate. Guru Gobind Singh recommends the path of love for Divine realization, and rejects all formalism as mere sham absolutely of no use for this purpose.[15] In the Sikh scripture, Guru Granth Sahib, we find *sevā* and *nām-simran* or remembrance of the Divine Name, given as the best and the only means for God-realization. When the Guru says that only those who love (*prem kīo*) realize the Divine (*prabh paio*), it does not mean a deviation from or contradiction of the fundamental philosophical beliefs of his predecessors because both the views are essentially the same. *Nām-simran* in Sikhism does not stand for a mere mechanical repetition of one or the other attributive name of the Divine as it used to be in the earlier Brahmanical and Sufi traditions. Here it implies the feeling and realizing of the Divine presence in all beings and at all places. This

would lead us to love all beings beacuse we shall find the Akalpurakh manifested in all of them.

The *raison d'etre* of the creation of the universe is, according to the tenth Guru, to make the entire creation remember Akal, without anybody interposing between them. However, the created beings had in the past failed to honour this moral commitment. Among the religious leaders blamed for this are mentioned in the *Bachitra Nāṭak* and they include many *sidhas*, *sadhs* and *rishis* in general and Dattatreya, Gorakh, Ramanand, Muhammad *et al.* in particular. These leaders should have made their followers remember the True One, but instead everyone of them established a sect (*panth*) of his own followers and attached them to himself rather than attaching them to the Lord-God. This gave birth to useless strife (*bair bād*) in the world. It was at such a juncture of history that Guru Gobind Singh was born. In fact, he was ordained by Akalpurakh to spread righteousness (*dharma*) among men and to bring them to their sense of duty towards Him. Thus, Guru Gobind Singh was a human instrument in the hands of the Divine to uphold righteousness vis-a-vis wickedness.

This account by Guru Gobind Singh of the milieu leading to his own birth indicates towards the fact that man is the centre of attention even of the Divine. The Akalpurakh does not remain indifferent to the human situation in the mundane world, but He intervenes in human affairs when He finds the forces of evil getting better of the forces of good in their constant struggle for supremacy. This Divine intervention is always through the instrumentality of human beings chosen for that specific mission. The Puranic narratives as retold and reinterpreted in the *Dasam Granth* also suggest that persons like Chandi, Rama, Krishna *et al.* were born with the specific object of annihilating evil from the contemporary mundane world. Guru Gobind Singh does not deify any of them, rather he considers them human beings, as he does himself. But these human beings were so enlightened and completely attuned to the Divine will that they strove and suffered for making the divine qualities of equality, love, justice, altruism and honour prevail in the affairs of empirical world. He retold these narratives, with significant shift in emphasis and interpretation, with a view to preaching that each human being is capable of becoming Rama, Krisna or Chandi provided he or she cultivates all the humanly realizeable divine qualities. In fact, it is the stage which we call in Sikhism as that of self-realization or God-realization.

(d) **Affirmation of the World**

Just like the beings, the world (*samsār*) they live in is also

considered real, relatively real. This is unlike the medieval Indian view holding the world *mithiā* or illusory, an idea which implicitly favoured asceticism and set in a process of degeneration of moral values in the material world. This is also unlike the Islamic view which considers Allah ever transcendent from His creation. The Sikh scriptural view is to accept this universe as true[17], a place where the True Lord abides.[18]

However, a comment of caution must be made while discussing the reality of social phenomena. There are numerous references in the Guru Granth Sahib and the *Dasam Granth* to the effect that this world and the societal relations such as father, mother, brother, sister, wife, children, friends, and others are all *jhūṭh* or false. Guru Tegh Bahadur calls this entire created world as *jhūṭh*.[19] This world has also been compared with the bubble on the water surface[20] and with the dream.[21] All these comparisons and metaphors used for the mundane world are not, however, meant to convey the sense of the world being unreal or illusory in the sense Sankara calls it. Here these epithets stress the evanescent or short-lived nature of this manifest reality. Whereas Akalpurakh is a reality in the sense that it is self-created and everlasting non-dual Reality not subject to *kāl*, i.e. time or death, the *samsār* (world) and all the *jīvas* (beings) in it are real only in the sense that they are in essence manifestation of the Divine. At the same time, since the material world and the beings are made of gross elements, their outward bodies are subject to *kāl*. It is the evanescent nature of the exterior which is explained with the metaphors of bubble and dream, and is called *jhūṭh*. The inner essence which is the main driving force of the body and with which man is born into this world is divine in nature and thus real. Thus, the reality of the social phenomena in Sikhism is only relative: it is real because the Real One pervades through every particle of it, but is only relatively real because it is not intransient like its Creator.

The entire literary corpus of Guru Gobind Singh and all the events of his life point towards the confirmation of the view held by his predecessors that the social phenomena is not *mithiā* or *māyā*. It is real, even though relatively real, being the manifestation of the Divine. According to Guru Gobind Singh, the entire phenomenal world owes its existence to the One *sarabākrit* (Jāpu, 179) or the Creator of all. When the unmanifest Reality willed Itself to immanence, the whole of the material world was created (*kīn jagat pāsār*), with all the fourteen realms and the beings who inhabit them. The creation by Akalpurakh has been of His own will and of His own self—*sarab bisv rachio suyambhav*

(*Jāpu*, 79). He pervades through the entire creation. His intrinsic oneness with the creation implies the effulgence of the Divine light in all the fourteen realms—*lok chatur das joti prakāsī* (*Akāl Ustati*, 1).

Just as all beings, big as well as small, are His manifestation, the Divine presence can be felt at all the places, too. Akalpurakh pervades through everywhere—*sarab ṭhaur bikhai ramio* (*Akāl Ustati*, 182). He is present in fire, air, water, earth and everywhere else—*aganī bāe jale thale mahi sarab ṭhaur niwās* (*Akāl Ustati*, 188). This belief in the Divine presence at all places forms the basis of the Sikh belief in the Divine concern for the amelioration of this world. Guru Gobind Singh makes it evident in some very explicit references to this effect in some of his hymns

In an invocatory verse in the beginning of his *Bachitra Nāṭak*, he invokes Sri Kal being the creator and ameliorator of the world—*jai jai jag kāraṇ srisaṭi ubāraṇ* (*Bachitra Nāṭak*, I. 2). This implies that the material phenomena is not to be shunned or discarded, rather it has to be improved upon. Akalpurakh is also concerned with the human affairs in the mundane world, and has been sending certain human beings, at specific junctures of history, to serve as instruments of His will and work for the eradication of evil and establishment of a society based on the values of equality, love, justice and altruism. Guru Gobind Singh's own life was, as he claims in his autobiographical account in the *Bachitra Nāṭak*, commissioned by the Divine in this material world specifically for the sake of *dharma*—to destroy the evil and the sinful and to protect the saintly.[22] Therefore, instead of renouncing the social life, the Guru feels that it is his Divine obligation to improve it by annihilating evil and spreading righteousness—*jahā tahā tai dharam chalāi/kubudhi karan te lok haṭāi* (*Bachitra Nāṭak*, VI, 29).

According to Guru Gobind Singh the way to God-realization is neither through the passive acceptance of certain specified formalism nor the subjective performance of rituals or incantation of magical formulae. Similarly, it is also not possible by renouncing the world and leading a lonely, austere life in a jungle or in a mountain cave. Having established the relative reality of the material world, the Guru prefers a householder's life to ascetism and declares repeatedly in his hymns all ritualism and formalism as sham (*kūṛ kriā*). On the other hand, the Guru asks man to love mankind which itself is an active and universal exercise and which is a sure way to realize the ultimate end of life. Preference for householder's life is also a significant step towards elevating woman who was earlier called a temptress.

After affirming the relative reality of man and the material world he lives in, Sikhism affirms the reality of human historical action. According to Guru Gobind Singh, man must act for the betterment of the social phenomena. However, this action ought not to be inspired by any subjective or selfish motive. It should, on the other hand, be aimed at the good and well-being of general masses. It should emanate from *prem* or love which when extended towards the fellow human beings in this life leads towards the Divine. So all actions which directly contribute to the common good of humanity as well as those which are aimed at the eradication of prevalent social prejudices and inequities are real. Such actions affirm the ethical values of equality, love, justice, altruism, etc. in the material existence of man. The inculcation of these values in societal behaviour is indicative of man's love for the Divine because all human beings are, in essence, identical with Akalpurakh. Man learns to love all other human beings only when he is able to realize the divine unity between himself and all others. This realization is tantamount to being ever in mystical communion with the Real One.

The endeavour to spread righteousness and to cause cessation of wickedness in human affairs is another form of love for the Divine. In fact, it is an obvious indication to suggest that *prem* (love) for the Divine which implicitly means love for human beings who are in essence one with the Divine, does not mean passivity or renunciation but an active, constructive role in the affairs of this world. Guru Gobind Singh, in his *Bachitra Nāṭak*, gives us the mission of his life—to prevent people from doing evil (*kubudhi*) and to spread righteousness (*dharma*) in the mundane world, a mission "which he soon sought to clothe in the Order of the *Khālsā*."[23] In another of his compositions, he seeks the Divine blessing to do ever good and to fight, even sacrifice his life, for the sake of good.[24] He seeks the Divine help in his endeavour for the defence of the claims of conscience. It would not be inappropriate for us to reiterate here the moral drawn by a known Sikh historian on this point from the *Bachitra Nāṭak* : those who abandon the Guru's cause, i.e. those who fail to defend the claims of conscience either from self-interest or fear of suffering for the right cause, are much worse than those who had opposed the Guru openly in the field of battle.[25] All the repertoire of the Guru and his action-filled life stand testimony to the fact that he remained diligently and consistently stuck to that ideal and ever did his best for its fulfilment. He preached in his writings that the actions performed in a spirit of selflessness and for realization of this aim are real and that they ultimately lead man to the realization of the

Real. The Guru's entire life is an apt illustration of putting that precept into practice.

In some of his other compositions, Guru Gobind Singh projects these precepts from the lives of some other mythical and legendary personages. These character have mostly been taken from the Puranic literature wherein these are either gods/goddesses or divine incarnations (*avtārs*). However their treatment in the Guru's compositions as included in the *Dasam Granth* is different. The Guru does not either deify them to invoke them but treats them as created beings like any other. Moreover, only those incidents from their lives have been given prominence which bring out the social, heroic and altruistic aspects of their personality. Many Puranic details have either been omitted or emphasis on detail shifted to serve the Guru's purpose. The Guru demythologizes these legends and myths by reorientating them. In these works, the Guru has depicted with the help of Puranic allegory a struggle between the forces of good and evil. In this struggle the all powerful Reality does not remain a passive or indifferent spectator: It rather participates on behalf of the good "through the instrumentality of human beings chosen for that specific mission."[26]

Of these Puranic narratives, the Guru has devoted three compositions to the exploits of Chandi in the battle-field against the demons (*asuras*). This repeated emphasis on the exploits of Chandi was perhaps the Guru's way of making 'man' aware of the real prowess of woman whom he had by medieval times come to consider just frailty or temptress. It was also to serve as a source of inspiration to man : if a woman could fight so valiantly and successfully against such odds, there was no reason why man should suffer passively and not take up the sword to checkmate the evil tendencies resulting in oppression and exploitation of the hapless and the poor. Chandi, as presented herein, has no historical entity or a social reality. On the other hand, she serves as a symbol for *śakti* or power of the Real One as against the evil tendencies in this material world. Similarly, Krishna in one of the Guru's longer poetic composition "Krisnavtar" (*Chaubīs Autār*) is not, as in the Mahabharata, under any vow not to fight against the unjust oppressors an active battle on the side of *dharma*. In fact, Guru Gobind Singh deviates at several places from the Puranic narrative, and at place invents certain new characters and situations.[27] The main aim of the Guru here is to bring out Krishna's concern for contemporary social situation and his martial character in his fight against *adharma*. This is the dominant theme with the Guru as against *jñāna* or *bhakti* of the

Bhagavadgita text. In the same vein, Rama in the "Ramavtar" (*Chaubīs Autār*) is also ordained by the Divine to vanquish evil and establish righteousness (*rām-rājya*). It is only this aspect of Rama's personality that comes out pre-eminently in the Guru's work. It is perhaps with this end in view that Guru Gobind Singh does not conclude his narrative, as do most of the Puranic narratives, with the successful completion of the *yajña* and Rama and Sita's departure to the Saryu river. The Guru makes his account tragic by adding another event in which Sita makes, on the insistence of some of her friends and sisters-in-laws, the portrait of Ravana and as this makes Rama suspect her fidelity she disappears/ sinks into the earth followed soon after by Rama's death by drowning in the Saryu because he could not bear separation from her.

The life of Guru Gobind Singh himself is a saga of struggle against the bigot and degenerate rulers, both Hindus (as in the case of certain chieftains in the Sivalik foothills) and Muslims (the Emperor of Delhi and his deputies in various provinces in the Punjab) who acted against the established ethical code of human equality, dignity, love, justice, righteousness, etc. based on the principle of Divine manifestation in all beings and at all places. The Guru was of the view that the observance of the above ethical code was necessary, on the one hand, for the spread of righeousness in human affairs and, on the other, for the realization of the Divine in personal life. It was with this end in view that he created the Khalsa-Panth, the ideal of Sikh social order. The basis of the Panth was human equality derived from the divine unity of man. The members of the Khalsa-Panth, a microcosmic form the universal brotherhood of man, were required to spread the doctrine of love, which is the other name of equality, justice, altruism, peaceful co-existence, self-respect, and righteousness in human affairs because it is this doctrine of love that will ultimately lead the human soul to its primordial Source.

The Guru emphasized that actions performed for the general good and without any selfish designs lead to the Divine. They not only elevate the doer but also transform the mundane society into *sach khaṇḍ* or the realm of Truth. They are of real importance for the ethical progression of society as a whole and the spiritual upliftment of the individual in particular. On the other hand, the actions done with some selfish motive take man farther, in inverse proportion, from the goal of mystical union with Akalpurakh. Such actions done by a degenerate soul (*manmukh*) cause not only further spiritual degeneration of the doer but also bring about deterioration in the moral standards of

society. The consequences are still worse and more widespread if the doer happens to belong to the ruling class.

A constant struggle for domination goes on in this world between these two types of action. Since the Divine had willed the universe into existence in order to see the created beings working for their mystical union with It, domination of the good and saintly is wished for. There have, of course, been occasions when the evil had come to have the upper hand. In such situations, Akalpurakh has always intervened, through the instrumentality of blessed human beings, so as to put mankind back on the right track.

Since the individual self (*jīva*) and the action (*karma*) performed by him here and now are all real, it implies simultaneously the inward mystical relation of man with the Divine and his extrovert social relations with other beings. These outward-bound social relations are as necessary for social evolution as for self-realization by man because the individual self struggles through socialization for an ideal social self. *Saṅgat, paṅgat, laṅgar, kīrtan,* and later the creation of the Khalsa-Panth are some of the social institutions which work for the elevation of the spiritual aspirant as well as for the establishment of an ideal social order.

The spiritual elevation of the individual self is not possible in isolation. Socialization of man in such institutions serves a dual purpose. On the one hand, it makes him realize his essential unity with the Divine through initiation of the process of identification. It is this realization which goads him to strive for achieving mystical union with the Ik. Second, such socialization helps man overcome his egoity by realizing his spiritual unity with as well as his dependence on other human beings. In the former case, the mystical unity of man with the ontological Unity erases from human mind all sense of duality. The realization of the fact that he is the manifestation of the Divine ceases all egoity in the individual self: His individuation is transformed into ultimate coalsceing of the self with the supreme Self. In the latter case, this socialization helps establish an ideal social self dominated by the values of love, detachment, mutual respect, altruism and so on. As soon as man realizes his real self and his essential divine unity with the entire mankind, he is just and respectful to others because he finds the same divine spirit pervading in all beings and at all places, and also because he discovers that universal love and fellow feeling bring him more real happiness than what he had been experiencing in his isolated smugness. When different individuals get motivated by such social

values, progress towards an ideal social unity is natural as well as simultaneous.

We have been trying to argue in the preceding page that Guru Gobind Singh tried to reaffirm social facts of life. And this-worldliness and struggle in it were two of the main tenets which he preached and practised. Several of his poetic compositions have their outline picked up from Puranic literature with a particular emphasis on struggle in life for the righteousness (*dharma*). He gives twist to the Puranic legends from the standpoint of Sikh metaphysical format. It becomes evident that old myths are demythologized and new ones studded in this world are created. This is what we mean by life-affirmation and world-affirmation.

In the next chapter we propose to take up Guru Gobind Singh's creation of the ideal man (*Khālsā* or *sant-sipāhī*) and the ideal social structure (Khalsa-Panth).

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CHAPTER VII

KHALSA-PANTH : THE IDEAL SOCIAL STRUCTURE

We have in the preceding chapter discussed the nature of the material phenomena, and concluded that the manifest world is a reality, relative reality. We have found that the *raison d'etre* of this social reality was dynamism of the metaphysical Reality. Guru Gobind Singh has made emphatic statements to the effect that Akalpurakh can be perceived in the immanent world. The entire world and all sentient and non-sentient beings are, in essence, one with the supreme Reality. This spiritualization of the manifest social phenomena makes it relatively real and, thus, worth living in. The Divine immanence herein requires a moral order to prevail. Akalpurakh uses human beings as the instruments of His will so as to make the values of equality, love, justice, self-respect, etc. dominate the human societal relations.

Guru Gobind Singh envisioned such an ideal social structure, and metaphysical precepts of his predecessors and his own served as the *vis-a-tergo* of this vision. The 'vision' is always related to seeing beyond the present. In this 'vision' all defects and short-comings of the present are eliminated. This is achieved either by improving and emphasizing the good, noble aspects of the present or by replacing the present with entirely new life-patterns. Thus, the 'vision' of Guru Gobind Singh was not a utopia but relates to an ideal to be realized. The Guru has placed the ideal before us and he guides us on the way to it, but it is the man who has to struggle and strive to realize it. In the creation of the Khalsa-Panth, he has given us the ideal person (Khalsa as an individual self) and the ideal social structure (Khalsa-Panth) in microcosmic form.

(a) Khalsa as a realised self

According to the Sikh philosophy, man's essential self is divine, and when he realizes his pristine nature he is able to achieve mystical identity with the Divine—*hari harijan dui ek hai* (*Bachitra Nāṭak*, VI. 60). The Sikh Gurus with their personal examples guided men on the pathway to their real selves. Those who are able to reach this highest

state of consciousness have been referred to in the Sikh canon as *gurmukh* (the Guru-oriented as against the *manmukh* or the ego-oriented), *brahmgiānī or* giānī (the gnostic), *sachiār* (Truth-conscious), *jīvan-mukta* (the liberated while still in embodiment), *jodhmahābal sūr* (the mighty hero) *et al.*

All these epithets, as they are used in the Sikh canon, are not essentially different in connotation from one another. Broadly speaking, all of them stand for one who has attained "a state of entire bliss, entire light, complete merging of man's will with the Supreme Will of God."[1] According to the Sikh canonical literature, the attainment of this ideal is possible through the Guru's help, God's grace and loving devotion to the Real One. Guru as person in the context of Sikhism is used only for the ten spiritual preceptors from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh and thereafter for the scripture, the Guru Granth Sahib, or more precisely for the revealed Word (*śabda*) as contained therein. No one else, however pious or enlightened, can be so addressed or acknowledged. The help of Guru must not be mistaken as mediation in favour of the seeker. The Guru does not "take him to a higher stage of spirituality as if by miracle or on a crutch."[2] He simply prompts man by right guidance but the seeker has to tread the path himself, thus giving way to the doctrine of free will alongside the idea of complete surrender to the Divine Will (*razā*). It is by following the advice of the Guru and not by a mere affirmation of faith in a particular personal *gurū* that man can tread the path leading to the ultimate goal of life.

What man is advised to do, under the help and guidance of the Guru, for the attainment of the ultimate ideal of life, is to cultivate loving devotion (*bhakti*) to the Divine because it is His grace (*kripā*) that counts the most in the final analysis. The Sikh spiritual ideal is declared the love of His 'lotus-feet' : Guru Arjan declares all else worthless, and rejects even liberation for its sake.[3] However, this statement of Guru Arjan should not be misunderstood: love for the Divine and liberation are not two contradictory concepts, rather the latter is the natural corollary of the former. Here, the Divine does not stand for an abstract ideal or the impersonal unity of Reality, rather the term implies the personal unity of Reality, as He manifests Himself in the entire phenomenal world. In this way, love for the Divine implicitly means love for all the living beings in the mundane world. This realization of the essential unity of man and the relative reality of the mundane world results in man's spiritual and ethico-moral enlightenment. Such a man attunes himself to the Divine Will and cultivates all the realizable

attributes of Him. Since he is an active participant in the social life, he carries these spiritual qualities to the social plane and is thus further transformed into a socially ideal person. Such a person who, with the help of the Guru, has, through his love for the Divine, cultivated all the humanly realizable attributes of the Divine and then socialized these spiritual qualities is the truly realized self.

The word *Khālsā* is Arabic in origin, and in the medieval Indian revenue vocabulary it was used for that part of land which fell under the direct control of the Emperor, the crown lands as against the lands apportioned to chiefs, lords and barons under the feudal system. In the Sikh context, Khalsa as an individual means a truly and socially realized self committed to morally responsible action, and in collective form it represents the model of the ideal socio-political structure envisioned by Guru Gobind Singh. Although it was in the hands of Guru Gobind Singh that the concept of Khalsa-Panth was institutionalized, the term had been in usage in the Sikh tradition even earlier. The term *Khālsā* (actually, the word used is *Khālse* which is the plural of *Khālsā*) has been used in the Sikh Scripture only once, and that too by Kabir (Guru Granth Sahib, p. 654). In this hymn Kabir calls the emancipated persons *Khālse'* i.e. God's own or the ones directly linked with the supreme Reality.[4] It is in this mystical sense that the term *Khālsā* has been employed by Guru Gobind Singh while creating the Khalsa-Panth.

Earlier Guru Nanak had established many *saṅgats* (Sikh congregations) and *dharamsālās* during his preaching odysseys (*udāsis*) throughout the length and breadth of the country and abroad as well. Since it was not possible for a single person to act as the central authority for the supervision of these *saṅgats* in far-flung areas, Guru Amar Das, the third spiritual preceptor of the Sikhs, established twenty-two *mañjīs* (or dioceses) and appointed *masands* (pastors) to further consolidate the growing faith. This, of course, did not altogether snap the direct link between the Guru and his Sikhs. The Sikhs were free to and they did visit the Guru throughout the year, but there were some specific days such as those of Diwali and Vaisakhi when they especially used to come and meet the Guru. In fact, Guru Amar Das had desired his Sikhs to assemble at Goindwal, his headquarters, at some festival times and certain other days considered auspicious by the Hindus. The object possibly was to draw the Sikhs away from the ritualistic functions and festivals associated with Brahamanism. Since many of the newly-converts to Sikhism still used to visit centres of Hindu pilgrimage on such days, it was the need of the hour to stop them from such futile

practices. No doubt, many Hindu devotees also used to visit the Guru on such days and the Guru took the opportunity to try to divest them from the ritualistic and Brahmanical practices of Hinduism. Although Sikhism was philosophically an independent and distinct faith yet this was perhaps the first instance in the Sikh tradition when they were asked to decide between the Sikh precepts and the Brahamanical rituals, to decide "whether they were Sikhs or Hindus. They could not be both."[6]

During the pontificate of the earlier Gurus, Sikhs were also called Nanak-panthis (followers of Guru Nanak) and *melī* or *sahalaṅgu*. Those who were proselytized and who functioned under the aegis of *mañjīs* were referred to as *melī* or *sahalaṅgu* of the concerned *mañjīdār* or *masand* (pastor). They have been referred to with these epithiets in a contemporary account *Dabistan-i-Mazahib* and in some of the *hukamnāmās* (edicts).[7] These *melī* or *sahalaṅgus* revered and served the *masands* as they were the close associates and representatives of the Guru. This tradition is still prevalent in the Udasi and Nirmala traditions. However, in some of the *hukamnāmās* some individual Sikhs and Sikh *saṅgats* are also referred to as Khalsa or Guru's Khalsa. For example, a *hukamnāmā* issued by Guru Hargobind, the sixth Guru of the Sikhs, refers to the *saṅgats* of East as Guru's Khalsa. Similarly, another *hukamnāmā* issued by Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Guru, calls the *saṅgat* of Pattan (Pak Pattan) as Guru's Khalsa.[9] Then, Guru Gobind Singh also refers to his Sikhs, in one of his *hukamnāmās*, written just nineteen days prior to the creation of the Khalsa-Panth in AD 1699, as his own Khalsa.[10]

The institution of *masand* went on well for some time, but gradually the *masands* who were initially appointed to the job for their personal piety and selfless devotion became degenerate and corrupt. They started not only misappropriating the offerings made by the *saṅgats* for the Guru but also behaving like and even declaring themselves to be the Guru. When Guru Gobind Singh found that the malady had become widespread and reached a stage of no return, he decided to abolish the institution itself. At this stage, he had also realized that the Sikh movement had acquired a compulsive mechanism of its own for its further development. Therefore, he inflicted punishments on the defaulting degenerate *masands* and disclaimed them as his Sikhs. It had also become necessary to get rid of these selfish *masands* because the Guru knew that for the success of his mission "he needed only those who were prepared to consecrate their

lives to the great cause."[11]

It was in this immediate background that the Guru created the Khalsa order, i.e. an order of saint-soldiers who would lead a spiritually pious and enlightened life and simultaneously strive for the socio-political liberation of the oppressed and the exploited. The earliest account available on the subject is Senapati's *Sri Gur Sobha.* Senapati was not only a follower of Guru Gobind Singh but also one of the poets at his court. He completed the compilation of this work within three years of the Guru's passing away. Thus, the work is significant though the account here is rather brief and does not include even in outline what has come to be accepted in the Sikh tradition as proceedings on the Vaisakhi day of AD 1699 at Anandpur. According to Senapati, the Guru transformed the *saṅgats* into Khalsa-Panth, declaring 'the entire *saṅgats* as my own for ever.'[12]

The "fusion of the saintly character with the heroic is the special feature" of the Khalsa-Panth. Since the Guru was planning to transfer guruship or at least the temporal aspect of Reality, to the *panth,* he continued further Guru Hargobind's concept of *mīrī* and *pīrī.* He made the constituents of the Panth *sant-sipāhī,* i.e. the spiritually enlightened (*sant* or saint) and those motivated by moral values to defend the cause of righteousness in human affairs (*sipāhī* or soldier). They were required to be ever in mystic communion with the Real One by attuning themselves completely to the Divine Will. But this did not turn them into ascetics, indifferent to the affairs of the world. Rather this mystic communion transformed them into morally and ethically uplifted and socially awakened individuals who strove, even sacrificed, for the sake of justice, love, equality, righteousness and self-respect in human affairs.

On the day when the Khalsa-Panth was created, Guru Gobind Singh chose the five Beloved Ones (*pañj piāre*) who were ready to make the supreme sacrifice for the Guru's cause. The manner of selection seemed rather queer to the unusually large assembly. Caste, class and such other considerations were of no consequence,[14] and the only criterion before the Guru was their selfless and unquestioned devotion to the cause which their Guru held so dear. They were asked to give their heads by way of offerings to the Guru. Though the demand at that particular moment was more symbolic than real, it did contain the forebodings of the events to follow. The injustice and oppression had become so rampant in the contemporary socio-political life that an order of enlightened and selfless persons who were ever ready to die for a

righteous cause was the need of the day so as to make this world a place fit to be the abode of the saintly persons.

The baptism of the double-edged sword introduced on the day of the creation of the Khalsa required the initiate to live a virtuous life of morally responsible action under the discipline and code especially prescribed for him. For outward symbols, the Guru asked them to have unshorn, long hair (*kesh*), keep a comb (*kaṅghā*) in the hair-knot to keep them tidy, wear a steel bracelet (*karā*) on the right wrist, a sword (*kirpān*) on his person and an undergarment (*kacchh*). These five K's (*kesh, kaṅghā' karā' kirpān, kacchh*) are not mere external symbols. A single and pervasive leitmotif is discernible in these marks of investiture on the personality of a baptized Sikh (Singh), and this can be characterized as a sense of preparedness to uphold the ideals that the Guru had demarcated.

These symbols the decision for which was announced "more through profound deliberations upon the fragile moral complexities besetting human beings than through any mystically intuited wisdom"[15] give the Sikhs their form, and are symbolic of their conduct. The long unshorn hair besides being a symbol of manliness are also symbolic of the higher stage of consciousness of the wearer. The hair which the Sikhs maintain as a command of their Guru, are also believed to imprint on the wearer the investiture of spirituality and even of godliness: in the Sikh scripture an epithet used for God is *kesva*, i.e. with long tresses. Let it be stressed here that God of Sikh perception is formless and that it is personified only when the attributes with which He is remembered are to be explained. The *jogis* also did keep long hair, but they did not clean them properly as a result of which the hair became knotty and matted. The Sikhs are required to keep their heads covered (it is turban for the male and *keski* or chunni for the female) so as to keep their hair clean from dust.

In the Indian cultural tradition, wearing of headgear (turban) has always been taken as a symbol of prestige and respectability. Turban was once a royal attire. All high Muslim dignitaries and officials always wore turban. The ruling Hindus class, Rajputs, with or without hair, also wore turban as a part of their royal robes. Respect and turban went together, and we still find that all Indians, irrespective of their caste or creed, wear turban on auspicious occasions like marriage, etc. When the head of family dies, his eldest son is provided with a turban symbolising his status and responsibility as new head of family. In this way, turban is not only a means to cover the hair so as to keep them clean and tidy

but is also a symbol of respect and royality.

The Sikhs must keep long, untrimmed hair but must not leave them unattended or hanging down. They must keep the hair clean and tidy and covered with turban, *chunni* or *keski,* as the case many be. Wearing of any other headgear like cap and hat is taboo.

The Sikh stress on physical or bodily cleanliness along with inner purity also exhorts its adherents to daily comb their hair to keep them clean and tidy. The *rahitnāmās* make it obligatory for every Sikh to keep a comb tugged to his hair. This facilitates them to comb their hair whenever they feel the need to or at least once every morning. To further exclude the possibility of the hair ever getting dishevelled, they are required to tie them in a knot (for gents) or a pigtail (for ladies). Thus, we see that the Sikhs were obliged to keep long. unshorn hair like the ancient Indian sages and Hindu *jogis*, but unlike them they were to keep their hair clean and tidy. And, comb is the easiest means to help realize this.

The code of conduct prescribed for every member of the Khalsa-Panth directs every baptised Sikh to wear an iron bangle or *kaṛā* on his right wrist. This *kaṛā* must be of iron, and of no other metal. Why did the Guru prescribe iron alone? The cheap rate and easy availability of the metal might have been one of the factors. A *kaṛā* made of silver or gold would have become an ornament beyond the reach of many common folk. More than that, however, the reason lies in the affiliation of iron with Bhagauti, i.e., the sword, but a term which is also used by Guru Gobind Singh as an attributive name of the Divine. The Guru has also referred to the supreme Reality as Sarabloh or All-Iron. *Kaṛā* has another deeper symbolic significance as well. As a circle, it signifies perfection. A circle is also said to represent *dharma.* Thus, *kaṛā* to a member of the Khalsa brotherhood represents a just, perfect and righteous life marked by self-discipline and self-control.

Besides, the wearing of heavy iron bracelets by the Khalsa warriors of early Sikh days was useful in another way also: it served as a protective gear for the lower arm of the warrior in the battlefield. Thus, *kaṛā* was also adopted as a pragmatic accessory to *kirpān* (sword). It is in keeping with this tradition that the Nihangs (a sect among the Sikhs) wear several heavy iron bracelets, usually on both the wrists as protective armour. The members of the Khalsa brotherhood are, on the other hand, required to wear only one iron braclet on the right wrist. In modern times, they wear quite a light bracelet.

Kirpān, in Punjabi a synthesis of two words *kirpā* (mercy,

kindness) and *ān* (self-respect), is another of the five symbols prescribed. *Kirpān* is manifestation of spirituality and worldly power, of *bhakti* and *sakti*. In the Sikh tradition, the word conveys two-dimensional meaning. One, sword (Bhagauti) is an attributive name of the Real One in the compositions of Guru Gobind Singh. Thus, the wearer feels ever under the protection of Bhagauti. Second, and which is in fact a derivative of the first, it symbolizes expression or manifestation of *śakti* or divine power which is to be used in favour of the saintly and against the demonic powers. It should be appropriate to state here that *kirpān* for the Sikh is not a mere weapon but a concept which has kindly disposition as a preponderant influence without which it would lose its meaning. The *khaṇḍā*, or the double-edged sword, which is used in preparing the ceremonial *amrit* and which stands in the middle of the Sikh emblem, is also the symbol of *śakti* inherent in Akalpurakh. This *śakti* is also two-fold : to protect the righteous and annihilate the evil. In the Sikh emblem the *khaṇḍā* has two swords on both sides of it—representing the powers of *mirī* and *pirī*, the two-fold *śakti* of Akalpurakh. The *chakra* encircling them is symbolic of the whole manifest world which itself reflects eternity.

The fifth 'K' prescribed is *kachhahirā/kachchh*. The traditional Indian dress for the lower part of male body has been *dhoti*, a long loose cloth tied on the waist with a knot on both sides of it. The Hindus, especially the Brahmins wear it on ceremonial occasions even today. In medieval days, this was the dress of almost every Indian. The main drawback of this dress (*dhotī*) has been that it is not sufficient enough to cover the nakedness of body. This became all the more clear when it was worn without any underwear. More than these utility values, the Sikhs avoid *dhotī* and wear *kachhahirā* as a gift from Guru, as a part of discipline ordained by the Guru.

In the Sikh tradition, the short drawers is made of a distinct and specific shape. The Khalsa must also not wear short underwear, short breeches, nicker shorts and strapped shorts. The Khalsa's short drawers symbolize the wearer's truthful character. The Sikhs were recommended to live a householder's life, but were required to observe temperance : moderation in sexual matters has been the key word. They must not look with lust at any woman other than one's wife. A Sikh must look at other woman as his mother, sister or daughter. Physical or sexual relationship with a Muslim woman, the community which happened to be at war with the Sikhs in those days, was strictly forbidden. This was also a pragmatic measure to check the Sikh soldiers against the molestation of

Muslim women if and when they fell in their trap during the course of a battle. History stands witness that the Sikhs were instrumental in saving hundreds of Hindu women being carried away by Muslim invaders but they never misbehaved with or molested a Muslim woman even under the most provocative conditions.

The maintenance of a shared form assures a sense of identity and also a natural, if not necessary, symbol of equality. It no doubt lends importance to the shared identity in form, but this is also a means to a higher end. And, the primacy should naturally belong to the higher end, i.e. the moral living. Maintenance of forms without observing the moral code is like demeaning the symbols. Just as a Brahmin without knowledge is graceless, a horse without celerity is worthless, similarly these symbols without morality, without inner values are only a lapse, says Bhai Desa Singh in his *Rahitnāmā*. The rejection by the Guru of the *janeū* (sacred thread) should also be seen from this perspective: Guru Nanak in one of his hymns asked for a *janeū* made of metaphysical and moral values instead of one made of thread. Thus, the maintenance of this shared form is symbolic of the inner discipline and valiance encouraged and cultivated by the wearer of these symbols. They are not mere formalism, rather the Guru invested them with the metaphorical expression of the inner qualities of the soul to stand for righteousness (*dharma*).

The ceremonies that surrounded the event of the creation of the Khalsa are conspicuous for their absence of any mythic element. Notwithstanding the story of involving goddess Kali prior to this event which is obviously influenced by fetishism as it prevailed in the medieval Indian life, the *motifs* in the actual baptismal ceremony are exactly contrary to the mythical. The Guru does not invoke any god or goddess, rather he tries to keep the entire ceremony human. He does so with the obvious aim of raising the human ingredients involved in the ceremony to the level of the Divine. According to Guru Gobind Singh, this can possibly be done not through the intervention of any deity but only through exalting and consecrating the human beings to be pure in thought and deed. If at all any mythological element is involved, it is demythologizing the myth of churning of the ocean by gods and demons with a view to getting *amrit* out of it : the Guru prepared *amrit* from pure clean water poured into a steel vessel and stirred by a double-edged sword (*khaṇḍā*). Patashas or sugar-puffs were added to it. First Guru Gobind Singh stirred the water with *khaṇḍā* while reciting hymns and thereafter any five baptized Singhs (Khalsa) were declared eligible

to perform this ceremony of preparing and giving *amrit.*

The creation of the Khalsa meant two immediate doctrinal developments. One, the Khalsa was united direct with the Guru or, since Guru in Sikhism has also been equated with the real One, with Akalpurakh Himself. The dissolution of the institution of *masand*, and then of personal guruship, conveyed an obvious meaning. It was not only Guru's Khalsa, but was Vahiguru's Khalsa as well. The Sikh salutation, *Vāhigurū Jī Kā Khālsā, Vāhigurū Jī Kī Fateh*, literally means that the Khalsa belongs to the Lord (*Vāhigurū*) and the Khalsa's exploits are in reality God's victories. Second, the Khalsa observed agalitaranism not *inter se* alone but also with the Guru Himself. During the baptismal ceremony of 1699, Guru Gobind Singh first administered baptism to the Select Five (*pañj piāre*) and then himself received baptism from them. The Guru first transformed the *saṅgat* into Khalsa and then indentified the latter with himself. He accords much reverence to the Khalsa and gives the entire credit to it for whatever he is. The equation and identification between the two is further stressed in the *Sarabloh Granth,* another volume attributed to Guru Gobind Singh, as well as in a *Vār* by Bhai Gurdas II. The latter is highly eulogistic of the Guru and salutes him for his being the Guru (he administered the baptism to the Five Beloved Ones) as well as the disciple (and thereafter requested the Five to administer the same *pāhul* to him)—*vāhu vāhu Gobind Siṅgh āpe gur chelā.*

Thus the Khalsa-Panth which became equal to the Guru during the latter's lifetime and came to represent the person of the Guru thereafter, was a body of spiritually and socially realized individuals who sought guidance from the Word as contained in the Guru Granth Sahib: the latter is believed in Sikh tradition to be the *joti* or spirit of the ten Sikh Gurus, and was apotheosized as Guru in 1708. Every member of the Khalsa-Panth imbibes this *joti* as he or she follows the teachings contained in the Scripture and bears the added responsibility of socializing the spiritual precepts and to work for the realization of the Guru's vision of ideal persons joined together to form an ideal socio-political structure.

The metaphysical doctrines of the unity of Reality and the spiritual unity of mankind are not merely abstract ideas. The spiritual goal of God-realization is not just a mystical state, and, similarly, *nām-simran*, the means recommended for the attainement of that goal, is not a mere mechanical repetition of some magical incantation. These esoteric doctrines have to be further extended to relate them to the mundane life.

The spiritual unity of mankind forms the basis of a universal brotherhood where ethnic equality, love and justice prevail. Since man is, in essence, one with the Divine, realization by man of his real self is not different from God-realization. It is this realization which makes man aware of his relationship with this mundane (relative) reality and the ultimate Reality. It is through the cultivation of metaphysical virtues that man achieves the individual as well as the social ideal, but at the same time, it is through socialization that man inculcates spiritual virtues. Without relating the latter to the human social life, man is bound to mistake them to be the complete truth and an end in itself, thus giving rise to the ascetic outlook which is against the very spirit of Khalsa. This socialization of the spiritual virtures and spiritualization of the social reality is the only way to enable man's simultaneous progress from within as well as without. It is this two-dimensional growth which makes man complete, and spiritually and mystically one with the Divine.

The Khalsa, as an individual, extends the virtues he has cultivated from the revealed Word to the social life. His loving involvement with God's revelation is throught *nām*. It has no selfish motives attached to it: detachment along with involvement is his marked characteristic. It emanates from the realization of his bond of spiritual unity with the entire mankind. Accepting that all beings are, in essence, divine and accepting that all beings are constituents of the universal brotherhood and equal claimants in the assets provided by the universal Father, he treats others as he would wish others to treat him. "Neither hold others in fear nor own to the fear of anybody"[19] is one of the fundamental theological dictrines followed by the Khalsa.

Thus, the social involvement of the individual Khalsa is two-dimensional. Positively, he tries to acquire all the humanly realizeable attributes of the Real One and become essentially like Him. He also finds no distinction between man and man on any grounds whatsoever. All human beings are, in essence, the same. Distinctions of caste, class, colour, sex, race, economic status, etc. are of no consequence. The spiritual unity of mankind which leads to ethnic equality also gives birth to the feeling of love and compassion. The love for the remotest here causes love for the nearest. In other words, man's loving devotion to the Almighty also implies his loving behaviour towards his fellow-beings in his societal relations. The path of the Khalsa is the path of love, but the zealot treading this path must enter with his head on his palm. Guru Nanak composed a verse to this effect,[20] but Guru Gobind Singh literally asked his followers to do so on the Vaisakhi day (30

March of AD 1699). Since he loves all as being equal constituents of the universal brotherhood of mankind, Khālsā is just and compassionate to all. He feels pleasure in the service of others since he perceives the Real One in each human being.

The Khalsa is not a parasitic ascetic, rather he strains for the fulfilment of his basic needs. He labours (*ghāl*) hard and through honest means. Also, the normative Khalsa discipline of detached involvement (*grihasti māhi udāsī*) has taught him to hold the fruit of his labour, earned through the sweat of his brow, as common possession. Before he himself partakes of it, he willingly shares it with others, especially the indigent (*waṇḍ chhakṇā*). Help to the needy is considered a rendition unto God,[21] and the food shared with the needy, may he be a Hindu, Muslim or Sikh, is considered sanctified.[22] Feeding the poor *(garib dā mūṅh)* is as good as making cash offerings to the Guru's coffers *(gurū kī golak)*. The Khalsa must not covet an object that does not lawfully belong to him:[23] rather he shares his own possession, a possession earned through honest, hard labour, with the poor and the needy.[24] Sincerity and fidelity in relations with the spouse[25] is a characteristic of every individual in the Khalsa-Panth. One must love one's wife with intensity but he must not think, even dream of 'another' woman, says Guru Gobind Singh in the *Dasam Granth.*

These acts of love and philanthropy do not give rise to either pity or pride, rather they cultivate compassion and humility in the behaviour of the Khalsa. The altruistic tendency which makes the Khalsa work with uncalculated consideration of and regard for the interests of others is one of the fundamental traits of his nature. Humility lies at the heart of these altruistic ventures. However, humility does not mean losing the sense of self-respect and passively bearing humiliation. Self-respect is an overriding value with him for which no sacrifice is considered too high.

Second, the Khalsa has to fight against and annihilate all those traits and tendencies which serve as antidote to the cultivation of above ethical virtues. In personal spiritual life, he effaces all signs of *haumai* (egoity) and *agiān* (ignorance), and calumny and harted are anathema to him. In his social secular life, he has to see that the values of equality, love, compassion, justice, self-dignity, etc. dominate his social behaviour. If there is one who tries to overawe him, the Khalsa must not submit to his fear, rather he should stand up to it courageously. Similarly, if someone tries to oppress or tyrannise the weaker thereby causing rancour and hatred in societal relations, the Khalsa is expected

to chastise that wicked oppressor. The Khalsa who was created with the specific purpose of annihilating the wicked and the evil and amelorating the sufferings (of the saintly)[26] must fight against the wicked and the sinful forces.[27]

The object before the Guru was to work for the complete development of man, both in the spiritual and the mundane domains. He wanted man to be able to aesthetically apprehend the joy of the full life and to be selfless and righteous in his social behaviour. For this purpose, he felt it necessary for man to inculcate a spirit of humility and dignity, selfless service and self-respect, compassion and rightousness: he derived these ethical virtues from the metaphysical precepts of his predecessors as well as of his own. In fact, these metaphysical precepts served as the basis to transform the human society into an order of spirtually enlightened, morally uplifted and socially responsible individuals. These constituents of such an order, called the Khalsa-Panth, were individually and socially realized selves who collectively form the nucleus of the ideal social structure of Guru Gobind Singh's vision. It was long-cherished dream of Guru Nanak and other spiritual mentors also who contributed in one way or the other to translate this ideal into practical social life. It leads us to the next section of social aspect of the Khalsa.

(b) Khalsa as Ideal Social Structure

The Sikh view of religion is that it is embedded in society and is the foundation of society. Therefore, a householder's active but detached involvement in the affairs of society is not considered hindrance in his spiritual and moral progression, rather it serves as the means to achieve the ultimate end of his life. God is with us not only in the solitude and quiet of individual, subjective meditation but He is with us in the struggle of life as well. Guru Gobind Singh enjoins, as did his predecessors, that religious life must be lived and practised in the socio-political context : the Divine is immanent in the human socio-political activity but this is known to man only through the understanding of the Guru's word. The Sikh canonical literature does not espouse spiritual values alone, but is a kind of constitution for an ideal social structure where there is no social or political injustice and oppression, and where the rulers are men of moral vision and courage. It is in this context that religion and politics are held in the compositions of Guru Gobind Singh complementary to each other rather than as two contradictory or mutually exclusive spheres.[28]

However, this interrelationship between religion and politics must not be misunderstood. Guru Gobind Singh makes a very obvious statement in his *Bachitra Nāṭak (bābe ke bābar ke doū.....)*. He recognizes that both the ecclesiastical and the political authorities are made by Akalpurakh to serve as the instrument of His will.[29] Both these forces claim allegiance of men's soul on earth. The primary allegiance of man is to truth and morality as symbolized in religion, and the failure in this allegiance is bound to bring suffering under subjugation of unjust and immoral state power. However the Guru did not imply supression of one by the other nor did he view one in complete isolation from the other.

No doubt, the precess of synthesizing the sacred (spiritual) with the secular (social and political) began with Guru Nanak, the founder of the faith. His hymns contain specific and emphatic statements to this effect. His loud protest (Cf. "Babar-Vani") against the barbarous treatment meted out to hapless Indian natives by Babar's armed hordes and his severe criticism of the degenerate and effete political authority are indicative of Guru Nanak's attempt not only at synthesizing the spiritual and the secular but also at making the former the ideational basis of the latter. The process was carried further by the succeeding Gurus. Guru Hargobind concretized the concept with the integration of the concepts of *mīrī* and *pīrī*, and by erecting Akal Takht, the supreme authority for the Sikhs in mundane affairs, in the vicinity of the Harimandir, the most sacred of the Sikh shrines. Guru Gobind Singh institutionalized the concept by creating the Khalsa: the constituents of the Khalsa-Panth are a blend of *sant* and *sipāhī*, i.e. they are not only spiritually enlightened and emancipated (*sant*) but are also active participants in the struggle against evil (*sipāhī*). It is this socialization of the Spiritual which has been called a Self-determination of the Divine in its temporal aspect in historical time.[30]

The creation by Guru Gobind Singh of the Khalsa-Panth as a socio-political set-up over and above the framework of Hindu and Islamic social structures was a very significant step. He and his predecessors had keenly observed the prevalent social structures and found in them some inherent drawbacks which prevented their complete transformation. Caste ideology was supported by scriptural evidences implying divine saction behind the system. There had been attempts in the past to eradicate this system which caused hierarchical inequality, injustice, oppression and exploitation in human affairs, but they had come to nought. All the movements against it had either been restricted

to monasteries (Buddhism) or submerged in the wider Hindu culture (Jainism) or were accepted as another tag to the numerous sects of Hinduism. There had been quite a vocal denunciation of the caste system by some of the saints of the Bhakti Movement but they could not pursue their objective consistently enough to bear any fruit.

These experiences of the immediate past were before Guru Nanak when he founded the Sikh faith. He developed his own vision of an ideal social structure different from the caste ridden society as it existed those days. He was also aware that no anti-caste movement could survive and succeed unless it was theoretically divorced from the stranglehold of Brahminism. It was with this end in view that he founded a distinct tradition and made his own ontological doctrines the basis of his social ideal. It was also to give the Sikh movement consistency and stamina that the guruship was passed on nine times until Guru Gobind Singh felt that the movement had developed an intrinsic mechanism and drive of its own for its survival and spread in the times to come. So he decided to put an end to the institution of personal guruship and invested the pontifical office for all times to come in the *panth* (Khalsa-Panth) and the *granth* (Adi Granth, later called Guru Granth Sahib).

The Islamic social structure did not give any place to caste ideology or system, nor did it consider the manifest social reality a mere *māyā*. The material phenomena were, no doubt, a reality to Islam, but it did not sanction the essential unity between social reality and the ultimate Reality in the sense Sikhism does. Sufism which had developed as a major renaissance movement within Islam and which acted as a vital link between Islam and other religious traditions in India advocated an ascetic attitude towards life. So, the Islamic social structure also fell short of Guru Nanak's vision. Therefore, he and his successors envisioned a social structure which was over and above all these existing structures and which had its ideological basis in the metaphysico-moral values contained in the sacred hymns as included in the Guru Granth Sahib.

Sikhism founded by Guru Nanak became a continuous and consistent movement aimed at giving the people a particular way of life in which spiritual and moral values formed the basis of human social behaviour and institutions. The Gurus preached through precepts and practices, composing hymns and establishing institutions to live the ideas as contained in the hymns. These hymns served as the normative basis for Guru Gobind Singh to realize in concrete terms the vision of his

predecessors. The creation of the Khalsa-Panth as the ideal model socio-political structure was the culmination and concretization of that vision.

As we has discussed above in section (a) the Khalsa as an individual is a spiritually awakened person performing responsible moral action in this world. The cultivation of such values is all the more required of a ruler. There have been numerous instances in the Sikh scripture where the corrupt, unjust and immoral rulers are ruthlessly criticized and condemned: only those who deserve should occupy the throne—*takht rājā so bahai ji takhtai lāik hoī* (Guru Granth Sahib, III, p. 1088). He should acquit himself in all fairness with justice, kindness and sympathy. He must perform his functions as a mandate from God, and try to be as loving, protective, just and benevolent to his subjects as God has been to all His creation. Some of the compositions of Guru Gobind Singh (Cf. *Hikāyats*) are a homily on the integrity and morality of a king. Lest this should be mistaken as the Sikh advocacy of the institution of kingship though it is not rejected or disfavoured either, we must add here that the Sikh thought gradually tended towards democratic republicanism. the supremacy given to the collective will of the Khalsa vis-a-vis the single ruler was a development which ran counter to the purely individualistic view of life prevalent in medieval India for more than a millenium. This ancient Indian idea insisted on the individual spiritual salvation, leaving no scope for the consciousness of morally responsible action and faith in the infinite capacity for growth of man's inherent potentialities. On the contrary, the Khalsa-Panth posits its faith in the inherent capacity of the populace instead of the supposed God-given right of a particular family or caste/class of men to rise to spiritual, moral and intellectual eminence.

However, this democratic essence and orientation of the Khalsa-Panth is different from the modern political democracy on at least two counts. One, the latter is essentially numerical or quantitative whereas the democracy of Guru Gobind Singh's vision is qualitiative in nature. Second, the dimension of spiritual love is the basis of the Khalsa-Panth. It is this love of the Guru for his disciples which makes him exalt them to his own status and the love of a Sikh (Singh) for the Khalsa-Panth and for the entire mankind which exhorts him to suffer in order to relieve others of their suffering. This mystical standpoint is peculiar to Guru Gobind Singh's thought which helps create a situation when "the Master lives and dies for the devotee exactly as the devotee in dying for the Master [or the ideals for which the Master stood] attains the

supreme bliss."[32]

Guru Gobind Singh's concept of the universal Fatherhood of God leads to the faith in the universal brotherhood of man. Therefore, in the Khalsa-Panth a man is to be respected not because he belongs to a particular caste-group or social class but because he is a spiritual manifestation of Akalpurakh Himself. All men are believed to be the same—in essence. Their outward appearances differ, no doubt, but this is the result of influence of difference in culture and climate. In this respect, Guru Gobind Singh says:

> Recognize all human nature as one.
> The bright and the dark,
> The ugly and the beautiful,
> 0The Hindus and the Muslims,
> All have developed themselves
> according to the fashions of the different countries.[33]

Since the constituents of the Khalsa-Panth are realized selves, they realize the essential unity of mankind, and it is only the foolish (those who suffer from duality) who overlook the inner unity and wrangle over the outward differences.[34]

The realization by the Khalsa of the essential oneness with Akalpurakh and with one another leads to complete ethnic and social equality among them. Distinctions of caste, colour, creed or sex do not divide them. The Five Beloved Ones chosen by Guru Gobind Singh on the day of the creation of the Khalsa-Panth and who formed the nucleus of the Khalsa brotherhood did not belong to the elite of the society: they came from the so-called lower castes. The first of those who came forward to offer his head to the Guru was Daya Ram (Khatri by caste). He was followed by Dharam Das (Jat), Himmat (water-carrier), Mohkam Chand (calico-printer) and Sahib Chand (barber). Similarly, these five chosen ones did not belong to any particular region: Daya Ram was from Lahore, Dharam Das from Hastinapur (Delhi), Himmat from Puri, Mohkam Chand from Dwarka and Sahib Chand from Bidar in Karnataka state. Thus, these beloved of the Guru belonged to no one particular caste and no one particular region, implying thereby, that, according to the Guru, all human beings are equal among themselves and in His eye—*mānas kī jāt sabai ekai pahichānabo.* There is no particular priestly class, and anybody from any family can officiate as such. Similarly, baptismal ceremony for proselytizing or otherwise can also be performed by any five Singhs who themselves live the Khalsa discipline

(*rahit*). During the baptismal ceremony, the initiates are made to drink from the same vessel which is, among other things, symbolic of the Sikh denunciation of the taboo on sharing food or vessels with the so-called low castes, and is as such a blow struck at the roots of untouchability practised in the Hindu society. Thus, the institution of the Khalsa-Panth meant heralding a new fraternal comradeship among the entire mankind.

The creation of the Khalsa-Panth was a heavy blow on the abnoxious caste hierarchy. Man's caste and status in society are not determined by the chance of birth in a particular family but by the kind of deeds he performs here and now: Guru Gobind Singh lays much emphasis on man's moral responsibility. History also stands witness that many people from the so-called lower castes were able to reach pinnacles of spiritual perfection. The untouchable Markandeya became a sage not because of his caste but because of his piety. Near at hand were the examples of Kabir (weaver), Ravidas (cobbler), Namdev (calico-printer) who have been contributors to the Sikh scripture and whose hymns got equated with those of the Gurus when the *granth* was formally apotheosized in 1708. The Khalsa-Panth has no place for caste, but it has also been a fact of history that the Sikhs have not been able to completely get rid of the caste complex. However, it also remains a fact that the Sikhs, among all Indians, are the most liberal in this respect.

The concept of equality in social life is not confined to menfolk alone. There is no sexist bias against women in the social ideal of Guru Gobind Singh's vision. In some Indian traditions, it was considered imperative for a person to be born in male form to be able to attain the ultimate object of human life. Some others considered woman no more than an object of property to be acquired for use and exploitation. Manu's *Manusmriti* sought to provide divine sanction to this discrimination against her. However, in the vision of the Sikh Gurus, she possessed the same divine essence as man. That is why Guru Nanak declared in one of his hymns that woman is not to be reviled for her female form: she should, on the other hand, be respected for being the mother of man. Human race would not have continued without her. Thus, the Sikh attitude towards woman is not that of denunciation or demeaning but of respect.

In the Khalsa-Panth, she was to be not only an equal member of the fraternity but was also to be widely respected. The *rahitnāmā* (moral code) literature on the authority of Guru Gobind Singh prohibits a member of the Khalsa-Panth from molesting women and children. There is a specific commandment against the molestation of or sexual relations

with Muslim women declaring it to be a grave sin.[35] When Guru Gobind Singh prescribed this code prohibiting the Khalsa from indulging in sexual relations with any other woman except one's own wife, the aim obviously was to establish a moral order in social life. His specific commandment against developing such relations with a Muslim woman meant no discrimination or rancour against the Muslims or Muslim women as such. During and preceding the time of Guru Gobind Singh, the Muslim invaders from outside and even the local chieftains used to assault non-Muslim Indian women. Guru Gobind Singh did not want his Sikhs to retaliate against Muslim women during their fight against Muslim forces : Guru's fight was not against any community but against the unjust and immoral ruling class which happened to be Muslim. He therefore issued this command not to violate the chastity of Muslim women. There have been instances in the Sikh history when the captured Muslim women were returned safely and many a sacrifice was made to recover Hindu women captured forcibly by Muslim invaders. There have been several instances in Sikh history to confirm the vital role played by women in the development, spread and protection of the faith. Thus, in the Khalsa social order woman was not only equal with man but was also respected irrespective of her religious and other affiliations.

The normative principles guiding the conduct and social behaviour in the Khalsa-Panth strictly prohibit female infanticide and adultery. The severe chastisement of the killing of female child, a practice prevalent in medieval India, is a vivid example of the respect paid in the Khalsa social structure to the female sex and to the moral norm of 'respect for life'. The *kuṛīmār* (killer of the female infant) has been declared a 'fallen' Sikh,[36] and no social relations are to be maintained with such people. Every being has a right to live and every being is obliged to ensure that right to everybody else. Any attempt to violate the supreme norm of sustaining life and thus denying anyone the right to live with the exception of inveterate rogues and incorrigible oppressors amounts to threatening the very basis of the continuance of communal/social life, and is thus declared a sacrilege. There are references in the Sikh canon and in various *rahitnāmās* denouncing adultery and recommending chastity and fidelity as important constituents of the sanctity of familial and societal relations. The tales of *Charitropākhāyan* also serve to put one on guard against men and women lax in morals. They also, in inverse proportion, stress the value of chastity and fidelity in life. These requirements of chastity and

fidelity are not applied to women alone—everybody, including even the kings were to practise these values in their life. Guru Gobind Singh's *Giān Prabodh,* especially the latter part of it which has for its theme the practical philosophy of the world, is a fine comment on the absence of moral virtues in the *kaliyuga* the worst features of which are "gambling, drinking, violence, adultery, falsehood, sensuality, intolerance and self-assertiveness."[38] The kings and the commoners and even the *rishis* are shown to have been guilty of unworthy conduct. The tragic fate of most of the characters in the compositions offers food for thought and teaches by example the importance of moral values in social life. Cultivation of such values is all the more required in modern world which is being threatened by deadly diseases like AIDS which mainly happen to be the result of moral laxity.

In the social structure of the Khalsa-Panth where all human beings realize their essential unity with the supreme Reality as well as with the manifest reality, there is no discrimination against anyone on any count whatsoever. All are equal members of the universal fraternity of mankind. Love for the Divine and love for fellow beings who are considered the manifestation of the Divine is another characteistic of the Khalsa social ideal, i.e. the Khalsa-Panth. Only those who love (*prem kīo*) can realize Akal (*prabh pāio*), says the Guru. Here Love is neither an abstract idea nor a sensuous trait. The Khalsa realizes the Creator-Lord to be full of benevolence, love and compassion for all. Since man is spiritually akin to that loving and benevolent Lord, he must imbibe all humanly realizeable attributes of the Divine. Another imitable attribute of God as included in Guru Nanak's *Mul Mantra* and closely related to love and compassion is to be *nirvair,* i.e. without enmity, rancour or malice. It is affirmed by Guru Arjan's *na ko bairī nāhi bigānā*.....and *sabhu ko mīt ham apnā kīnā*.....Even when fighting against tyranny and injustice, the Khalsa is exhorted to shun malice and vindictiveness. Guru Gobind Singh desires his Sikh to keep God (and Divine attributes) in mind even when he talks of war. The Khalsa loves the entire mankind realizing that love for the remotest can be best expressed thought love for the nearest. It is this love for the latter which exhorts him to endeavour build an equitable and just social order in which values of love dominate. The Khalsa-Panth is one such social structure in which equality of and love among human beings are the fundamental values.

A pre-eminent characteristic of the expression of love in social behaviour and action is the absence of any polemic and the willingness

to maintain harmony in one's personal as well as social dealings. This not only helps in the development of one's personality but also provides necessary impetus for the prosperity of society/nation. In his *Bachitra Nāṭak*, Guru Gobind Singh makes a reference to the deterioration of fortunes of the Bedi clan in which Guru Nanak was born. The founder of the dynasty, king Dashrath, was a *chakravarti* king whose writ, it is believed, ran in all the four corners of the world. However his descendents a few generations away fought among themselves as a result of which this royal dynasty was left with only 20 villages. Mutual fighting caused by the lack of love and faith, was the sole reason for their downfall. What the Guru implicitly suggests is that this could be anybody's or any nation's fate. Unfortunately, the Indians especially the Sikhs have not heeded to this advice of the Guru. This has been the major reason behind the loss of face in the recent years by the Sikhs who otherwise are such an adventurous, ecumenical, courageous and liberal community. This has also been the major factor behind all the unrest in socio-political life of India.

Love in this social set-up is also reflected in the altruistic tendencies of the realized selves who constitute that set-up. Everybody here suffers in the suffering of everybody else. This suffering is not in the sense of pain from evil as evil but it is in bearing the pain of others to relieve them of pain as also of evil. This altruistic tendency finds expression in the deeds of service (*sevā*) to others, contributing in cash and kind (*dasvandh*) for philanthropic purposes, striving for and even suffering martyrdom for a righteous cause, etc. The martyrdoms of Guru Arjan and Guru Tegh Bahadur and the sacrifices made by Guru Gobind Singh and numerous other Sikhs are also expressions of love because their struggle was against unjust, immoral and oppressive political authority and for the sake of the suffering humanity and for the creation and preservation of a just social structure. There was no external compulsion on them to do so, but they acted in defence of the claims of their conscience. Guru Gobind Singh's *Chaṇḍī dī Vār* and the *Chaṇḍī Charitras* are fine examples of cultivating a heroic temper in the reader. The glorious past of Hinduism had long ceased to have a realistic appeal because of the mythological manner of its presentation of war. They myths and legends of demons and monsters remained confined to religious fiction and were not related to the contemporary human situation. The failure to provide this link was the main reason for an average Hindu's inability to have a dynamic view of history.[40] Guru Gobind Singh in his compositions showed some mythical and legendary

heroes fighting, suffering and sacrificing with a view to restoring the supremacy of righteousness over wickedness. The Guru himself led a crusade in defence of freedom of faith and honour which the Mughal overlords of his day were so ruthlessly marauding.

The selfless, voluntary service rendered with no selfish motive attached to it is an act of compassion (*dayā*). Compassion for those whom one acknowledge as his own is an expression of love and not pity. The feeling of pity is bound to cultivate a sense of pride in the person who shows it and a complex of inferiority in the one whom it is shown. Thus, it is a negative feeling whereas *dayā* is a positive virtue which, besides creating a sense of oneness among the two, ennobles the character of the person being compassionate and relieves the suffering of the one at the other end. Being compassionate implies the realization of the fear of the Divine who might smite you if you smite anyone without a sufficient cause. It also implies defending the others when they are threatened by someone unjust and oppressive. Thus, the human behaviour and relationships in this social order are not based on materialism as Karl Marx would have us believe nor on Libido as held by the advocates of Freudian psychology, rather they are based on the spiritual unity of mankind which is expressed through compassion for every other human being. It is a higher state of responsibility in which every citizen is ever ready to struggle and suffer to relieve others of their pain and anguish.

Although Sikhism rejects all distinctions between man and man and instead makes the entire mankind as equal claimants in the heritage offered by Akalpurakh, yet it remains a fact of life that some of us are richer or poorer than others. There are some who lack even the basic requirements of life whereas others have enough and to spare. It has been obligatory for every member of the Khalsa Brotherhood, especially the latter type among them, to contribute one-tenth (*dasvandh* or tithe)[41] towards common coffers to be used for philanthropic purposes.[42] This system of *dasvandh* which continues to inform the Sikh way of life till today was not a new innovation. Similar concepts are found in Christianity and Islam (*zakāt*) as well. The offerings made by the Sikhs to the Guru Granth sahib are also not by way of pleasing the Guru or any other Deity, but these offerings are a corporate effort of the Khalsa-Panth to build up a common pool which could be utilized for the good of the general public, especially the needy.

Altruism in societal relations is another dominant value in the Khalsa-Panth. The Sikh canon recommends the adoption of social

service as the practical measure for the notion of altruism in mundane social life. It is with this end in view that man is asked to serve Hari (Akalpurakh),[43] Guru[44] and the fellow human beings.[45] It may not be possible to serve Akalpurakh as an impersonal Deity. Guru, in spirit, is equated with God, whereas his physical form is that of a human being. All other human beings are also, in essence, one with Akalpurakh. Since He manifests Himself in the phenomenal material world, serving humanity is tentamount to service of the Guru and Hari. Such service can be rendered in two ways—in cash or in kind. The Sikh code of conduct requires every member of the Khalsa fold to contribute *dasvandh* toward altruistic ventures. Service in kind is more popular form of social service. From odd menial chores in the community kitchen to the construction of magnificent *gurdwārās* or similar communal ventures are accomplished through *sevā* or selfless voluntary service. The tradition of *sevā* which began with Guru Nanak himself was consolidated by the succeeding Gurus. Guru Gobind Singh added another connotation to it when he exhorted the Khalsa to wage a continuous and relentless struggle (*dharam yudh*) to protect the suffering humanity from tyranny, fanaticism and injustice even at the cost of their own lives, Such a struggle or sacrifice is also a *sevā* to the cause of humanity. These injunctions, based on canonical literature including the entire literary corpus of Guru Gobind Singh and the tradition, help in the domination of values of altruism and philanthropy in the social life of the Khalsa-Panth.

The task of preaching such precepts and of exhorting people to put them into practice is never smooth. History stands witness that such preceptors have had to face the wrath of the contemporary degenerate rulers: the latter ever wish that the status quo be accepted by all and that none dare make any effort to disturb it. However, such preceptors always prefer to tread the more difficult path of being revolutionaries aiming at transforming the present social reality into a just, egalitarian and humane society. We find that Jesus had to die at the hands of the Roman authorities. The title on the Cross: King of the Jews made clear the reason for putting him to death—the political guilt. Although Jesus was accused of being a Zealot leader (the Zealots were narrow nationalists whereas Jesus had universal outlook, and he never participated in the Zealot Movement) yet the fact remains that Jesus had to suffer crucifixion because he attacked the authorities' apathy towards the life of common man. In the Sikh tradition, the martyrdom of Guru Arjan as well as of Guru Tegh Bahadur should also be studied in

the same context: they wanted to replace the existing social structure with an ideal one of their vision and this went against the personal interests of the contemporary rulers. After such individual sacrifices failed to stir the conscience of the degenerate ruling class, Guru Gobind Singh infused the same sense of sacrifice in all beings. Every ordinary member of the Khalsa-Panth is ever ready to make even the supreme sacrifice to see the Guru's vision realized into a practical reality. It is perhaps because of this spirit infused by the Guru into the Sikhs that the latter have ever been in the forefront in any struggle against injustice and oppression. Their struggle against the Mughal oppression (18th century), their role in independence movement (19th and 20th centuries) and their opposition to the Emergency excesses (1974-75) are some of the historic instances to prove the point.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Ishar Singh, *The philosophy of Guru Nanak*, p. 162
2. Gurbachan Singh Talib, *Guru Nanak: Personality and Vision*, p. 141
3. Guru Granth Sahib, V, p. 534
4. Some theologians and exegetes have also taken the word *Khālsā* here to mean *Khālas* or pure (the one who is not polluted by the sense of duality). It seems inappropriate to read to word *Khālsā* or *Khālse* (the plural form, in Punjabi, of *Khālsā*) as *Khālas*. Professor Gurbachan Singh Talib, in his translation of the Scripture, renders the word *Khālse* as God's own which seems nearer to Sikh tradition. See Gurbachan Singh Talib, tr. *Sri* Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1372
5. Giani Gian Singh, *Panth Prakash*, pp. 94-96
6. W. Owen Cole, *Five Religions in the Twentieth Century*, p. 222
7. The word *melī* means brother-in-faith. The meaning of the word *sahalaṅgu* is not very clear. The word, when used in the scripture means affiliated or united. However, in the printed text of the *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*, the word is not clearly legible (Cf. Ganda Singh, ed., *Mākhaz-i-Tawārīkh-i-Sikhāṅ*, p. 34) Umrao Singh Majithia, in his translation of a part of the *Dabistān*, renders the word *sahalaṅgu* into assistant but Dr Ganda Singh disagrees with him though his own attempt to equate the word with *satsaṅg* seems to us even more stretched. Kahn Singh, *Gurushabad Ratanākar Mahān Kosh*, seems more convincing, and seen from this perspective there seems no material difference in the meanings of *melī* and *sahalaṅgu*.
8. See Hukamnama No. 3 in Ganda Singh, ed. *Nisan te Hukamname*, p. 67. The *hukamnāmā* is preserved at Sri Harmandir Sahib, Patna.
9. The *hukamnāmā*, in the orginal, was avaiblable in the Sikh Reference Library, Amritsar, until it got perished in 1984. A photocopy of it is availbale in Ganda Singh. ed. *Hukamname*, p. 76
10. The *hukamnāmā* was available in the Central Sikh Museum, Amritsar, until it got perished in 1984. For a photicopy of it, see Ganda Singh, ed.,

Hukamname p. 152

11. J.S. Grewal, *From Guru Nanak to Maharaja Ranjit Singh*, p.50
12. Senapati, *Sri Gur Sobha*, p. 21. See also Bhai Gurdas (II) *Var*, the refrain of which is that Guru Gobind Singh is himself the *guru* as well as the disciple. In one of his own compositions, Guru Gobind Singh declares that the Khalsa is his own form.
13. Gurbachan Singh Talib, *Impact of Guru Gobind Singh of Indian Society*, p. 26
14. The Five Beloved Ones (*pañj piāre*) selected from the unusually large assembly belonged to the so-called lower castes of Hindu society.
15. Nripinder Singh, *The Sikh Moral Tradition*, p. 113
16. For a detailed analysis of the symbolic meaning of the five 'K's, see Kapur Singh, *Prasharprashan or Baisakhi of the Sikhs*, pp. 122-42.
17. There is difference of opinion as to whether it was Mata Sahib Devan or Mata Jito who poured the *patashas* into the vessel when the *amrit* was being prepared. Since the resolution of this does not fall within the purview of work, we have simply glossed over it.
18. *Swaiyye*, 2
19. Guru Granth Sahib, IX, p. 1427
20. *Ibid.*, I, p. 1422
21. "Chaupa Singh Rahitnama" is *Rahitnāme*. Ed. Piara Singh Padam, p. 73
22. Randhir Singh, ed., *Prem Sumarg Granth*, para 846
23. Bhai Nand Lal, "Tankhahnama" in *Bhai Nand Lal Granthavali*. Ed. Ganda Singh. Verse 20 and 22.
24. *Ibid.*, verse 50
25. "Sakhi Guru Amar Das Ki Mahla 3" states unequivocally that a true Sikh must not covet another's wife. See *Prem Sumārg Granth*. p. 5. This normative principle has been repeatedly stressed in almost all the *rahitnāmā* literature.
26. Senapati, *op. cit.*, 130
27. Bhai Nand Lal, "Tankhāhnāmā", verses 50 and 54
28. Sher Singh, *Social and Political Philosophy of Guru Gobind Singh*, p. 24
29. Cf. Teja Singh and Ganda Singh, *A Short History of the Sikhs*, vol. I, p. 65. According to them, the context of this hymn was the understanding brought about between the Gurus and the Government. Their interpretation of the hymn would cause ultimate and mutually exclusive dichotomy between ecclesiastical and political authority. The Sikh doctrine or tradition does not lend even implicit credence to disintegrating the condominium between religion and State.
30. J.S. Ahluwalia, *The Sovereignty of the Sikh Doctrine*, p. 63
31. The most severe vituperation of the immoral rulers is perhapse in Guru Nanak's *Āsā dī Vār* wherein the Guru compares such kings with lions and their officials with hounds who are ever ready to pounce upon the innocent and hapless masses.
32. *Impact of Guru Gobind Singh on Indian Society*, p. 111
33. *Akal Ustati*, 86
34. *Chaubis Autar*, 21
35. Santokh Singh, *Sri Gur Pratap Suraj Granth*, Rut 6, Ansu 20, No 16-19

36. The names of Mai .Bhago (who fought in the battle of Muktsar and travelled farther to Nanded in the company of the Guru) and of Mai Peri (whose name figures in some *hukamnāmās* and who is believed to be a prominent preacher) could be mentioned. The role played by Bibi Bhani, Mata Gujri and some other ladies from the Gurus' families is also a part of history.
37. "Daya Singh Rahitnama" in *Rahitname*, op. cit., p. 63
38. *Sikh Rahit Maryada*, p. 23
39. "Chaupa Singh Rahitnama" op. cit., 23; see also *Prem Sumarg Granth*, p. 110
40. Dharam Pal Ashta, *The Poetry of the Dasam Granth* p. 140
41. See Gurbachan Singh Talib, *The Impact*, p. 53
42. The term *'dasvandh'* has been interpreted differently by Bhai Randhir Singh. According to him, it means half of the one-tenth, i.e. one-twentieth of the income. See *Punjabi Duniya*, Bhai Gurdas Special Number, September-October 1968, p. 5
43. *Sikh Rahit Maryada*, p. 4
44. Guru Granth Sahib, II. p. 490
45. *Ibid.*, I, p. 1013
46. *Ibid.*, I, p. 26

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

Our study of Guru Gobind Singh's social thought reveals that the Guru's emphasis on the social praxis of man in the existential situations distinguishes the Guru's philosophical formulation from the earlier Indian and Semitic religious and social world-views. The Guru does not accept the medieval Indian idea of other-worldliness as well as of the Quranic viewpoint of the otherness (*ghairīat*) of the created beings (both sentient and non-sentient), rather he tries to encompass their 'otherness' within the all-comprehensive dynamic, non-dual eternal Being (Akalpurakh). According to Guru Gobind Singh, all these created beings are His manifestation, and thus equal in their essential ontological nature. Similarly, the entire manifest phenomena are accepted as (relatively) real which leads to the rejection of the Indian belief in asceticism (*sannyās*) or withdrawal from social life. On the contrary, the Guru advocates a disinterested involvement in societal relationships with his co-travellers in the struggle of social life. Man is also exhorted to perform selfless, altruistic action in historical time. The Guru is himself involved and exhorts his followers to involve themselves in the moral struggle (*dharam Yudh*) between the good and the evil. The aim is the establishment of an ideal social structure based on the metaphysical and moral assmptions of his predecessors and his own and as realized by him in the creation of Khalsa-Panth.

Both in the Vedic and non-Vedic (*śramaṇic*) traditions, the crux of their teaching was self-transcendence from the mundane world. It resulted in withdrawal from social responsibility. These ascetic traditions evaded moral and social responsibilities in existential predicaments. In contradistinction to it, struggle in existential situation is the very core of Guru Gobind Singh's social thought as it emphasizes to tide over the moral conflicts in existential situations. The moral struggle between the good and evil (*dharam yudh*) is to inspire man to perform noble deeds (*shubh karman*) which requires simultaneously

renunciation from within and social involvement and commitment from without. It is an ideal state of a perfect man to be *in* the world and not *of* the world.

With a view to bringing out a coherent and rational theoretical structure of the social thought of the Tenth Master and to articulate the ideal social order of his vision, it has been necessary to have a bird's eye-view of the social milieu out of which emerged the Sikh faith. We, therefore, made a brief critical survey of the then Hindu and Muslim views of social structures prevalent in India. We have found that two of the prominent features of the Hindu social structure were its hierarchical division into four-fold caste system and the belief that the entire manifest or material phenomenon was *māyā* (illusory) or *mithiā* (unreal).

In consequence of the latter, the sacred (spiritual) and the secular (social, mundane) were dichotomized as distinct and independent from each other, rather than as two aspects of the same reality. The supreme Deity who created this world was believed to be transcendent in nature. This deprived the created beings of their spiritual and divine essence. It was because of this that only the transcendent Absolute (*pārbrahm*) was believed to be real whereas the created world was considered as unreal. Since the world was unreal, so were the human beings and their historical actions. This metaphysical belief in the transcendent impersonal Being led to the concepts of life-negation and world-negation. Man was, thus, advised to shun indulgence in this empirical world and all actions therein as they were considered hindrances in the way of his spiritual progress. The preference for ascetic life vis-a-vis householder's resulted in neglecting the importance of moral values in social life and denegrating the woman. Another corollary of this ascetic atiitude was the creation of social conditions which tempted the foriegn invaders to expliot them to their advantage. It was in such socio-religious conditions that the Muslims occupied India and became her masters.

The hierarchical division of Indian social structure into four-fold caste system had become deep-rooted by the medieval times. Earlier, it was the Rig Vedic hymn of "Purusha-sukta" which was exploited by social thinkers like Manu to provide religious sanction as well as solidarity and efficiency to the caste system. However, the Vedic injunctions outlived their practicality by medieval times, and the Puranic legendary and mythical literature caught up common folk's imagination in every walk of life. At this time, certain legendary and mythical incidents from the life-stories of Rama and Krishna, the two incarnations

of Visnu in the Puranas, were used as divine sanction for retaining this social stratification. In consequence of this caste system, birth in a particular caste mattered the most as regards man's position at the Divine portal as well as in this world. The deeds done here and now lost their due relevance with reference to man's socio-spiritual life. This was one of the reason for the degeneration that prevailed in the medieval Indian society.

No doubt, the Quran believed in the reality of the mundane world as a reflection of Allah, and rejected any hierarchical division of mankind. However, Sufism which was a significant meeting-point between Islam and Indian traditions emphasized the other-worldly attitude. Although, the Quranic message stood for the equality of all human beings, yet the Muslims in India had by this time succumbed to the spirit of class division. In fact, the idea of equality was more or less effective only within the limited range of a class and not within the Muslim or human society as a whole. For example, the Turkish aristocracy among them was a closed group, jealously protecting its privileges. Muslims of other ethnic stock and the Hindus and other Indians converted to Islam were considered inferior and had absolutely no prospects of entering into that charmed circle. Similarly, the Sayyids also considered themselves as the descendents of Prophet Muhammad and therefore not only superior to all but also above the prevalent law. The Muslim attitude towards the non-Muslims, called *kāfirs* or non-believers, was rather fanatic and intolerant. Persecution of people on this count also belied the Islamic theoretical social thought. The notion of social equality among Muslims in their Indian home faced certain practical limitations. We can well use the Orwellian phrase—all are equal, but some are more equal than others—to depict the situation in the then prevalent Muslim social structure in India.

We have also seen that the simultaneous existence of the Indian (Hindu) and Muslim cultural streams which happened to be distinct from and mutually opposed to each other resulted in tearing asunder the fabric of the socio-religious life in India. It fell to the Sikh faith to play the role, as says Bhai Gurdas (*Vārāṅ*, XXXIII. 4), of a needle to sew together the fabric of Indian society badly torn asunder. The Sikh pontificate, from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh, tried to do so by proclaiming the entire mankind as spiritual manifestation of the Real One and by setting right the imbalances in the contemporary social life, especially in regard to the relationship between the sacred and the secular. They evolved a distinct metaphysical system which stressed

the simultaneous progression of man from within (spiritually) and without (socially). These metaphysical doctrines served as *vis-a-tergo* of their social thought which reached its culmination in the creation of the Khalsa-Panth by Guru Gobing Singh.

After introduction (ch. I) of the problematics of the thesis, we have given a brief profile of Guru Gobind Singh (ch.2) touching upon some major events from his life which help us correlate his life with his philosophy. The emphasis is not on constructing the life-story of the Guru, rather on highlighting those aspects of his life which help us articulate his social thought. We have then studied the existent Hindu and Muslim social structures and the emergence of the Sikh social structure (ch. 3). Thereafter, we have concentrated on bringing out the theoretical structure of Guru Gobind Singh's social thought which serves as a basis of the ideal social order (Khalsa-Panth) of his vision. For this purpose, we have made an analytical study of the *bāṇīs* (compositions) of the Guru (ch. 4). We have avoided refering to the question of authorship of the *Sarabloh Granth, Prem Sumarg Granth* and some other works which are attributed by some to the Guru and considered apocryphal by the others, because we are primarily concerned with only the *bāṇīs* from the *Dasam Granth.* Similarly, we have not discussed the issue of the authorship of the *Dasam Granth* and authenticity of certain compositions incorporated in the corpus of this sacred anthology. We have willingly digressed from this issue because our main emphasis is on the social thought of the Guru. Hence, the controversy has simply been touched and we have made no endeavours to fully resolve it. Instead we tacitly accept the entire given text of the *Dasam Granth* as one organic whole. It also implies that we have to interpret the entire sacred anthology in the light of certain accepted *bāṇīs* in the Sikh tradition. It may also be pertinent to point out that the entire *Dasam Granth* is an explanation or elucidation of the concepts and allusion, especially mythological, made in the Guru Granth Sahib. Our interpretation of these select compositions has also been in line with this.

We have also discussed (ch. 4 (b)) the social significance of the myths and symbols used in the *Dasam Granth.* In this process, our endeavour has been to see how Guru Gobind Singh has given an entirely new orientation and interpretation to certain Puranic myths and legends. This has facilitated our task of dismantling certain wrong notions held and propagated by some scholars.

Our brief but interpretive study of the texts from the *Dasam*

Granth, includes the *Jāpu* which is the only composition solely devoted to the eulogistic description of the Real One; the *Akāl Ustati* which is primarily metaphysical but is also a critique of the contemporary degenerate socio-religious situation in the country; the "Bachitra Natak Granth", the name given earlier by some to the entire *Dasam Granth,* which is actually a group of compositions including the autobiographical part as well as the *Chaṇḍī Chirtas* and *Avtārs*; and the *Zafarnāmah* (the Epistle of Victory) which is a letter, in Persian verse, addressed to Emperor Aurangzib and is a discourse on promise-keeping. We have also briefly touched upon the theme of *Charitropākhayān* (a collection of moralistic narratives) and some of the shorter compositions of the Guru, though they are not fundamental to our agreement.

Our study of these texts reveals that Guru Gobind Singh has made use of certain Puranic myths and legends in some of these compositions, especially the *Chaṇḍī Charitras* and the *Avtārs.* However, we find that the Guru does not deify or invoke any of these Puranic characters, and there is a conspicuous philosophical departure, in content and emphasis, in these accounts vis-a-vis the Puranic versions. He demytholigizes—to use Bultmann's term—these myths and reinterprets them with a view to relating them to the contemporary social reality. According to these Puranic myths, the intervention of Divine incarnations or gods/goddesses was imperative to restore righteousness in human affairs. Instead we find that the Guru creates a new myth: belief in the inherent potentiality of each man and woman—high or low—to perform as Chandi, Rama, Krishna *et al.* did as instruments of Akalpurakh's will.

The central doctrinal assuptions of Guru Gobind Singh have been discussed in the following chapter (ch.5). Here we have tried to work out that the Tenth Master, in continuation of the earlier spiritual mentors, advocates the non-dual and dynamic nature of ultimate Reality. The doctrine of the oneness of Reality forms the metaphysical basis of his compositions. It is at once both transcendent and immanent, spiritual and secular, eternal and temporal. The Guru also rejects the theory of divine incarnation in human or any other form. The dynamism of Reality has inherent creative principle which brings into being all manifest forms of the universe. He is the creator, the sole cause of manifesting through His will. He manifests as Word (*śabda*) in subtle and as world (*samsār*) in gross form. This implies coessential oneness between the ultimate Reality and the manifest reality, i.e. material world

which includes all sentient and non-sentient beings. Guru Gobind Singh reiterates the same idea from epistemological standpoint when he says that the Reality is both the nearest and the farthest of all—*sabh te dūri sabhan te nerā.* The Reality is nearest to the realized self because he realizes it within his own self and within all fellow beings. It is farthest to the ignorant person because he does not see beyond the exterior of the visible material world; hence, the transcendent always remains away from him. On the other hand, the realized self can discern unity behind diversity, and hence for him Reality is quite obvious and close at hand. Thus, we find that in Guru Gobind Singh's writings the Divine descends, *qua* Spirit, on to the manifest world and this socialization of the spiritual not only spiritualizes the social but also provides it essential oneness with the Divine.

The spiritualization of the material world including the entire mankind implies that the latter are spiritually and potentially one with the Divine. In Guru Gobind Singh's viewpoint, the material phenomena are the manifestation of the Akalpurakh. The manifest world is not sheer *māyā* but a stark reality. Since it is not self-existent and everlasting like the ultimate Reality, it is a relative reality. This reaffirmation of the self and the world has been discussed in the following chapter (ch.6). The acknowledgement of relative reality of the material phenomena implies divine presence here and now. It is in this sense that Sikhism rejects the earlier prevalent Vedantic idea of withdrawal from this mundane world in search of the transcendent Reality. On the other hand, man is required to actively participate in the affairs of the world so as to ensure that the created beings do not lose their essential spiritual nature. Guru Gobind Singh reiterates in his compositions that whenever Akalpurakh finds men forgtful of their essential divinity and thus turn demonic, He deputes some noble soul to serve as an instrument of His will and restore in mankind the essential divinity represented in human affairs through the moral values of righteousness, love, equality, altruism, and so on.

However, this deputizing does not mean incarnation of the Real One in human form. Such commissioned beings among whom Guru Gobind Singh counts himself and several historical and Puranic personages such as Chandi, Rama, Krishna *et al.* involve themselves actively in the struggle against evil forces and for restoring righteousness (*dharma*). Guru Gobind Singh, as he states in his Bachitra Natak, was commissioned by Akalpurakh with such a specific purpose and he seeks from Śivā (the name of Siva's wife in Puranic

mythology but here an attributive name of Akalpurakh as the emancipator) the blessing that he should never desist from noble deeds (*shubh karman*). Thus, Guru Gobind Singh recommends an active but righteous and altruistic participation in human affairs in the mundane world.

The central theme of the book culminates hereafter (ch.7) wherein we have discussed the concepts of the Khalsa as in individual and Khalsa-Panth as an ideal social structure. As we have pointed out above, the self was reaffirmed in the preceding chapter (ch.6) but in this chapter the self has been idealized as the Khalsa. The creation of the Khalsa-Panth by Guru Gobind Singh was the beginning in microcosmic form of the ideal social structure of his vision. The Khalsa-Panth was actualized as an institution based on the metaphysical principle of the universal Fatherhood of God: the universal brotherhood of man, equality, mutual love, altruism, righteousness and such other ethical values are the necessary corollaries of this principle. Since the ideological basis of the Khalsa-Panth was the metaphysical assumption of Akalpurakh, Guru Gobind Singh and the preceeding Gurus evolved a metaphysical system independent and distinct from those of other Indian and Semitic religious traditions. This model of the social structure of Guru Gobind Singh's vision was created as a critique of the prevalent Hindu as well as Islamic social structures.

The members of the Khalsa-Panth are, individually, realized selves. Such an individual is to be above evil and should try for others to shed all immoral propensities. He is to carry out all these activities in the society leading to the emancipation of human beings. He is expected to abide by the moral injunction enjoined upon the Khalsa. Therefore, wherever evil is seen to dominate in the human affaires, it becomes the spiritual and moral obligation of the Khalsa to eradicate it, and restore righteousness.

The violence involved in the annihilation of evil is neither unethical nor against the principle of *prem* as enunciated by Guru Gobind Singh and his predecessors. In fact, when peace becomes synonymous with the retention of unjust and immoral *status quo*, it should preferably be discarded in favour of the violence which restores righteousness. It is in this context that Guru Gobind Singh validates the use of sword (or violence) when all other means fail. It is also from this perspective that we view the inseparable relationship between religion and politics.

The Khalsa-Panth, in its collective form, is the model of the ideal

social structure of Guru Gobind Singh's vision. The moral values cultivated by the individual Khalsa are practised in human relationships and behaviour in society. Thus, the Khalsa-Panth represents a classless and casteless society in which all human beings are equal among themselves. Love is the cementing value of this social structure: herein, love for mankind is the necessary corollary of man's love for the Divine. This love is not merely an abstract idea, rather it is concretized in societal relationships so as to develop a harmonious social structure. The vision of such an ideal social order was, no doubt, inherent in the Sikh movement as initiated by Guru Nanak and nurtured by his successors, but this movement reached its culmination and this vision became concretized in the creation of the Khalsa-Panth by Guru Gobind Singh. Total identification with the suffering humanity was the ideal of the Gurus, and they put this ideal into practice as well. The martyrdoms of Guru Arjan and Guru Tegh Bahadur and the sacrifices made by Guru Gobind Singh are symbolic of this principle of self-sacrifice for humanity.

Guru Gobind Singh also showed, through precept and personal example, that the Khalsa must exert actively for the creation of congenial conditions in society which are conducive to the spiritual and moral progression of man. Active moral struggle (*dharam yudh*) against the forces of evil and for the restoration of righteousness is not an antidote to religion. In this sense, religion and politics are both equally significant aspects of human life in the material world. Complete dichotomy between the two or suppression of either one has always led to serious social maladies. The spiritual and moral values symbolized by religion ought to influence and direct the political system, and, on the other hand, politics should be the means to realize these spiritual and moral values in human life in the mundane world. In nutshell, politics is to be spiritualized as a necessary evolute of the Khalsa social order: political authority is required for the survival of *dharma.* It has been perhaps the crux of Guru Gobind Singh' social thought.

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