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**GURU
TEGH
BAHADUR**

—A STUDY



B.S.GUPTA

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By
B. S. GUPTA



**PUBLICATION BUREAU
PANJAB UNIVERSITY
C H A N D I G A R H**

Published by :

**R. K. Malhotra,
Secretary, Publication Bureau,
Panjab University, Chandigarh.**

First Edition : 1978

Price : Rs. 25.00

Printed by :

**NAVDEEP PRINTERS,
C-27, Industrial Area,
Ghaziabad.**

P R E F A C E

Guru Tegh Bahadur occupies a unique eminence in the annals of the religious history of man. He appeared on the scene at a time when Indian society was caught up in an unprecedented socio-cultural crisis. The Mughal empire was at the pinnacle of its power and glory but unfortunately it had also turned ever so intolerant and oppressive. Its political philosophy laid special emphasis on stamping out all forms of pluralism whether political, religious or social and demanded total conformism in faith, belief, form and action. In the vision of the Sikh Gurus a sane human society was essentially a plural and multi-central one in which each people was afforded the opportunity to work out its genius to its fullest possibilities and potentialities without any interference by the outside authority. The role of the State in enforcing a particular faith on the people of India as a whole was not only violative of man's inherent desire for variation and variety but was also promoting alienation of the sons of the soil from their ownelves and their rich cultural heritage.

From the very beginning Guru Tegh Bahadur's was a consecrated life which found its ultimate consummation in the "Unique Drama" of his martyrdom for the sake of upholding *Dharma* and infusing new faith and hope in the hearts of men. The Tercentenary of his martyrdom which fell in 1975 sparked off a great deal of intellectual and academic activity. The present book "Guru Tegh Bahadur—A Study" by Dr. B.S. Gupta can be safely considered as one of the best works which were called forth by the celebrations. Dr. Gupta has been eminently successful in restoring the essential element of integrity between the historical and the universal and the secular and the sacred as it blossomed in the life and works of Guru Tegh Bahadur. Upon his keen analysis and refreshingly original interpretation of the works of Guru Tegh Bahadur,

Dr. B.S. Gupta brings to bear the insights of his own mystical experiences as also study of western classics.

Panjab University, Chandigarh, sponsored the publication of the present work and Sheikh Baba Farid Chair of Medieval Indian Literature secured a grant for the purpose from the Punjab State Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Martyrdom Tercentenary Committee. I shall be failing in my duty if I do not express our gratitude to the President of the Punjab State Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Martyrdom Tercentenary Committee for making this publication possible. The keen interest taken by Prof R.C. Paul, Vice-chancellor, in the project has been, as ever, a source of great encouragement and strength for us.

I am also greatly obliged to Mr. R.K. Malhotra, Secretary, Publication Bureau, Panjab University, for keen interest taken by him for bringing out this work in as presentable form as possible.

Mr. O. P. Vasishta, Editor, English-Punjabi Dictionary Department, and Mr. Hans Raj Grover, Stenographer, Publication Bureau, rendered great help in reading the proofs while Mr. Harbhajan Singh Halwarvi, Lexical Assistant, graciously undertook the labour of compiling the Index. I may also put in a word of appreciation for Mr. Prithipal Singh, Stenographer, English-Punjabi Dictionary Department, for preparing the press copy.

Chandigarh
March 14, 1978

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INTRODUCTION

The present work is a modest attempt to present a fresh interpretative study and a synthesised view of Guru Tegh Bahadur's personality, work, vision and sacrifice. It is specifically written on the eve of the tercentenary of the holy martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur, yet it is more than a mere amalgam of the Guru's life and teachings. It is devoted to the unfolding of the Guru's creative personality, the nature and significance of his enlightened response to life and history, the hidden beauty and consistency of his poetic compositions and the philosophy implicit in them. These things are discussed not cursorily but in depth, and not in piecemeal isolation but as a whole.

The main flaw in the piecemeal approach is that it leads to conclusions which, as explained in the course of the study, fall short of a total estimate of the Guru's moral, spiritual and historical greatness. Critical interpreters and historians who do not take into account such an integral view fail to penetrate to the deeper levels of the Guru's response to life in his hymns as well as in his encounter with the historical situation. In order to enter into deeper meaning of his poetry and the fuller spirit and significance of his supreme sacrifice, a total view of the Guru's life and writings is indispensable. Hence this work, an integrated study of the various facts of Guru Tegh Bahadur's life, work, vision and martyrdom.

Ours is not a religious age. But the modern man can better understand religion on the level of the psychological rather than on the level of the unfamiliar. I have, therefore, tried to analyse some of the Guru's beliefs and ideas in the light of contemporary thought, particularly with reference to modern psychology, without encumbering the work with technical jargon.

The two chapters on biographical matter are not exhaustive but selective and interpretative with a view to bringing the Guru's movement of the mind and inner growth in philosophical and historical perspective.

I have meditated on the original hymns of the Guru, a copy of which in Panjabi script was given to me by my friend, Sardar

B.S. Tej. I was so much attracted by the depth of its inherent philosophy that I was inspired to write this book. In fact, earlier I was faced with two alternatives : to translate the hymns into English verse or to write a full-length study of Guru Tegh Bahadur. Since time at my disposal was short, I could not undertake both. I, therefore, chose the latter and for translations depended on Macauliffe. Macauliffe's translations may miss the spiritual connotation of the text but are dependable in the sense that they aptly convey the literal beauty of the original.

Since the Guru's poetical output is small, certain repetitions of lines or passages extracted from hymns and *Slokas* are bound to occur in an extensive dealing with various facets of the Guru's achievements. I have, however, tried my best to place each extract in a fresh key, while quoting it again in other chapters.

The book is divided into four sections and nine chapters.

The first chapter is focussed on Guru Nanak's creative vision, the mainspring of inspiration for the succeeding Sikh Gurus. It refutes the prevailing view that Guru Nanak was reformer, and not a revolutionary. It shows that the Guru's creative vision was not merely a reformative venture but a revolutionary step in the direction of reshaping the human individual and the society. Not only did it release an enquiring spirit among the people but it also restored the lost touch with the cosmic evolution, and showed the higher dimensions of consciousness, where all men are integrated and transformed. Guru Nanak powerfully applied the ambrosial flow of his ethical-spiritual wisdom to the problem of harmony between the outer and the inner modes of life, and rejuvenated not only the Indian tradition but the human spirit also. This was possible because he was a rare combination of a saint and revolutionary. His creative vision reached its climax in the holy martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur.

The second chapter deals with early formative years and the later years of contemplative seclusion which helped in the growth of Baba Tegh Bahadur's personality, rendering him eminently fit for holding the spiritual sceptre of Guru Nanak.

This chapter shows how Guru Tegh Bahadur's life was a preparation for the supreme act of sacrifice.

The third chapter deals with the epoch-making sacrifice of the Guru, and shows that the way Guru Tegh Bahadur met the challenge of history was, in fact, a unique practical application of spiritual wisdom in a situation triggered by the historical condition. It throws light on the larger meaning and significance of Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom by unravelling the philosophical implications involved, by refuting distorted versions of historians about martyrdom and by originally interpreting it in the light of Toynbee's historical formula of challenge-and-response.

The fourth chapter offers a fresh and consistent interpretation of the Guru's hymns, bringing out the dominant theme which lends a total meaning and inner unity to the Guru's sacred poetry. With the exploration of a central, unifying theme, the key issue in the poetry becomes clearer—the movement of the human mind, its relation to the progress of man along the path of self-enhancement, self-enlightenment and self-emancipation. This chapter also contends that the Guru's poetry does not deal with empty transcendentalism nor is it a mere exercise in didacticism.

The fifth chapter makes a general survey of the Guru's *slokas*, couplets, in an attempt to show their thematic coherence. It brings into focus the Guru's relation to tradition, his innovating trend and his characteristic way of relating the spiritual life to the need of his times. The chapter also discusses the Guru's poetic style.

The sixth, the seventh and the eighth chapters trace, analyse and shape the Guru's scattered but implied religio-philosophical thoughts into a coherent whole.

The concluding chapter contains an evaluation of the Guru's personality, work, vision and sacrifice as a whole. It also tries to clear certain misconceptions which arise from interpreting his hymns or his will-to-sacrifice in isolation. Finally, it brings out the relevance of the Guru's life and wisdom to our modern times and throws light on the creative aspects of his martyrdom.

I shall deem my labour rewarded if the book fulfils its function of promoting a deeper understanding, finer awareness, a fuller appreciation of the Guru's moral, spiritual and historical achievements.

In this study I have tried to bring in my humble insights into the interpretations of the various facets of the Guru's life and writings. I have drawn upon translations of the Guru's hymns made by Macauliffe, published by Oxford at the Clarendon Press, and I acknowledge my indebtedness to them. Moreover, to substantiate and support my viewpoint, I have quoted from the Holy Granth Sahib and a few modern writers on history and philosophy and all these have been duly acknowledged by me either in the text or in the footnotes.

I am particularly grateful to Sardar B.S. Tej, Divisional Employment Officer, Haryana, Chandigarh, but for whose interest, encouragement and generous assistance the book would not have come into existence. My grateful thanks are due to Shri G. C. Bansal, now Reader in Library Science, Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra, and Shri U.K. Tiku, Lecturer in Library Science, Panjab University for making available certain requisite material for this study. I also express my sincere thanks to Dr. S.B.P. Nigam, Reader in History, Kurukshetra University, for lending me some books on Mughal history from his personal library. I am particularly grateful to Professor Kuldip Singh Batra, former Joint D.P.I., Haryana, for his valuable suggestions. A special word of thanks goes to Dr. Sher Singh Dhillon of University College, Kurukshetra, for assisting me in the prompt preparation of the manuscript.

I express my deep gratitude to the President, the Secretary and members of the distinguished Sardar Mohan Singh Ahluwalia Awards Committee for recognising my humble contribution to Guru Tegh Bahadur Literature by adjudging my work as one of the best books on the subject.

Kurukshetra University,
Kurukshetra.

B.S. Gupta

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PART I

BIRTH OF THE CREATIVE VISION

CHAPTER I

GURU NANAK : THE SAINT AND REVOLUTIONARY

A Specific Life-view

Each great movement, religious or secular, is a creative vision in the mind before it becomes a fact of history. Guru Nanak, founder of the Sikh Religion, ushered in a revolution, based on a clear-sighted vision to redeem mankind from outer and inner darkness. The facile historical imagination paints Guru Nanak as a reformer. But an attempt at remaking of human personality and reordering of human life on the pattern of new ideals is more than a mere reformative venture. It is a big forward leap to revolutionise the human mind and society. Guru Nanak's mission was to open up a new vista of progress, a new perspective of thought and a new order of discipline in consonance with laws of the beauty of soul. He offered a specific life-view which was not static but dynamic in the sense that it had to be realised creatively in the living. The greatness and originality of his creative vision lay in the fact that it presented a fine fusion of the religious and the actual. And it was this new revolutionary mode of work and thought which not only amounted to the negation of the prevailing false modes but also brought into operation an effective and continuous form of campaign for liberation, ranging over more than two centuries, from Guru Nanak (1469-1539) to Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708).

To present a new vision, a new faith to man is full of promises and threats in relation to it. Guru Nanak's faith aimed at liberation from fear, liberation from stinking superstitions, liberation from the fossilized tradition, liberation from the

shackles of social exploitations and liberation from spiritual ignorance, social vice and corruption at all levels. Above all, it aimed at liberation of man from thralldom of false needs and satisfactions. Such needs and satisfactions thwart the growth of man's personality and keep him contented with that condition. In that state of mind, man cannot achieve real moral and spiritual health. Guru Nanak diagnosed the spiritual ills of society, recognized the disease of fragmentariness and grasped the chances of curing the disease. "All liberation depends upon consciousness of servitude" says Herbert Marcuse, a modern thinker, and "the emergence of this consciousness is always hampered by the predominance of needs and satisfactions, which to a great extent, have become the individual's own". Not only did Guru Nanak point out false needs and satisfactions but also aimed at the replacement of false needs and satisfactions by true ones. His purpose was not merely to expose false notions about religion but to fill the vacuum created by such an exposition.

Re-orchestration of Life's Harmonies

Religion, for Guru Nanak, was not a dogma or an intellectual gymnasium but an exalted way of life, a way of inner enlightenment that builds up the spiritual, ethical and social personality of man by inculcating in him love of truth, virtue, service to God and to humanity. As such, religion must make for honesty of mind and recovery of faith in higher values. Guru Nanak's rediscovery of the oneness of God and unity of mankind was not for its own sake. Based on his personal, living but supreme religious experience, it was a fresh basis for building a stable society upon earth and for giving it a new dynamism with which to face and remove dangers of division inherent in human nature. He showed that religion considered in the context of rigid formalism had shaken the foundations of human life and that it had also unleashed anarchy and moral chaos. There was no salvation for man unless mankind entered a new phase of cosmic evolution. It was possible by coming in contact with God, the Timeless, Eternal Will, the plan or the power behind evolution, which guides the universe. Guru

Nanak thus restored the lost touch with the cosmic evolution and showed the higher dimension of consciousness, where all men are integrated :

One indivisible God or soul is manifesting all the forms, and is the source of all light and life in the Universe.

Guru Nanak was so much alive to the need of the hour that he spoke with a new accent, as it issued out of the depth of his heart, in an extra-ordinary endeavour to apply his spiritual insight to practical life. He offered a special remedy for the spiritual sickness of the Age. Spiritual sickness means psychological illness. It was a time when people suffered from a spiritual or psychological malady without realizing that something was missing from their lives. Guru Nanak cautioned man about living a life which was deviated from certain psychological, ethical and spiritual norms. Since it was a psychological and ethical illness, the remedy sought was in terms of moral and spiritual measures.

The very application of this remedy to human affairs shows that Guru Nanak had a deep practical knowledge of psychology. He knew that roots of human discords lay in the human mind and heart. They must be changed and attuned to higher values for the uplift of mankind. He himself emphatically declared that unity of mankind could be enduringly accomplished by realising the presence of the divine particle in every person.

Apart from stressing the unification of existence, Guru Nanak stood for re-orchestration of the proper harmonies of all life, for by this alone could man and society hope to bloom in creativity, goodness, love and fraternity. He did not condemn the world as an illusion but considered it a field of action, necessary for the evolution of an individual, for his inner transformation and spiritual regeneration. Long before Mahatma Gandhi, Tagore and Dr. S. Radhakrishnan appeared on the Indian scene and stressed the necessity of spiritual salvation in the process of social well-being, Guru Nanak had combined spiritual enlightenment with the welfare of the masses. He

exhorted the Jogis not to retire from the world into Himalayan retreats in order to seek their personal salvation at the cost of neglecting the social good. He advised the common people to shun formal rites and to look to the essential as against the mere accidental, not to cling to the outer shell of religion but to look to its essence, its wisdom which is universal in scope and spirit. But he was more than a mere reformer. He attacked the citadel of superstitions with his sword of wisdom, and tried to replace the formal shows of religion by the dynamics of a new outlook. To the priests he pointed out that though they were studying holy scriptures, they had "daggers under their arms". Mere preaching, in his eyes, was of no avail unless it was translated into practical living.

Challenges of the Age

Guru Nanak himself has given a vivid picture of his times. India was bleeding under the iron heels of the haughty, cruel rulers. When Babur invaded India, it was a period of social, moral, political and spiritual chaos :

Both the modesty and piety have hidden themselves,
and falsehood is the presiding authority, O Lalo.¹

Again : Kings are the butchers and humanity bleeds under their knife.²

Guru Nanak compared the kings with butchers, and their officials with dogs.³ The kings were sunk in voluptuousness :

The kings lost their sense because of sensuous
pursuits.⁴

The rulers were lacking in constructive vision. The storm of the Mughal exploitation was unleashed against the Hindus :

-
1. Tilang, M.I.
 2. Rag Sarang, M.I.
 3. Var Malar. M.1.
 4. Asa, M.I.

The temples and gods are taxed ;
This is the law of the land.⁵

There was a complete segregation between the Muslims who were intolerant and the Hindus who were conventionally orthodox. The true spirit of Islam and Hinduism had disappeared. Religion had lost its spiritual savour and had degenerated into more religiosity :

This was an age of tyranny, corruption and exploitation :

The darkness of the age has made demons of men,
Sin is the king, Greed the minister,
Falsehood, the mint-master and Lust its deputy ;
They sit and confer together.⁶

Even the so-called leaders of religion, instead of bringing justice and enlightenment to the people, were themselves in the grip of selfishness, hypocrisy and sloth :

The Kazi tells lies and accepts hush-money.
The Brahmin, cruel at heart, bathes in holy waters.
The Yogi knows not the true essence of Yoga.
All three are at one in bringing harm to the people.⁷

It was during this dark period of Indian history, Guru Nanak released his message of harmony of mankind based on his living experience of spiritual realization. This was a powerful application of spiritual wisdom towards de-freezing of the Hindu-Muslim relationship by awakening people to the divine harmony and unity at the heart of seeming diversity of life. Didn't it amount to revolutionise the human mind through peaceable measures ?

Guru Nanak, in fact, stood for the mystic realization of the unity of man, of perfect identity at a spiritual level where all racial differences vanish. At the same time he released a new spirit which questioned the conventional garbs of Hinduism.

5. Basant Hindol, M.I.

6. *Adi Granth*, p. 468.

7. *Adi Granth*, p. 662.

To change the bad habits of centuries, to set the suffocating mind free out of the moulds of ceremonial and unenlightened orthodoxy, to initiate people into a new life, to pass poetic strictures on the superstitions and sentimental attitudes of religious priests, to raise a protest of the heart against imperial hatred and aggression—all this was not an easy task and Guru Nanak's creative vision was a revolutionary response to the challenges of the age. His creative vision was a factor of social progress and spiritual enrichment. To communicate it to the masses was his great achievement.

Pride, Foe to Vision of Wholeness

Guru Nanak's account of the Imperial rulers shows that he was aware of the demoniac depths of aggressive dictatorship. To improve Hindu-Muslim relations, he gave expression to the truth of what may be called religious relativism by peaceful co-existence of these religions. With a deep understanding of the human psychology, he clearly brought into focus the difference between harmony and discord. At the heart of discord, he found, was pride—man's readiness to mutilate and even destroy the sacred edifices raised by the human mind and society with a view to glorifying and magnifying his own private universe. Guru Nanak has exposed the imperial pride, the priestly pride, the richman's pride and even the commoner's pride. It is man's pride which imprisons his intellect and does not allow it to acquire a fuller depth and meaning of life and to have a glimpse of an organic unity underlying the Universe or of the Ultimate Reality present in all. It is pride which creates gulf between man and man, between reality and existence, between spirit and life. The king in his pride becomes tyrannical and intolerant of other's faith. The priest in his pride perpetuates the perversion of religion in stinking formality and empty exhibitionism. The wealthy persons in their pride do not cease to exploit the poor. Even the common people take pride in gratifying their false needs and satisfactions.

Guru Nanak also found pride at the heart of creed and caste-and-class consciousness. He, therefore, recommended

humility as the greatest virtue, lest the poison of pride should work havoc with an individual's inner enlightenment or recognition of truth or innate goodness in man. His own sense of humility is well illustrated when he calls himself one of "the lowest castes of the singers", a "slave of the slaves of men of God."

No wonder, therefore, if Guru Nanak did not exhort the people to conquer empires but to conquer the mind. "If the mind is conquered, the whole world is conquered".⁸ The conquest of the mind signifies inner transformation, and no true transformation, and no true transforming of the society is possible unless the man who wants to do so himself has undergone the process of self-purification. It is inner purification which helps man to lead a less self-centred and more creative life :

Those engrossed in falsehood find no spiritual poise.⁹

With purity of heart alone may one find God.¹⁰

Moreover, Guru Nanak found that people were devoted to *things* as opposed to *values*. They were severed from the creative fountain of all life and adhered to fragmentary shows of the outer world. In it he saw a denial of something basic and eternal to human experience. The human experience was in this sense incomplete, and men were content to live in fragments. The truly religious life, according to Guru Nanak, was not fragmentary but fullness of human life. He aimed at restoring the creative vision of the wholeness lost in the masquerade. He, therefore, advised the people to draw upon the inner sources of truth without losing touch with the world which, according to him, is also the abiding place of God. But honesty, nobility and truthful dignity must not be sacrificed in following worldly pursuits. Guru Nanak's approach is opti-

8. Japji, M. 1.

9. *Adi Granth*, p. 940.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 472.

mistic and synthetic in the sense that he holds that regeneration of life is possible on the pattern of values which are true, and mankind can be saved by returning to its roots in the eternal and by rendering service to fellow-beings : "A place in God's Court can only be attained if we do service to others in the world".

A New Vision of Man

Broadly speaking, Guru Nanak chose to perform a two-fold task, the task of awakening the masses as well as masters of the esoteric way, siddhas and ascetics, to inner demands of the soul and to outer demands of the existential reality respectively. To liberate the common man from external insecurity and internal anxiety, he sounded a clarion call to live a pure, truthful and courageous life by turning to God, the divine centre within, which delivers us from every type of defilement, fear, anguish and despair. His creative vision not only supplied the missing link between man and the inmost centre of his being, but also served as a corrective to the exclusive extremism of the spiritual path. To become spiritual, for him, was not to become lost to the world.

Led by a deep humanistic impulse, the Guru gave a rousing call to Siddhas, accomplished masters of spirituality, to come out of their private universes and to ameliorate the human condition. His deep concern for the well-being of man in dark times is evidenced from the following lines that occur in *Siddha-Goshti* :

The earth is in the grip of falsehood ;
 The bull is groaning under the grievous burden,
 The Siddhas have hidden themselves in the mountain
 caves ;
 Who might save the world ?

What Guru Nanak implies is that the decline of *Dharma* (righteousness) and values is not a terrifying factor, on the part of the men of spiritual attainments, for with drawing themselves from the world, for hiding themselves from the people's gaze, but rather an opportunity for saving them. The over-abstract

love of pure truth and shrinkage from the world for fear of being contaminated by it is not a healthy sign of spirituality. It should be combined with humanistic ethic, with the spirit of kindness and compassion, the will to serve the suffering humanity. Mere self-perfection and self-liberation have no meaning if the world continues to groan in chains of evil and ignorance. The decline of *dharma*, therefore, is essentially an instrument of liberation, and not of an escape from history into inner life.

The Guru's searching eye had also noticed that at a time when the mass mind was ruled by religiosity, superstitions, passions, prejudices and gross materialistic considerations, and the so-called leaders of religion—Yogis, pundits, sanyasis and tapasvis—too lived in shells of narrow, particular pursuits, the society was left to the mercy of the unscrupulous exploiters :

Pundits are busy studying Puranas;
 Yogis are busy in inward meditations;
 Sanyasis are ego-drunk, and ascetics
 Are drunken with secrets of the way ;
 All are drunken, none is awake,
 While thieves are robbing them.¹¹

To be awake in the Indian spiritual tradition is to be enlightened. The Guru's stress on wakefulness, as we have illustrated, is extended to all persons—householders, siddhas, yogis, ascetics and pundits.

The Guru, therefore, not only depicted the human situation as he found it during his times, but he also came forward to voice the need of a new Vision of Man. He made a revolution of values and opened up a new dimension of reality, where the tang of transcendence was reconciled with the pulsating rhythm of life, where vision was combined with action, knowledge with love, wisdom with virtue and self-enlightenment with the ideal of social duty. What he aimed at was indeed a fruitful synthesis between inward growth and outward performance.

11. *Adi Granth*, p. 64.

Even the Guru's encounters with Siddhas and Pirs (Moslem anchorites) bring home to us the truth that the spiritual is not divorced from the ethical. Spirituality is not the art of building a hermitage on the height or throwing of an invisible net which is more of a hindrance than a help. It is rather the art of seeking inner enlightenment and establishing an enduring contact with the Absolute, Timeless Reality, by transcending the horizon of the ego-world, but without going outside the moral orbit of tolerance, humility, charity and compassion in the process.

As regards the miracle stories of Guru Nanak, these are symbolic expressions of the tenets of his living faith, and as such provide a rich field for research.¹²

A Programme for the Future

Guru Nanak's writings present not only an indictment of the society of his time but also a programme for the future. He travelled far and wide to bring about social, spiritual, political and even economic awakening among the people. He had a vision to build a democratic and social order on the foundation of the rule of righteousness, an order which guarantees the individual freedom, gives him or her equal rights, social security and social harmony. The Guru's approach was of course rooted in spiritual idealism. His message was for the world which lived for its sensations and ignored the Divine. The evils of social, political and religious exploitation, growing out of proportions, stifled the growth of the interior life. Man was dehumanised in the social, economic and political fields. The seventeenth century, in fact, posed the dilemma of whimper and bang. While the officials like dogs attacked the subjects in gleeful whimper, the imperial hands were closing the doors of justice and love with a bang. It was an atmosphere of moral and political unease which destroyed faith in the essential and moral uniqueness of man.

12. The present writer in the preface to his book *The Rock and the Pool* (Guru Nanak Themes) has discussed this point.

Guru Nanak offered a programme to help man to realize the truth and to foster it in society, for all that is built on the distortion of the truth is useless. He brought in the revolutionary concept of a transforming religious process which could affect the socio-economic system, abolish some of its worst evils, and open a perspective for profound change in the society. It was a formidable task indeed to set right the disorder in the heart of things. But through the positive programme Guru Nanak earnestly strove for the reconstruction of human society by rejuvenating the human spirit.

He endeavoured to bring about radical changes in society by introducing the following five dynamic concepts : the concept of a casteless, classless society, the concept of *Sad Sangat* (congregation), the concept of the institution of Guruship (spiritual succession), the concept of sharing of one's honest gains with others and the concept of the common kitchen.

With his strong faith in the unity of man, Guru Nanak vigorously protested against the caste-system which had set artificial barriers between man and man. He brought in a revolutionary concept of the caste in his mystic way. Instead of looking to the caste, he advocated to look to the spirit of God present in every person :

Realise spirit of God in all,
Ask not the caste;
Caste counts not in the world to come.¹³

What mattered, according to Guru Nanak, was not birth in a low or high family but performance of good actions and the spiritual development of man. In his characteristic way he remarked :

“A person of low caste is he who forgets the Master”.

So lowliness is linked with man's fall from spiritual consciousness.

13. Asa, M. 1

Since the divine light dwells in all, the Guru pleads that we should stop enquiring about the caste of human beings. In fact, all illusions about caste and class are melted in the loving contemplation of the One Indivisible Absolute Being. In the realm of enlightenment, there is no consideration of caste and birth :

In the House Eternal caste and family have no place ;
Actions alone determine one's caste and status.¹⁴

Professor Gurbachan Singh Talib appropriately describes the Guru's approach to caste and class as "the emergence of a new spirit of humanity".¹⁵

The institution of *Sangat* was more than a mere concept. It was an experiment in harmonious living, which in due course flowered into a strong force to resist the oppressive moods of the rulers. The very building of this institution shows that Guru Nanak knew the importance of the people in the set-up of a new society. He raised his strong protests against sinful exploiters, knowing well that their exploitations would last as long as "ignorance makes the people blind to their welfare".

Guru Nanak's introduction of the institution of Guruship (Spiritual succession) was an effective and continuous form of adventure in animating the soul of man towards higher fulfilment. It carried on the spirit of his creative vision, in the course of nine succeeding phases, into the orbit of spiritually-oriented humanism and religious solidarity.

The concepts of sharing the fruit of one's honest work with others and of the running of the free common kitchen are obviously economic programmes for the welfare of people. They contain the germs of a true socialistic pattern. The very concept of enjoying the fruit of one's toil by sharing it with others is the forerunner of Marxist's criticism of individual possessions

14. *Adi Granth*, p. 1330.

15. *Guru Nanak, His Personality and Vision*, 1969, p. 262.

and its accent on the enjoyment of one's possessions by sharing with others. A free common kitchen (*Langar*) where masses and classes dined together, was manifestly the Guru's living vision of brotherhood in action.

We thus find that Guru Nanak's creative vision stemmed from his own live, central experience of spiritual realization of the unity of mankind and oneness of God. In the light of this experience, he initiated a quiet revolution by urging man to reach back into deeper meaning of his relationship with the Cosmic Order, and thereby to bridge the gulf between the eternal and the temporal. In times of political unrest and moral chaos, he aimed at reconditioning of the human vision, and God-realization was used as a driving force for the tasks of reconstruction as well as for saving people from the social, political and economic exploitations.

Guru Nanak was the uncompromising apostle of equality and fraternity, the great leveller, who stood for the regeneration of the common man. In the middle ages when imperialism had its full sway in the world, Guru Nanak brought to the world an idealistic, revolutionary vision of a new order. It was the vision of spiritual democracy, based on a feeling of kinship with all created humanity. In it he saw possibilities of universal peace, tolerance, brotherhood and moral and spiritual regeneration of man :

From one Supreme Light sprang the Whole Mankind ;
 All persons were as if sparks of the One Flame,
 Who then is to be called good or bad ?

Innovations

To call Guru Nanak, therefore, a mere reformer, a mere preacher who preached only wisdom of the old in a modified form is to underestimate the dynamism of his creative vision, a vision which created a new dimension of depth in which humanistic and spiritual values beautifully blend and strike a new path for humanity. The view advocated by Dr. Hari Ram Gupta that "Guru Nanak was not a revolutionary but a

reformer"¹⁶ falls short of such a comprehensive grasp. As already illustrated by us, Guru Nanak's own living, breathing experience of genuine inner enlightenment and perception of the Reality at the heart of existence is at the back of the dynamics of his faith. Mere theoretical acquaintance with the essential nature of reality is not enough. Nor does it bless a man with supreme insight into the source of all life and light, for without actually realising it man cannot achieve the creative vision that stems from the response of his whole being to the sense of the Real. Once as a result of this response the essential uniqueness at the centre of all human beings is realised, the creative vision, man's inner dynamism, is stirred into action for the welfare of mankind, and distinctions between '*sat-asat*', real and unreal, stand revealed. Such a man speaks not only from the depth of his soul but speaks with a fresh and fearless emphasis and vigour that induces new innovations to carry the society forward.

Dr. Hari Ram Gupta denies such innovations made by Guru Nanak. While referring to the institution of *Sad Sangat*, he traces it back to the concept of the Buddhist *Sangita*¹⁷. What chiefly matters is not a few traditional names or phrases that are present in the hymns and teachings of the Guru, but the central current which enlivens, illumines and liberates, and has a distinct practical purpose and a nucleus of its own. Guru Nanak's concept of *Sad Sangat* does not smack of Buddhist monastic discipline. It is thus an integral part of the Guru's creative vision to let people not only survive in the dark historical times but also to raise their personalities by making them grow towards a collective enlightenment. While Buddhism believed in renouncing a householder's life to embrace monastic discipline, Guru Nanak advised people to live the life of full-blooded householders. He exhorted people not to flee from the battle of life, not to renounce hearths and homes, but to realize God by renouncing age, greed, pride, lust and all other vices which were

16. Guru Nanak Foundation Volume, 1964, p. 53.

17. *Ibid.*, P. 52

dehumanising them. In *Siddha Goshti* he says :

In pursuing the Divine amid the normal life
lies true commerce with God.

The Guru's concept of *Sad Sangat* aimed at improving the spiritual perception, ethical conduct and social harmony of the congregation.

Moreover, the projections of Guru Nanak's creative vision are not all fully in line with the ancient Indian tradition. His doctrine of One God who does not incarnate but is the merciful Creator and Sustainer and his doctrine of Karma tempered with the commanding will of God (*Hukam*) are subtle examples of differences. Again, his rejection of *Karma Kanda* of *Varnashrma Dharma* and of the cult of gods and goddesses, and his emphasis on seeking the divine within rather than in the shows of rituals and waters of the holy places constitute a glaring departure from orthodox Hinduism.

Furthermore, Guru Nanak's blend of ethics with spirituality, his accent on the truth of relative reality of the world and, above all, his endeavour to bridge the gulf between the spiritual and the material, the timeless and the temporal, nay, between faith in God and human situation, are distinct progressive concepts which sound forward-looking and revolutionary, when considered in the context of Indian thought and the times when they were preached. Even in the twentieth century modern Indian philosophers, by and large, have focused their stress on them, in their attempts to explicate the value of Indian thought.

The main charge levelled against Indian thought by Westerners is that it is "world and life negating" and hence it is incompatible with the ethical ideal because "man cannot engage in ethical activity in a world with no meaning."¹⁸

The credit goes to Guru Nanak for having introduced a conspicuous note of world and life affirmation in his teachings.

18. Albert Schweitzer, *Indian Thought and Its Development*, pp. 2, 65.

He explicitly pointed out that neither this world was an illusion nor was life an empty dream :

“True are thy worlds, true Thy Universes,
True Thy Lokas, true The forms Thou createst.”¹⁹

The Universe, for Guru Nanak, is true because it is created by the True One :

The Universe is the dwelling place
of the Real One and He lives in it.²⁰

Guru Nanak's thought is creative in the sense it affirms the reality of the world, the meaningfulness of life and the immense seriousness of ethical discipline needed for inner perfection. The evolution of the soul is the purpose of human existence. Ethical perfection is not an adornment but an integral part of spiritual perfection :

“Upright persons are eternal, like the Lord.”²¹

Again, the Guru holds that service of humanity assures a seat in the Court of God.

This combining of humanistic ethics with spirituality dynamically contributes to Indian tradition in general, and to the healthy growth and progress of man and society in particular. Guru Nanak did not approve of the isolating trend of self-centred spiritual obsessions to the neglect of ethical value. He believed in bringing an inward change in man that would fit him for confronting life with all its vicissitudes and eventually for the realisation of God, the fundamental Truth. His standpoint was not life-denying but life-fulfilling. He thus stood for a vision of wholeness, for a synthesis of humanistic and spiritual values, to involve a better and saner society.

It would, therefore, be lack of proper assessment of Guru

19. Asa, M. 1

20. Asa. M. 1.

21. Raj Suhi. M. 1.

Nanak's wisdom to believe that it is only reformed repetition of the old one. The Guru asserted the dignity of the human spirit and challenged the conventional yardsticks of religion and society of his times :

No bath can purify a body defiled by falsehood,
Ablution is accepted only if one lives truthfully.

His dynamic revaluation of Yoga : (*jog*) corresponds to the deeper spirit of his creative vision.

Jog lies not in the cloak,
nor in the staff,
nor in ashes smeared over the body,
jog lies not in earrings worn,
nor in shaving the hair
nor in the blowing of horns.
Abide pure amid the impurities
of the world ; this is the way to *jog*.

The stress is laid on the quality of inner cultivation rather than on external trappings :

Make 'contentment' and 'modesty' thine earnings,
'Earning by honest work' thy begging bowl,
'Remembrance of God' the ashes to smear
'Thought of life's end' thy blanket, on thy body ;
'Keeping body free from evils' thy yogic penance
And 'faith in God' thy rule and thy staff.

The Guru's achievement is to make use of spiritual enlightenment as a healthier basis for social relationship, to make religion the personal as well as the social instrument of liberation.

The Saint and Revolutionary

Guru Nanak is essentially a mystic saint. But his mysticism is not simply a means of access to the divine principle in man but also a way of life, a way that brings about a radical transformation of personality. He lays greater emphasis on integrity,

on quality and character of man than on mere integration or metaphysical passion for truth :

Truth is great but greater than truth is truthful living.

Paul Tillich, the German philosopher, while referring to the limit of mysticism says, "it neglects the human predicament and the separation of man from the Ultimate. There is no faith without separation." But Guru Nanak's mysticism releases a new vision and a new awareness where man's relation to society is not overlooked in a search for realization of the ultimate Truth. It reconciles the worlds of time and eternity for fuller humanization of man.

Guru Nanak's creative vision thus comprises a synthetic attitude towards life, towards the individual and society as well as towards the individual and the Cosmos. It is this synthetic vision which is important enough to save man. Arthur Koestler, a modern thinker, has perceptively pointed out :

The Commissar's emotional energies are fixed on the relation between individual and society, the Yogi's on the relation between the individual and the Universe.²²

But he has suggested :

Neither the saint nor revolutionary can save us, only the synthesis of the two²³.

Such a synthesis is found in the creative personality of Guru Nanak. He was both a saint and revolutionary and hence a real saviour. He felt that it was vitally necessary for people to establish fruitful relationship with God, the Highest Truth, without negating life and the world.

Guru Nanak was thus more than a mere denouncer of the corrupt and evil practices current in his age. His was not merely a protest against religious formalism, as it is hastily

22. *The Yogi and the Commissar and Other Essays*, London, 1960, p. 11.

23. *Ibid*, p. 256.

generalized, but a plan, a plan to let the inner reality in man operate the crooked bypaths of life to more straightness and to make the temper of the age inwardly heroic. What revolution could be greater than this peaceful revolution started by Guru Nanak to break down barriers between man and man, to enable them to face the contemporary nightmare with spiritual fearlessness and moral courage and to build a social order that is fused with an elevating sense of the timeless and the temporal ?

At a time when religion had lost its inner eye and man's vision had become very narrow, Guru Nanak cured the sightlessness of religion and imparted a new perspective to man, enabling him to realise a sense of a spiritual order, of unique divine Effulgence at the heart of Creation. Such a perception results in a feeling of unity and love of our fellowmen, bringing much-needed peace and security on our planet. And Guru Nanak's creative vision was an adventure in this direction. His break with formal ceremonialism was more than a mere reformation ; it was a revolution, a non-violent clash between convention and progress, between complacent order and adventure. The more we delve deep into his life-histories and poetic compositions, the more we find that we owe to him not only many stimulating ideas but also many fundamental insights.

Flowering of the Creative Vision

After the death of Guru Nanak, his nine spiritual successors carried on the torch of his creative vision, illuminating dark corners of the human mind, rejuvenating the human spirit with ambrosial words of wisdom and songs of devotion. There began the spiritual transformation of their followers, the Sikhs, through self-purification, self-elevation and an uprightness of character that is born of self-transfiguration in the process of dedicated service to God and man. But spiritual transformation to flower as a way of life must possess a dynamism to face the dangers of external aggression in some form or the other. And

the dangers and threats came from the most powerful quarter, the ruling Mughal Emperors. The succeeding Guru rose equal to the occasion. Their diagnosis of moral perplexity, of political oppression, of the deepening spiritual crisis led them not to retreat, like Siddhas into the Himalayan private solitudes ; instead, they became increasingly committed to the truth, to righteousness and spiritual freedom, and became ready to face the stresses that were inseparable from the political condition. Instead of bending down to the Mughal will, Guru Arjun Dev, the fifth Master, and Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Master, suffered heroically, fearlessly and courageously. They suffered as well as sacrificed their lives in the cause of truth, justice, righteousness and religious freedom. From creative suffering to creative sacrifice was a glorious step which culminated in the armed defence of religious freedom and all that was precious in the domain of humanistic and spiritual values. The sixth Master, Guru Hargobind and the tenth Master, Guru Gobind Singh actually fought against the Mughal armies.

In their fight against political baseness, against aggressive passions, imperial lusts and horrors, the Gurus and their followers showed their true spiritual mettle. All the finest qualities—heroism, fearlessness, courage, tenacity, serenity of disposition in the face of torments and tortures, and a will to lead a life consecrated to higher values, a will to embrace martyrdom with a smiling face—came to the fore. Thus the quiet revolution started by Guru Nanak in its progressive phases became a potential basis of freedom for man, freedom from tyranny, freedom from injustice, freedom from ruthless religious conversion, but it did not cease to draw upon the inner resources of truth, the inner dimension of the mind which recognises the moral and spiritual consciousness as a fact. When the wheel of history revealed the ugliest face of religious fanaticism and barbarism, the tenth Master, Guru Gobind Singh unified his followers' energies and emotions, social, moral, spiritual, into a formidable force to stem the tide of Imperial tyranny. Guru Nanak's creative vision thus reached its full flowering in a challenging but disciplined religious force to fulfil the obligation of history.

But this full flowering of the Guru's creative vision was possible only after the climax it had attained in the unique martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur. And to Guru Tegh Bahadur we shall now turn, for an understanding of his personality, vision and sacrifice.

PART II

CLIMAX OF THE CREATIVE VISION

CHAPTER II

GURU TEGH BAHADUR

Towards Creative Sacrifice

Life of Guru Tegh Bahadur (1621-1675), the Ninth Guru, is a deathless saga of spiritual greatness, of amazing self-discipline and self-conquest, of inspiring courage and lofty resolution, of selfless service and creative sacrifice. It is creative in the sense that it releases a new dimension of truth and freedom for man. Self-discipline is pre-requisite to creative sacrifice. With its mergence, the higher aspects of man's nature, the deeper faculties of his soul come into play. The man of self-discipline then works in a spirit of selflessness and is ready to offer his life as a sacrifice to the Supreme Lord of the Universe or for the supreme cause of truth in which he sees the working of the Will of the Supreme. It requires exceptional energy, strong will and enlightened fearlessness before such a creative sacrifice is made.

Guru Tegh Bahadur's whole life was a preparation for this big event, the creative sacrifice. It was a psychological move from the formation of his creative personality, through a process of inner discipline—truthful living, forbearance, tolerance, self poise, kindness and contemplation—to the unique expression of his will to embrace martyrdom in the cause of truth, justice, religious freedom and righteousness.

Formative Years

Guru Tegh Bahadur was born on 1st April, 1621 A.D. at Amritsar. He was the youngest son of the Warrior Guru Hargobind, the fifth spiritual successor of Guru Nanak, the sixth Guru and the grandson of the first Sikh Martyr, Guru Arjun, the fifth Guru. He had, from his very childhood, a meditative frame of mind, a reserve and detached disposition.

He loved the solitude not for its own sake but for his love to meditate on God's name. Even at the age of five, he used to enter Samadhi, and his father made a prophesy that he would be a great spiritual leader and a mighty hero. His love of contemplative seclusion helped him to probe the depth of his nature, to explore the inner divine reality and to get into enduring contact with it. He was also endowed with a sensitive and receptive mind and was quite active in responding to good influences and high heroic qualities around him. His father, Guru Hargobind, exercised major early influence on him, and he lived with him for twenty two years. These were, indeed, formative years of his mental and spiritual growth.

At his father's house he imbibed the virtue of humanity, the inner urge to attain self-enlightenment, the spirit of fearlessness and fortitude, of self-dedication and of deep faith in the Divine. He developed aspirations towards a life of selfless service, and sacrifice, with a moral and spiritual courage to abide by the Cosmic Will. He learnt how one could become fearless by relying on the strength and power of God. Armed with this spiritual wisdom, which he later on realized creatively through meditation, he emerged as a dynamic figure to hold Guru Nanak's sceptre and to meet the crisis for which he was being prepared by Nature.

But it may be pointed out that his education was not exclusively religious ; it was secular too. He learnt the use of various weapons and developed necessary skill in horsemanship. He had witnessed and even participated in the battle of Amritsar in which his father fought fearlessly, courageously and perseveringly against the Mughal army. The battle symbolised for him the battle for Dharma (righteousness) against the unprovoked boisterous outbreak of fanatic imperial passion.

Another event which produced a lasting impression on his mind was the death of his brother, Baba Atal. Baba Atal, as a young boy, had performed a miracle by bringing his dead friend to life. His father, Guru Hargobind, did not approve of miracle performing feat and as a result of it, Baba Atal buried himself alive. From this incident young Tegn Bahadur learnt the

spiritual necessity of complying with the Cosmic Will than stooping to the act of working a miracle. And he adhered to this conviction in the time of crisis when a miracle performance on his part could have appeased the relentless Moghul Emperor, Aurangzeb.

There is another incident of his early youth which shows an extraordinary practical nature of the young mystic saint. It is said that a mother brought her ailing son to him for a cure through his blessed, powerful prayer. The young mystic asked her to come on the fourth day. On the fourth day as the lady came, the young mystic told her not to allow the boy to take jaggery as was his habit. The boy was completely cured after a few days. The mother enquired of Baba Tegn Bahadur why he had not told her earlier and postponed it for three days. Forthwith came the reply : "I myself was in the habit of taking jaggery. During these three days I tried to give up this habit and I succeeded in it. How could I prescribe the giving up of a habit to which I myself was addicted ?"

This incident reveals an early deep foundation of truthfulness on which his subsequent career was to be built. He indeed would not preach that he had not practised. This reminds us of Yuddhistra, a great Pandava, well-known for his truthfulness. It is said that as a young student, Yuddhistra was given a lesson by his Guru ; the lesson contained the words : "Speak the truth". While other sons of Kauravas and even his own brothers, the Pandavas, committed the lesson to memory in a few days, it took Yuddhistra several days to master the lesson. When asked by the Guru, Yuddhistra replied ; "How could I say that I grasped this lesson unless I myself had trained my mind to speak the truth ?"

Anyway, we find that there was a profound moral integrity in Baba Tegn Bahadur's nature. He grew in great moral and spiritual atmosphere at his father's house.

Meditation Cell

During the next twenty years, he chose the life of silent but active contemplation at Baba Bakala, a village in Amritsar

district. It was not a life of self-mortification but a life of deep devotion to God and of dedication to His Will. While living in the heart of the village, with his family, he was in fact, filling the deepest layers of his being with the ambrosial breath of the Divine Name. This let the spirit of Guru Nanak's creative vision surge in him with all its depth and beauty. The psychology of Meditation is that it helps to establish a sort of telepathic communication between the soul, the inner reality, the principle of our being, and the integrating principle of the universe. To live in a meditation cell is not to escape from the life of action but to explore the fundamental nature of life, for meditation is a method for realizing the truth in the broadest perspective of eternity.

Broadly speaking, there are two types of meditation—meditation at its height and meditation in its fullness. Those who practise the former retreat from the world of appearances into an entirely transcendental Nirvana. They have no concern with human relations. Those who practise the latter form of meditation, they attain the height of spiritual experiences, have glimpses of timeless reality, but step down from the height to bless the suffering humanity. Guru Nanak laid stress on the second form, meditation in its fullness. To the Yogis, Siddhas and saints he presented the ideal of spiritual attainment through meditation on God's name and its use for the good of humanity. He reconciled the spiritual perception with a proper concern for human needs. Guru Nanak's spiritual tradition thus holds that after attaining the divine height, one has to lift others from darkness to liberate the world. In *Japji* Guru Nanak says : "There can be no love of God without active service". Baba Tegh Bahadur's long spell of silent meditation purified and perfected his will. Meditation on God's name is a means of inner purification and of attuning self-will to the will of God. Through it Baba Tegh Bahadur entered the realms of divine knowledge and truth (*Gyan-khand* and *Sach-khand*) where he had a clear knowledge of the working of the Divine Will in the universe. The truth of the Ultimate Reality dawned upon him and his personality was perfumed with the fragrance of spiritual experience that came from within.

Spiritual realization thus must issue out in action in the larger interest of humanity. Meditation on God's name is essential. How could one be a true preceptor, a true Guru, without realizing the True One? The world is saved not by the armchair drummers of human welfare but by those who rise above dark egotistic moods by participating in the brightness of their being. Through meditation Baba Tegh Bahadur achieved inner enlightenment and became eminently fit for carrying on the torch of Guru Nanak's creative vision. None else but a person installed in light could be installed on the spiritual throne of Guru Nanak.

Discovery of the Guru

Guru Hari Kishan, the Eighth Master, on the eve of his death, had prophetically announced that his successor would be found at Baba Bakala. Accordingly, there sprang up a score of posers and pretenders who proclaimed themselves as successors to Guru Hari Kishan at Bakala. Ram Rai, the nephew of Guru Tegh Bahadur, and Dhir Mal, a Sodhi Khatri were the chief aspirants to Guruship. This gave rise to a wave of exploitation. The devoted Sikhs were puzzled over it and the innocent ones were even falling victims to it. But Baba Tegh Bahadur, with his perfect devotion to God had completely identified himself with His Will. He asserted no claim because his mind was full of calm detachment, divine illumination and contentment that was beyond ordinary comprehension. Even when the *Hazuri Sangat*, headed by the Diwan of Guru Hari Kishan's durbar, acknowledged Baba Tegh Bahadur as the Ninth Guru, the Guru accepted the honour in utter humility with the remark: "The call of the Almighty cannot be disobeyed". But he accepted the spiritual succession on the condition that they would not publically proclaim him the Guru, because he did not like to be dragged into the mire of competition with the imposters who were employing nefarious tactics to exploit people. This gesture speaks eloquently of his true detachment, and is a fine manifestation of his inner serenity and self-elevation born of the practical realisation of the supreme doctrine of *Hukam* enunciated by Guru Nanak. True self-

realization is annulment of self-will and the fulfilment of God's will or purpose on the earth. "Every one is within His *Hukam* and none is out of it. He who understands this *Hukam* can never talk in ego". Guru Tegn Bahadur by complete adherence to His Order and Will had achieved a new equilibrium in his personality and had thus practically shown a very high sense of dedication to the Supreme.

The emergence of Makhan Shah, a rich merchant, on the Bakala scene, where a sort of Guru industry had been set up by the false gurus, is one of the brilliant episodes in the Sikh History. Twenty two imposters had pitched their tents, and their agents were busy in attracting people to their respective camps. This reminds us of the Bible's famous words :

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.¹

But who would discriminate the real sheep from the wolves? How would the public come to know about the true Guru? This dilemma was resolved by the providential appearance of Makhan Shah at Bakala.

The Makhan Shah episode merits serious attention. Apart from the fact that it is full of dramatic interest, it has a four-fold significance. It reveals the silent but invisible working of the saving grace of Baba Tegn Bahadur, the benign, sterling qualities of his head and heart in dealing with the wicked imposters, and his tender and positive insistence on the potentialities of love and forgiveness whereby he enlarged the inner dimension of his followers. The episode also exposes the filthy falseness of fraudulent, gold-seeking gurus.

Makhan Shah, a wealthy trader, had come to Bakala with the specific purpose of offering 500 gold coins to the Guru by way of gratitude and fulfilment of his vow. It is said that earlier his ship carrying merchandise was caught up in a storm, and he prayed to the Guru in his heart of hearts to save his ship and in lieu of it he promised to offer 500 gold coins. The

1. Sermon on the Mount.

Guru's saving grace came into operation. The ship was saved and Makhan Shah, with his entourage, came to Bakala to fulfil his promise. But he was surprised to see so many camps, each claiming to be the abode of the genuine Guru. It was all uncertainty and confusion at Bakala. Makhan Shah hit upon a plan to test the genuineness of each camp-dwelling guru. He would visit each camp, offer two gold coins to each Guru, instead of the stipulated sum. The true Guru, his erstwhile true saviour, would divine his mind and would not accept two coins but the exact amount that he had promised to offer. When the scheme was put to practice, the imposters were glad to accept two coins from him. Makhan Shah became depressed.

On learning from a village boy that there was another guru not in a camp but in a house, Makhan Shah visited the specified house. Here the atmosphere was different. He could not enter without permission. He was at last allowed to see Baba Tegh Bahadur in his meditation cell. Reaching there he placed two gold coins before the Guru and bowed down. The Guru at once remarked, "Why are you deceiving me? You promised to offer five hundred gold coins when your ship was sinking, and now you are offering only two." Makhan Shah could not contain himself with joy. He had discovered the Guru. He was ecstatic over his discovery. He went back to his camp, brought the requisite number of coins, offered them to the Guru and bent down his head in great reverence. The Guru blessed him. Deeply delighted over his discovery of the Master, Makhan Shah wanted to release the happy news to the pious and devoted Sikhs who were still in search of the Guru and were being misled by unscrupulous exploiters. He, therefore, proclaimed from the house top, "I have found the true Guru, I have found the true Guru." On hearing this the Sikhs assembled to pay homage to the great Guru. The Will of God worked mysteriously and Makhan Shah was made an instrument to bring Guru Tegh Bahadur before the long-awaited *Sangat* (congregation).

Well-poised Personality

As already mentioned, Guru Tegh Bahadur preached what he practised. The very first hymn that he sang, when he came

out of his meditation call to greet the *Sangat*, was a remarkable illustration of his well-moulded, well-poised personality :

“The light of God shines in him who considers gold as good as dust, who indulges not in slander and flattery, and who is indifferent to all praise or blame.”²

Had not the Guru himself shown infinite patience, infinite self-control, infinite goodness in considering gold as dust, in his attitude to the Guru-posers in general and to Dhir Mal and his masands in particular ?

While all the posers had fled away with announced discovery of the Guru, Dhir Mal was filled with uncontrollable jealousy. He instigated a masand to put an end to the Guru's life. The Guru was attacked in his house. A bullet was fired at him but the Guru escaped with a minor injury. The masand seized the movable property of the Guru, together with the gold coins offered by Makhan Shah, and decamped to the house of Dhir Mal. But the Guru remained calm. Makhan Shah, with his reverential zeal, could not brook the inhuman treatment meted out to the Guru. He, with the help of his men, invaded Dhir Mal's house and recovered the Guru's property. Dhir Mal's property also was seized and both Dhir Mal and the masand, the plunderer, were brought before the Guru. Both the offenders begged for mercy. The Guru in his good gracious way pardoned them. All things belonging to Dhir Mal were returned to him. Makhan Shah was advised to keep restraint. Guru Tegh Bahadur thus became a living light of the true spirit of Guru Nanak, and taught people to follow the right path.

Mark the contrast between Guru Tegh Bahadur, the embodiment of nobility, serenity, love and forgiveness, and Dhir Mal, the unscrupulous and callous imposter. On the one side there were forces of love and light which raised man to the height of the spirit, on the other side there were wickedness and viciousness which reduced man to the sub-human level. On one side was the magnanimity of the Guru's mind, and on the other side

2. *Sorath*, M. 9. *Adi Granth* p. 633.

there was the narrowness of a heart, darkened by acquisitive passions.

Democratic Vision and Social Work

Guru Tegh Bahadur possessed not only a lofty humanistic temper, but also had a democratic view of *Sangat*. His first address to the *Sangat*, after the announcement of discovery made by Makhan Shah, savours of a truly democratic approach. The very first sentence that he uttered was : "I am here at the will of the *Sangat*". This shows that the Guru was well aware of the importance of the people in the new social set-up.

The Guru founded the town of Anandpur, and later on undertook extensive travels all over North India and even visited the distant region of Bengal and Assam where he spread the gospel of his faith. Raja Ram Singh, son of the late Raja Jai Singh, had sought the Guru's blessings during an expedition to Bengal on which he was sent by the Emperor. The peaceful compromise brought about by the Guru between the Raja of Kamrup and Raja Ram Singh to avoid the battle was a remarkable feat of his sagacity and the success of his mission of peace.

His keen interest in the social and economic welfare of people is clear from the fact that he financed the digging of hundreds of wells in the Punjab, Haryana, U.P., Bihar and Bengal. Thus the Guru had the good of the people at heart and his spiritual enlightenment issued forth in an active process of economic, social, moral and spiritual well-being of humanity.

Challenge of History

The challenge of history which the Guru had to meet was inherent in the conditions of his times. The Muslim State in India being entirely subordinate to the Church, believed in the orthodox ideal of waging war (*jihad*) against infidels. "The murder of the infidels (*Kafir-Kushi*) is counted a merit in Islam."³ "The conversion of the entire population to Islam and the extinction of every form of dissent, is the ideal of the Muslim

3. Jadunath Sarkar, *History of Aurangzeb*, Vol. III, p. 256.

State".⁴ According to this ideal "non-muslims (*Zimmis*) are not citizens of the State".⁵ They have to undergo political and social disabilities and pay a toll-tax (*jaziya*), to secure the right of exercising their religion.

The enlightened and liberal kings were of course against conversions by force. Emperor Akbar was against "forcible conversions".⁶ He abolished *jaziya* and showed considerable tolerance to non-Muslims. In his sixth year, Jahangir issued an order against forcible conversions to Islam.⁷ But Aurangzeb who reigned from A.D. 1658 to 1707 A.D. pursued his policy of religious persecution with fanatic zeal. The manner he had usurped his throne by throwing his father into prison and by killing his brothers, Dara⁸ and Murad, are well-known facts in history. In order to recover public respect he "posed as the champion of Islamic orthodoxy"⁹ and began to win the favour of *Ulemas* and Islamic priests by waging a relentless *jihad* against non-Muslims. This resulted in orders for destruction of the temples of the Hindus and discriminatory treatment against them.

Even before accession to the throne, as a viceroy of Gujrat, Aurangzeb had converted the temple of Chintaman in Ahmedabad into a mosque. In his eleventh year of reign, on 9th April, 1669, "The Emperor ordered the governors of all the provinces to demolish the schools and temples of the infidels and strongly

4. Ibid, pp. 249-50.

5. *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol. I, p. 959.

6. *Akbar Nama*, Text, Vol. II, p. 159.

7. *Tuzk-i-Jahangir*, Text, Vol. I, p. 101.

8. When Jahanara visited Aurangzeb in her bid to reconcile her brother and also expressing the wish of the Emperor to partition the Empire among brothers, Aurangzeb said to his sister : "Dara is an infidel to Islam and a friend to the Hindus, he must be extirpated for the sake of True Faith and the peace of the realm. I cannot visit the Emperor before concluding the business"—Aqil Khan Razi, *Waqiat-i-Alamgiri*, pp. 59-61.

9. Sarkar, *Aurangzeb*, Vol. III, p. 117.

put down their teachings and religious practices.¹⁰ As a result of this order, wanton destruction of Hindu places of worship took place throughout the country from 1669 to 1705. The Vishwanath temple of Benaras was demolished sometimes in August 1669, and in its place a mosque was built.¹¹ The temple of Gopi Nath at Banaras was also demolished about the same time.¹² In January, 1670, in the month of Ramzan, the religious-minded Emperor ordered the demolition of Keshva Rai Temple at Mathura. His officers accomplished it in a short time. A grand mosque was built on its site at a vast expenditure.¹³ The author of the *Maasir-i-Alamgiri* ejaculates : "Praised be the God of the great faith of Islam that in the auspicious region of this destroyer of infidelity and turbulence, such a marvellous and (seemingly) impossible feat was accomplished. On seeing this (instance of the) strength of the Emperor's faith and the grandeur of his devotion to God, the Rajahs felt suffocated and they stood in amazement like statues facing the walls."¹⁴ In short, as a result of the general order for the destruction of the Hindu places of worship, temples of Malwa, Orissa, Khandela, Jodhpur, Udaipur, Amber, Citor, Mewar, Haidarabad, Ujjain, Golconda and Maharashtra were raised to the ground".¹⁵

Moreover, in pursuance of his discriminatory policy against the Hindus, Aurangzeb excluded the Hindus from public offices. In 1671 the Emperor issued orders that Hindus were not to be employed in the Revenue Department as assistants to various heads.¹⁶ Earlier on 9th May, 1667 he had abolished the custom duty altogether in case of the Muslims though on the Hindus it was retained at the same level of 5%.¹⁷ Moreover, the Hindu

10. *Maasir-i-Alamgiri*, p. 81.

11. *Ibid*, p. 88.

12. U.N. Day, *Some Aspects of Medieval Indian History*, p. 223.

13. *Maasir-i-Alamgiri*, pp. 95-96.

14. *Maasir-i-Alamgiri*, p. 96.

15. Sarkar, *op. cit.* Appendix V.

16. *Maasir-i-Alamgiri*, p. 528.

17. U.N. Day, *Some Aspects of Medieval Indian History*, p. 221.

festivals of Diwali and Holi "were ordered to be held only outside bazars and under some restraints."¹⁸

It is strange that none raised a voice of protest against all these discriminatory measures against the Hindus. Mirza Raja Jai Singh Kachwaha, Raja Jaswant Singh Rathore and the whole host of Hindu and Rajput Chiefs in the employ of the state did not dare to raise their finger.¹⁹ The Rajputs did not protest because they were too much self-centred and what mattered to them was "their *gaddi* and personal gain. Their religion had failed to infuse in them that spirit which Islam infused among its believers".²⁰ Thus "Aurangzeb was absolutely certain that whatever steps he might take to make the state based entirely on the lines of the *Shariat*, there would be no opposition from the Hindus who by then had become supine and completely resigned to their lot of suffering and degradation." If he had "received opposition just when he launched his policy of discrimination against the Hindus, he might have reconsidered his measure and would have stopped at a certain point".²¹

It is against this historical background that the true significance and impact of Guru Tegh Bahadur's supreme sacrifice should be judged. The crying need of the hour was the appearance of a man of loftier stature who possessed moral strength, inner discipline, a sense of high mission and heroic determination, a selfless spirit of dedication and of detachment from earthly gains so that he could fearlessly come forward to voice a protest against forcible conversions and violations of the human rights. And such a man was Guru Tegh Bahadur, the enlightened saint who 'inspired no fear, and who had no fear of others' and who had inner reserves to meet the mounting crisis, as if nature was preparing him for the great mission.

18. Sarkar, op. cit., p. 279.

19. U.N. Day, op. cit., p. 222.

20. Ibid, pp. 228, 230.

21. Ibid, p. 230.

CHAPTER III

THE EPOCH-MAKING SACRIFICE

Call for Sacrifices

When Guru Tegh Bahadur was spreading his gospel of love and truth, India's political horizon was red with religious fanaticism. Aurangzeb, the ruling Mughal Emperor, had created a terror among the Hindus on account of widespread religious persecutions and conversions at the swordpoint. The terror assumed a most horrifying reality when it was known that Aurangzeb wanted an *en masse* conversion of Hindus into Muslims by a planned process of converting Brahmans into Muslims and thereby he aimed at the creation of Dar-ul-Islam. This was a signal for the liquidation of Hinduism. Who could resist or restrain the mighty egocentric holder of power? The situation became serious in Kashmir where Sher Afghan Khan, the Governor, in compliance with the Emperor's general order, set about conversion of the Hindus by force and massacred those who refused to forsake the faith of their fore-fathers. There was no constitution to protect the rights of the people. The will of the sovereign was the law of the land. At such a critical juncture, a delegation of Kashmiri Pundits approached Guru Tegh Bahadur for help. They narrated their tale of woe and implored for protection in their hour of real distress. The Guru felt great compassion towards them. But how could the determined and dreadful hand of religious fanaticism be checked? The Guru plunged into a deep thoughtful mood.

In the meanwhile his young son Gobind Rai appeared on the scene. He asked his father why he was in a pensive mood. The Guru replied, "Son! You do not know that the country is oppressed by the Mughal Emperor. Hindu Dharma is in peril. The situation is eased only if a holy or noble soul offers himself

at the altar of Dharma". At this young Gobind Rai remarked, "Dear father ! who is holier and richer in nobility than you ?" On hearing these words from the lips of his young son, Guru Tegh Bahadur was delighted to see his detached and daring spirit.

Momentous Decision

The Guru then made a momentous decision of great historical significance. The saint who had earlier saved the ship of Makhan Shah on the stormy waters, now decided to offer his life in order to stem the cruel, imperial tide which threatened to engulf Hinduism. It was only through such a sacrifice that the moral law could be set in motion and wrong undone.

The Guru told the Kashmiri Pundits to go and convey to Aurangzeb to convert him first to Islam. If he succeeded in doing so, they all would follow suit. The Kashmiri Pundits were over-joyed to hear the decision of the Guru. They knew that the Guru was a saint of deep integrity and would never succumb to temptations or be overawed by torments and tortures.

There is a strong sense of the moral dimension of freedom in the Guru's decision to help the Brahmans out of their impasse. It adds a unique richness and depth to his creative personality. His sublime awareness of his own freedom and moral responsibility combined with a spontaneous readiness to suffer and to sacrifice his life for removing others' sufferings is an unprecedented act in the history of humanity. The Guru's selfless, God-centred personality fully peeped out of his grand free choice. It marked a contrast with Aurangzeb's approach. While the despotic rule of Aurangzeb affirmed the rule of prejudice and passion, the rule of a master over slaves, the Guru asserted the rule of the soul over the body, the rule of mind and reason over the human passion and extended the principle of compassion to his afflicted countrymen. On one side was the political power, the instrument of exploitation and high-handedness, on the other was the strength of high-

mindedness, of Dharma (righteousness) to liberate Hinduism from the increasing suffocation of religious intolerance.

Encounter with Aurangzeb

The Kashmiri Brahmins who had found in the Guru a true saviour acted in accordance with the Guru's advice and made a representation to the Emperor. Aurangzeb sent two officials to the Punjab to summon the Guru to Delhi. The Guru taking with him only five of his devoted Sikhs including Bhai Mati Das, Bhai Gurdita and Bhai Dyala marched towards Delhi by stages. On the way he preached his gospel of fearlessness, truth, freedom and righteousness to the people. At Agra he was arrested and was taken to Delhi.

The Guru's encounter with Aurangzeb is of great cultural significance. To the bigoted Emperor who believed that Islam was the only true religion on the earth and who wished that all non-muslims should be converted to Islam, the Guru gave the message of catholicity and tolerance. He told him that there were more than one road leading to the palace of God, the true King. The Guru was offered the exalted priesthood of Islam in the event of his becoming a Musalman. The Guru spurned the offer and pointed out that conversion by force was wrong because religion was a matter of the heart. Aurangzeb threatened the Guru that he would be tortured mercilessly if he did not embrace Islam. The Guru emphatically told the Emperor that he could not impose one religion on the world. The Guru thus took a strong moral stand and championed the human rights in those barbaric times.

Heroic Sufferings

The Guru stood against the evil of persecuting people on account of their religion, the worst evil in history which has taken the toll of millions of lives. He became the prop of the powerless pundits. He knew the consequence of such a stand. He was oppressed and afflicted but he did not accept conversion. He did not demand a personal relief from suffering. He suffered heroically but such was his extraordinary self-poise that he "uttered not a groan."

The concept of the suffering saint is green in the pages of history. Christ too suffered crucifixion and bore men's griefs and carried their sorrows. But the Guru not only himself suffered but was made to see the terrible sufferings of his devoted ones—Bhai Mati Das and Bhai Dayala. Bhai Mati Dass was publicly sawn alive into two halves. Bhai Dayala was boiled alive in a cauldron. Barbarism could not go further. The gigantic horror of the situation did not make the Guru swerve from the path of righteousness. He could not be frightened into acceptance of conversion. He himself was locked in an iron cage that had, thorn-like, sharp nails bulging inside it. He had to stand in a stooping posture. But his soul knew no stooping.

The Holy Martyrdom

Aurangzeb was led by his conversion complex and inhuman impulses. When temptations and tortures failed to convert the Guru to Islam, he became furious and issued orders for the execution of the Guru. The Guru, on learning the order, became ready to cast off his body, impermanent and perishable, without any remorse or tinge of hate and anxiety. He was taken out of the iron cage. He took his ablutions at a neighbouring well. As he began to say his last prayers, he asked the executioner to strike off his neck when he bent down at the conclusion of the prayer. He recited the holy prayer of *Japji* in full serenity and faced the executioner's sword on his neck to fulfil his great mission. Thus Guru Tegh Bahadur was publicly beheaded near Chandni Chowk in Delhi. But the moral victory was of the Guru who had willingly suffered the fatal severance of the head from the body for the sake of righteousness and for the stricken Hindu humanity. Guru Gobind Singh has beautifully described the unprecedented martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur in the following words :

He protected the frontal marks and sacrificial threads
of the Hindus.

And displayed great bravery in this Kali age.

When he put an end to his life for the sake of holy men,

He gave his head, but uttered not a groan.

He suffered martyrdom for the sake of religion ;
He gave his head but swerved not from his determination.¹

The Guru's martyrdom was the fulfilment of the purpose of his life. He offered the highest sacrifice to shake the throne of injustice, to protect the oppressed millions. It was his love of the suffering humanity to the point of self-effacement. Sacrifice, in fact, was the need of the hour to kindle a sense of living courage, to re-vitalize the faith, to rejuvenate the spirit of chivalry and to re-orchestrate the scattered energies of the people.

The Holy Martyrdom—Its Impact and Significance

The impact of Guru Tegh Bahadur's sacrifice was significant and far-reaching. The Emperor read in it the impossibility of converting the entire mass of the Hindus into Islam. Such was its creative potency that it released energy that changed the outlook of the people of the Punjab and gave them strength to go forward under the dynamic leadership of Guru Gobind Singh. In fact, with the holy martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur a point was reached where resistance to imperial tyranny became imperative. It awakened Guru Gobind Singh to the grim reality of the Mughal domination and gave him a new historic mission to meet the challenge of the Mughal oppression. He created the heroic order of the Khalsa and breathed life into the dead masses of the Punjab.

Guru Gobind Singh took the sword in defence of Dharma and generated a new spirit of idealism and heroism in history. He invoked God as Murari (Destroyer of the Demon Mura) as Sarb-Loh (The All-Steel), as Kharg-ketu (Holder of the Sword-Flag) and took the sword against the tyrants of his times. This was not against but in complete accord with the inherent dynamism of the creative vision released by Guru Nanak.

1. *Bichitra Natak*, Chap. V.

Guru Nanak too called God the Destroyer of Evil (Asur Sanghar). At another place he says :

To set one's foot forward on the path (of true love) one should not hesitate to give up one's freedom.²

For a man of God mere pursuing the path of righteousness is not enough. He should defend righteousness and suffer and even sacrifice his life for it. Guru Nanak had been a clear-eyed witness of the conversion of the Hindus into Muslims :

Under the force of circumstance people have now to accept the Muslim creed, or to practise deception (by pretending to accept it).³

The wheel of history changed active conversion to forcible conversion, which was repugnant to the human spirit and free dignity of man. Hence sacrifice was needed to save Dharma from tyrants and to create a new race of men, God-oriented but lion-hearted, prepared to die under the sword as well as to wield the sword for the protection of all that is noble and good and holy.

Guru Nanak has asserted that evil must be resisted on all fronts, in all forms. "The essence of evil", says Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, "lies in invading what is regarded as another's sphere."⁴ Religious persecution is evil. The task of a saint in Sikhism is not to liberate only himself, but others too. For this purpose he has to fight spiritual darkness without. The spectacle of a saintly personality fighting oppression to make the world safe for spiritual democracy is in consonance with the law of spiritual creativity. When the dark night of evil envelops the earth, when the lights of truth and righteousness are blotted out, it is the duty of the saints, pure in heart and devoted in spirit, to spread as well as to safeguard the values which constitute the distinguishing marks of human greatness and perfection. This is the crown and culmination of Guru Nanak's

2. *Adi Granth*, p. 1412.

3. Ram Kali, M. 1.

4. *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 103.

creative vision. The loving contemplation of the divine Lord is made not an escape from history but brought in relation to history to purify its meaning and purpose.

It required a superhuman act of will to resist tyranny unleashed by powerful Mughal Emperors, and Guru Gobind Singh by wielding the sword to fight oppression and unrighteousness generated a new spirit of Dharma-oriented chivalry in history. To lift people out of their spineless servility and servitude, to inspire them to fight against the powers of darkness, to rouse them to live with dignity, to "make the sparrows hunt down hawks", to "make one person dominate over a legion (a lakh and a quarter)"—all this was indeed an uphill task and Guru Gobind Singh, with his flaming faith in the triumph of Good and God's Will, performed it successfully. To bring about such a glorious transformation of human character, he worked a great miracle in history.

True saintly life does not consist in mere eliminating self-will but in fighting the lusts and hungers of evil men in power, which envelop the world in darkness of exploitation and violence. Who will not recognise the need to restrain murderers ? A man of God who has the vision of the eternal Lord and submits to His Will does not overlook the importance of life and history. He rather gives a creative expression to the fullness of his life which is the life of God.

Guru Tegh Bahadur's Martyrdom heralded the dawn of a fine heroic temper which shaped the course of history of the Punjab in particular and released a living political emotion, expressive of the voice of the awakened soul of India in general. It opened a new dimension of human toughness and endurance, of a righteous revolutionary will to fight against aggression, injustice and tyranny.

Guru Tegh Bahadur was thus not trapped in history ; he rather projected an unexampled image of his daring and creative religious leadership on the historical horizon.

Philosophical Implications of the Guru's Martyrdom

We find that there are three major philosophical considerations implicit in the Guru's creative martyrdom : an enlightened acceptance of the challenge of history, the holiness of the will to sacrifice and the refusal to perform a miracle. No estimate of the Guru's sacrifice would be complete unless a proper appraisal of these intrinsic views is made, for the weight and vitality of the Guru's response to the historical crisis basically depends upon the quality of the vision that is inherent in it.

Meeting the Challenge of History

In the splendid act of sacrifice of Guru Tegh Bahadur we see the unlocking of the reservoirs of spiritual energy to meet the affront to national honour. To put up with tyranny is to suffer humiliation. Aurangzeb had inflicted a series of tyrannies on the Hindus by reimposing *Jaziya*, by demolishing their places of worship and by banning to teach and follow their religious practices. That there was a wave of resentment among the Hindus is clear from the fact that thousands of Hindus were put into jail and thousands were massacred for not forsaking the faith of their forefathers. But the fact remains that there was no idea of nationhood at that time, and no national leadership to turn their isolated resistance into a people's movement. At this juncture the Guru's decision to offer his life as a sacrifice had a great historical significance. Since it was conveyed to Aurangzeb through the Pundits that the Guru should be first converted to Islam and the entire mass of Hindus would follow his example, it signified a clear-cut recognition of Guru Tegh Bahadur as a national religious leader, and the Guru came forward with a high sense of mission and fine resolve to redeem national honour.

It may be mentioned that the Guru being a man of God had no quarrel with the Muslims. In fact, he had several Muslim disciples and believed in religious co-existence. His decision to undergo sacrifice was his voice of protest against religious persecution which was morally unacceptable to him. His protest was against Aurangzeb's rule of injustice and oppression.

History bears testimony to the facts that Aurangzeb for grabbing power had thrown his father into prison and had killed his two brothers. He, in his fanatic religious zeal, had even killed Sarmad, a great Sufi Faqir. But when the Emperor's tyranny crossed all limits, the Guru stood as a bulwark against the onslaught of the imperial bigotry and protected the religious rights of the people. This act would obviously entail terrible sufferings and horrible tortures. But the Guru was willing to pay the price for religious freedom. He bore all sufferings with equanimity of spirit, with full faith in God and in the ultimate triumph of goodness. He gave up his life for the ideal, for faith, for human dignity and freedom.

It is not easy to insist on morality and righteousness before ruthless holders of power. The Guru met Aurangzeb with light of love, goodwill and truth in his mind, but Aurangzeb had no eyes for all that. It may be made clear that the Sikh Guru were not arm-chair spiritual teachers or philosophers. They were creative religious leaders who not only expounded their firmly realized principles concerning God, truth, virtue, and happiness but were also aware of the dark times of history in which they lived. So they had to confront the spiritual, moral, psychological, social and political issues directly. They had to face the multiple issues of choice and responsibility. Yet they met the challenges of history, without budging an inch from the path of righteousness.

The way Guru Tegh Bahadur met the challenge of history shows the triumph of self-enlightenment in action. It was a unique practical application of Guru Nanak's great wisdom in a situation triggered by the historical condition.

The Guru, in fact, practised what may be called spiritual ethics. It was a standard of conduct that involved self-surrender to the Cosmic Will, the laws of which he comprehended because he had attained self-enlightenment. His spiritual consciousness had interior relationship with the will of God. He had realised by virtue of his meditation that the world, a flow of time and events, was grounded in the Cosmic Soul which is all-pervading.

Guru Tegh Bahadur's resignation to the Will of God is not a stoic resignation but a positive acceptance of the Divine Will and Order. To realize the Divine Order in the universe is to overcome the assertive self or ego, the sense of time, and since the Guru had entered into higher consciousness of timelessness, he vanquished time by rising above its terror and trap. To surrender to the Divine Will or Order is not a matter of belief only. It is a matter of realisation, achieving the state of enlightenment when one's individuality becomes a part of the whole and works within the fold of the perfect universal order. It requires the disciplining of the will to merge one's will with the Will of God. This results in a total and radical transformation of consciousness. The Guru's enlightened consciousness was a living proof of his high degree of perfection in his character, the flowering of the creative aspect of his spiritual personality. It was such a spiritual ethic in action that countered the tyrant's measure to impose his fanatic will upon the Guru.

The Guru looked upon the will of God as the spirit of history that was to manifest itself. It is in this sense the Guru had faith in historical fulfilment. The Guru, in fact, had an intrinsic view of human history. For him, history was not merely a series of political events ; it had a meaningful process, a significant development in accordance with the Will divine, the Cosmic Will. The Divine Law is inescapable. Those who looked at the Guru's faith in the working of the Divine Will from the outside were of the opinion that the Guru should have saved his life by showing a miracle. But the Guru had a deeper glimpse of history, where his own sacrifice was required to further the evolution of history. He believed in the will of God manifesting itself as what is called historical inevitability. He, therefore, did not want to alter the events by showing a miracle.

Moreover, performance of a miracle would amount to changing of the Will (the laws) of God. The Guru believed that all happenings were in perfect order and the order created by God and sustained by his Will (Laws) could not be changed. The Order of God, in fact, represents the march of evolution,

and no miracle can change the design or course of evolution. Those persons who live on the surface are the prisoners of their private preferences and self-interests and cannot comprehend the great design : How everything is within the fold of the Divine Order. In fact, submission to the *Hukam* or the Will of God is an expression of supreme insight into the highest reality. In this state man rises above ego-centred thinking and leans upon the strength of the Lord, for he recognizes that only His Will (Moral Law) operates in the universe. Guru Nanak has finely put it :

The whole visible creation is the expression of His *Hukam*.

Through the *Hukam* the Bull is bearing the earth on his head.⁵

To surrender to the Divine Order is not an escape from but a spiritual conquest of the world.

Sikhism-its Relation to History

Sikhism has an organic relation to history ; it is an historic religion. It holds that the temporal process is sustained and unified by a spiritual principle, the Timeless Being, and therefore, it urges men to realize the purpose of existence, without turning their back upon it but by purifying it with the strength and sweatness of their inner development. It believes that history does not exclude the supra-rational and infra-rational forces. Good and evil both find social expression in the historical experience. Evil and falsehood must be resisted, asserted Guru Nanak. And he himself denounced all that was dehumanising in religious and social practices. A Guru, morally and spiritually evolved holy person, is not held, like Christ, as the fulfilment of historical event. He is considered to be an instrument in the hand of the Lord, the Divine Will, and carries its purpose forward. God, for the Sikh Gurus, though Timeless Absolute, is responsive. "An unresponsive God can be of no significance for religion or for history."⁶

5. *Adi Granth*, p. 1037.

6. Aban G. Widgery, *The Meanings of History*, p. 97.

In Sikhism to submit to the Will of God is not to abide in blissful passivity but to let the Will (the purpose) of God prevail. To put in modern terms, it means to let the law of evolution operate in shaping the history of mankind. This law of evolution is moral in its root. Hence moral forces appear in the form of holy persons to resist and challenge the rule of unrighteousness. This challenge is possible because God is also invoked as the Succourer of Right and Destroyer of Evil. It is this spiritual idealism which endows a man of God with power to resist evil and to wage war against it.

In *Bichitra Natak* Guru Gobind Singh while explicitly describing his mission, writes that God sent him for "the protection of Right, for spreading truth and for destroying wickedness". This reminds us of the *Bhagvad Gita's* famous verse :

For the protection of the virtuous, for the destruction of evil-doers, and for establishing Dharma (righteousness), I am born from age to age.⁷

But whereas this is a clear-cut reference to the incarnation of the Divine Lord for the destruction of wickedness from age to age, Sikhism does not believe in the theory that God is subject to incarnation. In *Japji* Guru Nanak explicitly speaks of God as "Timeless Being" and "Unincarnated". Sikhism, however, realistically believes that there is evil as well as suffering in the world. It is not God in human disguise but the man of God, the Saint, who takes on himself suffering to weed out evil from this world. So struggle, suffering and sacrifice are part of the life of the holy man who is anchored in God. And he suffers cheerfully in a spirit of resignation to His Will. Guru Arjun, the first martyred Sikh Guru, says :

In suffering I find joy !

It may be mentioned that a holy man's career is a perpetual struggle. First of all he has to conquer his mind by subduing the five evils—lust, anger, attachment, greed and pride—which

7. *The Bhagvad Gita*, IV, 8.

Guru Tegh Bahadur has alluded to several times in his poetry. Again, his next struggle begins in resisting the outer evil in the form of tyranny, injustice and persecution. The path of true love and saintliness is not the path of roses but that of hardships, and trials, of self-dedication and sacrifice. It requires "placing of one's head on the palm". To perform a miracle to save oneself amounts to deviation from the path. Guru Tegh Bahadur's refusal to show the miracle indicates his mature spiritual side, his deep inner illumination and his complete negation of self-interest. The true miracle is to endure suffering to persevere in the face of temptation, and true heroism lies in resisting aggressive evil to defend the meek and the weak. And Guru Tegh Bahadur performed this true miracle.

The Holiness of the Will-to-Sacrifice

Behind the will-to-sacrifice is the will to create a new order, for sacrifice is an effective means of giving shape and dimension to history. According to the law of ancient wisdom, when tyranny becomes overbearing, when injustice grips the land, sacrifice is needed to redress the imbalance of tyranny. Sacrifice is a powerful instrument for effecting a change.

The main problem facing the world has always been this : How to expel evil from man's nature. The solution to this problem has been suggested in the act of sacrifice. Sacrifice is the law of nature. All great ideals and human possibilities can be achieved through sacrifice. Through sacrifice it is possible to abolish evil from the world and to free mankind from the tyranny of men in power.

Behind The Guru's philosophy of sacrifice is the vision of the moral Law, the Law of action. Man's destiny is the fruit of his actions, performed during his lifetime or during his previous births. Guru Nanak has explicitly stated "As you sow so shall you reap."⁸ So according to the Law of Action, man remains in power so long his meritorious acts bear fruits. If he starts doing sinful deeds, his virtuous acts will start losing their

8. *The Adi Granth*, p. 4 .

force, and the power that he wields will start diminishing. Guru Arjan has said : Those who commit sin shall assuredly be ruined”⁹.

Guru Tegh Bahadur explicitly told Bhai Mati Dass in the prison that he would offer his life and in doing so he “would deprive the Mughals of sovereignty.” The idea behind it is that by killing a man of the saintly stature of the Guru, Aurangzeb would be committing a heinous crime. It will set the moral law in action ; as a result of it the good deeds done by him in the earlier births by virtue of which he had gained the royal power, would be exhausted and the process of the decline of his empire would come into operation. The Guru himself elucidated it : “He would turn to ashes the fruit of the meritorious acts which the Emperor had performed in former births, and by which he had obtained sovereignty.”¹⁰ This shows that Aurangzeb’s tyranny perpetrated on non-muslims had reached a point when a man of God had no other alternative but to lay down his life to put a halt to it by invoking the Moral Law operating in the Universe. This also throws light on the Guru’s great faith in the inevitability of human progress. Instead of submitting to the will of the evil-doer, he defied the might of an unjust Emperor by his soul-force.

As regards the importance of sacrifice, it is held in the world-religious tradition that God sacrificed himself to create Universe. In the Purusasukta of *Rigveda* we find the following declaration :

The Supreme Being sacrificed Himself for the purpose of creation.

The book ‘Revelation’ of the Christians records—“The sheep was sacrificed for the creation of the world”. The sheep is the symbol of God’s power. It is also mentioned in the ancient religious book *Zarathustra* of Iran :

9. Maru, M. 5.

10. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. III, p. 382.

When the earth was not Ahur Mazdan, Creator of Universe appeared with great religious sacrifice of Zarvan.

The Indian Puranic lore holds that Lord Shiva drank poison for the redemption of mankind. There is also a Puranic reference to the sacrifice of a saint named Dadhichi. It is said that when a powerful demon invaded heaven and routed the godly forces, it was predicted that the demon could be killed only with a weapon made out of the holy bones of the great ascetic saint, Dadhichi. Indra, accompanied by gods, approached Dadhichi and implored for help. Dadhichi readily agreed to give up his life for the establishment of righteousness.

Thus the ancient religious tradition holds that sacrifice is required not only for creating but also for sustaining the universe and for routing the forces of evil.

Refusal to show a Miracle

The Guru's refusal to show a miracle was not accidental ; it was an integral part of his approach to spirituality, an approach which is in keeping with Guru Nanak's spiritual tradition. To the messengers sent to Guru Tegh Bahadur for prevailing over him to concede to the Emperor's proposal of showing a miracle he replied that "a miracle was the wrath of God ; and to undo what God had done...would be a crime against heaven".¹¹ Later on his son and spiritual successor, Guru Gobind Singh while commenting on the Guru's martyrdom, wrote :

*Natak Chetak Kiye Kukaja.
Prabhu logan keh avat Iaja.*

(God's people would be ashamed to perform the tricks of mountebanks and cheats.)¹²

Both these statements imply clear-cut distinctions between religion and magic. A man of God, grounded in the Eternal

11. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. III, p. 392.

12. *Bichitra Natak*.

Light will consider the performance of magical tricks as a shameful act. The wrath of God falls on the holy man who instead of adhering to the path of spirituality deviates into the bylanes of magic and miracle mongering. The 'wrath of God' signifies a fall from higher spiritual consciousness.

Both the Gurus indicate that magic and religion are sharply opposed to each other. Judged from the psychological standpoint, the will-to-magic typifies a craving for possession. It is rooted in the sentiment of self-regard. It is self-assertive. It smacks of primitivism. Modern psychology too supports this view :

...the savage knows that he himself changes the external world by his impulses and his will.¹³

Magic seeks to pull the world of necessity to its purpose. This shows the primitive character of magic which is rooted in man's will to change the external environments. Sigmund Freud too alludes to it when he holds :

In his fight against the powers of the surrounding world his first weapon was magic, the first forerunner of our modern technology.¹⁴

Magic is thus the mechanistic will of the ego to win the world of necessity to its ends. On witnessing the sufferings of Guru Tegh Bahadur, even the patience of Mati Dass, the Guru's devoted disciple broke down. To quote Macauliffe he (Mati Dass) "charged his Master with practising too much humility, and talked of putting an end to the Mughal rule. The Guru remonstrated with him, and said that man must accept the Will of God. Mati Dass replied that Guru's sufferings were intolerable.¹⁵ The Guru spoke from an illumined consciousness which had undergone a true religious experience. Since his mind was liberated from the downward pull of ego, he could not take recourse to psychic powers to "put an end to the

13. Cattell, Raymond B., *Psychology and the Religious Quest*, p. 17.

14. *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, p. 211.

15. Macauliffe, pp. 381-82.

Mughal rule". Had he done so, that would have amounted to stepping down from high spiritual estate to the level of the ego. Acceptance of the Will of God means overcoming of the assertive self or ego. Magic is thus operated from ego-centred consciousness and religion is rooted in the spirit of self-surrender, the highest virtue in Sikhism. "Submission to the Will of God is the highest prayer."¹⁶

The Guru did not show a miracle because he was a mystic saint and not a magician. As a true mystic he believed in "total self-dedication, an active surrender of his whole being" to God. "Mysticism", says Evelyn Underhill, "is not magic. The fundamental difference between the two is this : magic wants to get, mysticism wants to give."¹⁷

Full of the spirit of service and sacrifice, the Guru thought in terms of taking up the cause of righteousness and freedom and not in terms of what he could get for himself from the Imperial Ruler. He, therefore, stood firm as a granite, stuck to his exalted spiritual position and did not budge an inch from it.

The power to perform miracles is recognised by Raja Yoga, the psychologically planned meditation, and even by modern parapsychology. According to Patanjali Yoga, miracles or psychic powers are the spontaneous outcome of one's advancement along the path of spirituality. When the mind becomes deeply absorbed in its real *swarupa*, it acquires *vibhuti*s or psychic powers. But these powers are obstacles in the way of spiritual advancement. The reason is that they tend to make the person ego-centric, whereas religion aims at making man God-centred or Cosmocentric. To run after these powers is to wander in mazes of Maya and to throw away life in vain and idle and shadowy pursuits.

Guru Nanak's words addressed to the Yogis when they asked the Guru to show miraculous powers throw ample light on this issue :

16. *Adi Granth*, p. 13.

17. *Mysticism*, p. 151.

Except for the True Name of the Lord,
no miracle of any kind do I possess.

The great Guru even drew a line of sharp distinction between
magic and religion :

All miracles are as shadows, and a waste of life.
God's name alone bestows true merit.

To show the miracles is thus to direct the mind to "the show
of things" (Maya), while religion in Sikhism enjoins to achieve
enlightenment through meditation on God's name. Even Guru
Arjan Dev, the fifth Guru, who was subjected to inhuman
tortures and embraced martyrdom, uttered :

Sweet is Thy Will
Nanak begs only for the riches of the Name.¹⁸

The achievement of the spiritual life is thus higher than miracle
mongering.

Guru Gobind Singh has, therefore, rightly remarked that
"men of God would be ashamed to perform magical tricks".
It implies that religion and magic are fundamentally opposed to
each other, a fact which has been sharply observed even by Sir
James Frazer. He holds that there is "a fundamental distinc-
tion and even opposition of principle between magic and
religion".¹⁹ To put into psychological terms, religion and
magic represent two states of consciousness, the psychic or
ego-ridden state which pines for self-gratification and the
spiritual state which is accompanied by inner peace and purity,
inner freedom and fearlessness resulting from spiritual trans-
figuration of one's being. Guru Arjan has beautifully said :

They who are imbued with God's love
are not deceived by Maya.

.....
By God's name all their fear is dispelled.²⁰

18. *Adi Granth*, p. 394.

19. *The Golden Bough*, Vol. I, XVI.

20. Macauliffe, *Op. Cit.*, p. 149,

Moreover, the will-to-magic is associated with the instinct of self-preservation, but in true religious experience the will to live is merged in the Will of the Lord. The Holy scripture says :

Birth and Death are by His Will.²¹

Guru Tegh Bahadur's preference of death over succumbing to the Emperor's proposals for showing a miracle shows that he had acquired a complete mastery over his mind, and that there was no stir of anxiety in his mind. According to modern psycho-analytical theory the idea of self-preservation is operative in a state of anxiety :

...For while anxiety is truly apprehension of terror ; yet in anxiety states we can see the psychical self-preservation function at work.

The Guru transcended anxiety in a spirit of resignation to the Will of God. Guru Nanak has stated :

Anxiety is not annulled except by attuning ourselves to God.

Guru Tegh Bahadur himself has said :

It is by worshipping God that man dwells in the fearless state.²²

The Guru's refusal to show a miracle was the victory of spiritual self-transformation over the egotistic ambition. By doing so he showed that his mind was the instrument of the divine Lord and not of the ego. Philosophically interpreted, we find that the whole issue boils down to two distinctive but divergent attitudes—magical and religious. The former responds to the call of the appetitive self in man ; the latter makes man move on a plane of moral and spiritual exaltation. And it is the latter attitude which made itself manifest in the Guru's

21. *Adi Granth*, p. 412.

22. Sloka, 33.

adherence to his ideal position of not showing a miracle even in the face of gravest provocations.

Since there is implicit a grand philosophy behind the Guru's will to sacrifice, it is neither sentimental nor romantic but the expression of a soul, highly evolved along the path of inner enlightenment and fearlessness.

Distorted Versions Refuted

The tendency on the part of some historians to undervalue and play down the Guru's martyrdom is deplorable. To justify the imperial standpoint for the execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur, they advocate the so-called 'probable' facts which, in fact, are distorted pictures of the Guru's martyrdom. Syed Muhammad Latif writes :

...it is more probable that the Guru was executed as a rebel against Government.²³

Dr. Trumpp remarks :

The Guru appears by no means as a humble spiritual instructor, but riding at the front of well-armed disciples,...made pedatory incursions on the Muhammedan population.²⁴

Even Cunningham writes that the Guru was "more of the kingly than priestly spirit".²⁵ Almost all such writers get their cue from Ghulam Hussain who earlier had stated :

...finding himself at the head of so many thousands of people, (the Guru) became aspring; and he united his concern with one Hafyadam, a Mohemedan fakir.... These two men...forsake every honest calling, they fell to subsisting by plunder and rapine, laying waste the whole province of Punjab.²⁶

23. *History of the Punjab*, 1964, p. 260.

24. *Adi Granth*, p. IXXXIX.

25. *History of the Sikhs*, p. 85.

26. *Siryar-ul-Mutakherin*, English Translation, Raymond, pp. 84-86.

Latif too echoes the same version when he writes that "from a devout *udasi* (indifferent to World) in Bengal, the Guru seems to have turned out a regular freebooter on his return to the Punjab,"²⁷ and that he indulged in "pedatory excursions".²⁸ The principal aim of these historians is to justify the Guru's execution by throwing a political colouring on the Guru's popularity during his extensive tours which he undertook to spread his spiritual message. In fact, the Guru's increasing popularity excited the jealousy of Ram Rai who whispered a lie to Aurangzeb against the Guru's ambitious designs. The Emperor's indignation was further roused when he learnt that the Guru had taken up the cause of the persecuted Hindus. Even Latif has mentioned that Ram Rai had represented to the Emperor that the Guru's "designs were detrimental to the State", and on that account he had been summoned to come to Delhi" as a pretender to power and disturber of peace".²⁹

Latif also explicitly states :

The Emperor had in those days thrown hundreds of Brahmans into Jail, in the hope that, if they first embraced the religion of the prophet, the rest of the Hindus would readily follow their example.³⁰

This establishes that the Guru's offence in the Emperor's eyes was the cause which the Guru had taken up, to thwart the conversion of Kashmiri Brahmans. The Guru's refusal to abandon his faith and to embrace Mohamedanism must have further provoked Aurangzeb, since in it he saw the defeat of his plan to make the Hindus become converts on a mass scale.

As regards the version that the Guru had turned from "a devout *udasi* to a freebooter", it sounds hollow and fictitious, when considered in the light of his life and writings. While looking at him through his personal life, his work or his vision, there is no getting away from the fact that he was a saint in

27. *History of the Punjab*, p. 259.

28. *Ibid.*

29. *History of the Punjab*, p. 259.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 260.

whom moral and spiritual values had taken deep roots. The picture that emerges from a study of his life and sacred compositions is of a man of God who had dedicated his life to love of God and submission to His Will. His poetry repeatedly stresses the necessity of over-coming the ego and of developing restraint and self-poise. To charge such a saint with "pedatory excursions" and "rebellion" against the Government on the eve of his arrest for his sympathetic response to the entreating Kashmiri Brahmins is obviously a travesty of truth and a politically-oriented trend to undermine and under-estimate the spiritual and historical greatness of the Guru.

Again, such a charge does not fit in with the psychological facts of his personality. The Guru's saintly stature is evidenced in the manner he bore all sufferings and tortures with unruffled equanimity on the eve of his martyrdom and did not move away from the supreme principle of righteousness and spirituality. How could such a saint step outside the moral orbit all of a sudden on his return from Bengal? Even Latif cannot help paying tribute to the Guru's saintly virtue after his execution :

His life was extinct, but the memory of his priestly virtue remained in the world.³¹

And this automatically contradicts his earlier remark that the Guru "seems to have turned out a regular freebooter on his return to the Punjab". It appears that Latif had inserted this version of Ghulam Hussain in his treatment of Guru Tegh Bahadur, which appears like a foreign matter incorporated into his text, not being fully absorbed into it, for it contradicts his own views, as we have shown in the preceding discussion.

Need for an Integral Approach

For proper assessment of the character and personality of a person who is historically significant, one must bring a larger integral vision to historical events. We cannot ignore the cultural vitality of such a man, his innate potentialities which

31. *The History of the Punjab*, p. 260.

command the external environment and influence human attitude and life-style. History is, after all, "the record of man's effort to prevail over his environment"³². It involves the element of progress; the progress is not outer but inner also. It is not external environment only that determines life; it is one's inner development too that determines one's response to life. We cannot ignore the richness and creativeness of inner life which is at the base of one's personality. The value principle cannot be divorced from the meaning of history; unless we are content with a distorted picture or with distorted facts torn from the context of the whole. We cannot ignore intrinsic thoughts or psychic forces acting upon our consciousness, out of whose interplay the general behaviour comes into operation. Historical events, from the psychological standpoint, reveal the latest reality out of which they are but surface manifestations. It is during historical events of magnitude that creative potentialities of significant historical personalities come to the fore.

Judged from the philosophy of history, we find that the Guru's emergence as a firm-minded, high-souled, iron-willed saint displaying unprecedented poise and patience in the face of barbaric tortures, and his amazing acceptance of the Divine Will and total resignation to it was not a sudden breaking in of a holy man upon the political scene but was the result of a life long discipline and creative enlightenment, as we have duly illustrated in the preceding chapter. His confrontation with the challenging moment of history was a "psychologically experienced situation" in which psychic facts of his earlier life blossomed forth into a supreme sense of sacrifice. It is perceptively stated :

A psychological process accompanies and reflects material occurrences, for there is a rhythm between satisfaction and creation, between rest and change.³³

The Guru's life shows a coherent regular pattern of development, which in the event of his martyrdom fulfils a divine

32. G.P. Gooch, *Historical Surveys and Portraits*, p. 214.

33. G.P. Gooch, *Historical Surveys and Portraits*, p. 214.

purpose. The Guru himself saw history in terms of divine fulfilment.

He rejected the alternative of performing a miracle. To reject miracles is to reject supernatural revolution. This indicates his philosophy of Religion. Religion is not miracle mongering, a magic show, but an evolving human experience. Again, the performance of miracle would have saved his life. The Guru by sticking to his ideal position shows his preference to self-development over self-preservation. He had grown fearless for he had known the reality of God in religious experience. In his poetical writings he explicitly states that devotion to God bestows the "fearless dignity" on man, and it is the "fearless dignity" born of his rigorous spiritual discipline that lent an unusual glow to his willingness for sacrifice. We cannot ignore this progress in consciousness while evaluating the Guru's response to the historic situation. We should study with imaginative understanding extra-ordinary behaviour of men of destiny in a given situation. We cannot ignore the formation and realization of the Guru's ideas and ideals, in short, value experience in assessing the character and achievement of his historical personality.

Lack of attention to value in the historical process does not yield a vision of the whole. The Guru, while embracing martyrdom, brought into action contemplative wisdom, the highest value of human life, and this sharply distinguished him as a supreme martyr. At the supreme moment the Guru's fundamental attitude to life came to the fore.

Spiritual Drama of Challenge-and-Response

Guru Tegh Bahadur's life of creative discipline culminating in creative martyrdom can be well understood in terms of Toynbee's historical formula of "Challenge and Response".³⁴ According to Toynbee, societies achieve growth through "the dedicated individual and creative minority". "The creative individual", according to Toynbee, "practices withdrawal and Return. He leaves the world for contemplation and enlighten-

34. Arnold, J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, Vol. IX, p. 382.

ment so that the world to which he eventually returns may profit from his creative absence".³⁵ His return and subsequent acts contribute to the progressive enrichment of culture and civilization.

In Guru Tegh Bahadur's life the rhythm of challenge and response manifests itself in a remarkable degree. According to Sikh tradition he withdrew, not from the world, but to a meditation cell in his own home at Baba Bakala, and lived a life of contemplative seclusion for twenty years. This was a big step towards self-enlightenment. Self-enlightenment is, in fact, essential preliminary to self-change. Through meditation and devotion to God, one's consciousness is purified. One realises the light of God in pure consciousness only. Before the Guru started preaching his gospel of disarming the ego, he himself by virtue of his long spell of meditation had attained self-poise and mastery over his mind through single minded devotion to God.

Withdrawing or contemplative solitude is necessary for the unfolding of the Divine in us, for the transformation of personality so that it becomes eminently fit for rendering humanitarian services to the world. The world is served nobly when it is overcome spiritually. And how is the world conquered spiritually. Guru Nanak says :

He who conquers his mind conquers the World.

Through single-minded meditation mind is freed from bondage to unreal values and unruly passions. He whose mind is not the playground of passions is blessed with inner enlightenment ; he rises above the self-centred feel of pleasure and pain and remains unperturbed in prosperity and adversity. Guru Tegh Bahadur himself has sung of this state of the mind of an enlightened person in his hymns.

It is important to bring the mind under restraint through meditation because the act of subsequent service is not defiled by any selfish motive. When spiritual insight is gained, one serves humanity with all his heart and strength, with all his soul

35. Robert Paul Mohan, *Philosophy of History*, pp. 135-36.

and mind. Of several blessings that flow from meditation and dedicated devotion to God, the chief blessing is the attainment of wisdom which imparts inner fortification and fearlessness. It is the power of spiritual realization that totally drives fear out of the mind. Guru Nanak says :

My soul, with the attainment of Truth, fear is banished.³⁶

In the *Rigveda* God is described as *Abhayam Jyoti* (Fearless Light). In *Kathoupanishad* He is also called *Abhayam* (Fearless One). In the very first stanza of *Japji*, the basic Sikh prayer, God is conceived as the One, Indivisible, Eternal Reality, Fearless and Rancourless. The spirit of fearlessness is derived from contemplation of God, the Fearless One. Guru Arjan, in the psychological fitness of things, rightly assures us :

Those who worship the Fearless Lord get free from fear of every sort.³⁷

The spirit of spiritual fearlessness is necessary to resist the tyranny and wrong-doings of tyrannical persons in power. It may be mentioned that Guruship (Succession to Guru Nanak's spiritual throne) was not a bed of roses. It meant a life of utmost purity and truthfulness, with a willingness to serve, suffer and even undergo sacrifice for the cause of Truth. Guru Har Rai has finely remarked :

The Guruship is like a tigress's milk contained in a golden Cup.³⁸

The golden cup is the vessel of mind perfectly purified and enlightened. For that purpose inner preparation is necessary. Meditation is thus withdrawing to the recesses of one's being and one returns from it with a flame-like spirit, a vivacious magnanimity of heart and magnificence of spirit to render service to mankind.

36. *Adi Granth*, p. 18.

37. Gauri, M. 5.

38. Macauliffe, op . cit., p, 310.

When Guru Tegh Bahadur came out of the meditation Cell, in obedience to the call of the spiritual throne of Guru Nanak, he devoted himself heart and soul to the welfare of the people, preaching his gospel of love, truth, uprightness and fearlessness. This was his return to the world to deal with it and to act in it. And when a man of God acts, he acts in a heroic way which surpasses the myths of old, for he is acting nobly, wisely and righteously in confrontation with grim realities of the World where Evil has pitched its tents.

As a true saint, Guru Tegh Bahadur combated evil on two fronts, domestic and political. On the domestic front he was the victim of uncontrollable jealousy of his nephews and others who were aspirants and claimants to Guruship. He met this spirit of jealousy with his saintly virtue of forgiveness, noble conduct, non-attachment and tolerance. The spirit of vengeance is totally absent in his dealings with Dhir Mal and others who even tried to put an end to his life. He not only forgave them but also restrained his own men to inflict any harm on others.

It is in his confrontation with evil on the political front that heroic virtues of his true saintliness manifested themselves. He accepted the challenge of history and responded to the crying need of the hour to protect the religious rights of his countrymen, though he knew full well the gigantic risk it involved. He was arrested and tortured but he declined to accept Islam as well as to work a miracle. This shows that his spirit would not be confined nor compromised in the effort to protect Right (Dharma).

The Guru willingly offered his life as a sacrifice, as we have already discussed, to further the forward movement of the Moral Law for the defeat of Evil in the World. The magnificence of his spirit shines through the whole episode of his martyrdom. It's the richness of his spiritual life, the aroma of inner sweetness and strength which emanates through this grand drama of Challenge-and-Response.

PART III

**POETIC COMPOSITIONS OF
GURU TEGH BAHADUR**

CHAPTER IV

HYMNS OF GURU TEGH BAHADUR

Poetry of the Sikh Gurus

Literature is not only knowledge but also a means of wisdom and enlightenment. The poetry of the Sikh Gurus, so spontaneous and precise, with varying richness and strength and with a universal significance, a deep moral consciousness and reflective vitality, forms the most precious treasure of the Punjabi tongue. It contains that all-pervasive sense of truth which bestows upon cultures a supreme spiritual insight and a unique refulgence of creative heroism in decadent ages.

The Gurus are saint-poets and their poetry stems from their living inner experiences. A poet is a maker, a creator. To create is not to manufacture but to compose. The Gurus composed hymns which are a literature that is sincere and true because it is felt. It is not produced with the notion of art for art's sake, but with the consciousness of having a duty towards God and towards humanity. Mere bursting into a holy song for the sake of song is not enough. At the same time a saint-poet is not a religious hawker or a moral propagandist. He communicates a spiritual truth and a spiritual truth becomes an ineffectual weapon in the hands of an unrealised soul. It is a realised soul which observes the higher facts of inwardness and contrasts them with facts of outer life, working in relation to the totality of what the hymn enacts. This is what the poetry of the Gurus represents—a creative energy, an enrichment of poetry by conveying subtle spiritual and psychological truths. Their poetry, while exposing the surface of life, touches it at its deepest. There is a beautiful blend of humanist and spiritual values, of historical consciousness and man's hunger for the Unseen Supreme, bending his energies toward life's fulfilment.

There is a wonderful dignity as well as grace and beauty in the hymns of the Gurus. They proceed from a unity of spiritual experience and hence they are expressly lyrical, sincere, sublime and effortless. The form chosen is the traditional, classical form—the Rag. The hymn is chanted to the accompaniment of music or melody. Music indeed supplies wings to the human mind to soar to the spiritual height of vision.

There is a psychology of recitation of hymns. Hymns of great saints embody truth, and when recited, sensations of spiritual truth are carried into the hearts of the listeners. In this way the recitation of hymns is potentially useful. Sensations are carried into the dimension of depth in which the process of thinking, feeling and imagining are finely fused and man recognises an immediate life which is lost to him, immersed as he is in gross wordly affairs. Repeated recitations of hymns awaken the heart from its torpor of apathy and inspires it with a sense of purpose, a search for truth. Considered in this context, the hymns of the Gurus exercise an essentially humanizing and elevating influence on people who read or recite them for something other than their poetry.

The noteworthy feature of the hymns of the Gurus is that they are written under the name of Nanak. According to the Sikh tradition, the same spirit worked in all the ten Gurus and that the light that illumined their minds was the same, the light of Guru Nanak. We may interpret it psychologically by saying that the Gurus succeeding Guru Nanak had merged their identities with the identity of Guru Nanak, and consequently their minds were completely attuned with Guru Nanak's creative vision. Their poetic selves carried out their functions without a strain of dualism between their empirical and spiritual selves. And it is this potential identity which is the distinguishing mark of the spiritual poetry of the Sikh Gurus.

Spiritual Poetry Versus Modern Poetry

A saint-poet does not write destructive and anarchic poetry, where the sublime rolls in the dust, and meaninglessness is hailed as a deliver. The reason is that he never loses his

solidarity with himself, with the truth and with mankind. Since he is devoted to God, he has not to count the streaks of the lotus ; he has to contemplate upon the lotus feet of the Lord.

Poems without practical consequences are phenomena, historically and morally ineffective. Modern poetry has the distinction of numbering "the streaks of the tulip", of universalising the particular. Spiritual poetry, on the contrary, voices a spiritually sane view of wholeness and true fraternity. In fact, in our sceptic times there is a tendency to criticise spiritual or religious poetry and the beliefs inherent in it. It is strange that while we accept the beliefs of Marxism, of the new groups, we hesitate to accept what has been the practical experiences of the saints and mystics, the specialists in spirituality through the ages.

Spiritual poetry does not make us dance at the prospect of the discovery of energy at the heart of the atom ; it rather urges us to turn to the light current in the atom of the heart, to seek awareness of the uniqueness that is within man. Each line of spiritual poetry, arising from the illuminated consciousness of a saint-poet, is a gift. All the theoretical resources of the mind fail to match it, because it produces a state of mind where man, disgusted with chasing reflections of the sun on the sea, longs to be drenched in the light of the Ocean of Mercy. The poetry of the Sikh Gurus vibrates to penetrate the mask that man wears, and reassures that there is no truth except in the heart of man, thus awakening man from the dusk of dreams and self-deception to a vision of the Supreme Truth and truthful living. The Gurus reveal the invincible power of faith in contrast with the vulnerable vanities of the world, yet their great achievement is to bridge the gulf between the eternal and the temporal, for they insist that enlightenment should be achieved in the process of living.

As saint-poets, the Gurus are eminently aware of their main task to expand and enlighten man's consciousness, and they accomplish it in their characteristic synthetic way, by combining idealism with realism, by proclaiming that man is redeemed by

human love, inner purification and remembrance of God's name.

Hymns of Guru Tegh Bahadur

Guru Tegh Bahadur's poetical compositions consist of *Shabads* (hymns) and *slokas* (couplets). In all he composed 59 *Shabads* and 57 *Slokas*, which were incorporated in the *Adi Granth* by Guru Gobind Singh. We shall discuss his *slokas* in a separate chapter. Here we shall chiefly concentrate on his *Shabads* or hymns.

The hymns of Guru Teg Bahadur, though marked with characteristic simplicity are sharpened by a high degree of spiritual awareness. The Guru does not reduce the external world to a single, simplified idea of the Divine but seeks to purify the relative circumstantial sphere. By such a method he recreates spiritual values and awakens the celestial instinct slumbering in man.

The Guru's moral sensibility is brilliantly carried over into flashes of didactic lines :

Sadhu, mun ka man tyago
(O Good man, renounce the mental pride)¹.

But it would be lack of a unified and proper insight into the poetic utterances of Guru Tegh Bahadur to dub them as merely didactic. No doubt a strain of didacticism is present in his hymns and *slokas* but his didacticism is not a mechanical array of moral maxims composed merely to cater to the moralistic taste; it is rather subtle and refined in the sense it is rooted in an idealism which reconciles spirituality with humanism. As such, it has a vital glow of its own, and stands for an ideal, perfect, God-centred life, enshrining the deepest values. It is thus not moralism but is akin to a moral vision that draws its splendour from a spiritual height.

Guru Tegh Bahadur's poetry is more than a mere exercise in didacticism. Didactic poetry is primarily intended to instruct,

1. Gauri, 1.

to teach a moral. No doubt the Guru's poetry is seasoned with moral flavours, yet it has implicit philosophical wisdom. It is characterized by an ever-present awareness of transitory nature of all earthly things and of the imminence of death that serves to open up insights into the supreme value, God. It is by making us grasp the particulars that his poetry makes us apprehend the universal.

His hymns unfold a new dimension in the assessment of human behaviour, a psychological dimension that reveals the distinction between the divine consciousness and ego-ridden normal consciousness. The Guru knows human limitations. Man's erring mind runs towards worship of mammon, towards sinful pleasures. It gets so much intoxicated with joys of youth, wealth and glory, that it is not an easy thing to hold it under restraint :

O good people, the heart cannot be restrained.²

Man, therefore, has to fight against the encroachments of the ego in him, in order to let the divine in him work freely. The encroachments of the ego are suggested in the form of unrefined qualities like lust, avarice, pride, selfishness and excessive entanglements with the world and its affairs. This obsession with the material pursuits of the world to the neglect of higher perceptions in man has been voiced in world-poetry. Wordsworth cried out : "The world is too much with us." But whereas Wordsworth deplors that man's obsessions with material pursuits have made him oblivious of the beauties of nature around him, the Guru goes a step further. He laments that man in his hectic chase of worldly pursuits has forgotten the inshining jewel, the indwelling splendour in him :

The jewel of God was in my heart, but I knew it not.³

But the Guru does not give us beguiling pictures of empty transcendentalism. He rather makes a searching criticism of man and society and preaches creative positive values whereby man can reject the false and embrace the true. His hymns

2. Gauri, IV.

3. Jaitsari, I.

reveal a fundamental analysis of man in himself, in society and in relation to God.

The Guru's is not an attempt to produce a functional poetry for his followers. He puts his whole heart, his most delicate feelings, his sharp observations, his critical awareness of things around him and, above all, his spiritual perception into his hymns. There is a close relationship between literature and morality, between literature and spirituality, between the health of poetry and the moral and spiritual health of man and society. The poetic compositions of Guru Tegh Bahadur contribute to the inner growth of man and society.

His hymns sensitively reflect the human condition, human perplexity, helplessness and despair. Man's alienation from God and his consequent miserable results are depicted in his hymns. The poet also sounds a call to man to come out of the shadows of frantic attachments and develop sunny insights into the deepest nature of the truth within. There are also distinct strands of liberating optimism in his hymns when he recommends selfless devotion to God and remembrance of the Divine Name. God's name releases man from the imprisonment of his ego or personal self. God's name is compared with wealth,⁴ with a jewel⁵, so priceless a treasure it is. It brings not only comfort and success but also salvation.

A Central Unifying Theme

On a closer study we find that Guru Tegh Bahadur's hymns are not stray, isolated pieces with diverse themes. Taken as a whole, they present a central, unifying theme: a coherent and dynamic vision of man, his predicament as a part of nature, the way out of this predicament and the resultant awareness of the jewel, the unique spiritual lustre that is within man. In this way the Guru helps man to redefine his relation with the world and to make him grow according to the inner logic of the soul. As a result of it, man will be able to project his mind

4. Basant, III.

5. Jaitsari, III.

beyond the limited zone of self-will to let it partake of truth and abide by the Will of God. This is not an abstract speculation but a creative process of discipline which frees the inner personality from sensuous entanglements and confers a fearless dignity on man. Considered in this context, the Guru's poetry has a higher moral purpose. It seeks to redeem life from meaninglessness and fear, to enlarge and enliven man's consciousness and to open his inward eye to the glory of the all-redeeming, ever-existent truth. The clarity of the Guru's language may serve to obscure the deeper levels of meaning in his poetry.

The Human Predicament

Man is conceived in his totality, as body, mind and spirit. The inescapable realities of the body and the mind are duly taken into consideration. The world is considered to be a theatre of action and human birth is considered to be precious. As a religious poet, the Guru's striking emphasis is on freedom. Man is free in making a choice between leading a life addicted to sensuous pursuits and a life devoted to higher ideals of inner purification and God-realization. But man is still to be liberated from the prison of little selfhood into spaciousness of the Supreme Truth. Each man has the potentiality to attain to the God-consciousness within and underlying all creation. Until we attain it, we shall keep revolving in the circle of *Samsara*.

Even in modern times Martin Heidegger lays emphasis on man's finite and contingent condition. But he does not suggest a way out of it. Religious poetry, on the other hand, has a function to fulfil. It aims at regenerating or transforming an individual. The basic human problem is spiritual—self-control and self-regeneration. The sensitiveness to the Divine cannot be developed unless the mind is purified of its passions. Hence the Guru's repeated stress on self-discipline—self-reflection (*vichar*) and the necessity of establishing contact with God, the Universal Source of life and light. The mind if not mastered, is drawn towards five vices, lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride (ego). The more we are enslaved by these passions, the

more we fall away from our authentic being, our divine consciousness within.

This condition of man is indeed man's gross worldly state. It is the condition of spiritual sterility. It may be made clear that the Guru is not against the worldly life but points out with a vigorous warmth that it is viciousness that stifles the inner growth of man. Man in the process of discovering the jewel of God within has not to reject the human but to reject all lower desires which reduce man to the sub-human level and screen his view from the essential reality within.

Man's troubles are due to his mental pride and ego-intoxicated moods. The Guru, therefore, rightly exhorts :

O good people, renounce your mental pride, day and night flee from lust, wrath and the company of the evil.⁶

What the Guru means to say is that man's awareness of his personal ego is the main factor that retards spiritual progress. The psychology of five evils, lust, wrath etc. is quite clear. They stand for the psychological impurities of the mind. The spiritual consciousness is obscured by psychological impurities and fluctuations in the sense that they all stimulate us into thinking that our personal ego is all in all. One has to overcome these psychological impurities of the mind to attain spiritual enlightenment. Mental pride cuts man off from the reality of truth, his spiritual consciousness. Apart from surface consciousness or awareness, there is pure consciousness or soul-awareness in man : "The Pure One dwells in my heart, yet I know not his secret".⁷ All that man has to do is to remould his personality by allowing the inner divine spark to glow in him. And it is this spark which will purify all utterances, enterprises and longings of man.

There are several base qualities like meanness, avarice, pride, selfishness which constitute what the Guru calls 'the filth of the heart' :

6. Gauri, I.

7. Sorath, VII.

What shall I say of my baseness ?

.....
I remained night and day absorbed in worldly affairs,
and the filth of my heart forsook me not.

Says Nanak, I have now nowhere salvation except in
the protection of God.⁸

The 'Filth' again stands for psychological impurity of the mind. Man can get rid of this filth, and his heart can be cleansed by remembering God's name. It is this psychological impurity which screens the 'Jewel of God' in his heart :

The jewel of God was in my heart, but I knew it not.⁹

Life gives the opportunity to extract and isolate the jewel of God from the heaps of filth which represent the ego.

The Guru does not ask us to flee from the battle of life but to battle against mental pride and the other evils in order to let the jewel of God shine within us with all its splendour :

Introduce the service of God into thy heart, renounce mental pride, so that thou, Nanak asserteth, be illustrious in the world.¹⁰

Man should, therefore, not lose the opportunity of having been born as a human being. He should keep the purpose of human life, the goal to be achieved in view. The goal is the goal of God-realisation, and to attain it, he should come out of 'great infatuation' and "darkness of ignorance".¹¹

Human birth affords an opportunity of achieving enlightenment. The loss of this opportunity is the symbol for death. Spiritual enlightenment, for the Guru, is not a thing to be postponed, it should be achieved in the process of living before death overtakes man. Hence the feeling of extreme urgency in acquiring spiritual experience through adoration of God :

8. Todi.

9. Jaitsari, I.

10. Jaijawanti, IV.

11. Sorath, III.

Adore God, adore God, the life passeth away.¹²

One of the finest images the Guru has introduced is about the process of bodily decay :

Every moment life is passing away like water from a cracked vessel. ¹³

Even modern British poet, Auden, speaks in a similar metaphorical vein; "Vaguely life leaks away". This implies a sense of unfulfilment. Hence the necessity of realising the essential truth that makes the real life. The reality to be achieved is not an idea to be realised. It is a state of inner enlightenment, achieved through self-purification, where one realizes the all-present glory of God and understands the meaning of life, and frees himself from the bondage of passing passions.

For inner purification, the Guru's emphasis is on inner cleanliness and discipline rather than the outer shows or ritual performance :

Believe his piety to be fruitless,
who performeth pilgrimage and even fasting,
but who hath not control over his heart. ¹⁴

Even man's gross worldly state is suggested as man's bondage to the life of senses. The Guru, therefore, advises us that freedom from bondage must be achieved by purifying the mind.

Man's deliberate obsession with the worldly state and his failure to grow up and accept spiritual reality some times makes the Guru ironical :

Like a dog he wandereth from door to door,
and heedeth not God's worship. ¹⁵

And again :

Like a dog's tail he is never straight and
lendeth not an ear to what I tell him. ¹⁶

12. Jaijawanti, I.

13. Tilang, I.

14. Bilawal, III.

15. Asa.

16. Devgandhari, I.

There is also a note of sadness at the thought that man's worldly state has cut him off from spiritual life that alone ensures inner peace and poise, and that having obtained the human body, man is squandering away the wealth of human life in gross sensual pursuits :

I have lost the whole of my life in wandering, and not obtained a stable mind.

I have night and day pursued sinful pleasures, and have not abandoned sinful hobits. ¹⁷

But the pervasive feeling in his hymns is that mere material gain is not enough. It must be balanced against a perceptible spiritual loss. It is the spiritual loss that man suffers in his exclusive pursuits of material gain.

Too much emphasis on material gain leads to covetousness and pride, and this strikes at the very root of human relationship. Accordingly, a new ethic emerges, the ethic of self-interest. The Guru protests against this ethic and aims at a higher model of social behaviour. His accent is on truthful living and truthful speech, on decency of family life and relationship instead of calumny and vulgar entanglements with others' wives :

O man, what evil inclinations hast thou entertained ?
Thou hast found pleasure in other men's wives and in calumny, and God thou hast not served. ¹⁸

The Guru's teachings aim at profoundly transforming man's private behaviour since he lives within the atmosphere of moral perplexity. The Guru brings spirituality into human behaviour for transforming his conduct. He reminds the people of the peculiar constitution of human nature that it is rooted in five evils, lust, anger, attachment, greed and pride. One has to overcome these psychological impurities of the mind to attain spiritual enlightenment, the realization of God.

There is also an acute awareness of the sense of wastage of life in worldly pursuits :

17. Sorath, VI.

18. Sorath, III.

I remained attached to sensual pleasure night and day, and did what pleased myself. I never carefully listened to the Guru's instruction.

I became entangled with others' wives. I busied myself greatly in calumniating others, and understood not the counsels I received.

How far shall I describe my acts—how I have wasted my life ?

Saith Nanak, in me are all demerits; protect me, O God. I have come to thy sanctuary. ¹⁹

It is, however, worthy of note that in the poetry of Guru Tegh Bahadur spiritual perfection and moral significance are not opposed but complementary aspects of a single vision.

After describing man's psychological predicament the Guru describes man's predicament in nature. It is by the lurking image of death in human life that he succeeds in making man's obsessions with the world appear insignificant, vain and ephemeral. He brings us an awareness of our physical mortality; all attachments come to an end with the advent of death.

By reminding us of the noose of death ever awaiting man's neck, the saint-poet aims at awakening us out of the slumber of worldly attachment :

When Death's mace fell upon my head, then I awoke from my slumber. ²⁰

“Death is severing of man's ties to the earth”, said Guru Nanak. Guru Tegh Bahadur emphasizing the same end feels that man is so much drunk with worldly attachments that he does not heed the slow but sure-approaching footsteps of death. He urges us that instead of surrendering ourselves to the passing emotions and perishable shows of the world, we should look to the spiritual Reality that is changeless and eternal. The Guru's poetry offers mankind a rock to lean upon, it offers something that does not change with time. And realisation of this Changeless, Eternal Reality is an all-important goal.

19. Sarang, IV.

20. Maru, III.

The Guru repeatedly points out that transience is the law of man's being. Inexorable mortality hangs over human attachments. The predicament of the human condition is shown by emphatic pronouncements on the sweep of impermanence and inevitability of death :

Whatever is visible shall vanish like shadows of the clouds.²¹

again :

The whole world is like a dream, and in its destruction there shall be no delay. As a wall of sand, even when elaborately built lasteth not four days,
So is the pleasure of mammon; why art thou entangled in it, O ignorant man ?²²

The Way Out of the Predicament

After describing a picture of the ignorant, wearisome condition of humanity, the Guru shows that if man can sink downward to darkness of ignorance (*Mohaa Timar*) there is no need for despair, because at the heart of life is the eternal saving consciousness. It is man's alienation from this consciousness that brings pain and misery, and man's fruitful relationship with it that sets him free from bondages of senses of life. The personal and the universal finely blend in his hymns :

Nanak, I have grown weary and have sought thy protection, O God, grant me salvation. ²³

Devotion to God is, therefore, essential for without it life is passing in vain :

He in whom there is no devotion to God,
Hath lost his life in vain, bear this in mind. ²⁴

God, for the Guru, is not a metaphysical abstraction or the divine Idea but the Supreme Reality which is to be experienced and realized.

21. Gauri, II.

22. Sorath, VIII.

23. Jaitsari, II.

24. Bilawal, III.

The Divine Lord is not far but near. He is within us. It is foolish to run to forest to renounce society in search of God.

O Sir, why goest thou to search in the forest ?
 God though ever apart dwelleth everywhere,
 and is contained even in thee.
 As in flowers there is odour and in a mirror reflection,
 So God dwelleth continually in thy heart; search for
 Him there, O brother. ²⁵

By employing homely images of 'odour in flowers' and 'reflection in mirror', the poet brings us the vision of the Divine Principle in man.

In his hymns the Guru refers to man's ignorance about this fact :

He does not know that the Pure One dwells in the heart,²⁶... that the jewel of God is found in the mine of one's being.²⁷

But it is not a personal God the Guru refers to in his hymns. It is the ultimate Reality, without form :

Know that the Lord... .. is near thee, but without form, or outline.²⁸

The Guru points out that self-knowledge is necessary to remove the darkness of ignorance which veils the Divine within man :

Nanak, without knowing thyself the scum of doubt shall not be removed.²⁹

What prevents man from finding his true path is the psychological impurity of his own nature and the darkness of self-ignorance.

25. Dhanasari, I.

26. Jaitsari, II.

27. Ibid, I.

28. Ibid, III.

29. Ibid, I.

The company of saints is a powerful factor for dispelling the ignorance³⁰, cleansing sins³¹, removing impurities of mind and obtaining salvation³². The way to God-realization is known through the courtesy and kindness of the Guru.³³ The supreme role of the Guru is recognised by Guru Nanak. "The Guru removes the veil of illusions and shows us the right path".³⁴ But man is so deeply engrossed in affairs of the world that he does not pay heed to the process of spiritual enlightenment to be received from the Guru :

Nanak, among millions few there are who
become attached to the Guru and recognise God.³⁵

Guru Tegh Bahadur thus exposes the poverty of the human heart since it does not aspire for God's protection, for the jewelled essence within and for wholeness of living, but is content only with its soul-eclipsing attachments to the worldly things, which are severed at last by death's all-severing stroke.

The Guru's hymns, though sounding characteristically individual, are impersonal and universal. They give expression to man's worldly state of spiritual unawareness, the loss of opportunities for self-elevation and God-realization, and painful awareness of the lack of stability of mind and spiritual knowledge :

In the darkness of great worldly love and spiritual
ignorance my heart hath been entangled;
I have lost the whole of my life in wandering,
and not obtained a stable mind.³⁶

Or : I have no virtues nor have I performed devotion or
penance : what work shall I now perform ?³⁷

30. Sorath, VII.

31. Ibid, I.

32. Sarang, II.

33. Sorath, XI.

34. Sri Raga, M.I.

35. Dhanasari, II.

36. Sorath, VI.

37. Jaitsari, II.

Since life is ever growing shorter, the remedy suggested by the Guru is to take shelter in God's name, for salvation lies in the redeeming love of God. The Guru stresses the fact that each man has the potentiality to attain the divine consciousness within. What is required is only a diverting of consciousness from ego to God within. God's name has the power to bestow salvation on man :

O my soul, take shelter in God's name; by remembering it evil thoughts are dispelled, and the rank of Nirvana attained.³⁸

The easiest way to win the saving grace of God is to renounce selfishness :

The man who renounces selfishness and recognizes God as the creator, says Nanak, is saved.³⁹

God's name, the Guru suggests, is a spell-breaker. It will release man from the spell of his obsession with the world which leads to the practice of self-deception, wickedness etc. God's name is potent enough to break the hold of the mammon on him :

God's name is the purifier of the world.⁴⁰

Singing of God's praise is another remedy prescribed by the Guru to cure man's chronic sense of obsession with the world. It slowly opens man to increasing degree of spiritual awareness by cleansing his mind of its ego-stirred impurities. It focuses the mind on God, and a focussed remembrance of God is a major step in spiritual advancement.

By introducing the image of death in his poerty, the Guru does not simply shock us into becoming aware of the mortality of human condition and transitoriness of human life. His aim is to draw our attention to the spiritual reality that is above all

38. Ramkali, I.

39. Saloka, XIX.

40. Jaitsari, III.

change and flux. By turning to the Unchanging, Everlasting Reality man can conquer death. What is changeless is essential and, therefore, real, and, therefore, the Truth. By discovering the Truth, man rises above the sense of time and enters into timelessness which is another name for deathlessness, for to triumph over death is to triumph over time. And it is to this highest state the Guru refers when he speaks of the breaking of the bonds of the cessation of the wheel of *Samsara*.

Samsara is psychologically speaking, the stream of relative consciousness. In our total obsession with it we are lost, for it does not constitute the total reality. It is necessary to penetrate its glittering surface. The Guru makes distinction between relative consciousness and divine consciousness in man. If we are engrossed in the former state, we do not achieve an insight into human destiny and are drowned in the stream of relative awareness. It is man's duty to learn from the spiritual preceptor how to float on this stream by remembering God's name till he floats on and on into the infinite consciousness of the Divine, the Supreme Truth. It is then he is liberated. Liberation is thus a process of man's inner expansion which culminates in merging with the Supreme Truth "as water blends with water". It is the highest point of transition from relative to real consciousness.

Optimistic Strains in the Hymns

The hymns of Guru Tegh Bahadur with a promise to transfigure man's momentary stay into timeless existence, make beauty out of spiritual sterility. In his hymns, taken in their totality, the Guru contrasts the human condition and the crowning fulfilment of human life. The final resolution, however, comes with the replacement of the remorse over last opportunities for self-poise, self-expansion, self-enlightenment and salvation, as a result of contact with the Divine in us. Accordingly, the sense of frustration fades into the strain of hope of meeting the Divine because He is ever forgiving, loving, helping and saving mankind.

Saith Nanak, O God, recognize Thy daily practice of forgiveness ; mortal ever erreth⁴¹.

We thus find that Guru's poetry aims at leading men towards higher purposes of life. Instead of producing sadness at the transitoriness of life, it breathes the spirit of optimism. To the ignorant man who has wasted his life's precious hours in sinful, vicious pursuits, he holds out a promise and hope :

This very day come to thy senses ; no harm is yet done ; repeat God's name.⁴²

Or : No harm hath yet been done if thou even sing God's praises⁴³.

Again : There is no harm done if even today thou awaketh⁴⁴.

Tradition and Innovation

Guru Tegh Bahadur's poems chiefly relate to the tradition represented by Gurk Nanak, which itself by virtue of its depth of insight and moral and spiritual seriousness has a universal significance. There is re-orchestration of some of the themes employed by the earlier Gurus, especially of man's alienation from God, his search for God or Truth, the need for turning to God who dwells within, the power of God's name and God's omnipotence. But since Guru Tegh Bahadur's hymns proceed from the unity of spiritual experience, he makes a fresh attempt to put man back into the spiritual universe. His poetry is spontaneous and inspired, a feast of living thought.

Though his hymns are finely framed in appropriate *Ragas*, yet what matters is not merely the process of musicalisation but the way the Guru has illumined truth about man, society and God. In touch with the wisdom and musical mastery of the earlier masters, the Guru sought not to reproduce, but to avail of it in composing his own hymns in accordance with the needs of the times. This gives rise to an inventive literature, and the

41. Sorath, X.

42. Sorath, VIII.

43. Tilang, 1.

44. Basant, V.

Guru-poets have varying degrees of inventiveness. for they are most closely in touch with the Great Innovator, Guru Nanak.

There is a distinct but subtle suggestiveness of Guru Tegh Bahadur's reponse to the contemporary situation, in his presentation of God as "man's only helper," the strength of the strengthless. He is reaching back into the deeper meaning of man's relationship with the Divine, without mentioning the contemporary barbarism, the nightmare of terror and violence, the gigantic horror of religious fanaticism. The Guru also strikes a fresh note in devotional mysticism when he says that God, in His Mercy, by removing the suffering of Darupadi, "enhanced His Own renown". "Panchali at the royal assemblage remembered the Name of God : The Merciful One removed her suffering and enhanced His renown"⁴⁵.

Darupadi's episode in the *Mahabhart*a is well known. Darupadi was also called Panchali, being the daughter of the king of Panchala. She has saved from disgrace at the Court of Duryodhana by the saving grace of the Lord. God is recognised by the religious tradition of man as Merciful. It is also admitted that God helps those who remember Him. Yet the Guru's mysticism goes a step further. For him the saving business of God is not a one-way traffic. By doing so, God is also adding to His own glory. An act of saving grace on the part of God is doubly blessed. It blesses the recipient of the divine grace as well as adds a laurel to the Divine fame.

Hymns as Religious Poetry

Guru Tegh Bahadur's poetry is indeed religious. Religious poetry should not be misconstrued as poetry with expected emphasis on certain religious convictions and beliefs. It is, in fact, an instrument for probing man's predicament, and aims at shaping "the clay of actuality into something divine." Religion, for Guru Tegh Bahadur, is not an unending debate or an unfinished sermon ; it is a way of life, an exalted way of the soul.

45. Maru, I.

In his religious poetry, Guru Tegh Bahadur awakens the individual to achieve the lasting values of life by purifying and elevating the mind. His hymns open a field where ideal fulfilment implies the birth of the dynamic personality, a *Gurmukh*, a God-centred man. The central dominant trend of his hymns is towards transformation of man, moral and spiritual, till he becomes a living image of God.

Historical Relevance of Guru's Poetry

The Guru's poetry, though deeply religious, was not without its historical relevance. It was an age when under the terror of Aurangzeb's rule, the mass-mind was demoralised. The Guru's aim was to breathe a new spirit among the people, to awaken them to inner moral strength to resist pressure of outside evil and to liberate them from greed and sense of defeatism. You cannot stand up to face aggression so long as you are feeling helpless and are attached to wealth, body and outer worldly things which are transient. Hence a note of renunciation in his poetry. Without giving up attachments you can neither attain moral or spiritual stature to walk fearlessly along the path of integrity, freedom and righteousness. The Guru, therefore, sounds a call to eschew selfishness. He deplores in one of his hymns "Everyone seeks his own happiness. And life is drained away wastefully." In another hymn he says that God dwells in a man who "is indifferent to the world's praise and blame, and is not worked upon by lust or wrath"⁴⁶. Such a man is a man of self-restraint and self-poise which is the hall-mark of a truly religious man or man of God. Even in the *Bhagavad Gita* it is stated: "He alone is wise and established in religion whose mind is free from the evils of passion and remains unperturbed both in prosperity and adversity"⁴⁷. Such a man relying solely on the resources of his moral purity and strength of the Lord can come up to the mark of the Guru's ideal of a sage, who fears no one, nor strikes fears in any one. The Guru's poetry brings in the note of eschewing the fear of death

46. Sorath, XI.

47. *Bhagayada Gita*, II, 56.

by clasping God's name. It urges man to make efforts to fight the evil impulses that enslave the mind. The implication is that only such an evolved man could save the people from decay, could challenge the unjust social and political order and could suffer and die like a true man of God. The Guru clearly indicates that a greedy, craving and covetous mind would "hanker like a dog at every door" in utter degradation. To resist evil in the outer world, evil in the mind must be resisted, That alone will impart true strength to fight against injustice and cruelty. The Guru's poetry in this sense contains a note of spiritual idealism which raises man to the level of a true hero and teaches him to live with fearless dignity. The note of renunciation in his poetry is only a means to the higher end.

The Sense of fulfilment

Guru Tegh Bahadur's poetry thus does not show the split between the divine order and natural order. It rather urges us to recognize, apart from our personal consciousness, the awareness of the divine element in us. We do not get side-tracked into spiritual awareness. His poetry makes us conscious of the flux of the natural order and draws our attention to the universal source of life which is lost to man in his craze for worldly pursuits. The human mind must learn to vibrate in harmony with the divine order or cosmic will. The passing away of life like water from the cracked vessel is to be replaced by a sense of fulfilment, of fruitful kinship with God.

The theme of man's fruitful kinship with God is beautifully organised in balance, contrast and resolution with the theme of man's worldly state. Man must penetrate beneath the flux of life and time to the reality of the unchanging eternal one, and thus make the most of the human life. Man's relationship with God is creative in the sense that by clasping God's name man shall lose all fear of death and reform his life.⁴⁸ The moral consciousness is thus finely blended with the process of inner expansion. In the hymns of Guru Tegh Bahadur the moral and the spiritual do not reveal a divided self, but have become a part of a vision of human existence as a whole.

48. Ramkali, II.

CHAPTER V

SLOKAS AND STYLE

Slokas

Apart from the hymns which we have discussed in the preceding chapter, Guru Tegh Bahadur composed more than half a century of *slokas*. *Slokas* are pointed, epigrammatic couplets. They are occasional memorable expressions of a profound insight. We feel powerful emotions behind them. But they are not complex theological statements. Each *sloka* creates a living moment in all its intimacy and immediacy.

Guru Tegh Bahadur's *slokas* are packed with rich inner meanings. Though each *sloka* has an identity of its own and can be read, enjoyed and understood individually, yet taken as a whole, they are a series of direct statements in the plainest language, so finely inter-related that they advocate the need of bringing the timeless into the temporal field of life to make it rich and fruitful. Though these *slokas* were written at different times, on different occasions, we observe the thread of a developing meaning through the apparent fluidity and find that it does weave all the themes and concerns into a harmonious whole. It is, therefore, necessary to study the *slokas* in their totality for understanding their full significance.

Theme and a General Survey

The main theme is the squandering away of precious human life without singing God's praises.¹ There are warnings that life is passing away, even growing shorter,² old age has arrived

1. *Slok*, 1.

2. *Ibid*, X.

and death's noose may fall on the neck at any time.³ Again, there is a warning that all worldly things, wealth, wife, riches you deem your own will not depart with you.⁴ But there is no need to despair. For God is the "saviour of sinners, and dispeller of fear, the Lord of the helpless."⁵ It is also emphasised that God dwells within man.⁶

As regards the necessity of loving God, it is explicitly stated that God has given man "human body, wife, wealth, prosperity and commodious mansions."⁷ Moreover, He is "the bestower of all happiness" and by remembering Him "deliverance is obtained".⁸

The poet then dwells on the necessity of returning to the Divine, because man has sprung from God and must mingle with Him. Human body is composed of five elements.⁹ Since God dwells in every heart, it is by adoring Him that man shall cross over the terrible ocean of *Samsara*.¹⁰

The Guru then describes the marks of an enlightened man, a man evolved in God's image. Such a man is not affected by weal or woe, greed or pride, praise or blame. He treats gold and iron, friend and foe as the same.¹¹ He himself is fearless and inspires no fear in others.¹²

He abandons evil passions and renounces selfishness. The Guru's stress is not on renunciation of the world but on renunciation of selfishness, for it is necessary to win the saving grace of God.¹³ As an experienced mystic, the Guru knows

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3. Slokas, II, III.
 4. Ibid, V.
 5. Ibid, VI.
 6. Ibid, VI.
 7. Ibid, VII, VIII.
 8. Ibid, IX.
 9. Ibid, XI.
 10. Ibid, XII.
 11. Ibid, XV.
 12. Ibid, XVI.
 13. Slokas, XIX, XXII.

that selflessness is an attribute of enlightenment. Self-love must change into love of God.

The Guru then implicitly poses the question : Why should man worship God ? and he answers it in his characteristic way. God's name is the destroyer of fear, the banisher of evil thoughts, the bringer of success in all undertakings and even the remover of the net of death.¹⁴ Moreover, the reality of the world to which man clings passionately is relative. Fools and ignorant persons are crazy after wealth and other vanities of the world.¹⁵ Life is passed in vain without repeating God's name. Man's effort to obtain happiness in this world ends in failure. God alone is the highest Reality, the fountain of happiness.¹⁶ In worship of God alone man dwells in the fearless state.¹⁷

Worship of God is man's basic concern which he has forgotten in his pursuits of worldly charms and riches :

Day and night mortal wandereth after wealth ; Among millions, O Nanak, few there are who remember God.¹⁸

Pride and covetousness are negative emotions which are fatal for the spiritual life. The human mind is a prey to these emotions and hence does not utilise the opportunities of life to turn to its divine essence.¹⁹ In order to experience the divine reality mere "going to pilgrimages, fasting and giving alms" are fruitless so long as pride is in the heart.²⁰ The Guru insists on transformation of consciousness rather than on entanglements in a religion of rites and charity. Man must demolish the barriers of the self-regarding ego that separates him from God. To turn toward God is, therefore, not an external act of formal

14. *Ibid*, XX,XXI.

15. *Ibid*, XXIII, XXVIII, XXXV, – VIII.

16. *Ibid*, XXXI, XXVII.

17. *Slok*, XXXIII.

18. *Ibid*, XXIV.

19. *Slokas*, XXXIV, XXXVI, XLI.

20. *Slok*, XLVI.

ritualistic demonstrations, but a psychological act of inwardness of imbibing the virtues of humility and inner purification. What the Guru insists on is a sort of evolutionary change that man's mind must undergo before it achieves enlightenment.

Finally the Guru depicts man's true relation to the world and its divine ground. In this world no one is another's friend²¹, the structure of the world is all unstable²². It is the way of the world that nothing is permanent,²³ and that what is born dies today tomorrow or the next day.²⁴

What the Guru impresses upon us is that the world is not permanent in the sense that it is a world of time and change, where birth, evolution, decay and death are essential. According to the Guru, "only devotion to God is permanent."²⁵ Hence the Guru's exhortation that instead of submitting to the temptations and distractions of the world, man should avail of life's opportunities for self-advancement, for evolving spiritually towards God, the ultimate divine permanent Reality. The Guru, therefore, sounds a clarion call to man to move from self-centredness to God-centeredness, from passing lures of the temporal riches to the inexhaustible richness of the nature of eternal, divine Reality.

The Guru recognises the psychology of human nature but he has also unshaken faith in the finite capacities of man for self-improvement. He advises man not to linger on the animal level but to climb on to the spiritual level. This is the implication of renunciation of selfishness. A man who is not devoted to God is compared with a hog :

Consider that person, O Nanak, as a hog or a dog,
In whose heart there is no devotion to the One God.²⁶

21. Ibid, XLVIII.

22. Ibid, XLIX.

23. Ibid, LI.

24. Ibid, LII.

25. Ibid, XLVIII.

26. Ibid, XLIV.

The Guru's irony is consistent with the function of a saint poet to make men discriminate between the animal level and spiritual existence. In his attempt to make men fully conscious of their inmost potentialities, he also points out the quagmire of animal passions in which man is liable to be lost. Man's progress lies not in increasing bondage but in increasing disillusionment. Estrangement from God results in moral degradation and spiritual bankruptcy.

The Guru's call is to come out of the domain of animal appetite into the sphere of enlightenment and deliverance. How can this be achieved? By a process of single-pointed devotion to God:

As a dog never abandoneth his master's house, says
Nanak in the same way worship God with single mind
and single heart.²⁷

This is a psychological device to eliminate self-will which is a hindrance on the road to God. To remove the block one has to cultivate one-pointed concentration of the will on God.

The central unifying theme of *slokas* is that though man lives in a world of time and flux, addicted to carnal joys and and covetousness and ego, yet living amidst fears of death and change, he is capable of evolving himself into a God-centered being and can attain the state of spiritual fearlessness and lasting happiness. An enthusiasm for freedom and fearlessness shines out in the Guru's poetry.

There is no sentimental idealism about the theme. It is rather the expression of the Guru's illuminated consciousness, his refined and sublimated mind that transcends its own temporal selfness and urges man to turn to the timeless spirit, the source of life and strength.

Its proof is found in the biography of the Guru especially in the disciplined way he responded to the contemporary religious tyranny with absolute abandonment of his will to God.

27. Ibid, XLV.

He even refrained from showing a miracle to Aurangzeb because that would have amounted to climbing down from spiritual height to the abyss of self-preference and self-interest. It requires a total and radical transformation of consciousness, a disciplining of the will to merge one's will with the will of God. And Guru Tegh Bahadur was an illustrious example of it.

Slokas as Events in History

The Guru's personal predicament is illustrative of his wider concern with the timeless divine order which is beyond the flux of time and history. And it is this perceptive and heroic faith in God which asserts itself under the shadow of suffering and death, and which he brings up against the inescapable realities of the flux and conveys to the posterity in his final *slokas*. A couple of *slokas* which the Guru composed under the stress of the moment, while he was in the Mughal jail, speak eloquently of his state of unique spiritual enlightenment and of an alert, invincible and active faith in the existence and power of God.

To console his dear and near ones and others in sorrow he wrote :

Ram passed away, Ravan passed away with his large family, Saith Nanak, nothing is permanent, the world is like a dream.²⁸

And again there is the Guru's celebrated couplet :

Be anxious only regarding what is not expected ; It is the way of this world, Nanak, that nothing is permanent.²⁹

To his young son he wrote the following sloka :

All human power has failed,
Humanity groans in chains,
Moral efforts are of no avail,

28. Sloka, L.

29. Ibid, LI.

Lord ! save them, O save
 With Thy Merciful hand,
 As thou didst save,
 The drowning elephant that prayed.³⁰

The response came from the Guru's young son, Gobind Rai, whose potential faith in the divine grace and power urged him to continue to hold aloft the banner of truth and religious liberty. His reply is couched in fine words :

All power is mine with Thy grace, O Lord,
 The fetters of bondage are broken,
 For liberty and truth everything is possible,
 Lord, everything is in Thy Hands,
 Nanak craves for Thy protection and aid.³¹

These lines reflect a rare enthusiasm, a unique spirit of adventure, a great confidence and an immense seriousness of purpose.

These *slokas* of Guru Tegh Bahadur are events in the political history of India. They assert the saint poet's singular identity, and show his calm but acute consciousness of God while responding to the tremors and rumblings of the violent age. They also reveal that the Guru is blazingly sincere towards his own real and innermost self. It is the inner sense of poise and self-realization that brings out a new purity of will to suffer than to yield. An intense order of being, born of the unflinching beauty of faith, is breathed into intense moments of creative imagination. And it is this flavour of faith, genuine, inspiring and redeeming, which strongly pervades the Guru's being and his poetry, rendering the latter into a sort of spiritual autobiography.

Style

The feelings of Guru Tegh Bahadur, while giving us a glimpse of man in a fragmentary world, without a faith, with-

30. Ibid, LIII.

31. Sloka, LIV.

out a centre, are personal but extend themselves easily into general, something rich, universal and impersonal. The result is that he describes the wearisome and ignorant condition of humanity with suggestions to rise from the instinctive to the spiritual level. This becomes a striking feature of the Guru's poetry that he is not simply voicing his personal sorrow but the world-condition, so completely identified is his mind with the sorrow of the people :

Ah, to whom shall I express the sorrow of my heart ?
 Ensnared in greed, it drifts, and shifts
 Craving evermore for wealth.
 It listens not to the counsel of wisdom.³²

Or : I have lost the whole of my life in wandering.³³

While building up his case for spiritual fulfilment, the Guru heightens his emotions through expression, through suggestion as well as through repetition :

Sadho, sukh dukh donno sam kari janno
 (O good people, recognise pleasure and pain as the same).³⁴

And : *Sadho, Gobind ke gun gao*

(O good people, sing God's praises)³⁵

and again :

Taj abhiman moh maya
Bhajan Ram Chit lavo
 (Lay aside pride, wordly attachment,
 ego-lure and apply your mind to God's worship)³⁶

It is this strong sense of deep religious faith in the Divine Lord that pervades the Guru's poetry and it is this sense which helps man in the living as well as fulfilment of life.

32. Asa.

33. Sorath, VI.

34. Gauri, I.

35. Ibid, V.

36. Ibid, V.

By comparing God's name with 'wealth', with a 'jewel', the poet brings home to the worldly people the necessity of its value because it alone can remove spiritual poverty. "Without God's name all the world is false." He, therefore, exhorts man to sing His praises, for the opportunity is passing away. By such a method he reveals the existence of a divine order behind the shifting sands of life. On one side, he shows the passing pageantry of human relations and wealth, and on the other, the immortal wealth of God's name. He thus sounds a call to man to know the jewelled essence within, to "sing the praises of God who is with thee."³⁷

The Guru emphatically says :

Know that the affairs of the world last only during
life. Nanak, sing God's praises; everything is like a
dream.³⁸

The Guru further stresses the importance of meeting God :

Grown weary of wandering about for many ages,
Man hath at last obtained a human body,
Nanak saith, O man, it is now thy turn to meet
God, why not remember Him ?³⁹

Here again the poetic effect is heightened by a method of contrast used by the Guru with precision and directness. Wandering for many ages is suggestive of migrating from one body to another according to one's actions. This is an allusion to the theory of the transmigration of the soul.

Human form is considered to be rare and precious because man is the only animal who can feel spiritually sick, and who is aware of lack of perfection. Something drives him to find a sense of harmony and fulfilment in life. God is the ever-living symbol of this harmony and perfection in religious terms. Meeting with God, the eternal consciousness in man, means

37. Tilang, III.

38. 1bid, II.

39. Sorath, II.

that man is not doomed to time and change, and that he can discover the jewel of God within, the illuminating and purifying light of Truth.

An extraordinary simplicity invests the Guru's poetic lines with a distinct meaning and beauty of its own :

Bhakti Mukti ka karan swami.

(The Lord, the cause of devotion and salvation)⁴⁰.

His moral toughness is present in his hymns :

He in whom there is no devotion to God,
Hath lost his life in vain.....
Believe his piety to be fruitless
Who performeth pilgrimage and even fasting,
But who hath not control over his heart.⁴¹

The Guru has made use of 15 Ragas (measures) in the composition of his hymns. They are : *Gauri, Asa, Devgan-dhari, Bihagra, Sorath, Dhanasari Jaitsari, Todi, Tilang, Bilawal, Ramkali, Maru, Basant, Sarang* and *Jaijaiwanti*. He is the only Guru who has employed jaijaiwanti measure. It has its characteristic flow like the rushing of a stream among hills :

Ram simar ram simar ihai tero kaji hai

(Remember God, remember God, this is thy duty).

The music of word results chiefly from the relation between utterance and meaning :

*Ratan Ram ghat ke bheetar
tako gyan na parao.*

(The jewel of God was in my heart, but I knew it not).⁴²

And rhythm and vision are inextricably fused :

Agant apar alakh niranjan sabh jag bharmayo

40. Gauri, III.

41. Bilawal, III.

42. Jaitsari, I.

(Incomputable, illimitable, unseen and spotless is He who hath bewitched all men's minds).⁴³

The moving but subtle lines of the Guru's poetry are bare of any ornament at all :

Bahar bheetar eko janno

(Know that there is one God without and within).⁴⁴

The Guru's *slokas* are easy, packed, concise and rich in the vigour of the moral and spiritual directness with which he conveys truths.

In his *slokas* there is no playfulness of metaphor but a manner realistic and austere, revealing the self-effacing character of the poet's mind. Moreover, his *slokas* have a life of their own and express thoughts with intrinsic appeal, and deeply-felt beliefs. His tone of voice is distinctive enough behind his stylistic conventions :

*Jagat bhikari phirat hai
sab ka dato Ram*

(The world goeth about begging ; God is the Bestower of all).⁴⁵

The commonplace words 'jagat', 'Bhikari' are elevated to exquisite memorableness.

Images and Symbols

The Guru draws his images and similes from the work-a-day world. But there is a fine and meaningful fusion of idea and image, of form and content :

The world is a hill of smoke⁴⁶.

The body is like hail, it vanisheth in a moment.⁴⁷

43. Bihagra.

44. Dhanasari, I.

45. Ibid, XL.

46. Jaijawanti, II.

47. Basant, IV.

The Guru evokes vivid comparisons and allusions. The images of Yama's 'noose' or 'mace' falling on the neck of man, though mythical in implications, add to the vigour of the verse.

We find that one of the finest images the Guru has introduced about the process of bodily decay has a parallel in the poetic line of Auden, the modern British poet. The Guru states :

Every moment life is passing away like water from a cracked vessel.⁴⁸

The British poet puts it :

"Vaguely life leaks away".

With the help of an exquisite simile, the Guru describes man's inseparable absorption in mammon :

The heart is absorbed in mammon and cannot escape from it, O my friend ;
As a picture painted on the wall, O Nanak, leaveth it not.⁴⁹

The image of 'a picture painted on a wall' is singularly unsophisticated and homely.

We further find that in two *slokas* the Guru has introduced "dog" in two different symbolic sense. In one *sloka* he says :

Consider that person, O Nanak, as a hog or a dog
In whose heart there is no devotion to the One God.⁵⁰

Here the 'dog' symbolises the unregenerated self. Man's self remains unregenerate so long as it lives purely on the animal level or it is lost in the gratification of animal appetites.

In another *sloka* the Guru says :

48. Tilang, I.

49. Slok XXXVII.

50. Ibid, XLIV.

As a dog never abandoneth his master's house, Nanak, in the same way worship God with single mind and heart.⁵¹

A dog who never abandons his master's house is a dog tamed and domesticated. The tamed 'dog' stands for transformed self. The dog's loyalty to its master is proverbial. So if man by disciplining his will devotes himself to God with single-heartedness, he will certainly undergo a process of change from unregeneration to regeneration. The Guru by using the common word 'dog' in two different symbolic sense has conveyed a rich meaning of his significant message. This is symbolism at its simplest. But we experience the physical, emotional and moral meaning at all the three levels. It is only by unravelling the inner meaning that we can enter into the spirit of the Guru's poetry.

Irony

The Guru not only exposes worldly truth in its most simple but suggestive sense he is also critical of the self-centred perversity of human nature :

For the sake of pleasure he undergoeth much suffering
and is the slave of every individual ;
Like a dog he wandereth from door to door, and
heedeth not God's worship.⁵²

The Guru deploras the ignorant state of man. Instead of serving God, man entertains evil inclinations and finds pleasure in 'coveting others' goods and others' wives'⁵³. The perverse insistence of man on sinful pursuits is vividly evoked in a startling comparison :

However much I have striven, my heart remaineth as
crooked as a dog's tail, and will not straighten⁵⁴.

51. Slok, XLV.

52. Asa.

53. Sorath, VII.

54. *ibid*, IX.

The Guru's significant snub has a sense of irony :

Why singest thou not the praises of God, thou ignorant fool ?

Attached to false avarice thou hast not thought of death.⁵⁵

The irony becomes sharp when it is found that man's perversity of nature in clinging to the false values is deliberate :

O mad man, thou hast intentionally ruined thine affairs.⁵⁶

Thus man is not merely called an 'ignorant fool but 'mad' because he is deliberately lost in worldly attachments. The Guru, however, as a saint-poet is keenly alive to his mission of sounding a clarion call to man, the heedless sleeper :

Awake, O man, awake ; why dost thou heedlessly sleep ?⁵⁷

And reminds him not of metaphysical subtleties which are too vague for the common man to understand but of the relative truth of life and world :

Know that the affairs of the world last only during life.
Nanak, sing God's praises ; everything is like a dream⁵⁸.

Man has fallen into the sleep of heedlessness because he does not care for affairs of the soul but has exclusively confined himself to the affairs of the body and the mind.

An Estimate

The Guru's reference to Darupadi, Ajamal, Ganika, the elephant that was saved etc., shows that his knowledge of the

55. Tilan, I.

56. *ibid*, III.

57. *ibid*, II.

58. *ibid*.

Indian epic, the Mahabharata, and the Puranas has worked allusively into his poetic compositions. His style is limpidly clear. If his hymns have a profound, purifying appeal, his couplets are potent enough to rekindle the light within.

The Guru's poetic achievement lies in the fact that by the use of plain language, he has the power to enlarge our dimension of faith and awareness. There is a native strength of spiritual passion, moral seriousness and reflective vitality in his hymns. His pre-occupation with the essential Divine Reality sets his observations of relative realities of life and world in clear contrast, perceived and rendered with a sharpness of precision. His hymns and couplets are verses of experience rather than of mere ideas. To grasp their full meaning, one has to identify oneself with the spirit of moral and spiritual vision which lies at their core.

PART IV

**DYNAMICS OF THE GURU'S FAITH
AND PHILOSOPHY**

CHAPTER VI

THE CONCEPT OF GOD AND HIS NAME

Not an Academic Philosopher

Guru Tegh Bahadur is not a philosopher in the academic sense of the term. It is from his poetry (*bani*) that we know of his philosophy. His philosophical thoughts are implicitly present in his poetic utterances. An attempt is made in this section to trace, interpret, systematise and inter-weave the different thoughts into a harmonious view of life. In this process we bring out certain clear-cut concepts of the Guru, concerning God, power of God's name, man's relation to God and world and the Guru's attitude to death and the ethical and spiritual development of man. We also show that these concepts derive their central glow from Guru Nanak's sacred tradition.

GOD

Guru Tegh Bahadur's concept of God is marked with absolute monism and devotional mysticism. The Guru says : "There is but one God."¹ This is in complete accordance with Guru Nanak's Moolmantra, *Ik Oamkara* "God is one", or his emphatic statement : "God is one without a second."²

We further find that theism and absolutism are finely fused in the Guru's approach to God. God is not a creative aspect of the Absolute but the absolute Himself, the ultimate divine reality, eternal and changeless, with innumerable qualities and attributes. God is the All-pervading Absolute Reality, omnipotent, merciful, benevolent. He is both transcendent and immanent :

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1. Dhanasari, 1.
 2. Asa, M.1.

Lord of the earth, yet uncontaminated by the world.³ He is formless but most intimate to man :

Though the Lord is without form or features, yet He is quite near.⁴

The Guru also mystically believes in the playful aspect of God :

He assumeth many shapes and playeth many sports, yet is distinct from everything.⁵

The Guru thus holds that it is the One who manifests Himself in the Many. He is All-existence. The Lord Himself is illusion spreader and illusion-beholder.⁶

Even Guru Nanak says : "The world is a mere sport of Brahman."⁷

God is a power abiding within us and nearest to us. Man's efforts to renounce the world in search of God is futile, for God dwells within :

God is in thy heart, yet thou searchest for Him in the wilderness.⁸

The Guru refers to certain positive, concrete and pleasant attributes of God which signify that God's help is necessary to enable man to rise above imperfections, sufferings, fear and bondage. He is fulfiller of desires,⁹ bestower of all happiness,¹⁰ all-gracious, all-forgiving.¹¹ Man has desires, God is the full-filler; man is miserable, God bestows happiness on man; man is erring and sinful, God is gracious. Since man is desire-ridden,

3. Sorath, V.

4. Jaitsari, IV.

5. Bihagara.

6. Jaitsari, IV.

7. Maru, M.1.

8. Sorath, III.

9. Ibid, IV.

10. Slok.

11. Sorath, IX.

weak and helpless, God in His mercy helps him in his undertakings¹² as well in his distress. Thus man ever stands in need of God, and God is ever active to bless man.

Man's weakest moment is the moment of death. Guru Tegh Bahadur explicitly states that the Lord is not only the giver of the human birth but He is also our helper at the last moment.¹³ At the last moment when no body accompanies man, "God alone is His helper."¹⁴

Countless are the attributes of God. A mystic or devotee chooses such attributes as supply his psychological needs. But the saint who is devoted to the welfare of humanity asserts attributes which are suitable to the need of his age. Since Guru Tegh Bahadur lived in the age of spiritual darkness and religious tyranny, he very wisely gave expression to such divine qualities which served as instruments for removing human fear and perplexity and urged man to look forward to the saving grace of God when all their human resources failed.

A study of the Guru's *Shabads* and *Slokas* reveal that they contain beautiful and arresting lines which unfold such appropriately selected attributes of the Omnipotent Creator and Sustainer of the world as inspire the human mind with much-needed confidence.

God is the strength of the strengthless, the Dispeller of fear, the Lord of the helpless.¹⁵ He is granter of safety to His creatures,¹⁶ the friend and protector of the poor,¹⁷ the Lord of the poor and destroyer of fear,¹⁸ the remover of sorrow and the ocean of Mercy.¹⁹

12. Slok, XX.

13. Ramkali.

14. Basant, V.

15. Sloka, VI.

16, Ramkali, I.

17. Gauri V, Todi.

18. Sorath, IX.

19. Ibid, IV.

The concept of God as the saviour and redeemer is vividly brought out in several hymns and *slokas*. When all human resources and moral efforts are of no avail, God alone extends His saving grace.²⁰

The redeeming aspect of God presupposes His Omnipotence. And the Guru's God is all-powerful. He can in a moment make a beggar a king, or a king a beggar.²¹

And again :

What is empty He filleth, and What is full he emptieth.²²

God, for Guru Tegh Bahadur, is thus creator, sustainer and destroyer and at the same time He is the absolute reality, eternal and changeless, merciful and gracious. He is "the purifier of sinners and the friend of the poor",²³ and the ever-living fountain of light and strength to humanity in hours of darkness and distress.

Power of God's Name

The Guru recommends *Simran* or *Japa*, constant remembrance or repetition of the divine Name. It is an effective way to control the mind, to evolve one-pointed awareness of the absolute reality, and in the most advanced stage it produces a state of perpetual consciousness of being in God. What counts is not mechanical repetition but love of the Name and the whole-hearted remembrance which springs from the devoted worship.

God's name, according to Guru Tegh Bahadur, is the purifier of the world;²⁴ it cleanses away all filth of sin,²⁵ steadies the mind, dispels the fear of death,²⁶ snaps man's bonds²⁷, and

20. Slok, LIII.

21. Bihagara.

22. Ibid.

23. Guri, 5.

24. Jaitsari, III.

25. Gauri, IX.

26. Sorath, V.

27. Sorath, IV.

bestows salvation on man.²⁸ By taking shelter in God's name man obtains fearless dignity,²⁹ evil thoughts are dispelled, the rank of Nirvana is obtained,³⁰ safety is insured,³¹ life is reformed,³² spiritual knowledge springs up in the heart, covetousness departs from the heart and it abides in special happiness.³³

God's name helps at all levels, spiritual, mental, moral and psychological. At the mundane level, God's name bestows comfort³⁴ and success in all undertakings.³⁵

At the moral and spiritual level, it helps to tame the mind and to ensure enlightenment. The most effective way to reform one's life, to illumine one's consciousness and to obtain salvation is the constant remembrance of God's name. No emancipation is possible in *Kali Yuga*, the Age of spiritual darkness, without contemplation on the name of God.³⁶ At the psychological level God's name helps us to get rid of fears, anxieties, tensions and inner impurities of the mind that make a hell of human life.

The Guru's main stress is on the theme of purification of mind. Unless the mind is purified, God's light will not shine in man. The easiest and the simplest key to purify the mind is to remember the name of God. Once the "filth" of the heart is washed away by the power of the name, knowledge springs up in the heart and steadily the way is prepared for salvation.

Purity of mind is a necessary qualification for dispelling doubts in the mind. Mere going to places of pilgrimage, fasting, and practice of jog (Yoga) and sacrificial feasts are of no avail.

28. Ramkali, II.

29. Tilang, I.

30. Ramkali, I.

31. Bilawal, I.

32. Ramkali, II.

33. Basant, III.

34. Maru, I.

35. Sloka, XX.

36. Bilawal, III.

What is necessary is to lay aside mental pride, and to apply the mind to adoration of God.

In view of all these benefits derived from the remembrance of God's name, the Guru declares:

“Remembrance of God is Man's duty.”³⁷

The Guru discards the traditional, mechanical ways of dipping in holy waters, of fasting and observing rigorous Yogic disciplines in order to gain purity of mind and self-knowledge. “There is no other religious ceremony equal to that of remembering of God's name.”³⁸ There is no greater spiritual exercise than meditating upon the “Word”, in the sense that it is a harmless technique to refine the mind, to rid it of baser qualities that prevent it from flowing towards God. The remembrance of God's name has the moral significance because it helps to develop man's personality. The nature of mind is to flow towards sense objects. By constant repetition and reflection upon God's name, intellect, will and feeling are unified and man advances towards the goal of God-realization. Instead of becoming self-centred man becomes God-centred and he grows in constant awareness of divine reality. The remembrance of God's name is a simple but a very useful method of shifting the focus of attention to the Absolute Reality. It rescues man from falling a prey to mental pride which is God-eclipsing.

The Divine name is not only a means of attaining peace of mind, spiritual insight and salvation, it also removes obstacles that appear along the path of God realization. Such impediments are psychological, found rooted in man's instinctive and basic urges—the will to live and to enjoy, the will to exalt one's ego, which gives rise to five evils, lust, anger, infatuation, greed and pride. With the help of God's name the mind becomes free from the mists of these passions and attains clarity of thought, tranquility, confidence, satisfaction, faith

37. Jaijawanti, I.

38. Sorath, VII.

and awareness. Hence it is man's duty to lift up his mind to God by means of the Divine Name, cleansing it of all imperfections.

The Divine name, the Guru says, is the dispeller of doubts. Mere discrimination between God, the Real, and the unreal(ego) is not enough. Ego must be dissolved, and it is in devoted remembrance of God's name that ego is easily dissolved. There are three paths to perfection in Indian Philosophy. The way of knowledge, the way of action and the way of devotion to God. Though there is a fine balance of all the three ways in the writings of the Guru, but he chiefly recommends the way of devotion. In the Guru's way of devotion, all the three are, however, beautifully harmonized. Ego in man is considered to be the main mischief-maker, which impedes the growth of our creative personality. Guru Nanak too has said that by falling a prey to ego, truth cannot be realised, the truth cannot be practised.³⁹ The ego shuts man away from the Absolute Reality.

Hence to defeat ego, the root of all imperfections man has to sublimate his emotions by turning them towards God.

The Guru holds that devotion to God is the most effective way of removing obstructions that block the way of enlightenment and God-realisation. This involves a discriminating process of realization that God is eternal and the things of the world are transient. God alone is the source of everlasting happiness and obsessive love for perishable things of the world is the cause of misery. Thus devotion is not merely an emotional preparation but a discriminating and active cultivation of insight into the eternal reality. But mere devotion and discriminative knowledge are not enough. These must be supplemented with action. If we do not make efforts to turn to God, the supreme reality, we cannot achieve spiritual targets self-discipline, self-enlightenment, lasting contentment, peace and happiness. We will then be satisfied only with our life as led on the surface consciousness, ever falling a prey to instinctual and

39. Gauri, M, 1.

fundamental urges in us. We shall never try to drive all evils away from our heart and never move towards higher progress and perfection. The Lord's name, therefore, restores a sense of balance in life, confers true sacredness and dignity on the individual, brings about inward transformation and places man above the subjectivity of the ego. Without it, it is not possible to realize the supreme spiritual ideal, the divine reality. Hence it is very significantly the Guru says :

“Without the name of God all this world is false.”⁴⁰

The world is, in fact, a theatre of action for realization of the supreme spiritual goal of life. The name of God is a means to this end. If man neglects it he simply entertains a false outlook, revelling in transitory things of the world, ignoring the unchanging Reality underlying it. It is the name which enables us to have a glimpse of the Divine Reality. Without it man is lost in false or meaningless show of things. So long as man clings to this impermanent, phenomenal world, he remains in ignorance. He ignores (in a state of spiritual darkness) the infinite to derive pleasure from the finite. He is lost in confusion and doubt. As he steps towards God with faith, he begins to evolve spiritually. Faith in God is life transforming. He rises from lower to higher form of awareness. To live at the level of instinct and sense is the lowest form of awareness. Intellect is higher to it but it is limited and screens the highest truth due to mental pride that is associated with it. Man must awaken in him the intuitive awareness of God, a total vision of Reality, of seeing the one in his manyness.⁴¹ The Guru singing of God's name raises recommends simran and Kirtan, remembering God's name and for gaining such a whole view of things. They give us spontaneous knowledge, which arises from an intimate communion of mind with the highest truth, till this process culminates as water mingles with water.⁴² The Guru's way of devotion is thus a harmonious blend of dis-

40. Jaitsari, III.

41. Bihagra.

42. Sorath. I.

crimination, emotion, feeling, imagination, will and meditation on God's name.

Psychology of Simran

The Guru's belief in the efficacy of God's name has a psychological significance. How can mere chanting of God's praises or contemplation on His divine name help in our dark hours? We find that Simran and Kirtan are psychological techniques. They enable us to identify our will with the will of the fundamental Divine reality within us. And this helps us out of our predicament:

The psychology of Simran is that it makes a person live in the consciousness of something lower than the human will. And this rescues him from becoming a plaything of time and change. By the process of Simran our surface-consciousness is drenched by the tides of the essence within, the spiritual principle in us, and thereby it grows strong to absorb lightning attacks from the external world. This is an important achievement of the inner life.⁴⁴

It may be mentioned that Guru Tegh Bahadur's concept of the Divine name bears a striking resemblance to Guru Nanak's concept of name, though the latter's concept is more poetically described. For example, Guru Tegh Bahadur makes a concise but a direct statement about five evils, lust, anger, infatuation, greed and pride which can be driven away from the heart by remembering the Divine name. Guru Nanak speaks in an attractive metaphorical vein when he compares the divine name with water which can extinguish the fire of vile appetites, lust, anger, attachment, greed and ego. "The world", he says, "burns like fire and the name of the Lord is cool."⁴⁵

Guru Tegh Bahadur's statement is again direct, but highly suggestive when he speaks about the falsity of the worldly condition without God-consciousness. "Without the name of God

44. See the present writer's article "Hitch Your Wagon to a Star" in *Art of Living*, June 1975, p. 41.

45. Dhanasari, M. 1.

all this world is false."⁴⁶ But Guru Nanak's statement is instinct with deep psychological implications when he says: "Without the practice of the word, the whole world is madly furious."⁴⁷ Man, psychologically speaking, cannot but act. "The best action," according to Guru Nanak "is the remembrance of the Lord's name."⁴⁸ But acting in the world without remembering God can only be a distraction. The image implies that the world is 'mad' in the sense that it does not discriminate between the essential and the non-essential, and that in its frantic pursuit of the non-essential it ceases to meditate on the Divine Name which brings inner tranquility and illumination. The equilibrium of the world is upset if man remains dominated by instinctive and primitive urges. This is madness, a deliberately induced psychotic state where there is disintegration of the spiritual view of the oneness of things. In such an atmosphere, ego has its free play and life is devoid of true progress.

Such is the predicament of man without remembering the Divine name which alone ensures spiritual discipline or eradication of passions, and brings about inner regeneration and purification. It can bring about radical change in our mental make-up. Guru Tegh Bahadur puts in a straight forward manner :

O madman, thou hast remained entangled with sin and forgotten the jewel of the name.⁴⁹

For

Life is only profitable, Nanak, when we are absorbed in God's praises.⁵⁰

Life is profitable in the real sense when we attain God-consciousness or Truth-consciousness. And this is possible only when we clear up the muddle of our being and achieve conquest over ignorance through devotion to God's name.

46. Jaitsari, III.

47. Sorath, M. I.

48. Sri Raga, M. 1.

49. Sorath, X.

50. Maru, III.

CHAPTER VII

THE GURU'S ATTITUDES TO WORLD AND DEATH

World, Man and God

The Guru's poetic statements about the world require to be read between the lines. A mere casual look at them may mislead one into thinking that the world is only an illusion, a mere empty dream, and that there is nothing real in it. On a closer study we find that the Guru's various utterances about the world boil down to the two broad approaches : the transitoriness of things of the world and the self-centredness of the people of the world.

The world's transitoriness is reflected in the statements :

The world is like wealth obtained in a dream¹.

Everything which is visible shall vanish like the shadow of a cloud².

The world is like a bubble³.

These statements do not point to the falsity or unreality of the world but to its transitoriness. Guru Nanak clearly wrote :

Thy worlds are true, the material creations are true⁴.

The world is, therefore, not false from the standpoint of the Sikh tradition. The Guru's main focus is on the impermanence

1. Basant, II.

2. Sarang, II

3. Sloka.

4. Var Asa, M.1.

of the world. He refers not only to the short-livedness of things of the world but he also points out the instinct of self-centredness in man. He sings : "The whole world is attached to one for its own interest"⁵. What the Guru implies in his concept of the world as a whole is that the world-process is in a flux. The world is ever on the move, ever-changing. Man is so excessively attached to it, so infatuated with it that he has forgotten to look beyond and behind the world-process. As a result of it, he does not recognize the Ever-Existent Divine Reality which creates and sustains the process. Man's self-centredness is the outcome of his vision limited by the ego. The Guru seeks to open man's eyes to the fact of eternity which underlies the time-process.

Man and God

The Guru's purpose in bringing into focus the ever shifting time process is to awaken man to the eternal reality underlying it. He then draws our attention to a creative relationship between man and God. God is very gracious to man. He has given man "Human body, wife, wealth, prosperity, commodious mansions"⁶. Since He is the Bestower of all happiness, it is incumbent on man to remember Him to obtain deliverance. What the Guru implies is that God is the creative source of all things ; man should not lose himself in pursuits of perishable things only, but he should try to gain enlightenment and his final release into God. In several hymns and *slokas* the Guru has explicitly stressed that since man is mortal and the world is like a bubble or a dream, he should shake off egoistic entanglements with the world which obscure the Divine Principle or God in him. The way of the world is the way of the worship of Mammon⁷. But Mammon is only God's handmaiden⁸. Once the truth dawns on man that God is the fountain of all prosperity, joys and life, his mind, instead of moving in the direction

5. Sorath, IX.

6. Sloka, VII.

7. Gauri, III

8. Jaijawanti, III.

of the worldly things would move in the direction of the Divine to obtain lasting happiness and to go across the ocean of the world, the ever-changing time-process.

It may be pointed out that the Guru does not condemn the world. He only reveals its finite and impermanent character to the discriminating eye. Unless the character is stamped on the human mind, it will not divert its flow from sensual pursuits to the pursuits of the Truth. The Guru explicitly states :

This temporary body thou deemest permanent, in this way thou hast entangled thyself⁹.

This implies that man's entanglements are due to this lack of the sense of discrimination between the permanent and the non-permanent, between eternal and non-eternal.

The Guru empirically states the nature of the phenomenal world :

It is the way of the world, Nanak, that nothing is permanent¹⁰.

What is, therefore, worth preserving in heart is "only devotion to God which is permanent"¹¹. It is only through single minded devotion to God that one can have his pangs of birth and fears of death removed and can dwell in the fearless state.¹²

The Guru compares the world with a "Wall of Sand,¹³ a mirage,¹⁴ a hill of smoke,¹⁵ a dream or a play,¹⁶ a shadow of the cloud¹⁷. The metaphors do not negate its reality, but only

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9. Sarang, III.
 10. Sloka, LI.
 11. Sloka, XLVIII.
 12. Ibid, XXXIII.
 13. Sorath, VIII.
 14. Devgandhari, II.
 15. Basant, IV.
 16. Sloka, XXIII.
 17. Gauri, II.

show its evanescent nature. We have not to withdraw ourselves from it but to understand its finiteness. We can then turn to the spiritual. By the spiritual the Guru means not the renouncing of this world but of narrow, selfish, ego-centredness and attainment of God-centredness. Instead of living in fragmentariness and disharmony born of exclusive and excessive pursuits of the world, we should live an active good life through devotion to God and the resultant purification of mind and integration of personality. The integration of personality is not possible unless we recognise the permanent element within us. The Guru says :

Thou hast lost the jewel of human life, and thou knowest not God's way.¹⁸

Human life is as precious as a jewel. We have not to throw it away in sheer sensual pleasures. The Guru, therefore, exhorts man that instead of being enslaved by avarice and worldly attachment, he should recognize "as permanent the God who dwelleth within him".¹⁹ The Guru thus lifts man out of servitude to the ego in him and directs his attention to the Divine that dwells within.

The Guru significantly compares the world with "a nightly dream"²⁰ So long as man does not realise God, he remains in a dream-state where he sticks to animal relativity. When the spell of egoism that keeps him in bondage is broken, his choice falls on spiritual eternity, till his dream-state vanishes into realization of the Supreme Reality at the heart of things. His self-centredness drops and he realizes God.

The Guru's concept of the world is thus indissolubly interlinked with his concept of man's relationship to God. Man becomes short-sighted in his egoistic pursuits and this prevents him from comprehending His existence in its depth. But the Guru not only shows the impulses that blind man and obscure

18. Gauri, VIII.

19. Gauri, VII.

20. Sarang, I.

his vision of truth, he also tells the spiritual know-how that liberates. He reveals the technique of acquiring the "jewel of God" within, which chiefly consists of a good moral discipline and devotion to God's Name. Hence the necessity of a good moral discipline, for having spiritual enlightenment and realization of God.

The Guru's Attitude to Death

The Guru's attitude to death is simple, spontaneous but highly realistic. Death is inevitable. All things created are subject to decay and death. But worldly man is so much engrossed in his pursuits that he is least conscious of the fact of death. The Guru awakens him to the consciousness of death.

Thou hast become old, knowest thou not that thy time hath arrived ?²¹

The body which is born with thee shall depart with thee.²²

The Guru refers to three stages of life : childhood, youth and old age.²³ These stages of life point to the fact that life is a process of change, a state of flux, where all things are transitory. The fleeting nature of things is clearly implied here. In this phenomenal world "men are born and die like bubbles"²⁴.

After awakening man to the consciousness of death, the Guru brings home to him the reality of the last moment :

Everybody speaketh of his relations, and attacheth his heart to them with love. At the last moment nobody will accompany him²⁵.

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21. Sloka, IV.
 22. Tilang, II.
 23. Sloka, XXXV.
 24. Ibid, XXXIX.
 25. Devgandhari, III.

Again :

Understand that wealth, wife, prosperity and home will not depart with thee²⁶.

The Guru realistically observes that "all relations are only for life".²⁷ His kinsmen love him so long as he lives. The Guru believes in the existence of the soul. Death, for him, is "the parting of the soul from the body"²⁸.

The Guru also exposes the self-centred viewpoint of the worldly people. When a man's soul parts from his body, the very kinsmen who used to lavish affection on him, "cry out and call him a "ghost", and he is expelled from the house."²⁹

After showing the brevity of human life and relationship, the Guru refers to what may be called psychology of the consciousness of death. He suggests that consciousness of death is the cause of fear and anxiety :

"I have not forgotten the fear of death ; in my anxiety my body hath wasted away, I have been running in every direction contriving plans for my salvation³⁰."

But anxiety and fear give way to reflection. The very consciousness of our finite and mortal existence makes us think about something that must be above the flux of finitude. We then are seized with a longing to pass from death to deathlessness, from darkness of perishable condition to light of everlasting truth.

The Guru thus does not throw a romantic halo of mystery about death. He does not call it the gateway of new life, the fulfilment and completion of life. Nor is it an illusion but a stinging reality.

26. Basant, IV.

27. Devgandhari, II.

28. Ibid.

29. Sorath, XII.

30. Jaitsari, II.

But the certain approach of death as emphasised by the Guru is not for the sake of an existentialist emphasis. It is made a starting point to reflect on the question : since our life-span is limited, what is essential and urgent for us to do ? The choice lies before man : either to establish relationship with God, the Absolute Deathless Divine Reality or to keep clinging to the cycle of *samsaric* existence. Man has to choose between higher inner advancement and animal-like living, between turning to God and "filling the belly like a beast". The limitations of the latter are sung by the Guru in hymn after hymn. A man who remains absorbed in Maya (*Maya magan*) has no time to sing God's praises. His is an erring mind.³¹

Escaping the Noose of Yama

At several places the Guru states that Death's noose will not fall on the neck of a person who remembers God. This simple statement has a profound psychological truth. It does not mean that a man whose heart is the seat of God will escape the noose of Yama. Death is a part of cosmic routine. What the Guru subtly suggests is that such men who worship God with single-hearted devotion attain a state of mind in which death loses its mystery, terror and sting. It is only those who lead the life of instincts are obsessed with the hysterical fears of death. Those whose minds are attuned with God, the Eternal light and Truth do not pass away but pass on to the divine sphere of eternal Truth (*Sach Khand*).

Since God's name is powerful enough to ferry men across the ocean of the world, devotion to God ultimately leads to the cessation of the cycle of birth and death. The Guru believes in the theory of reincarnation. Man wanders on from life to life, haunted with fears of death in each life-time, till he is delivered from this cycle by devotion to God. It is by attaining salvation that man is not subject to death; he escapes the net of Yama.

Salvation in this context means a state of bliss and deathlessness where men have no fear to become playthings of time and change.

31. Jaitsari.

The Guru's repeated reference to the mortality of life has a psychological significance. The psychology involved is that though death is inevitable, man is yet capable of doing good deeds for a moral and spiritual transformation. Man is not only subject to nature, to the cosmic order, he can also transcend it and attain immortality. Time and change are not fundamental. When selflessness and ceaseless devotion to God puts a stop to egoism in man's nature, he can attain immortality. He can gain enlightenment and can reach a state where, as Guru Nanak puts it, "time, bondage and death cannot have access to him."³²

To transcend the noose of Yama is to cross the ocean of the world, the world of time and change, and to come to union with the Unchanging, Time-less Spirit.

Metaphysical Interpretation of the Guru's Attitude to Death

The Guru prepares a way for a proper understanding of spiritual wisdom by making death a significant topic. But that does not mean that his philosophy is gloomy. Besides death, there is a frequent reference to spiritual life which makes the fear of death evaporate. From the existentialist viewpoint, man sees himself as a finite creature poised on the brink of nothingness. But existentialism has to go a step further to let the existentialist's anxiety vanish into what the Guru describes as the bliss of remembrance of the Divine Name. (*Hari ko nam sada sukh dai*)³³ God's name is ever bliss bestowing.

The Guru, in fact, is critical of the hedonistic utilitarian approach that pleasure is the end of life. Pleasure is not happiness. There are moments when man feels the sense of spiritual want :

I have passed my life in the intoxication of worldly love; nor have I devoted myself to God.³⁴

32. Sri Raga, M.I.

33. Ramkali, II.

34. Maru, III.

The awakening of sense of the spiritual is part of a purificatory process (*Nirmal gyan*).³⁵ The way is prepared for deepening of man's consciousness. He understands that he does not belong to a fragmentary reality but to the infinity, from which he is separated, and for which his yearning begins. But in metaphysical terms, the Guru describes the conflict between being and non-being in the process of becoming. God is within us; this implies that He is our essential Being, Pure Being. When man is dissatisfied with things of the world and realizes their finite, fear-inspiring character, he takes shelter in the infinite power of Pure Being. He sees through things until he perceives their core, the divine reality at the heart of creation. He gains the insight that Pure Being transcends time. All existence is bondage to time and this gives rise to insecurity of being which produces fear of death in man, for it would snatch him away unnoticed from the theatre of action. But behind this insecurity lies the discovery of the Deathless, Pure Being in us.

Devotion to God, the Timeless Being, is the defeat of death. Remembrance of God's name brings us in enduring touch with the Real Being, and all our fears come to an end. Man is lifted from existentialist despair and helplessness to a plane of hope. The Guru suggests that man has the power of free choice : despair or hope for the future.

Buddha talked about "sorrow and the ending of sorrow". Guru Tegh Bahadur talks about death and the ending of the chain of death. But their techniques differ. While Buddha is silent about God, Guru Tegh Bahadur affirms "All except God perishes, and man can achieve unperishing consciousness only by being in union with the imperishable Divine Reality for which we need not flee to the forest but to search it within ourselves :

As in flowers there is odour and in a mirror reflection,
so God dwelleth continually in thy heart; Search for
Him there, brother."³⁶

35. Basant, III.

36. Dhanasari, I.

The spiritual reality is thus a part of man's being, nay, the basic part from which man derives his being itself. It can be known and deathlessness can be achieved, provided the mind chooses to dissipate its voluntary spiritual ignorance.

The Guru exposes the fact that man lives his life as a sub-human creature. It is a trivial life full of malice, greed, perverse self-assertion that leads to death and spiritual darkness. To be truly human, man should live not on the animal but on the spiritual level. In this way he can be liberated into deathlessness.

Keeping in view the human condition the Guru has thus sounded a note of optimism. The actual and the metaphysical, as we have shown, are subtly fused in Guru Tegh Bahadur's attitudes to world and death.

CHAPTER VIII

THE GURU'S ETHICS

Guru Tegh Bahadur's ethics is not a set of commands issued by *Gurbani* (poetical utterances of the Guru); it is a transforming discipline, and hence an inseparable part of spiritual discipline. After declaring that God is within, and He alone is man's helper, the Guru points out an ethical discipline that is essential for God-realization. The purpose of this discipline is to sublimate the ego that binds man to the life of the surface-consciousness which is not the whole being. This will help man to embrace positive qualities of devotion, discrimination, humility and contentment in his search for the Jewel below the threshold of everyday awareness.

The Guru does not dole out sermons of sentimental humanism. His stress is on the overcoming of the ego which is indispensable for ethical discipline as well as for realization of a higher life. All great moral qualities will spring when God-consciousness becomes a felt reality.

Renunciation of Mental Pride

The Guru does not ask man to renounce the world. He rather insists on renouncing mental pride.¹ Mental pride does havoc to the mind that is seeking God. It puts fetters on it in the sense that it resists the influence of inwardness to creep over it for its advancement towards the Divine. It prevents the mind from utterly depending on the Divine, from becoming humble. Humility in the devotional process is the indispensable virtue for discovering the Divine in us. It is humility and total self-surrender which cuts off the supply of thought to pure

1. Gauri, I.

consciousness and thus helps in activating its potential power to save man. One should go beyond the egolessness of things in order to have spiritual insight into the Truth. This is possible when man eliminates self-will, self-interest and then instead of becoming self-centred (*mannukh*), he becomes God-centred (*gurmukh*). Spiritual insight cannot be attained without overcoming ego, and especially without meditating on the Divine Name. It is in the state of enlightened self-surrender that mental pride, a form of ego is dissolved.

Making the Best of the Human Birth

The Guru emphatically points out that man in his self-centredness has become blind to the divine Reality within and has completely forgotten the purpose of human existence. Man has attained human life, after wanderings for many ages.² He should, therefore, make the best of it by understanding its meaning and significance by adoring God, the fountain of all life. This idea is at the root of the Indian Bhakti tradition :

Having achieved human birth, a rare and blessed incarnation, the wise man, leaving all vanity to those who are vain, should strive to know God, and Him only before life passes into death.³

But the question arises : Does man act in ignorance or deliberately ? The Guru believes in the idea of ignorance but he makes a fresh noteworthy emphasis, not merely on spiritual darkness but on man's deliberate intentions and acts to pursue the seemingly pleasant path of unrighteousness. No wonder if he ironically compares man's ego-centred cunningness and perversity to a "dog's tail that will not straighten up"⁴ because people do not budge an inch from the animal level to which they cling. He blames man for deliberately plunging into the fire of sensual pleasures. It is in our power to do noble or base acts, to choose the good and to reject evil, to remain a *mannukh* or to

2. Sorath, II.

3. *Srimad Bhagwatam*.

4. Devgandhari.

become a *gurmukh*. The former is led by his own mind and is attracted by lures of his ego, temporal fascinations and general evil. The latter is a man who remembers God, keeps his ego under restraint and works according to the Will of the Lord.

Man's faculty of cognition and the power of free choice is blunted by the five evils which obscure the reason of truth and goodness. The Guru exhorts man to work with sufficient clearness and distinction so that he is not deceived by these thieves. The way to avoid falling into trap of the five evils is to cultivate genuine faith in God and His name. Faith will produce courage to assert the affirmation of permanent element in man. To deny this element is to lose oneself in the flux of relative and transitory experiences of one's ordinary life. The Guru's prayer to God to preserve from pride and evil thoughts and his exhortation to abide under God's protection is a clear pointer to the saving power of the Divine within us and the necessity of turning to it for weakening the evil forces which tend to grip the mind.

Evils of Passion

The Guru's advice to man is to "flee from lust, wrath and company of the evil."⁵ He brings into focus three major vices which stand in the way of ethical discipline and social progress. These are cupidity, calumny and dishonest earnings. It is as the prey of avarice that man runs in every direction in the hope of obtaining wealth⁶ and indulges in earnings by fraudulent means :

By fraud he deceiveth the world and filleth his own belly ?⁷

Again, man's self-will gets him entangled in sensual pleasures, and with others' wives.⁸ The Guru exhorts man to forsake

5. Gauri, I.

6. Asa.

7. Dcvgandhari.

8. Sarang, II, IV.

sensual pleasures as poison.⁹ To covet others' goods and others' wives is to pass the life in vain.¹⁰ It is to dwell in the darkness of great worldly love and spiritual ignorance.¹¹ Man's gross worldly condition, as the Guru conceives it, is the condition in which he bids farewell to moral discipline and takes to evil ways. It is this condition which the Guru urges us to shun and not the world itself.

The Guru's criticism of the pursuit of sinful pleasures is in complete accord with the teachings of Guru Nanak. From ethical viewpoint, they boil down to covetousness and ill-will which are degraded instincts in man. Guru Nanak says :

The desire for the wealth of others, the lust for the love of other women and calumny are poison and result in misery.¹²

A life of sensual pursuits and of idle gossips and gloating criticism of others, born of evil inclinations, is far from an ideal life. Such a life makes man blind to the finer spiritual presence within and even vitiates all feelings of exaltation in human relationships. It is a slavery to passions. And in this condition "like a dog he (man) wanders from door to door and heeds not God's worship".¹³ This shows that by leading a life void of moral discipline man lives on the animal level.

Purity, Fearlessness and Poise

The Guru not only urges man to overcome evil passions but he also exhorts him to embrace positive ideals of purity, poise and fearlessness.

By purity the Guru means inner purity, the purity of mind. The world is impure in the sense that it is defiled by ego and bewitched by Maya. "The Name of the Lord alone can bring in purity." Guru Tegh Bahadur too says :

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- 9. Jaijwanti, II.
 - 10. Sorath, VII.
 - 11. Ibid, VI.
 - 12. Malar, M. 1.
 - 13. Asa.

Pure is the name of God in the world ; by ever remembering it all fifth of sin shall be cleansed.¹⁴

The Guru also exhorts man to cultivate poise by rising above pleasure and pain,¹⁵ affection and hate,¹⁶ above the distinction between gold and iron.¹⁷ This has a deep psychological significance. Without poise, there is no steadiness of mind, no stability of intellect, no insight. The Guru himself has stated : "A true Jogi is one who is free from joy or sorrow, and that man is saved whose restless mind becomes steady.¹⁸ Again, with the achievement of equanimity of mind, man conquers evil in him, and performs his duty in doing the right. Instead of simply insisting on right action and right efforts, the Guru advises us first to attain the level of steadiness in which there is no disturbance or agitation. Without firmness one's reason cannot remain steadfast. In order to obtain this state, all the five have to be overcome. It is only by attaining this state that one can remain unruffled in pain and suffering, and unelated in joy. This is the psychological conquest of the world. "If the mind is mastered, the whole world is mastered".¹⁹ Going on pilgrimages, fasting and giving alms are of no avail unless man does not enter God's asylum.²⁰ These things are as fruitless as an elephant's bathing²¹. What matters is not external ritualism but inward purity. The body does not become pure with mere bath, purity comes when the Lord dwells in the mind.²² What counts is therefore, not bathing in the holy waters of the Ganges but making the mind pure like the water of the Ganges. The Holy scripture says :

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14. Gauri, IX.
 15. Gauri, I.
 16. Sorath, X.
 17. Dhanasari, III.
 18. Ibid.
 19. *Japji*, M.I.
 20. Bilawal, II.
 21. Sloka, XLVI.
 22. *Adi Granth*, p. 472.

When the mind becomes pure like the waters of the Ganges, God follows it.²³

Fearlessness is a great virtue. And fear is the disease of the soul that keeps the mind in tension and in a state of anxiety. It is by contemplating on 'God who is without any fear (Nirbhau), that man can develop the state of fearless dignity in him. Guru Tegh Bahadur calls God the Dispeller of all fears (*Sagal Bhai Bhanjan*). By taking refuge in Him, man becomes fearless. The psychological implication in this statement is that fear operates on the egoistic plane. By leaving this plane when man rises to the higher plane of divine knowledge and truth, all fears evaporate. For here he finds that the All-Powerful Glory of the Lord is all in all. At this stage he cries out :

None is higher than the Lord Almighty,
Therefore, who is to fear and whom to fear.²⁴

But in that enlightened state of mind man is not afraid of others nor does he strike fear in others :

Saith Nanak, hear, O man, call him a person possessed
of divine knowledge
Who inspireth no fear, and who hath no fear of
others.²⁵

God's Grace and Man's Free Will

Guru Tegh Bahadur explicitly states : *Rachna Ram Banai* i.e. God is the sole creator of the Universe. He also believes, as we have indicated in the preceding chapter, that God is Omnipotent, Omnipresent (Nanak, One God filleth all things).²⁶ At the same time he believes in the sweet will of the Lord which reigns supreme over all things and events :

23. Ibid, p. 1367.

24. *Adi Granth*, p. 842.

25. Sloka, XVI.

26. *Basant*, I.

Saith Nanak, hear, O man
What pleaseth God happenth.²⁷

But this raises the ethical dilemma : Is man a free agent or a puppet in the hands of Almighty God ? The Guru has resolved this dilemma in his characteristic way. He holds that man has free will in the performing of actions. Making of efforts is essential for human progress. No efforts, no achievements in any sphere of life. Our right endeavours will attract the grace of the Lord. In performing actions, however, man has to discriminate between the higher self or the soul in man and the lower self, his ego. The will in man is identified with the lower self in him. Such is its nature that it keeps man a slave to evils of passion to the neglect of the higher self or divine element in him :

Mortal is in the power of lust, anger and wordly love,
and hath forgotten God.²⁸

Thus the will of man is in the grip of five evils which divert his mind from higher or spiritual consciousness in him. The will of man in this respect is erring ; it is inclined toward selfishness, toward evil thoughts and as a result of which man remains unsteady in mind and Maya-absorbed. He is even, as the Guru calls it, "enamoured of deadly sins."²⁹ Man's free will be thus basically rooted in egoistic impulses. It is a psychological fact.

It is by surrendering our self-will to the will of the Lord that our intellect and mind are purified, and we then attract the saving grace of the Lord. The Guru does not advocate detachment from actions to win the grace of the Lord. He rather insists on good actions and earnest endeavours to uplift our mind, to refine our intellect, to purify our will. He vigorously assures man that action in this direction will meet with the approval of the Lord and he will shower His grace to remove his ignorance.

27. Sloka, XXXIX.

28. Gauri, II.

29. Sloka, II.

The Grace of God does not fall like a ripe fruit in man's lap, all of a sudden, but it is the result of man's sustained efforts in the direction of truthful living and search for Truth. The Guru explicitly states :

“The man who is untouched by covetousness, worldly love, selfishness, joy, and sorrow,
And who is not a slave to his passion,...
Who deemeth heaven and hell, ambrosia and poison,
gold and copper, as the same ;...who hath not the entanglements of pain and pleasure
Nanak, admit that such a mortal is saved.³⁰

Thus the Divine Grace and man's free will are significantly blended in the Guru's ethics.

Marks of an Enlightened Man

An enlightened man, according to Guru Tegh Bahadur, is one who knows “the real thing in the world”.³¹ This means that he enters into awareness of the Real, and attains an insight into the Supreme Reality underlying all creation. He is thus “possessed of divine knowledge,” and is free from the bonds of “pain and pleasure, and thus is not affected by the pull of opposites. The enlightened man is a true *jogi* (*Yogi*), a man of steady concentration.

Other characteristics of an enlightened man are that he is “untouched by covetousness, worldly attachment, selfishness,”³² who is not “bewitched by mammon”, who knows the secret that the Pure One dwelleth in his heart, whom lust and wrath touch not,³³ and who remembers God as his duty, because the Guru believes that a person in whose heart there is recollection of God, he obtains salvation. Supreme is the devotion of an enlightened man to the Lord Supreme. There is no difference between that man and God :

30. Gauri, VII.

31. Jaijawanti, I.

32. Sloka, XXIX.

33. Gauri, I.

Know that that mortal is like God who worshippeth
 night and day ;
 Between God's saint and God there is no difference :
 Nanak, recognize that this is true.³⁴

Morality thus proceeds from the inner nature of man, and once the inner nature is cleansed of all impurities, man acts in a truthful, virtuous way. In fact, the inward spirit of man diffuses its perfume over the acts of an enlightened person. There are no conflicts within him to be reasoned. He grows in the image of God.

Ethics of Sacrifice

It may be stated that before the call of sacrifice came to Guru Tegh Bahadur, he had not only presented the ideal to the world but had embodied the ideal of truth in himself. He had developed his personality in a specific spiritual way to be able to assert his choice in the hour of crisis. There was a finely balanced growth of various tendencies and impulses in him which led him to achieve a proper spiritual perspective for the realization of God's cosmic order. Participation in God's love is then not in this case for the sake of personal benefit but for the sake of leading man to the goal of cosmic evolution.

The Guru as an enlightened saint offered his services to the suffering humanity out of compassion.

When the call came and he was beseeched by the Brahmans to help them in their darkest hour of distress, he felt no conflict in his mind, he readily agreed to save them fully conscious of the huge risk that his assurance involved. His attitude shows Guru Nanak's great principle of liberation in active practice. Guru Arjun says : "A person who deserves a salute is he who is liberated and gets others liberated".³⁵

Guru Tegh Bahadur was himself a liberated being, a *jivan mukta*, who gave his life in the cause of truth, justice and

34. Gauri, VII, VIII.

35. Gauri, Sukhmani, V.

Dharma, for liberating others from religious tyranny. The Guru's ethics is, therefore, neither exclusively personal or social nor exclusively spiritual. It is an integral ethics, which is a means to spiritual freedom as well as its manifestation in our world in the form of truthful living and self-dedicating and self-sacrificing love. The Guru thus gave to society a vision of fearlessness born of the truth of his being, a vision of hope and light in midst of despair and darkness.

The Guru's martyrdom was the expression of his true religion. He had the courage to meet tyranny and torture with equanimity of mind which he had idealised in his poetry. If tyranny is a factor in the evolution of mankind, the Guru showed to humanity that there was also the crown of evolution in the form of an enlightened man who was ready to face tyranny to redeem the suffering mankind. His life is an illustration of the truth that spiritual enlightenment is the shaping power of human personality and renders it humane and heroic. Aurangzeb could not win him to his side, with all his glittering lures and gigantic intolerances. To be spiritual is to be invincible. A soul bathed in the light of eternity will never step to a dictator's whims. Was it the unique mysterious way of testing the will of an illumined soul by the cosmic will ? The Guru who had the direct and intuitive awareness of God could not bring down his awareness to the psychic level for showing a miracle to the tyrant to save his life. He had tirelessly preached not to cling to what was transient and perishable. So how could he descend from the inner universe of enlightenment and liberation to the psychic universe which generates super-normal powers, miscalled miracles, because it is now proved by the science of parapsychology that psychic powers are real and they have their own laws.

The Guru was no doubt thrown into the prison of stone walls, but he could not be imprisoned in the psychic activity of his mind and no miracle could be extorted out of him.

The Guru, in keeping with the great ideal of liberation, had become a selfless channel of the All-knowing Spirit.

Siddhis or psychic powers are the by-product of one-pointed concentration. Unless performed for some altruistic purpose,

they are impediments in the way of enlightenment and liberation. A completely selfless or enlightened person would not give himself up to the bondage to self-will by showing a miracle for his own safety.

The Guru, therefore, with the enlightening and liberating knowledge of the Divine stood firm like a rock to meet wickedness, fanaticism, narrow mindedness with tranquility, poise and supreme self-surrender to the Divine Will. The higher potentialities of his being manifested themselves in his ethical will to sacrifice.

The Guru's Ethics not an End in itself

The social and spiritual progress, according to Guru Tegh Bahadur, is possible through an ethical discipline combined with devoted worship of God. The individual stands between the material and spiritual side of nature. He is free to choose between the two sides, yet if he chooses exclusively the material side, he simply lives on the animal level. He will thus be overpowered by lust, anger, attachment, pride and greed and all these vices will sap his inner spiritual strength. But if he chooses the spiritual side, he will, passing through stages of spiritual growth, attain liberation.

Since the span of man's life is limited, and his experiences have chiefly egoistic and hedonistic overtones, the Guru exhorts him to utilize the fleeting hours in performing actions which are moral and spiritual, constructive and forward-looking.

To attain spiritual enlightenment is not a way of escapism, but to enter into a new realm of consciousness, from where one can serve God as well as fellow-beings. A person who has selfless love for the Lord will not do anything that smacks of self-centredness. The enlightened person, therefore, does not act unethically. The Guru's ethics is not an end in itself but a means to attain a higher state of consciousness where man is sensitive to the will of God, is inwardly calm, but devotes himself to the service of humanity. His own life is a unique and brilliant illustration of his great ethical and spiritual wisdom in action.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

I

Our study shows that Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, was more than a mere reformer; he was a prophet of socio-religious revolution, peaceful in character but liberating in its aim. He awakened the people to the vital need of resisting evil and falsehood on all fronts, and brought new ideals for reshaping of the human individual as well as society. In his characteristic revolutionary way, he released a creative vision which opened up new depths of human self-understanding and higher consciousness and gave to men a new outlook, to tradition a new dynamism and to history a new dimension.

Guru Nanak's creative vision was not a mere concept; it was a beacon of light, with its inherent dynamism of sustained glow of living values and ideals which his spiritual successors embodied in their lives. It reached its climax in the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth spiritual master, and its full flowering in the personality of Guru Gobind Singh, the warrior saint, the last and tenth spiritual Master.

II

Guru Tegh Bahadur was no isolated phenomenon. He belonged to Guru Nanak's spiritual galaxy, but shed distinctive lustre which added positive vitality to the freedom of the human spirit and to the stature of morality.

As a man of finely awakened moral sensibility, Guru Tegh Bahadur had a wider understanding and tolerance which is rare among religious leaders. The nobility of his moral outlook and the serenity of his soul are reflected in his detached dealings with

his self-styled enemies—the seekers after the spiritual throne of Guru Nanak, whose impulses were governed by dreams of gold and Guruship.

Guru Tegh Bahadur was God-centred, yet human. He had risen above the false satisfaction of psychological self or ego, and his moral and spiritual judgement springs from his moral and spiritual consciousness. In the conduct of his own life he was a model of moral discipline, with a healthy enough distaste for moral irregularities. This is evident from the fact that he refused to have the first compiled volume of *Adi Granth* when he learnt that it was taken by force from the house of Dhir Mal. He told his followers that it was an affront to the moral consciousness to acquire a thing by force. He was a true saint who “lived immaculate amidst the impurities of the world”.

As an active-mystic saint, he bridged the gulf between spiritual and temporal life, by raising his whole being and life to the spiritual status of a God-centred man, and by serving the people with wisdom and vitality, with unremitting social efforts, by inspiring them with constructive ideals of the development of the soul, and above all, by offering himself as a sacrifice to redeem the stricken Hindu humanity. He lived and died for the eternal values of truth, goodness, justice and freedom. His sacrifice is a triumph of the heart which bled for the well-being of others.

III

Since Guru Tegh Bahadur, like his illustrious predecessors, personally embodied the values and ideals he upheld and preached, his achievements cannot be understood without a reference to his mind and vision. An isolated approach, whether historical or literary, misses the deeper significance of his work and vision. Lack of total insight into the Guru's life and writings merely results in stray or casual remarks about his historical greatness and spiritual achievements.

An attempt to separate values from facts does not yield a correct picture of the Guru's personality and the issues involved

in his struggle for religious freedom. Considered in its context, the charge for "pedatory excursions" levelled against the Guru by some historians is dismissed as purely fictitious and politics-oriented, for it betrays a complete ignorance of the creativeness of the Guru's inner life. History is, in fact, more than a mere compilation of facts. It has been described as a dialogue between the present and the past. And this dialogue cannot be written unless the historian achieves "some sort of contact with the mind of those about whom he is writing."¹ The deeper the contact, the greater the light is thrown on facts of history. If one sees life and man in a mechanical way, it does not represent the truth. For example, Indubhushan Bannerjee, while commenting upon Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom writes :

"Knowing full well the might of the Emperor and his own comparative helplessness he yet took up the cause of the persecuted Hindus."²

This is not the whole truth. Behind Guru Tegh Bahadur's decisive stand to help the persecuted Hindus was the fact of his spiritual insight into the nature of things and he derived heroic strength and spirit of spiritual fearlessness out of it, the power to resist evil, the power to suffer for the ideal of justice and righteousness. He, therefore, assisted the Hindus against the religious policy of imperial persecution, not fully knowing his "comparative helplessness" but in the full knowledge of his inner fearlessness born of his contact with inner reality. A helpless man cannot save others nor can he accept the challenge of history.

IV

The Guru's decision to protect the Kasmiri Pundits was the momentous, historical decision. It was made without shilly-shallying on the spot at the sight of the suffering, entreating, Kashmiri Brahmans, with a sense of determination to uphold the religious rights of the people. In fact, he had suggested a

1. L.H. Carr, *What is History ?*, p. 24.

2. *Transformation of the Khalsa*, p. 61.

solution to the Pundits that only the sacrifice of a very holy person could thwart Aurangzeb's efforts for wholesale conversion of the Hindus. It was the magnanimity of his heart that he himself agreed to make such a supreme sacrifice. He gladly came forward to save the land from becoming an unmitigated Hell of religious conversion.

Such was his deep concern for humanity that he identified himself with the highest of human causes—justice, freedom, and righteousness. The saintliness in him had reached a level where he, a *Brahm Gyani*, a spiritually enlightened man, was imbued with the spirit of universal well-being, and he proved by his heroic resistance to evil that he [was directed by the cosmic will, and not dominated by an unjust outside political authority.

The philosophy of history, for the Guru, involved a philosophy of action—of resistance to evil for the protection of the suffering humanity. No one can resist evil in history who has not resisted it within himself. A total view of the significance of the Guru's martyrdom is not complete unless his long career of early self-discipline is taken into account. The Guru did not emerge miraculously on the scene to protect Dharma, without a marvellous spirit of self-control at the back of his being. He was fully conscious of his own sense of moral involvement. There was a long process of inner discipline, a career of humanistic and spiritual urges to guide people along the path of virtue, moral purity and spiritual fearlessness. He was finally equipped for suffering and sacrifice because at the critical hour he would not allow passions to intrude his own spiritual self-control. He was also equipped with a vision illuminated by an insight into the working of the cosmic will, and this enabled him not to succumb to the temptation of saving himself by working a miracle. He knew that to embrace the magical was to reject the spiritual. His refusal to show the miracle indicated his mature spiritual side, his deep inner illumination and his complete negation of self-interest. Working of a miracle would have amounted to magical subservience to self-interest.

Mere historical interpretation will not explain the fact of the Guru's refusal to show the miracle. Values must enter into

facts to illuminate them. The Guru was a great saint in whom the idea of God was not a cut-and-dried concept but a dynamic glow of felt experience. As an embodiment of self-discipline, he saw the helplessness of the Hindus against over-whelming imperial tyranny, and felt the urgent need to save them. The rise of each civilization in the world is founded on such a noble task of saving man. No wonder the Guru came forward to fulfil the vital need of liberating the horror-struck Hindus. Out of the enveloping darkness, there streamed forth the unique saintly Light, defying death. History pressed upon him most alarmingly. He, in his full serenity, recited the Lord's praise, remembered the greater glory of the Supreme Being whose Will guides the course of history, and laid down his life at the altar of righteousness and freedom.

The Guru's spirituality, a living fact is thus inextricably fused with his creative sacrifice, an historical fact, and this marks the climax of the creative vision of Guru Nanak. What gives meaning to history is not merely the crimes and insanities of despotic states but patience, compassion, resolution, fearlessness, self-abnegation, a self-sacrificing attitude towards suffering humanity and all such high qualities which spring from a cleansed perception and an effective transformation of personality. Compassion cannot be dispensed within the scheme of righteousness. In *Japji* Guru Nanak says :

“The Bull of Righteousness is the child of compassion”.

V

A proper understanding of the Guru's hymns is also not possible without an integral insight into his poetical compositions. Mere piecemeal study of his hymns will not yield the total view and significance of his poetry but may give rise to a superficial estimate about the Guru's approach or about his purpose. To illustrate our point, Duncan Greenlees makes the following observations on Guru Tegh Bahadur's hymns :

“In his own hymns there is the keynote of *renunciation of the world's illusory* delights and a regret that so few ever cared to look beyond the view to the Reality behind

but he combined this pessimism with passionate devotion to God and the knowledge that one must be *ceaselessly aware of the world around* and its need.³

This is a contradictory statement, with a rash labelling of the Guru's approach, torn from its total context as pessimistic. The contradiction lies in two divergent attitudes emphasizing "renunciation of the world's illusory delights" and "ceaseless awareness of the world around and its needs". In fact, the Guru's total vision consists in making us realize the fundamental wretchedness of attachment to the lower self and the necessity of the actualisation of the higher, the divine consciousness in us. He is of course critical of the level which restricts truth to the level of sensuality or of cerebration, mental pride, shutting out higher kind of awareness so necessary to human deliverance.

Viewed in its totality, the Guru's hymns present both the problem and its solution. The problem is related to the larger question of appearance and reality. The Guru urges us to realize the difference between the trivial and the true. To throw off trivialities he voices the need of a vision of Man. The keynote of the Guru's poetry is not of renunciation or of pessimism, as it is generally described. His poetry, in fact, embodies a vision of life, describing man alienated from the centre, the divine truth of his being, and wasting away all opportunities to realise his true human nature. To describe such a situation is not to voice a pessimistic standpoint. It is rather to bring into focus the physical and psychological facts of life. But the Guru is not content with describing such facts only. He urges us to look more deeply behind these facts into the meaning of life, into the fact of eternity which we have forgotten in our pursuits of life's lures.

Our study shows that it is not pessimism but a critical review of the human situation that governs the Guru's poetic sensibility. He, in fact, is ironical of the situation where the material is raised at the expense of the spiritual. What he deplors is

3. *The Gospel of the Guru Granth Sahib*, 1952, pp. XCIII-XCV.

that relative truth should be elevated to the position of the only truth. "The temporary body thou deemest permanent."⁴ And this is the inherent illusion of the human situation. What is misconstrued as the cold touch of pessimism is, in fact, a realistic view of the human situation. The patch of devotion to God is strewn with spiritual aspirations and wasted opportunities.

The Guru is conscious of the Higher Truth beyond the world of appearance, and so he urges man to discover the divine within and to come to terms with the fundamental nature of life. He wants that man should detach himself from ego, from imposed condition on his mind to become aware of the inherent, divine condition, the spiritual Reality. By emphasizing on the spiritual fact the Guru impresses upon us that it is God, the source of all light and power, that gives to the world of sensation its life and charm, and when this charm begins to fade away, we feel the need to lean on something that abides, something that will help us in our hour of distress. To turn to God is to move from internal enslavement to greater self-control and higher self-awareness. The Guru makes us realise that man's ignorance is vincible ignorance. It must be conquered to be fully conscious of our inmost potentialities.

The introduction of the fear of old age, of death, accompanied by the apprehension of losing what we possess is a psychological fact. It makes us feel the need to lean on something that does not change, something that will never desert us, something that abides, a reality, an absolute and everlasting truth. This is the true religious strain in his poetry. After all, what is religion? Alfred North Whitehead observes :

"Religion is the vision of something which stands beyond, behind and within the passing flux of immediate things; something which is real, and yet awaiting to be realised....."

The Guru is thus not pessimistic in his approach; he is rather painting the picture of man's relative condition with terrifying

4. Sarang, III.

honesty. He is intensely aware of the presence of the Divine that lies beyond the confines of man's surface consciousness. This specific sensibility is accompanied by a process of bringing the ethical to a focus, for ethical discipline makes for higher life, and, coupled with devotion to God's name, it leads to union with the Divine. By realizing it, bondage gives place to liberty. Ethical discipline, in his poetry, is not a commandment but an inner way for transformation of human consciousness and for furthering the evolution of man. After all, it is good life which carries man forward towards inner enlightenment. The Guru's poetry is a powerful instrument for the remoulding of character. He draws man to a higher level of awareness and ethical sensibility. Man living in a private universe of his own sentiments, moods, impulses and desires, forgets the universe of the Soul, misses his inner evolution and it is this overmuch worldliness which is the negation of creative living. A man loses his being in the toils of sensual pleasures. The Guru lays bare here the psychological reality of human nature with glowing candour and directness. He makes use of common images of 'dog' and 'hog' to expose the mind in a state of unenlightened perception. What appears to be a touch of pessimism is, in fact, a description of a stage on the way to human evolution. When we take a total view of the Guru's poetry we find that man has to pass through three levels of reality before he achieves emancipation. The first stage describes the obvious facts of life—its transitoriness and perishableness. The world is *samsara*, the realm of flux and change. That the world in which we live is subject to change is a fact which cannot be denied empirically.

But beyond this *samsara*, the perpetual pageant of life there is a reality. Man is to discover this reality which is immanent as well as transcendent. Ordinarily man lives at the animal level. He has to outgrow this level in order to have a glimpse of the higher reality. Man living on the level of the animal is hypnotised by his senses into believing that nothing exists outside the restricted realm of sense-experience. Thus man, according to the Guru, is more than a biological phenomenon. He is of course a prey to instinctual desires. He has to learn to redirect his desires to the attainment of the Divine, the

darkness of ignorance, the shining centre within which liberates him from the fear of death, the despair of existence and the anguish of loneliness.

The Guru's approach is not pessimistic in the sense that he has faith in man's ability to grow. Faith in God, he emphatically sings, would weed out frustration, fear, unruly passions and cleanse the mind of its psychological impurities.

The second stage describes man's disillusionment with the way of the world and his mood of regret over his past wastage of the precious hours of life in trivial pursuits. This mood does not smack of pessimism but originates in an awakening of consciousness which is psychologically essential for having an insight into the nature of reality. The philosophy of regret is that the central spark of the inmost self in man may be dimmed in his gross involvement in the worldly affairs, but it never goes out. The Guru deplors the submergence of the individual in the sensual pursuits to the utter neglect of the fundamental values. He, therefore, urges man to achieve inward realisation, to establish contact with the Supreme Eternal Reality. To achieve this end the Guru exhorts man to make heroic efforts to overcome five vices which obscure the inner Reality.

The Guru thus recognises the power of human will. God has given man the power to discriminate truth from untruth. It is, therefore, within man's power to control his lower passions and to establish contact with God, the universal source of life and power. The Guru is of course critical of man who revels in ignorance and overlooks the spiritual will in him. It is man's spiritual will or faith in God which carries him beyond the capacities of his limited action, and links him to the infinite light and power of God which redeems mankind.

At the third stage, with his devotion to God's name, man seeks inner enlightenment, becomes an ideal image of God and eventually attains salvation or merges with Him "like water blending with water". God, for the Guru, is not a mere fine idea or an abstract notion but Everliving, self-existent Reality which strengthens our inner fibres and assists and enriches life.

Spiritual enlightenment, for the Guru, is not a hopeless quest but it is achievable, and man should make the best of the human birth to achieve it. Its utility should not be under-estimated. It is spiritual enlightenment that releases the resources of inwardness, of fearlessness and courage to face the sun and even to sacrifice one's life for the well-being of others. This is gloriously embodied in the life of the Guru himself.

The world of Guru Tegh Bahadur's poetry is thus not a restricted word. Realism and metaphysics remarkably cohere in this world. His ability to see the wood in spite of the trees is marvellous. The trees spring up and die but the meeting of the individual soul and the universal Reality is possible against the ever-shifting play of life, in woods of inward realization. One need not run to the forest for inner illumination. By righteous living and faith in and devotion to God one can achieve spiritual enlightenment. Like the great poetry of the past the Guru's poetry is intensely individual and at the same time universal. It awakens something very deeply implanted in the human mind.

VI

The Guru's life has a shining message for us. In times of deep distress and acute difficulties we should not break out of contemporary crisis and return to purely private life, but let the sense of moral and social duty rise in us to face the crisis and to control the catastrophe. To serve others at the risk of our own lives is a great moral and spiritual act, for true morality and spirituality are not divorced from social duty. Self transcendence, for the Guru, is not merely reaching into the chamber of the Divine within, but it is also reaching out to other human beings through selfless service and sacrifice. God-centredness, the Guru's life reveals, is the fulfilment of manliness and not its negation. Man's aim is not to liberate himself but to liberate others, to work, to act in complete accord with the cosmic order, not for one's personal ends. We should care not for our own private good but for the good of our fellow-beings.

His life reminds us that the spirit of man cannot be overcome by perils. It highlights the fact that external forces may

imprison the body but cannot assail the soul of a man who is anchored in God and devoted to the cause of righteousness and freedom. The Guru's life-history further teaches us that we should not look vainly for miraculous interventions in life but should build inner strength to accept all sufferings cheerfully.

VII

It would not be out of place here to bring out, in the light of our study, the relevance of the Guru's message to our own times. Prejudices and passions are as prevalent to-day as they were in seventeenth century ; only the garbs have changed. Real progress demands a commitment to honest living, a life of self-discipline and the development of our essential human nature which is divine in its essence. Material standards are not a yardstick for creative living. The cult of greed and acquisitiveness of lust and violence betrays the symptoms of a sick society. Our ills are due to the fact that our modern life has become divorced from the moral and spiritual life. Man is more than a mere pleasure-hunting and money-minting animal. Mere dissatisfaction with the surface consciousness, as is seen in Existentialist philosophy, is not enough. We should look more deeply into the meaning of existence and move towards its higher purposes.

The modern world flaunts the philosophy of meaninglessness of despair. This is due to man's identification with the transient, lower self. Its cure lies in turning to God, the Divine within. To reach the divine is to reach the pinnacle of human evolution, liberation from fear that is caused by the inexorable phenomena of change and flux. The Guru emphatically states that for a man who is anchored in God, there is no fear.

Thanks to modern science which, taking a circuitous route via knowledge, has disclosed the spiritual dimension to the modern man. As such a new consciousness is rising in the West that not only our surface consciousness but the structure of the universe in which it works is to be realized. Atomic physics has brought us to the threshold of spiritual vision. To

the modern world the Guru's message is that neither individual nor social uplift is possible unless the creative role of the divine in man is recognised and actively brought into operation. That is the only panacea to purify the spheres of private, family, social and political relationships.

The Guru's emphasis to shun calumny and acquisitive passion is also relevant to our present needs in our democratic and social set-up. Irresponsible criticism is dangerous to the growth of an individual as well as to democracy. Acquisitive passions only breed the excessive worship of mammon and an indifference to values. And this leads to hoards of gold and vulgar display of wealth acquired by dubious means, black money rackets which plague the land with corruption and servitude.

Man, according to the Guru, is more than a belly-filling, lust-gratifying and calumniating animal. He has to sublimate his desires to enter the plane of higher consciousness. Nor is man simply the outcome of "chance collocations of atoms," as a modern scientific humanist considers him to be. Human birth is precious for it affords opportunities for self-refinement and self-enlightenment. The mystery of human existence is solved by the Guru when he points out that man is the victim of his inner urges and drives and at the same time he is rooted in the Reality out of which a galaxy of realities have sprung. What the world needs is a spiritual regeneration, founded on an enlightened understanding of the phenomenal world and the resultant discovery of the eternal Reality that underlies it.

All talks about Vedanta and Yoga are futile when the sword of the tyrant hangs on the head. The Guru teaches us that fear cannot be shaken off by drugging ourselves with myths and illusions but by willingness to offer sacrifice for the sake of truth and freedom. To the present age the Guru's message is to reconcile the spiritual and the historical for the good of the humanity. He urges us not to flee from horrors of history but to stand up to aggression by drawing power from the resources of inwardness.

The Guru's greatest gift to the posterity is a quality of energy and moral initiative, of selfless service and fearlessness. At a time when the dominant impulse in India under the rule of Aurangzeb was that of fear, he generated a temper of fearlessness. The present world too is consumed with fear and tension. The Guru exhorts to get rid of fear by basing our thoughts and actions on what is essentially right and true. This will resolve the crisis of conscience man is facing today.

VIII

The Guru's martyrdom is extraordinarily creative in the two-fold sense. Firstly it served as a means of setting the soul of history in order. In fact, it opened a new phase in history—the transition from the night of self-centred individualism to the brilliant dawn of self-sacrificing love, from weakness of mind to the strength of the spirit, from apathetic condition of self-prostration to the dynamic condition of heroic suffering, from mere passive resistance to the positive moral defiance of the tyrant's will and from moral defiance to armed defence against aggression. Such was its creative potency that it raised the quiet revolution started by Guru Nanak to its highest pitch. The creation of the Khalsa, under the dynamic leadership of Guru Gobind Singh, as we have discussed in the text, was not a turning away from but was in complete accord with the creative vision of Guru Nanak.

Secondly, Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom has a potency of the spirit which helps us to define his personality as well as his relationship with his time. The Guru's life moving from supreme spiritual awareness to supreme sacrifice is better understood, as we have shown in the text, in terms of Toynbee's historical formula of "Challenge-and-response". Through meditation the Guru had imbibed the spirit of free, creative and spiritual life. As a true saint, after liberating himself from bondage to false values, he started liberating others from inner entanglements, tensions and fears. He reacted morally to the persecution policy of Aurangzeb. He brought his spiritual ideal to counter the brute force, and his life thus became a pure flame of sacrifice. He was indeed a great saint, a glorious martyr.

IX

The achievement of the Guru lies in offering a new model of spiritual perfection at the time of great historical crisis. It is generally believed that "the mystical perfection is not realizable in history". But Guru Tegh Bahadur by bringing into operation his soul force—his amazing self-discipline and self-surrender to the cosmic will—showed that spiritual values, generally considered to be extra-historical values, too were rooted in history. The call of martyrdom came and he rose equal to the occasion. How urgent was the call of sacrifice! No less urgent than the call was the pulsation of human love and spiritual robustness that the Guru threw into that call.

His martyrdom is unique in itself because it reveals that spirituality is a dynamic, progressive process; it enables one to reach the spiritual stage of fearlessness where the God-centred man, rising above the historical situation, projects his vision into the future, into a new dimension of progress. The Guru's sacrifice is, in fact, a remarkable case of spiritual perfection responding to the crying need of the hour. This is a living example of fusing the timeless spirit with the spirit of history, of harmonising self-enlightenment with the urgent demands of the world without.

By taking a total view of Guru Tegh Bahadur's life, work and vision, we find that his martyrdom is the crown and culmination of an evolutionary process in which morality, creativity and purpose are central. In his personal life and choice of sacrifice he reflects the highest values of Indian spiritual idealism linked with historical reality. He is indeed an embodiment of India's best self. His greatness shines forth from the holiness of the will-to-sacrifice. Hegel's classical concept of a great man is brilliantly exemplified in the Guru's personality :

The great man of the age is the one who can put into words the will of his age, tell his age what its will is, and accomplish it. What he does is the heart and essence of his age; he actualizes his age.⁴

4. *Philosophy of Right*, p. 295.

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