

**GURU TEGH BAHADUR  
BACKGROUND AND THE SUPREME SACRIFICE**

*Guru Tegh Bahadur's Martyrdom Tercentenary Memorial Series*

# GURU TEGH BAHADUR

## BACKGROUND AND THE SUPREME SACRIFICE

A COLLECTION OF RESEARCH ARTICLES

*Edited by*  
GURBACHAN SINGH TALIB



PUBLICATION BUREAU  
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Punjabi University, Patiala

**GURU TEGH BAHADUR : BACKGROUND AND SUPREME SACRIFICE**

*edited by*

*Gurbachan Singh Talib*

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## FOREWORD

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The tercentenary of Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom that fell in 1975 inspired a tremendous amount of zeal and enthusiasm, which took concrete shape in several directions all over Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra and other parts of our country where his followers reside in considerable number or monuments commemorating his association with certain places exist. Plans for large religious gatherings, founding of memorials and production of literature to highlight the holy Guru's teaching and sacrifice were set afoot. It is so heartening that in these projects Hindus, Muslims and followers of other faiths participated no less reverently and enthusiastically than Sikhs. Besides the Guru Tegh Bahadur Martyrdom Memorial Trust, which is an All-India Organisation, the Punjab Government also set up a body to commemorate the great event befittingly.

In this connection, it was felt that universities and other educational and cultural institutions could render particularly useful service by reproducing literature filling up gaps in the history concerning the life and back-ground of Guru Tegh Bahadur's service to high moral and spiritual ideals, as also make studies of his *Bani* and the philosophical and literary aspects of his teaching. In these respects it was felt there was great scope for useful original work, as there are still wide gaps in our learning in these areas.

Punjabi University, in its Departments of Religious Studies, Guru Granth Sahib Studies and Punjab History Research consequently, planned that each of these could profitably undertake work in respect of this great anniversary. While historical research has been set afoot to compile detailed information about the Guru's travels to spread his message of truth and heroic resistance to tyranny, it was felt that in keeping with the high learned traditions of the



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University in Religious Studies, books containing collections of scholarly articles on the life, times and teaching of Guru Tegh Bahadur should be produced. The present book, containing twenty essays, in English, is a valuable piece of research and brings in one volume material of very high calibre about Guru Tegh Bahadur, which is sure to be a valuable addition to literature on the subject. It falls into three distinct portions, concerning the life-work of the holy Guru, the essence of the teaching of Sikhism and its course uptill his day, thus relating his ideal achievement to the character of the Sikh faith and lastly, the study of his *Bani* from the philosophical and literary view-points. One article tracing the concept and tradition of Martyrdom within Sikhism traces this phenomenon in universal religious history to its characteristic fulfilment in the Sikh faith.

The writers of these essays are well-known scholars and I take this occasion to thank them on behalf of the Punjabi University for their labours. I also place on record my thankfulness and appreciation of the work done by the Editor, Professor Gurbachan Singh Talib, for planning and executing this work along highly useful lines. I trust the world of scholarship will find this work valuable in the study of the achievement of a most sublime personality in the history of the Sikh Religion and of our country.

March 22, 1976  
Punjabi University,  
Patiala

I. K. SANDHU  
*Vice-Chancellor*

## INTRODUCTORY

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This book should fall into two distinct portions, in accordance with the dimensions to Guru Tegh Bahadur's achievement in history and the inspiration of spiritual experience provided by his teachings. Added to these, however, is a study of the vital features of the social and political milieu which shaped the course of events that led ultimately to his spiritual elan that ended in his martyrdom and the historical and human significance of that great event. A biography, unless it is so planned as to touch only some particular aspect of the entire life-experience of its subject, should attempt a comprehensive view that helps to recreate a personality whose scheme of life and action fit into a total background of events, ideas and movements and reflect its deeper urges and the degree to fulfilment they might have found. While this book is not intended primarily to be a biographical narrative of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the themes attempted in its several chapters provide the kind of insight into the life of this great soul that a more formal kind of biography might be expected to put forth. The scheme adopted herein has the advantage over a biography that being attempted by several hands, a certain degree of specialization has been imported into the various aspects put forth and discussed and thus the total picture emerging is fuller and more comprehensive than perhaps in any other book attempted on this subject. This itself should be an ample justification of the scheme adopted, a few more aspects of which will be touched upon below.

Guru Tegh Bahadur's personality, whose earlier direction had been overwhelmingly towards meditation and devotional exercises, detached except here and there from the world of events and historical movements, became in the last years of his life the centre of a great movement of resistance against aggression and oppression, and (*hetu iti jini kari*), in the most reliable original source mentioning this

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great event. In *Bachittar Natak*, this sacrifice is stated to be for the protection of *Dharma* (*Dharma hetu saka jini kiya*). While our ancestors of yesterday had little difficulty in interpreting this highly significant term, our contemporaries who are exposed to influences of modern humanist thought and certain of our present-day national ideals and objectives, may not be in full agreement with its earlier interpretation as faith, religion, belief, duty centred in piety and the religious ideal. A wide-ranging interpretation of this term, as covering the great concept of human rights and 'freedoms' particularly those emerging as an aftermath of the second World War, is what is sought to be associated with this term, embedded in the thought and sentiment of India now for at least three millennia. At a related tangent is the socialist-democratic ideal formulated as the goal of our people's national policy. *Dharma* is no less emphatically sought to be interpreted as the key-term to define such a comprehensive idea.

And yet, traditionally it is believed that the Guru laid down his life in defence of all those India-born traditions and decencies which were so tyrannically sought to be uprooted by the bigoted religious policy of Aurangzeb. While persecution of followers of faiths other than Islam had appeared in spurts during the centuries of Muslim rule in India, the sustained and relentless campaign by Aurangzeb to make it the pivot of state policy was an unprecedented situation in Indian history. And keeping this fact in view, the sacrifice of Guru thus took a turn, that on a casual observation would be thought unexpected. But on a deeper study of the history of the Sikh faith it would become clear that while for about a hundred years after the Divine revelation came to the Founder, Guru Nanak, its message had been non-attachment to *maya* or the world, it had at the same time maintained a keen social consciousness in respect of the issues of deeper and wider morality in human events and the forces that manifest themselves in history. It had thus, unlike those sages who had been led to the extreme state of renunciation and indifference to the character of temporal affairs, maintained an attitude of compassion towards human suffering, a strong denunciation of assertive evil and exhortation to man to be a crusader in the cause of Right. All through his long period of meditation and the life of a virtual recluse, Guru Tegh Bahadur, being the son of the heroic

Guru Hargobind and saturated with the spiritual impulse of Guru Nanak's teaching, had obviously directed his life along fulfilment in the direction of devotion and enlightenment, as also action in the world of human relationships.

In adumbrating as fully as possible, the greatness of the Guru's personality therefore, a fairly large span of aspects to be treated was considered necessary. This comprehensive range of themes highlights that total reality in which Guru Tegh Bahadur's personality may be placed to be better understood. The principal question with regard to Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom is the character of the socio-political situation that inspired him to take the 'extreme step' as set forth in *Bachittar Natak*. \* Sacrifice of Tegh Bahadur too was unique, as a great step to stem the rising tide of such a total campaign to make of India another Iran, Syria or Egypt or any other such land where from all vestiges or earlier faiths had been removed by the irresistible conquering force of the new faith. Clear guidance is available in the Sikh sacred literature and the Sikh tradition as to those objectives for which the Guru laid down his life. In *Bachittar Natak*, as Guru Tegh Bahadur's brief account opens, in the middle of his story so to say, mention is made of *tilak* (sacred paste-mark) and *janju* (sacred thread, *yagyopavit*)—two symbols of Hindu piety. And yet, in the same text, occurs the word *taka* ('theirs') that is, of the Hindus with whom neither Guru Tegh Bahadur nor the Sikh tradition was identified in belief, ritual and practice.

Sikhism no doubt shares some of the decencies and spiritual aims with Hinduism as also a good many cultural features, but it has from its inception been a faith outside traditional Hinduism, though cherishing deep sympathy for it and seeking to put strength into its vast inert body.

It is possible that from the narrative in *Bachittar natak* some lines were lost in the course of the Sikh persecution of the early years of the eighteenth century, and those lines might have narrated

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\**Bachittar Natak* ('A Marvellous Tale') is the autobiographical fragment of Guru Gobind Singh's life in verse, narrating in brief the History of religions in India, the course of the Sikh faith and the battles fought by Guru Gobind Singh till about 1688. In this narrative are a few lines on Guru Tegh Bahadur, which give the conclusive answer as to the significance of his sacrifice.

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the incident of the Kashmiri Brahmins placing before the Guru their tale of suffering at the hands of Aurangzeb's Subahdar in Kashmir, who was carrying on the campaign of forcible conversion of Hindus to Islam with excessive zeal. The *taka* (theirs) in the all too brief story of Guru Tegh Bahadur might thus refer to these Brahmins about whose visit to the Guru at his seat of Anandpur, Sikh tradition is clear and emphatic. This brief narrative leaves thus tentatizing thoughts and speculations, to which the clue is perhaps lost for ever.

The Hindu population of India have all through looked upon Guru Tegh Bahadur's sacrifice in the light of an act of defence of their faith and traditions. Hindus have never been in any doubt about the great debt they owe to Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh. Their reverence for their memory is no less great and sincere than that of the Sikhs. Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh have been ventured as 'Dharmarakshaks'. This could imply protectors of those Indian-born pieties, decencies and spiritual ideals by which India has all through the centuries-lived and developed its distinctive personality in the world. The attempted destruction and loss of these ideals cannot be contemplated lightly. Of course, in the Guru's sacrifice, humanitarian values, and issues of right and wrong were overwhelmingly involved. To omit to appreciate any part of this total picture would be to misread the significance of his life, his agonized sense of the need for self-sacrifice and his heroic act in 'breaking the potsherd of his body on the head of the monarch of Delhi', in the immortal words of *Bachittar Natak*. Not a word in the Guru's *Bani* nor in *Bachittar Natak* of bitterness against Islam, the religion of the persecutor has been said. In perfect poise of mind and with a clear spiritual vision he bore of the executioner's sword.

As between Hinduism and Islam, Sikhism took a somewhat ambivalent stance. While the holy Gurus sought to strengthen Hinduism by purging it of the hollow ritualism, sectarian divisions, superstitions, fetishism and primitivism which in the course of its history have struck to it and only increased age after age, and further sought to give it a dynamic character, they at the same time befriended the Muslim people as a whole, apart from the arrogant ruling class. This would be evident from the reverence shown to Sheikh Farid, by including in the canon of the new faith the universal and

humanitarian aspects of his teachings, along with the hymn of Sheikh Bheikhan, another Muslim saint. Guru Nanak called the Muslims to the same path of purity of conduct and pursuit of the spiritual life as he did the Hindus, rejecting the notion of religiosity centred in mere ritual and dogma. To have a fuller understanding of Guru Tegh Bahadur's ideal and his supreme sacrifice, this totality of the background must be kept in view. To omit from consideration any element in it would result in giving a lopsided and distorted picture of his ideals and significance in history.

A number of essays in this book thus, set forth the historical, social and cultural background of Guru Tegh Bahadur's age and particularly of the period of his holy Ministry. All through these, the attempt has been to place the Guru's personality in the centre, so that his life's work emerges as a vital fact in a whole which is the religio-social history of India in the seventeenth century, and not merely as a life detached from its background. Another group of essays, small in number, but no less vital for an understanding of the Guru's life, seeks to study some of the cherished ideals and traditions of the Sikh faith, of which Guru Tegh Bahadur was the ninth apostle. These ideals and traditions imperatively demanded of the Guru the unhesitating sacrifice of his life when the issue facing him was to defend right against puissant evil.

A no less significant group of essays studies the devotional compositions of Guru Tegh Bahadur—the core of their teaching as also some aspects of these as sacred poetry. The holy Granth of the Sikh faith has been studied in any depth only in fragments—and mainly in those portions which have been familiarized through their inclusion in the scheme of the daily prayer. Many portions out of its vast corpus are practically unknown and unexplored. While this is true of the study of this Scripture in Punjabi and the Indian languages, it is still more so when its study in English is considered, wherein any serious work may be said to have begun only a decade or so back, around the time of the Tercentenary of Guru Gobind Singh's birth (1966). A further spurt to such study was given by the India-wide celebrations of Guru Nanak's birth Quincentenary in 1969, echoes of which were heard in all those parts of the world where Indians live in any considerable numbers. Out of Guru Tegh

Bahadur's hymns, the only portion that has been familiar to the average Sikh are the *Slokas* (couplets) which occur as the *finale* of the holy Book, and are recited ceremonially whenever its ritual reading is closed. Consequently, in his *Bani* (sacred compositions) like much of the Book is *terra incognita* for all but the specialists. The present book through its few studies of Guru Tegh Bahadur's *Bani* thus fills up an important gap. A few other similar studies have also been made in the background of the Tercentenary of the Guru's martyrdom (1975). References to this body of literature occur here and there in the course of this book.

The language of Guru Tegh Bahadur's *Bani* is Brajī Hindi with the faintest tone and tendency towards the Punjabi idiom. The Punjabi vocabulary as such forms an imperceptibly small portion of it—so small indeed as to be missed as such by the average reader. That gives it a character which places it close to the neo-classical tradition of medieval Hindi. It should however, be clearly understood that it is free from the tropes, baroque structure and verbal filigree-making of the typical neo-classical Hindi compositions. To appreciate this, one has only to study works like Bhai Gurdas's Brajī *Kabits*, some portions of *Dasam Granth* such as *Shashtra-nam Mala* and the two Brajī *Chandi Charitras*, and a work like *Guru Partap Suraj Granth*. All these are neo-classical in essence and form. Guru Tegh Bahadur's *Bani*, on the other hand, has the same internal structure as the rest of the *Bani* of *Adi Granth*, except its overwhelming Brajī linguistic character. The classicism of Guru Tegh Bahadur's *Bani* is of a higher character, as consisting in lucid structure, a teaching appealing to the mind and heart in a tone which is meant to be taken in by the rightly guided human intelligence and to instil in man the spirit of moral reason. All this poetry is composed to be set to music, in several of the classical Indian measures, and when sung, its power to stir the soul is irresistible.

Another prominent feature of Guru Tegh Bahadur's *Bani* is its saturation with the spirit and terminology of *Bhakti*, and its emphasis on *Vairagya* (dispassion towards worldliness). This last aspect in him is deeply touching and the *Slokas* in which it is the characteristic *rasa* (emotional tone) seldom fail to leave the listeners' eyes moist.

Before closing, I have to thank the contributors to this volume

who have laboured to develop their respective themes. In keeping with the distinguished character that these studies were intended to have, in almost all cases the writers had either to try out new themes or to give to familiar themes new emphases. All this involved a good deal of adjustment of the creative stance, which makes their labours all the more valuable.

The writers are mature and established students of history, religion and the other related disciplines. Their co-operation in this venture has been most willing and heartening.

I have to thank particularly the Vice-Chancellor of Punjabi University, Patiala, Mrs. I. K. Sandhu who thought out the scheme of this book of learned essays on Guru Tegh Bahadur along with the companion volumes in Punjabi and Hindi. Her help and guidance at each step has been ungrudging and a true inspiration.

My colleague in the Punjabi University, Professor Harbans Singh has as usual, helped with sound and mature advice in chalking out the details of this volume, and in general with his characteristic enlightened sympathy.

Guru Gobind Singh Bhavan.  
Punjabi University,  
Patiala  
15th March, 1976

GURBACHAN SINGH TALIB  
*Editor*



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## LIFE AND THE BACKGROUND OF HISTORY

# GURU TEGH BAHADUR—A BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY

HARI RAM GUPTA

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## BIRTH AND EARLY YEARS

An event which took place just three hundred years ago like a ripple on the shore, in now rolling and roaring as a strong wave across the seven seas and is echoing throughout the world in hallowed memory of a man, the influence of whose life has never ceased, and who has left a permanent place in the world of religion. The man was Guru Tegh Bahadur, and the event was his martyrdom.

Tegh Bahadur was the youngest and sixth child of the sixth Guru, Hargobind. Gurditta was the eldest son, born in 1613. He was followed by his only daughter named Viro in 1615. Suraj Mal was born in 1617. The remaining three sons were Ani Rai, born in 1619 and Tegh Bahadur on Sunday, April 1, 1621 at Guru Ke Mahal at Amritsar.<sup>1</sup> The last three sons were born of Guru Hargobind's second wife, Nanaki, daughter of Hari Chand Khatri of Bakala, a village situated 40 km east of Amritsar and 4 km north of the modern Beas railway station near the river. The youngest child was named Tyag Mal\* (The Great Sacrificer), an apt prophecy which came out true.

The child was brought up with great care and attention by his mother. The father made excellent arrangements for his education and training. The best teachers were engaged to give him lessons in reading, writing, arithmetic, religion, music, physical exercises, riding and shooting. Bhai Buddha was given general charge of the child's upbringing in all directions.

Tegh Bahadur was administered *churan pahul*<sup>2</sup> or baptism at the age of eight. Hargobind's life routine of hunting, meeting the

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\*This is a doubtful statement, though of late it has become current. (Editor)

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congregations, visiting free masses, praying at the Hari Mandir and holding court at the Akal Takht deeply influenced the growing mind of the lad. On the death of his brothers he became so sad and serious that he avoided worldly pleasures and turned to meditation and prayers.

In 1632 A.D. Guru Hargobind was staying at Kartarpur, 15 km west of Jullundur. The future Guru was then eleven years old. Lal Chand Khatri of this place offered his daughter Gujari in marriage to the blooming lad. Mother Nanaki approved of the match and the nuptial ceremony was performed with the great splendour and solemnity.<sup>3</sup>

Hakim Alim-ud-din, generally known as Wazir Khan, a native of Chiniot in the district of Jhang, now in Pakistan, was appointed Governor of Lahore in 1628 by Emperor Shah Jahan. In 1633 he was transferred to Agra, where he died the next year. According to Dr. Trilochan Singh, "Wazir Khan was respected by the Sikh Gurus for his liberal views, deep scholarship and love of truth," and after Prime Minister Asaf Khan, "he was the most trusted official in Shah Jahan's regime."<sup>4</sup> Besides, the celebrated Sufi saint, Mian Mir, a resident of Lahore, is stated to have been on the best of terms with the Sikh Gurus. He was highly venerated both by Shah Jahan and the Crown Prince Dara Shukoh. The contemporary author, Mohsin Fani states that Hargobind offered his formal allegiance to Shah Jahan and made friends with the local Faujdar, Yar Khan.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, in the circumstances no warfare between the Guru and the Government could have taken place during the years from 1628 to 1633, as is alleged by some writers. Dr. Trilochan Singh observes :

"The Emperor was now at Lahore. It was difficult to influence him as long as Wazir Khan was the Viceroy, but now that Wazir Khan had been transferred to Agra, it seemed easier to get military aid from Lahore<sup>6</sup>," by officials who were jealous of the Guru. This writer further states :

"Both Wazir Khān and Mian Mir were the silver and golden bonds bridging the gulf between the aggressive and bigoted forces of Mughal Imperialism and the progressive and resurgent forces of Sikh faith."<sup>7</sup>

Hence a cleavage between the Guru and the Mughal authorities could take place after the transfer of Wazir Khan and death of Mian Mir, both of which took place in 1633 A. D.<sup>8</sup> The battles of Jallo and Sangrana seem to have taken place in 1633; the battle of Amritsar in 1634; the battle of Hargobindpur in 1635, the battles of Lahara and Gurusar in 1637, and the last battle of Kartarpur in 1638. The last expedition was sent from Lahore under the command of Mir Badehra and Paindah Khan. They were joined by the Jullundur troops. The Guru had only 5,000 soldiers with him.<sup>9</sup> In a hard-fought battle at Kartarpur, both the enemy commanders were killed.<sup>10</sup> In this Battle the future Guru Tegh Bahadur displayed such remarkable skill and spiritedness that his father conferred the title of Tegh Bahadur on him by which name he came to be known in history.

Tegh Bahadur means Lord of the Sword or prizefighter. General Sir John J. H. Gordon says that Tegh Bahadur preferred to be called Deg Bahadur, Lord of Hospitality or the support of the poor and cherisher of the hungry.<sup>11</sup> Tegh Bahadur was at this time 17 years old. His remarks led to the following saying :

*Jis ki deg  
us ki tegh*

(one who is charitable commands the sword).

#### AT BAKALA

From Kartarpur the Guru went to Phagwara. There he stayed for some time. Mohsin Fani says as the place was situated on the highway from Delhi to Lahore, 16 km east of Jullundur, it was not safe to reside there for long. Hence Guru Hargobind decided to settle at Kiratpur.<sup>12</sup> Nanaki had already lost her two elder sons, Ani Rai and Atal Rai. She did not like to go there with her only son and young daughter-in-law owing to family jealousies. She obtained the Guru's permission to go to Bakala, her home town, and there she went and settled with her parents Hari Chand and Hardevi. Tegh Bahadur was present at Kiratpur on the occasion of Guru Hargobind's death in February 1644 together with his mother, wife and brother-in-law Kripal Chand, and after the funeral rites all of them returned to Bakala.

Tegh Bahadur lived at Bakala for nearly 26 years. Some lands

of Hargobindpur had been assigned to Tegh Bahadur and the family led a comfortable life on the share received from the cultivators<sup>13</sup>. To avoid the burning heat of summer every well-to-do family had a basement dug into the floor where the members of the household retired in the afternoon. Tegh Bahadur got such a cell erected for himself to meditate in solitude and peace of soul. Such a cell was generally called Bhora. His wife Gujari also devoted a good deal of her time to prayer, reflection and contemplation.

#### GURU HARI RAI, 1644-1661

Of Guru Hargobind's five sons, two had survived him. The elder was Suraj Mal and the youngest Tegh Bahadur. The Guru could nominate either of them as his successor, but he preferred the second son of his deceased eldest son Gurditta, named Hari Rai. His elder brother was Dhir Mal. Hari Rai was a lad of fourteen years, born at Kiratpur on January 30, 1630. Shah Jahan's eldest son Dara Shukoh was the crown prince, and Punjab was his fief. He believed in saints, whether Muslim Hindu or Sikh, and he maintained cordial relations with Guru Hari Rai.

Shah Jahan fell ill in September, 1657 and a civil war began among his sons for the throne. Dara was defeated by Aurangzeb in May, 1668. Dara fled towards the Punjab. Guru Hari Rai joined him at Rupar at the head of 2,000 troops. The Prince and the Guru reached Lahore on July 3, 1658. "But Dara was utterly broken down in body and spirit." Finding the Prince in an indecisive mood and Aurangzeb in hot pursuit of him<sup>14</sup>, Guru Hari Rai returned to Kiratpur.<sup>15</sup>

After firmly establishing himself on the throne, Aurangzeb summoned Guru Hari Rai to his court. The Guru sent his 14 year old eldest son Ram Rai. He was instructed to concentrate on God and reply to the Emperor carefully and resolutely. He was advised to keep in view Guru Arjan's conduct, when Jahangir ordered him to modify the hymns in the holy Granth. He was warned to avoid flattery and to behave with grace and dignity.

The lad being over-zealous and ambitious, and perhaps out of fear for his life, tried to win over the Emperor and his courtiers. He was asked to explain why the following verse in the holy granth abused the Musalmans :

*"Miti Musalman ki perai pai kumiar,  
Ghari bhande itan kia jaldi kare pukar."*

(The dusts of Musalman is kneaded by a potter into a dough and he converts it into pots and bricks, which cry out as they burn.)

The hymn expressed Guru Nanak's vision that cremation and burial differed little. Ram Rai was overawed by the splendour of the court. In order not to offend the Emperor, Ram Rai, just in his early teens, replied that Guru Nanak's actual word was '*Beiman*' or an atheist, and not '*Musalman*' which appeared in the text by the mistake of the scribe. His answer naturally pleased the Emperor, but offended the Sikhs of Delhi who reported the matter to the Guru at Kiratpur.

Guru Hari Rai was deeply distressed at his son's behaviour in having insulted Guru Nanak and the Granth Sahib. The Guru declared Ram Rai unfit for Guruship and immediately excommunicated and excluded him from succession. Hari Rai observed :

"The Guruship is like a tiger's milk which can only be contained in a golden cup. Only he who is ready to devote his life there to is worthy of it. Let Ram Rai not look on my face again."<sup>16</sup>

His decision was conveyed to Ram Rai as well as to the Sikhs at Delhi. Ram Rai could not come to Kiratpur and stayed at the Mughal Court from September, 1661 to 1666 A.D.<sup>17</sup>, where he conducted himself as a faithful courtier. Shortly afterwards Guru Hari Rai passed away at Kiratpur on October 6, 1661 at the young age of 31.

**GURU HARI KRISHAN, 1661-1664**

Guru Hari Rai had nominated his younger son Hari Krishan to be his successor. He was born on July 7, 1656. Thus he became Guru at the age of five, and was called the 'Child Saint'. Ram Rai was living at Delhi. He pressed his claim for Guruship. Aurangzeb was fully occupied in setting state affairs and had no time to turn his attention to a matter which had no urgency. Besides, he wanted the family feud to develop into an unbridgeable gulf. In 1662 he fell seriously ill, and next year went to Kashmir to recoup his health. He returned to Delhi on January 18, 1664. Ram Rai complained against his supersession, and sought the Emperor's help in getting him the Guruship.<sup>18</sup> Aurangzeb was a past master in the art of



diplomacy. He wanted to take full advantage of the rift which had grown between the two brothers. He was keen to use Ram Rai for weakening the Sikh movement. He summoned Hari Krishan to Delhi to justify his claim to Guruship. Mirza Raja Jai Singh of Amber (Jaipur) was asked to call the Guru to Delhi. Jai Singh sent his agent Diwan Paras Ram, with suitable presents, requesting the Guru to come to Delhi on the Raja's surety.<sup>19</sup> The Guru's mother was terribly afraid of the machinations of Ram Rai and the stern character of the Emperor, who had destroyed all his male relatives in the most brutal manner. But nobody could dare disobey Aurangzeb.

Hari Krishan came to Delhi and put up in the house of Mirza Raja Jai Singh at the village of Raesina in the Raja estate called Jaisinghpura in the suburbs of the capital, 6 km distant from the Red Fort. Shortly afterwards, the Guru had an attack of smallpox with high fever, and he became delirious. Owing to this infectious disease the Guru was shifted to a house in village Bhogal near the present Nizam-ud-din railway station.

The Sikhs who were attending on him realized that the Guru might succumb to the fatal disease. They were anxious to secure from him nomination of a successor according to old tradition. They placed a coco-nut<sup>20</sup> and five paise in a golden dish before him and pressed him to name his successor. As a rule a child would never call his ancestors by name out of respect, and would address them as *chacha*, *tau*, *baba* or *dada*. If they were living away from him, their place of residence would also be mentioned. The child placed his right hand on the dish and the articles, and uttered 'Baba Bakale', obviously referring to Tegn Bahadur, his grand-uncle, who had been living at village Bakala for the past 26 years. He closed his eyes, became unconscious, and expired on March 30, 1664, the Baisakhi day, at the age of eight. He was cremated on the bank of the river Jamuna where now stands Gurudwara Bala Sahib.<sup>21</sup> A big Gurudwara was later on constructed at Raesina, called Bangla Sahib, at the site of the bungalow of Mirza Raja Jai Singh in which Guru Hari Krishan had stayed.

TEGH BAHADUR BECOMES GURU—AUGUST, 1664

Guru Hari Krishan was accompanied by about twenty trusted followers.<sup>22</sup> They included Diwan Dargaha Mal who was in charge

of the Guru's finances, his nephews Mati Das and Sati Das, Gurditta the high priest, a descendant of Bhai Buddha and Dyal Das of Alipur in Multan district. These five men represented the panchayat and cabinet of the Guru's court. They discussed the matter and came to the conclusion that the obvious reference of Baba Bakale implied Tegh Bahadur who was the only Baba (grandfather) of Guru Hari Krishan then living and who was at Bakala. All other sons of Guru Hargobind had died. They first escorted Guru Hari Krishan's mother, Sulakhani, to Kiratpur towards the end of April 1664 A.D. They stayed there for a few months to console the grief stricken lady, and set the Guru's household in order.

Meanwhile Guru Hari Krishan's nomination of 'Baba Bakale' had spread among the Sodhis of Kiratpur, Kartarpur and other places. Twenty-two of them set up their posts in village Bakala to claim Guruship. Eleven of them were Sodhis and the remaining eleven were *masands* or Sikh bishops.<sup>23</sup> The most rebellious of them was Dhir Mal, the elder son of Gurditta, the eldest son of Guru Hargobind. He had shifted from Kartarpur to Bakala on hearing the news of Guru Hari Krishan's death. He based his claim on the principle of primogeniture or seniority by birth, although this principle was never accepted by the Sikh Gurus, nor even by the Mughal rulers. Further, he possessed the original copy of the holy Granth prepared by Guru Arjan which had been deposited in the Gurudwara of Kartarpur for safety. He also employed many touts to proclaim his succession as the ninth Guru.

Tegh Bahadur remained undisturbed and unruffled by the uproar of impostors. By the divine light he knew that the call was for him, and he firmly believed that if he deserved it, it would come to him automatically without any effort on his part. So he did not change his way of living and kept busy in meditation and prayer as usual. His mother and wife also knew from intuition that the great hour in their lives had struck. But the violent activities of Dhir Mal greatly alarmed the ladies. Mother Nanaki invited Dwarka Das, a scion of the house of Guru Amar Das, from Goindwal to come to Bakala for the protection of Tegh Bahadur. He called the five members of the Guru's Panchayat from Kiratpur to announce their decision and offer the sacred articles of nomination to the new

Guru on behalf of the deceased Guru. All of them reached Bakala about the month of August, 1664.

They went to Mother Nanaki's house and gave a brief account of Guru Hari Krishan's death and his nomination of Tegh Bahadur as the ninth Guru. A meeting of prominent persons of Bakala was called. Then the high priest Gurditta placed the sacred coconut and five copper coins before Tegh Bahadur, bowed before him and declared him the ninth Guru. Tegh Bahadur accepted the sacred articles in all reverence and humility and declared that he would remain ever loyal to the house of Nanak. It happened in August, 1664.<sup>24</sup>

The impostors were still holding on, carrying on propaganda in their favour. In October, at the end of the rains Makhhan Shah,<sup>25</sup> a rich Banjara<sup>26</sup> merchant, accompanied by numerous bullocks, horses, hounds and armed retainers, being a follower of the Sikh Gurus, arrived at Bakala, to pay homage to the true Guru. To avert a calamity befalling him on a previous occasion, he had prayed to the Guru to save him, vowing in his heart to make an offering of 500 gold coins, by way of thanksgiving. It was to fulfil this vow that he had gone there. Finding a multitude of Gurus and visiting all the twenty-two of drums somebody suggested that he should visit a recluse named Tegh Bahadur. Makhhan Shah had been deeply disgusted and disappointed with all these pretenders to Guruship, as none demanded the full amount of his dedication. He did not mind calling on Tegh Bahadur and laid two coins before him. Tegh Bahadur closed his eyes for a moment and then said that his vow was for 500 and not for two coins. Makhhan Shah prostrated himself before the Guru and told the congregation that he was the true Guru.<sup>27</sup>

Dhir Mal's men deeply resented Makhhan Shah's intervention. The sixth, seventh and eighth Gurus had lived at Kiratpur. Dhir Mal was living during this period at Kartarpur. As he possessed the original copy of the holy Granth, he had established his influence in the Amritsar and Jullundur areas. He was afraid that Tegh Bahadur from Bakala might oust him from power. He, therefore, decided to kill Tegh Bahadur. About a hundred of his armed followers attacked the house of the Guru at the time when it was unguarded. A shot was fired at the Guru, and the bullet grazed his shoulder. The Guru's house was plundered of everything of value. Then Makhhan Shah

appeared on the scene. His men fell upon Dhir Mal's camp and seized the Guru's property along with some articles belonging to Dhir Mal, including his copy of the holy Granth.<sup>28</sup>

When Tegn Bahadur heard about it, he declared :  
 To exercise forgiveness is a great act,  
 To exercise forgiveness is to give alms.  
 Forgiveness is equal to ablutions at all places of pilgrimage.  
 Forgiveness ensureth man's salvation.  
 There is no virtue equal to forgiveness.<sup>29</sup>

He ordered that everything brought from Dhir Mal's house, whether it belonged to the Guru or to the culprit, must be restored at once. The order was partially obeyed, as the copy of the holy Granth was retained without the knowledge of the Guru. This too was returned afterwards.

#### GURU TEGH BAHADUR AT AMRITSAR

Guru Tegn Bahadur left for Amritsar on February 30, 1665 and called at Hari Mandir. He was accompanied by his mother Nanaki, wife Gujari, her brother Kripal Chand, Makhhan Shah and a few followers. The priests would not admit him and closed the doors of the holy Temple against him. The Temple was under the control of Prithi Chand's descendants, who was the eldest brother of Guru Arjan. Prithi Chand had been passed over from succession by Guru Ram Das. Prithi Chand called himself the sixth Guru, his son Meharban dubbed himself the seventh Guru, and his son Harji took the title of the eighth Guru. Guru Hargobind's houses and property were in his possession. Guru Tegn Bahadur and his party rested under a tree only a few metres to the north of Akal Takht. This place is termed Thara Sahib<sup>31</sup> or the holy platform. A Gurudwara marks that site. Makhhan Shah was strictly forbidden to take any action against the culprits. A peasant woman, Hariyan, of village Walla,<sup>32</sup> 7 km from Amritsar, offered her house as shelter for the Guru and his family. Tegn Bahadur retired there in the evening to spend the night. In honour of the Guru's visit a fair is held at Walla called Kothe da Mela on the full moon day of Magh<sup>33</sup> (January-February). In the Guru's absence Makhhan Shah entered the Hari Mandir, and Guru Tegn Bahadur was admitted to the Temple where he worshipped for a while, and then left for Khadur, the place

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dedicated to Guru Angad and Goindwal, the seat of the third Guru, Amar Das. He then returned to Bakala.

### THE GURU'S RAMBLES

The Guru lived at Bakala again up to the end of the rainy season, October 1665. "Here too he was not allowed to abide in peace, for the old jealousy and enmity of the Sodhis had revived."<sup>34</sup> He later visited Kiratpur. "There again he was plagued with the jealousy of the Sodhis."<sup>35</sup> Guru Tegh Bahadur made up his mind to go on a pilgrimage to the east. The reasons were plain. He did not find the atmosphere in the Punjab congenial for his work. He wished to follow the example of Guru Nanak by visiting holy places. He was desirous of meeting the Sikhs living outside the Punjab at many places in northern India. He was keen to propagate the new religion to give consolation to suffering humanity. He left Punjab in November,<sup>36</sup> 1665, accompanied by his mother, wife, her brother Kripal Chand, Dyal Das, Mati Das, Sati Das and a few other devoted followers. He had his own tents, horses, carriages, bullocks, camels and necessary equipment to meet his requirements on the journey. He usually halted outside a village or town in a garden or on the bank of a river.<sup>37</sup>

Visiting Pehowa and Kurukshetra, Guru Tegh Bahadur reached Delhi. Ram Rai got him arrested, as he still claimed Guruship for himself. George Forster who wrote his book about one hundred years later, says that Guru remained in gaol for two years.<sup>38</sup> It seems that he was there only for two months. Mirza Raja Jai Singh was at this time in the Deccan carrying on a campaign against Shivaji. His son Raja Ram Singh represented him at the Mughal Court, and pleaded the Guru's innocence. He said that the Guru was on his way to visit the sacred places of pilgrimage and he stood surety for his conduct.<sup>39</sup> From Delhi the Guru went to Mathura, Brindaban, Agra, Etawah, Kanpur and reached Allahabad about February 1666. At the last place he stayed for six months. Guru Gobind Singh says in the *Bachitar Natak* :

*Mur pit purab kiyas payana  
Bhant bhant ke tirath nana  
Jab eh Jat tribaini bhaye  
Pun dan din karat bitaye.*<sup>40</sup>

(My father went to the east,  
 He visited all sorts of places of pilgrimage;  
 When he reached Tribaini (Prayag),  
 He spent his time in alms-giving)

It was at this sacred place in the divine atmosphere and celestial environment when Guru Tegh Bahadur was busy in giving away his spiritual and material wealth that Mata Gujari conceived for the first time in thirty-four years of her married life. Passing Mirzapur, Benares and Sasaram Guru reached Gaya where he stayed a little longer. There he was joined by Raja Ram Singh<sup>41</sup> of Amber. He arrived at Patna in November, 1666.

#### THE GURU ACCOMPANIES RAM SINGH TO DACCA AND ASSAM

Shortly after the Guru's departure from Delhi, Raja Ram Singh was involved in a serious trouble. On the solemn pledge given by Mirza Raja Jai Singh as a Rajput for his safety and honour, Shivaji with his elder son called on Aurangzeb at Agra on May 12, 1666. He was placed under the custody of Raja Ram Singh. Finding their lives in danger, Shivaji and his son Shambhuji escaped from Agra by a stratagem on August 19, 1666. Sir Jadunath Sarkar writes : "The Emperor suspected that Shivaji had fled with the connivance of Ram Singh. The Rajput prince was punished first by being forbidden the court then by being deprived of his rank and pay."<sup>42</sup> Aurangzeb then ordered the prince to lead an expedition for the conquest of Assam. In reality he was sent there either to die of malaria, which was rampant in those parts and of which Aurangzeb's great general Mir Jumla, had died on March 31, 1663 or to be killed in fighting. In the event of Ram Singh's death, his state of Amber (Jaipur) was to be confiscated.<sup>43</sup> The base of Ram Singh's operations was to be Dacca which was the capital of Bengal, and Shaista Khan, the Emperor's maternal uncle was its governor. A Mughal army formerly under Mir Jumla was already there. Ram Singh was required to take charge of this force along with his own troops. To begin with, he was to make a preliminary survey of the situation, while the formal order of his appointment accompanied by a *khilat* was issued later.

Ram Singh did not wish to stay at the court in an atmosphere of disgrace, humiliation and suspicion. He wanted to study the

situation, and then call his armed force to join him. The young prince thought of one remedy to secure his safety in the unhealthy climate and hostile jungles, hills, wild elephants, and a determined foe aided as reputed, by sorcery. This was to keep Guru Tegh Bahadur with him. He set out in pursuit of Tegh Bahadur and met him at Gaya. He implored the Guru to keep him company during the operations. He said : "It was certain death to command the invading army, and it would be equally fatal for me to disobey the Emperor's orders. Hence I have come from distant Rajputana to seek the protection of thy holy feet."<sup>44</sup> The Raja did not like to stay at Patna, a stronghold of the Mughals in the east and he wanted to be at his post without any delay. The Guru would not disappoint a true devotee. He could not take his family with him owing to the approaching confinement of his wife. So he left the family at Patna without making suitable arrangements for their residence. He exhorted the local Sikhs to help Kripal Chand and Dyal Das in looking after his family, and himself with Mati Das and Sati Das followed the prince to Dacca. From Monghyr the Guru wrote a letter to the Sikhs of Patna :

"We are accompanying Raja Ji and have our family at Patna. It is time for the congregation to serve the Guru."<sup>45</sup> He added :

*"Bhai Dyal Das kahe  
Sangat Guru ka hukam kar mannana."*<sup>46</sup>

(Whatever Bhai Dyal Das says, the *Sangat* should accept it as Guru's command.)

They reached Dacca in the beginning of 1667. There Tegh Bahadur got the happy news of the birth of his son, Gobind Rai,<sup>47</sup> on December 22, 1666. Ram Singh spend two years in making preparations for the war, conducting negotiations at the same time for the submission of Ahoms of Assam without fighting, if possible. The Mughal troops were already there. His Rajput forces joined him long after his arrival at Dacca. The prince was accompanied on this journey only by a suitable contingent as bodyguard. Guru Tegh Bahadur also stayed here with the Prince, and visited many places in the neighbourhood to meet his followers.

Ram Singh and Guru Tegh Bahadur left Dacca in December, 1668 and reached Dhubari in Assam, about 300 km distant, in February 1669. Ram Singh's expeditionary force consisted of 4,000

Rajputs, 18,000 Mughals, all horsemen, 30,000 infantry and 15,000 local archers.<sup>48</sup>

The Guru remained busy in meditation and prayers, giving his blessings to the Rajputs and other visitors. His fame spread far and wide. A prince of some state in Assam, named Raja Ram, heard about the Guru. He had no son, and earnestly desired to have a successor. He came with his two wives to pay homage to the Guru and requested for the boon of a son. The Guru blessed him.<sup>49</sup>

#### GURU TEGH BAHADUR RETURNS TO PUNJAB

Guru Tegh Bahadur stayed with Raja Ram Singh in Assam for about two years and a half. Meanwhile reports of Aurangzeb's fanaticism and determination to convert the Hindu population to Islam, and to make Hindu India a purely Muslim state began to pour into Ram Singh's camp. Muhammad Said Mustid Khan in *Maasir-e-Alamgiri* says that in April, 1669, "the Director of the Faith issued orders to all the Governors of provinces to destroy with a willing hand the schools and temples of the infidels; and they were strictly enjoined upon to put an entire stop to the teaching and practising of idolatrous forms of worship."<sup>50</sup> Leaving aside what was happening to the Hindu, we refer only to the Emperor's doings with regard to the Sikhs. The contemporary historian, Khafi Khan, writes :

"There is a sect of infidels called Guru, more commonly known as Sikhs Their chief, who dresses as a fakir, has fixed residence near Lahore. From old times he has built temples in all the towns and populous places and has appointed one of his followers to preside in each temple as his deputy. When anyone of the sect brought presents or offerings for the Guru to the temple, the deputy had to collect them, and after deducting sufficient for his own food and expenses, his duty was to send the balance faithfully to the Guru. This sect consists principally of Jats and Khatris of the Panjab and of the other tribes of infidels. When Aurangzeb got knowledge of these matters, he ordered these deputy Gurus to be removed and temples to be pulled down."<sup>51</sup>

*Kalimāt-e-Tayyibāt* says, "a Sikh temple in a village in the Sarhind Division was turned into a mosque.<sup>52</sup> Mirza Inayatullah Khan in his book *Ahkam-e-Alamgiri*, on pages 12-13, states that under Aurangzeb's orders a *gurudwara* of the Sikhs (*Butkhana-*



*e-Nanak parastan*) in the town of Buriya, Parganah Khizarabad, Sarkar Sarhind, was pulled down by the Qazi and a mosque was built in its place. Sayyid Zafer Darvesh was appointed to be in charge of that mosque to guide prayers and benedictions. Some Sikhs attacked the mosque and killed the Darvesh. The Emperor suspended the Qazi and the Superintendent of Police (*Mohtaib*). Alimullah was appointed Qazi and his father head of the Police. Such incidents had become common.

When Guru Tegh Bahadur heard of these things, he decided to return to the Punjab immediately. He took leave of Raja Ram Singh in October 1671 and came to Patna where he stayed for a while. He showed his determination to proceed to the Punjab without delay. His Sikhs and supporters suggested that the Guru should leave his family at Patna for the present and recall them if he found the situation favourable in the Punjab. The Guru agreed. Having travelled for a few days, he changed his mind. He did not like to leave the family a thousand miles away from Kiratpur. He stopped and sent his trusted men to escort the family. In a fortnight they left Patna and joined Guru Tegh Bahadur at the place of his halting. Stopping on the way at prominent places like Kashi, Ayodhya, Lucknow, Shahjahanpur, Bareilly, Moradabad, Hardwar, Saharanpur, the party arrived at Lakhnaur, 15 km from Ambala City, about February, 1672. The Guru left his family there under the protection of Bhikhan Shah, an influential Muslim chief of Ghuram, situated nearby and the Nawab of Saifabad, a town 6 km east of Patiala now called Bahadurgarh.<sup>53</sup> He himself went to Kiratpur to study the attitude of his relatives.

#### MAKHOWAL, NANAKI CHAK AND ANANDPUR

Guru Tegh Bahadur did not like to stay at Kiratpur which was still rife with conspiracies and intrigues. But he was fascinated with the panoramic landscape of the region lying in the outer parts of the Shivalik Hills. At a distance of 8 km to the north below the hill of Naina Devi situated 13 km distant, close to the village of Makhawal, on the left bank of the Satluj, the Guru purchased a piece of fallow land from the Raja of Bilaspur for a sum of Rs. 500/- in March, 1672.<sup>54</sup> The site acquired was named Chak Nanaki<sup>55</sup> after his mother. The Guru had been supplied by Raja Ram Singh and his

Rajputs with a sum of seven lakhs of rupees<sup>56</sup> on the occasion of his departure from Assam, mostly in the form of *Darshni Hundis* (bearer cheques) issued by Jagat Seths on the bankers of important town and cities. Their credit existed not only in India, but also all over Asia, especially in Central and Western Asia which were closely connected by trade with India. With this money the Guru started construction of buildings at Nanaki Chak, and called his family from Lakhnaur after seven<sup>57</sup> months on the sacred day of Dusehra, October, 1672.

The Guru felt extremely happy at having a place of his own to reside, like the previous Gurus. Guru Nanak had lived at Kartarpur on the Ravi, Guru Angad at Khadur, Guru Amar Das at Goindwal, Guru Ram Das and Guru Arjan at Amritsar, Guru Hargobind, Guru Hari Rai and Guru Hari Krishan at Kiratpur. The sight of the Dhuala Dhar Range covered with snow in December, the hill of Naina Devi in front and the river Satluj flowing nearby, fascinated him. The joy of having a loving mother, a happy wife and a gifted son inspired him. He took strolls on the open high ground now marked by a cluster of buildings lying around the Gurudwara Sis Ganj. He named that area Anandpur or the Abode of Bliss. Sir George Campbell who served as deputy commissioner around here in 1844, calls this place "Anandpore-Makhawal."<sup>58</sup>

#### AURANGZEB CAMPS IN THE PUNJAB

About this time the sky began to darken. In 1672 the Afridis of the Khyber Pass revolted and inflicted terrible losses on the Mughals. "Ten thousand men fell under the enemy's sword in the field and above two crores of Rupees in cash and kind was looted by the enemy. They captured twenty thousand men and women and sent them to Central Asia for sale."<sup>59</sup> The Afridis were then joined by the Khataks. Their chieftain Khushal Khan, a great poet and warrior, inspired the tribesmen in their defiance of the Mughals both by pen and poniard. The situation grew so serious that Aurangzeb had to take the direction of operations in his own hands. He remained at Hasan Abdal near Rawalpindi, also called Panja Sahib, from June, 1674 to December, 1675.

#### THE GURU VISITS HIS SIKHS

During Aurangzeb's stay in the Punjab, local officials persecuted

the Hindu population and converted them to Islam in large numbers in order to win the appreciation of the Emperor, in whose mind the spread of Islam was uppermost. Syed Muhammad Latif writes : "The emperor had in those days thrown hundreds of Brahmans in the hope that if they first embraced the religion of the Prophet, the rest of the Hindus would readily follow their example"<sup>60</sup> In Kashmir, thousands of Pandits were forced to embrace Islam. The Hindus were terror-stricken. Guru Tegh Bahadur realized the imperative necessity to encourage the Hindus and Sikhs to face the situation calmly and boldly and not to yield to despair and despondency. He decided to tour from village to village first in Malwa, the land lying between the rivers Ghaggar and Satluj.<sup>61</sup>

In this region the influence of the Gurus had been firmly established since the time of Guru Hargobind. Next he was to travel in the Jullundur and Upper Bari Doabs. He left Anandpur after the Diwali festival, in November, 1674. The main theme of his sermons was :

(i) *Bhay Kāhūn ko det nāh*  
*Nahīn bhay mānāt ān*  
 (Neither to terrorize others nor to fear anyone.)

(ii) *Gun Gobind gāīyo nahīn*  
*Janam akārath kīn*  
*Kah Nānak Har bhaj manā*  
*Jeh bidh jal ko mīn*  
 (You did not sing the praise of God,  
 And wasted your life in vain;  
 Nanak says, remember God,  
 As a fish remembers water.)

(iii) *Dhan dārā, sampat sagal*  
*Jin apni kari mān*  
*In men kachnu sangi nahīn*  
*Nānak sāchi jān.*  
 (Wealth, family, property, all of which  
 you consider your own;  
 None of these shall abide with you,  
 Says Nanak, this is the truth).

(iv) *Sab sukh dātā Rām hai*  
*Dusar nāhin koi,*

*Keh Nānak, sun re manā*

*Tah simrat gat hoi.*

(God is the giver of all happiness, none else.

Says Nanak, hark my mind,

You will succeed by meditating on His name).

As the Guru was meeting his disciples after eight or nine years, many men followed him during Tegh Bahadur's tours to listen to his sermons and to get his benediction. To serve the congregation the residents of the villages voluntarily collected foodstuffs, milk and clarified butter for the Guru's *langar*. The area was backward. Rain was scarce. It was almost a desert in the absence of any irrigation facilities. The poor and ignorant but hardy and tough people, were cowed down by Muslim officials, particularly at this time when the Emperor was present in Punjab.

The Guru tried to ameliorate the condition of the inhabitants with the money he had brought from Assam. He sunk wells at places where there was scarcity of drinking water. Tanks were constructed to store rain water which was not to be allowed to go waste. He purchased cows and gave them free to poverty-stricken families. He got trees planted at suitable places. He spent ten months in this tour, and visited numerous places. Attar Singh, chief of Bhadaur, in his book entitled, "The Travels of Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh" in 137 pages, mentions some of the important places visited by the Guru.

The local officials were upset at the Guru's activities, and they submitted alarming reports to the Emperor. They accused him of having a large following, exacting money forcibly, and instigating people in revolt. Sayyid Ghulam Husain who compiled his history of India under the title of *Siyar-ul-Mutakhirin* one hundred years later, baselessly charged the Guru with plundering people. George Forster who met Ghulam Husain in Calcutta, and who journeyed in the Punjab, about the same time writes :

"No document for the elucidation of this passage appearing in any of the memoirs of Hindostan that have reached my knowledge, I am prevented from discovering the quality of the crime which subjected Tegh Bahadur to capital punishment."<sup>62</sup>

Malcolm and Cunningham followed Ghulam Husain. Thus writes Cunningham :

"And the ordinary Sikh accounts represent him, a pious and innocent instructor of men, as once more arraigned at Delhi in the character of a criminal; but the truth seems to be that Tegn Bahadur followed the example of his father with unequal footsteps, and that, choosing for his haunts that wastes between Hansi and the Sutlej he subsisted himself and his disciples by plunder, in a way, indeed that rendered him not unpopular with the peasantry."<sup>63</sup>

Syed Muhammad Latif, a Muslim, goes a step further in his condemnation of the Guru, he writes :

"Tegn Bahadur resolved upon the extirpation of the Sodhis, by whom he was looked upon as a usurper; but Makhhan Shah persuaded him to put his sword in the sheath. He lived with splendour and kept in his employ one thousand armed horsemen. With the immense offerings of his disciples he commenced building a strong fort at Kartarpur, where he established his ecclesiastical court."<sup>64</sup>

The exaggerated reports by Government officials alarmed the Emperor who had already gone through a bitter experience of a revolt on the frontier. He was not prepared to find the border province of Panjab in a disturbed condition, and he decided to punish Guru Tegn Bahadur.

#### THE GURU BROUGHT TO DELHI

The Guru had hardly settled down again at Anandpur when another catastrophe took place. Some of the Kashmiri Brahmins who were not prepared to embrace Islam under persecution called on Guru Tegn Bahadur to seek his guidance. They had heard about Guru Hargobind's visit to Kashmir in company with the Emperor Jahangir, and had knowledge of his warlike activities. The Guru's heart melted at their tale of woe. He became uneasy and restless at the sad plight of innocent people. At this time the child Gobind, not even nine yet, appeared there. He innocently asked about the cause of sadness of the Guru and the visitors. The Guru replied that the nation required a holy man to sacrifice his life. The child remarked that there could be no holier person than the Guru himself. This was enough. The Guru took the child's observation as God's own oracle. His resolve was made. He informed the Brahmins that they should tell the rulers to convert Tegn Bahadur first and then they

would follow his example.

The Pandits went back and told this to the Governor, who conveyed it to Aurangzeb at Hasan Abdal, situated close to the borders of Kashmir. The Emperor's mind was already prejudiced against Guru Tegh Bahadur. He hated the word *Sachchā Patishāh* used by the Sikhs for the Guru. It implied that the Guru was a true king while the ruler of India was a false king. He also detested the word *Bahadur* in the Guru's name, as this was reserved for the nobility of the Mughal court only. He ordered his deputies to summon him to the capital and force him to accept Islam or to lose his life.

The Guru realized that his end had come. He composed four stanzas marked as Dohiras Nos. 53, 54, 55, 56. In Nos 53 and 55 he describes his difficulties and trials, and in Nos. 54 and 56 he expresses hope and faith in God's succour.

DOHIRA NO. 53

*Bal Chhutyō bandhan pare*

*Kachu nā hot upāē*

*Kah Nānak ab ot Hari*

*Gaj Jiyan hot sahāē*

(My strength is exhausted, I am in bondage,

I have no resource :

Saith Nanak, God is now my refuge;

May he succour me as He did the Elephant).

Guru Tegh Bahadur then gave the reply himself :

DOHIRA NO 54

*Bal hoā bandhan chhute*

*Sab kichh hot upāē*

*Nānak sab kichh tumre hāth main*

*Tum hi hot sahāē<sup>65</sup>*

(Strength has come, the bondage is broken,

All the resources are there;

Saith Nanak, Lord! everything is in your power,

You are my refuge).

"The Emperor divided his residence between Delhi and Agra, but Delhi was the chief capital, where most of the state ceremonies took place."<sup>66</sup> Tegh Bahadur was accompanied by five Sikhs. His life-long companion Bhai Mati Das, a Mohyal Brahmin of Kariala

in Jehlam District, 10 km from Chakwal on the road leading to Katas Raj and his brother Sati Das were among them. Gurditta, a lineal descendant of Bhai Buddha was also there. Dyal Das, the eldest brother of Bhai Mani Singh Shahid, was the fourth. Jaita of the sweeper caste who attended to the menial work of the Guru and his companions, completed the group.<sup>67</sup>

They were first taken to Agra where the Wazir of the Empire was staying; but latter on they were brought to Delhi. The Wazir under orders of "Emperor Aurangzeb," writes Syed Muhammad Latif, "whose efforts were directed to converting the whole world to the Mahomedan faith urged the Sikh Guru to embrace Mahomedanism."<sup>68</sup> Tegh Bahadur turned down the proposal with contempt. He was then asked to show miracles. The Guru rejected the idea by saying that he could not interfere in the work of God.

#### THE GURU IN AN IRON CAGE

Guru Tegh Bahadur was thrown into prison and was shut up in an iron cage in chains. He was subjected to severe tortures, both physical and mental. His companions were imprisoned elsewhere and the Guru was falsely told that they had fled away. The darogha of the gaol was Sayyid Hasan Abdullah of Mani Majra near Chandigarh. He treated the Guru with consideration as far as circumstances permitted.<sup>69</sup> In this situation the Guru composed two more chants :

DOHIRA NO. 55

*Sang sakhā sab taj gae  
Kou na nibhyo sāth  
Kaho Nānak yeh bipt men  
Tek ek Ragh Nāth*

(My associates and companions have all  
abandoned me;  
No one has remained with me to the last.  
Saith Nanak, in this calamity  
God alone is my refuge).

He gives a reply in *Dohra* No. 56 :

*Nam rahyo sadhu rahyo  
Rahyo Gur Gobind  
Kauh Nānak eh jagat men  
Kin japyo Gur mant.*<sup>70</sup>

(The Name remaineth, saints remain,  
The Lord remaineth;  
Saith Nanak in this world,  
Few are God's devotees).

The Guru took five paise and a coconut<sup>71</sup>, prayed and bowed before them. He sent these articles to his son Gobind Rai as a token of his nomination to Guruship, through Gurditta.

#### THE MARTYRDOM

The authorities now decided to finish this matter. Of the five companions of the Guru, Jaita remained free, as he had taken to sweeping the road in front of the Kotwali. Gurditta had escaped and gone to Anandpur disguised as a rustic. Dyal Das, Mati Das and Sati Das were brought into the presence of the Guru. Then the most diabolical drama was staged at the place where now stands the Fountain in front of the Kotwali. Bhai Mati Das was asked to become a Musalman. He refused, saying that his own faith was true and he had no desire to change it. He was tied between two posts, and while standing erect, was sawn across from head to the joins. He faced the savage operation with such composure, tranquility and fortitude that the Sikh theologians included his feat in the daily prayer (ardās) of the community. Dyal Das was tied up like a bundle and thrown into a huge cauldron of boiling oil. He was roasted alive into a block of charcoal. Sati Das condemned these brutalities. He was hacked to pieces limb by limb. Jaita was also present, disguised as a sweeper with a broom and a basket in his hands. He collected the remains of these martyrs at night and consigned them to the river Jamuna flowing at a stone's throw.

All this happened before the very eyes of Guru Tegh Bahadur. He was all the time repeating "Wah Guru". He knew his turn was coming next. He remained composed, unruffled and undismayed. His energy, thoughts, ideas, feelings and emotions had concentrated on God, and the dazzling divine light was beating upon his face. He realized that such immortal sacrifices could not go in vain. Their name would live for ever. In this holocaust he saw a new nation of heroes. It was not the English nation as misinterpreted by some apologists for the British Raj but the Khalsa, the Sikh warriors, whose daring exploits and heroic deeds were to fill the pages of



history later on. His followers were done to death on November 10, 1675.

At the end of this devil's dance the Guru was asked either to embrace Islam or show a miracle, or face death. The Guru refused to apostatize himself. About the performance of miracles, he turned down the demand with contempt. In the words of *Bachittar Natak*, an autobiographical fragment composed by Guru Gobind Singh, he is stated to have replied :

*'The performance of theatrical acts is low,  
At which the devotees of God should feel ashamed.'*

The Guru, contemplating the sufferings of the Indian people and the Kashmiri Brahmins who had sought his succour, was determined to offer the supreme sacrifice. The famous words of a poet express his resolve :

*Bāhen jināhn di pakariye,  
Sir dije bāhen na chhoriye  
Guru Tegh Bahadur boliya  
Dhar paiyai dharam na chhoriye*

(Give up your head, but forsake not those  
whom you have undertaken to protect.

Says Guru Tegh Bahadur,

Sacrifice your life, but relinquish not your faith).

On the morning fixed for the martyrdom, the Guru got up early. He bathed and sat in meditation, recited the *Japuji* and *Sukhmani*. He reflected upon the supreme sacrifice of his grandfather, Guru Arjan, on the duties of the office of Guruship, and on his own responsibilities at this crisis. His resolve was already made.

The nobles and courtiers had gathered near the Kotwali in the open space. Thousands of spectators had flocked there. At 11 O' clock the Guru was produced before the multitude. "The Guru said before the assembly of the Omerahs that he duty of man was to pray to the Lord, but since he had been commanded by His Majesty to show a miracle, he had resolved upon complying with the King's orders. He wrote on a piece of paper, which he said was charmed, and then, having tied it round his neck declared that the sword would fall harmless on it by the effect of the charm which was written upon it. The executioner was now summoned to test the miraculous charm. The blow was given and the head of the Guru

rolled on the floor to the amazement of the court.<sup>72\*</sup>

A grand Gurudwara, called Sis Ganj (The Holy Head), stands at the place where the Guru was executed. Its adjacent building, the Kotwali Prison where the Guru was kept confined, was acquired by the Sikhs from the Delhi administration of October 11, 1968.

#### DARING DEEDS OF JAITA AND LAKHISHAH LABANA

The people of Delhi were so terror-stricken that none came forward to cremate the body of the Guru for fear of the authorities. Jaita, the sweeper, managed to steal the Guru's head, and carried it to Anandpur, 340 km distant, a prodigious performance, and presented it to Guru Gobind Rai, the nine-year old child. The new Guru bestowed all affection and love on this hero and remarked, "Ranghrete Guru ke bete", meaning "the untouchables are the Guru's own sons." The Gurudwara Sis-Ganj at Anandpur Sahib marks the site where the head was reverently received and cremated.

A Labana Sikh, Lakhi Shah, a trader by profession, stole the decapitated body in a cart laden with cotton and cremated it in his village later named Rikab Ganj, 8 km distant from the Kotwali, by setting his own hut with all its belongings on fire to avoid detection. The ashes of the body were collected, placed in a brass vessel (*gāgar*) and buried. A magnificent Gurudwara has been erected recently at this site.

This was the great turning point in Sikh history. The execution of the Guru and his companions in the most barbarous manner set ablaze the hearts of Hindus no less than of the Sikhs. They were convinced that any attempt at reconciliation with the Mughal authorities was impossible. It was realized that the people themselves must find their own salvation against a cruel and corrupt government. This task was taken up by Guru Tegh Bahadur's son and successor, Guru Gobind Singh.

As is well-known, Guru Gobind Singh transformed the Sikhs from a quietist sect of God-fearing people into a martial people, a church militant, that urged endless war against Aurangzeb and his successors. After untold sacrifices for nearly three quarters of a century, the Khalsa (militant Sikh Order) of Guru Gobind Singh

\*About the details of this story may be lurking doubts as to their authenticity'

liberated the Punjab and its neighbouring areas. Guru Tegh Bahadur's sacrifice was only the starting point for a mighty revolution. In the words of *Bachittar Natak*, already referred to :

*The Lord protected the paste-mark and the sacred thread.  
And in Kali-yuga performed a mighty heroic deed.  
This deed he performed for the protection of Dharma,  
Gave up his head, but not his passion.  
For men of God he spared himself no suffering.  
Gave up his head, but uttered not a groan.  
Breaking the vessel of his life on the head of the monarch of Delhi,  
He departed for the Celestial Realms—  
None has performed a mighty deed like Tegh Bahadur's.  
At Tegh Bahadur's departure the whole world was plunged in grief:  
The world wailed, but the Celestial Realms echoed with his glory.*

#### FOOTNOTES

1. There is a controversy over the date of birth of Guru Tegh Bahadur. Gulab Singh in *Gurpranali*, and Gian Singh in *Twarikh Guru Khalsa*, give 19 Maghar Shudi 2. Bikrami Samvat 1678 (November, 1921).  
Sohan Singh in *Gur Bilas Patshahi, Chhevin*, Santokh Singh in *Suraj Prakash*, Kahan Singh in *Mahan Kosh*, Amritsar *Bansavali*, Kesar Singh Multani in *Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji Ka Jiwan Britant*, Macauliffe in *Sikh Religion*, Teja Singh and Ganda Singh in *A Short History of Sikhs*, and Trilochan Singh in *Guru Tegh Bahadur* accept Baisakh Vadi 5. 1678 B.S. (April 1. 1621 A.D.)
2. The practice of *Charan pahul* was started by Guru Nanak and it was followed by all the Gurus up to 1698 A.D., when the Khalsa was created by Guru Gobind Singh. At initiation a Sikh drank water in which the Guru had dipped his head finger of the toe (*Nar angusht-e-pa*) Its object was to develop the spirit of humility and meekness as this was the only way of survival for common down-trodden non-Muslims.
3. J. S. Grewal and S. S. Bal. *Guru Gobind Singh*, fin. p. 11.
4. Trilochan Singh. *Guru Tegh Bahadur*, p. 42
5. *Dabistan-e-Mazahib*, p. 234.
6. *Guru Tegh Bahadur*, p. 75.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 83.
8. Latif. *Lahore*, pp. 51, 61, 214-21.
9. M'Gregor. *History of the Sikhs*, 1, p. 59.
10. *The Dabistan*, p. 235.
11. *The Sikhs*, William Blackwood & Sons. London, MCM IV, 35: Syed Muhammad Latif. *History of the Punjab*, p. 252.
12. *The Dabistan*, p. 235.
13. Gain Singh, *Twarikh Guru Khalsa*, i. (Gurmukhi). p. 264.
14. Jadunath Sarkar. *A Short History of Aurangzeb*. p. 68.

15. Sujan Rae Bhandari, *Khulasat-ut-Twarikh*, p. 513.
16. Macauliffe, iv, p. 310.
17. Trilochan Singh places it in October, 1661, which is October 6. 1661; vide *Guru Tegh Bahadur*, p. 109, f.n. 40.
18. Kesar Singh Multani, 9.
19. Kanhiyalal, *Tarikh-e-Panjab*, 38; Trilochan Singh *Guru Tegh Bahadur*, 112.
20. Kanhiyalal calls it Sripal perhaps a sharifa. *Tarikh-e-Panjab*. 39. 41.
21. Guru Gobind Singh's two wives, Mata Sundari and Mata Sahib Devi. were also cremated close to Bala Sahib.
22. Gian Singh. *Twarikh Guru Khalsa*, 262.
23. Gian Singh. *Panth Prakash*, 110; Trilochan Singh *Guru Tegh Bahadur*, 139, f. n. 5.
24. Khazan Singh in his *History and Philosophy of the Sikh Religion*, i. 150 puts it on April 16. 1664 A. D., which is obviously wrong.
25. Makhan Shah belonged to village Tanda in Jehlam district. Gian Singh. *Twarikh Guru Khalsa* i. 265; Khazan Singh *History and Philosophy of the Sikh Religion*, i. 1914. p. 149.
26. "Banjaras acknowledge one God and look on Guru Nanak as the Supreme Teacher". W. Crook. *Tribes and Castes of N. W. India*, i. 1542.
27. Santokh Singh. *Suraj Prakash*, Ras. 11. Ansu 2 and 5 : Gian Singh, *Panth Prakash*, 110; *Twarikh Guru Khalsa*, i. 265.
28. Santokh Singh. *Suraj Prakash*, Pas 11. Ansu 13.
29. Macauliffe. iv. 335.
30. Khazan Singh. *History and Philosophy of the Sikh Religion*, i. 1914. p. 151.
31. Gian Singh. *Twarikh Guru Khalsa*, i. 266; Jagjit Singh *Temple of Spirituality*, The Sikh Religious Tract Society, Tarn Taran. 1935. p. 24.
32. Two shrines were later on erected in this village to commemorate Guru Tegh Bahadur's visit; one is outside the village and the other inside.
33. Macauliffe. iv. 337.
34. *Ibid.*
35. *Ibid.*, 338.
36. *Ibid.*, 339.
37. Santokh Singh. *Suraj Prakash*, Pas 11. Ansu 33.
38. *A Journey from Bengal to England*, i. Languages Department. Punjab. 1970. p. 300.
39. Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs*. 1966. p. 57.
40. *Bachittar Natak*, 711.
41. Khazan Singh. *History of the Sikhs*. 1966. p. 57.
42. *A short History of Aurangzeb*, 1954. p. 204.
43. Macauliffe. iv. 350.
44. Kirpal Singh. *Patna Collection of Hukam Namahs*. quoted in S. S. Uppal's *Guru Gobind Singh—The Saviour*. 1969. p. 89.
45. Kirpal Singh. *Patna Collection of Hukam Namahs*.
46. Trilochan Singh. 219. 222. 223.
47. The name. Gobind Rae. was given by Tegh Bahadur at his departure from

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- Patna to the expected birth of a male child. Macauliffe, iv, 358.
48. Jadunath Sarkar, *History of Aurangzeb*, iii, 213.
49. Macauliffe, iv, 357.
50. Eliot and Dowson, vii, 1964 edition, pp. 183-4.
51. *Muntakhab-ul-Lubab*, ii, 651, Eliot and Dowson; *Later Mughals*, Susil Gupta Calcutta, 1955, p. 26.
52. Sri Ram Sharma, *Religious Policy of the Mughals*, 115.
53. Macauliffe, iv, 366, Kartar Singh, *Life of Guru Gobind Singh*, 1968, p. 25.
54. Chait Samvat 1729 Bikrami; Sewa Singh. *Shahid Bilas*, 59; Cunningham writes : "After a time Tegh Bahadur returned to the Punjab and bought a piece of ground, now known as Makhawal, on the banks of the Sutlej and close to Kiratpur. the chosen residence of his father." *A History of the Sikhs*, 1955, p. 57.
55. Trilochan Singh, *Guru Tegh Bahadur*, p. 177.
56. Gian Singh. *Twarikh Guru Khalsa*, i, p. 270.
57. Surinder Singh Johar, *Guru Gobind Singh*, 1967, p. 37.
58. *Memoirs of My Indian Career*, i, p. 77.
59. Jadunath Sarkar, *A Short History of Aurangzeb*, 133.
60. *History of the Panjab*, 260.
61. Kartar Singh, *Life of Guru Gobind Singh*, 1969, p. 34.
62. *A Journey from Bengal to England*, i, Languages Department. Punjab. 1970, p. 300.
63. *A History of the Sikhs*, 1955, p. 57.
64. *History of the Panjab*, 1964, p. 259.
65. Macauliffe, iv, 385 wrongly attributes this Dohira to Guru Tegh Bahadur's son Gobind Rai.
66. Stanley Lanepool, *Aurangzeb*, S. Chand & Co., 1964, p. 89.
67. Bhagat Lakshman Singh, *Guru Gobind Singh*, Languages Department, Punjab, 1970, p. 14.
68. *History of the Panjab*, p 259.
69. Kanhiyalal, *Tarikh-e-Panjab* (Urdu), 45.
70. *Bani Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur ji*, SGPC. Amritsar. (Gurmukhi). October 1963. 5th edition. 69-70.
71. Kanhiyalal calls it Sripthal. *Tarikh-e-Punjab*, (Urdu). 75.
72. Syed Muhammad Latif, *History of the Panjab*, 260.

## GROWTH OF THE SIKH FAITH—1469-1708

GURCHARAN SINGH

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"One of the most striking creeds in India, which arising on its own soil, protested against her dominant Brahmanism, is the Sikh religion."

Sikhism which made its appearance in the late 15th century took two centuries to flower into a full-fledged creed. During this period a number of key events contributed much to the growth of the Sikh church. The transformation of Sikhism has two distinct phases—the first was from the birth of Guru Nanak in 1469 to the compilation of the *Adi Granth* in 1604. With the compilation of the Scripture, the Sikh church made a definite shift from Brahminism. The Scripture provided it with new ideals and institutions. The second phase from 1606 up to the creation of the Khalsa in 1699 saw this movement of pacific protestantism adopting a more actively militant role. During this period Guru Arjan was martyred in 1606 at Lahore, and Guru Tegh Bahadur too met his martyrdom at Delhi in 1675. The active resistance of the Sikhs to Mughals' rule was, therefore, a logical development of these religious persecutions, which started during the apostleship of the Sixth Guru, Hargobind (1606 to 1644).<sup>2</sup> Although Guru Hargobind's successors—Guru Hari Rai (1644 to 1661) and Guru Hari Krishan (1661-1664) were peacefully disposed towards the establishment, the execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur (1675) proved a 'baptism of fire'<sup>3</sup> for the Sikhs under the stewardship of the Tenth Guru, Gobind Singh (1675 to 1708).

Thus, these religious persecutions transformed the Sikh movement into one of crusaders and heroes who defended their cherished faith by the force of arms. And through a phased confrontation with the establishment, the community evolved its own church, with its own Scripture, a religious capital at Amritsar,

distinct religious practices and ceremonies which gave it strength and determination to secure their identity against all hostile forces, whether of the leaders of orthodox creeds or the state power.

When Guru Nanak, the founder of the faith was born (1469), Buddhism had already faded away from the scene. Brahminism had failed to rise to the occasion and Islam had assumed an aggressive posture. Thus, the continuation of a peaceful religious life had no chances in the context of the militancy of Islam. The appearance of Guru Nanak on the scene heralded a new epoch for the misery-stricken people of large parts of India. He devoted his life to the service of humanity. He tried to bring back the people to a religion of austerity and simplicity. He preached unicity of the Godhead and the brotherhood of man; denounced idol worship, condemned caste and sectarianism and tried to form a brotherhood of the elect. He declared sacrifices, pilgrimages and religious rites and ceremonies to be irrelevant to the spirit of true religion. He emphasised that God could only be realised through His own grace, and guidance of the preceptor (Guru). Guru Nanak also rejected the idea of renunciation and called upon his followers to live a life of spiritual fulfilment. The Guru took his message to many places in the Punjab and the rest of the country along with his Muslim companion Mardana. During these *Udasis* (journeys to spread truth), the Guru's endeavour was to enlighten the people as to the true character of the religious life.

After these *Udasis*, the Guru settled at Kartarpur (on the right bank of the River Ravi, now in Pakistan) and continued to disseminate his gospel till the end of his life. It was at Kartarpur that a nucleus for the evolution of the Sikh church was formed. The Guru wished his mission to serve posterity. Thus, he appointed Bhai Lehna, a devoted disciple, as his successor in preference to his sons (Sri Chand and Lakhmi Das), who were found wanting for the sacred office of Guruship. The nomination of a successor by the Guru proved an important landmark in the growth of the Sikh Religious organization.<sup>4</sup>

Guru Nanak during his life-time, had baptised Bhai Lehna as 'Angad' (one born of his self) who became the second Guru of the Sikhs in 1539. He carried forward the mission of his Master and

emphasized in the followers of Guru Nanak their own distinct identity, so that they might not relapse into Brahminism. He took some concrete steps to achieve this objective.

One side from which a reaction could come was the Udasi sect founded by Guru Nanak's son, Sri Chand. Sri Chand had founded his own creed after being deprived of guruship. But Guru Angad through his sweetness of personality and devotion put the true creed of Guru Nanak on a firm footing, against which no reaction could succeed.

The adoption of the Gurmukhi script for the sacred writings of the rising faith was a revolutionary step. This proved very useful for the growth of this new creed. It worked to dilute the influence of orthodoxy which had relied on Sanskrit as the language of religion. Thus the communication of the Guru's message to the common people was facilitated.

As the tradition goes, he got the life-story of Guru Nanak recorded, with the help of one Bhai Bala. Bala may not be a historical character, but in the myth of Sikhism he is firmly established. He also collected and preserved the hymns of his Master. The Second Guru also kept the institutions of *Sangat* and *Pangat* (holy assembly and community kitchen) running, initially started by Guru Nanak. These new institutions had through their uplifting mass character, attracted large numbers to the new faith and served as powerful media of propagation and integration. These institutions also helped in breaking the crust of the caste system. The second Guru thus imparted a distinct identity to the community by sowing the first seed of the organisation among the Sikhs.<sup>5</sup>

The second Guru during his life-time, had nominated Amar Das, a venerable old disciple, as his successor. The new Guru had, however, also to face the opposition of Sri Chand and the sons of Guru Angad, especially Datu, the elder of the two.

It was under Guru Amar Das that the Sikhs formally started drifting away from Brahminical practices and emerged as a distinct society in their own right.<sup>6</sup>

After consolidating the position of the mission he was heading, the Guru took further steps to propagate it far and wide. The institutions of '*Sangat* and *pangat*' started by his predecessors were



further strengthened. Thus, the followers of the Guru not only grew in numbers, but also developed a sense of brotherhood among themselves. The sect had become so popular during the apostleship of the Third Guru that even some Muslims like Alyar<sup>7</sup> or Allah Yar are said to have joined the new faith.

Because of his advancing years (he was 73 years when he came to the holy office) and steady growth of his followers in far flung places, the Guru decided to organise "The Sikh Spiritual Empire" into 22 bishoprics called 'Manjis' (lit 'Cots'—implied meaning 'chairs'). The Mission was placed on the analogy of the twenty-two provinces of Akbar's empire, during whose reign the Guru also appointed twenty-two principal missionaries all over India to propagate his teaching. In Sikh tradition they are known as '*Bai Umare*' (the twenty-two cardinals). A pious and devoted Sikh was put in charge of each 'Manji' whose main function was to preach the gospel of the Faith. In this way the Sikhs were given a well-knit organisation. The Guru further strengthened the cohesion of the Sikhs by giving them a central place of pilgrimage by founding a Baoli (well-pond with steps) at Gōindwal on the right bank of the river Beas. It was an important step towards the growth and strengthening of the church, because with the founding of the Baoli, the dependence of growing number of devotees of the Sikh church on the Centres of the Hindu pilgrimages was minimised.

The Guru also collected the hymns of the first two Master. Later on, Guru Arjan, the Fifth Guru, at the time of compilation of Adi Granth had to beseech Baba Mohan (Guru Amar Das's son) to hand over the collection to him, which after some hesitation he did.<sup>8</sup>

Guru Amar Das further called upon his followers to celebrate the festivals of Diwali, Baisakhi and Maghi collectively.<sup>9</sup> The Guru also initiated new ceremonies for the occasions of death and marriage. The presence of a Brahmin on such occasions was dispensed with. Guru Amar Das composed a large number of hymns of devotion and spiritual experience. Among his compositions is 'Anand' ('Bliss', 'Joy') whose Preamble and Finale is chanted on all occasions in the religious assemblies of the Sikhs. Guru Amar Das was deeply respected by the rulers of the day, and the Emperor Akbar is stated to have come to see him. The Emperor conferred

on him a piece of land on which later the Sacred Pool and Temple of Amritsar grew. Some social evils prevalent in the Hindu society such as '*pardah*' and '*suttee*' were condemned and widow remarriage was encouraged by Guru Amar Das.

By an edict of Guru Amar Das the institutions of Guruship henceforward became hereditary.<sup>10</sup> Bhai Jetha, the Guru's son-in-law, a Sodhi Khatri by caste, succeeded the Guru under the name of Ram Das.

The new Guru, in order to avoid any clash with Baba Mohan, his brother-in-law, chose not to stay at Goindwal. As Macauliffe says on the authority of *Gurpartap Suraj Granth*, Guru Amar Das had anticipated this difficulty and had accordingly advised Ram Das to shift to the land assigned by the Emperor Akbar (north of Goindwal at the present site of Amritsar) and get a tank excavated to the East of it as a place of Sikh worship and pilgrimage.<sup>11</sup>

Guru Ram Das Shifted to this new place and named it 'Ramdaspura'. He started the work of excavation of the tanks, later named as 'Amritsar' (Pool of Immortality) and 'Santokhsar' (Pool of Spiritual Content). A market was also established. The work started by the fourth Guru was given completion by his son and successor, Guru Arjan Dev.

To meet the growing needs of the funds required for the completion of these works, the Guru sent his messengers known as 'Ramdasis' to his followers to raise offerings, which encouraged the growth of another institution, the Masand System, which flourished in his time of the Fifth Guru.

The Fourth Guru also succeeded in bringing about reconciliation with the Udasis, thus clearing the way for the rapid growth of the Sikh Church. He also composed four 'Lāvs' (peregrination hymns) to be chanted during the performance of the marriage ceremony. These compositions of the Guru systematically replaced the reciting of mantras from the Brahminical texts on all ceremonial occasions.

Guru Ram Das, like his predecessors, was a spiritually-inspired poet. His hymns are characterized by the fervour of devotion (*bhakti*). These hymns have a swing and musical quality which makes them special favourites for chanting and recitation in the morning devotional assemblies of the Sikhs. Guru Ram Das also

collected the hymns of his predecessors, with addition of *Pauris* (stanzas) composed by himself and thus gave shape to several *Vars* (disquisitional poems). As founder of the township of Amritsar, Guru Amar Das provided to the Sikh faith its central place as a capital.<sup>12</sup>

Thus under the Fourth Guru the Sikh Church made a marked drift away from Brahminism, developed its own rites and ceremonies and acquired a distinctive identity.

Towards the end of his life, Guru Ram Das decided to pass on the Holy Ministry to his youngest son, Arjan Dev.<sup>13</sup> The choice was strongly opposed by Prithi Chand, the eldest son of the Guru, who later tried to establish a satellite gurudom which eventually faded out.

Guru Arjan Dev during his tenure of Guruship (1581-1606), endeavoured to change completely the external ceremonial of the Sikh faith. The compilation of *Adi Granth* in 1604 by the Guru was the most spectacular among his achievements. The compilation was necessitated by the activities of Prithi Chand and certain other false claimants to Guruship, who had also started composing their own hymns under the pen-name of 'Nanak' and interpolating these in the genuine scriptural writings. The Guru was also determined to raise Sikhism from the status of sect to a full-fledged religion. For this purpose it was necessary that the Sikhs should have their own scripture like the Vedas, the Bible and the Quran.<sup>14</sup> In this regard spade work had already been done by the Third Guru in collecting the hymns of the Sikh faith in the '*Pothis*' (Volumes) already referred to. Guru Arjan compiled the Holy Book in A.D. 1604 and a scholar devotee and relation, Bhai Gurdas acted as his assistant and amanuensis. The compilation of *Adi granth* is a highly important landmark in the development of Sikhism.

Guru Arjan made the Sikhs a totally distinct community in having their own scriptural language, their own place of pilgrimage and social customs. They were now given in addition, their own Scripture which ended their dependence on the Brahminical and other texts, such as those made current by the various sects and sub-sects with in Hinduism.

The Fifth Guru completed the projects started by the fourth

Guru—namely, the construction of the Harimandir (The Divine Temple) in the midst of the Amritsar Pool. The Guru brought to it greater sanctity and importance. The *Adi Granth* compiled by the Guru was installed in the Harimandir and Baba Buddha, a venerable old Sikh who had been blessed by Guru Nanak himself, was appointed the first priest (*granthi*).<sup>15</sup>

The Guru also founded some other places of pilgrimage such as Tarn Taran, Kartarpur (near Jullundur), Sri Har Gobindpur, Chheharta and Lahore.

Another contribution of Guru Arjan in the growth of the Sikh Church was the reorganisation of the *Masand* system, (initiated in the form of Manjis' by the third Guru and later developed by Guru Ram Das) which was found useful in providing funds for making the growing requirements of big projects at many places and the *langar* or holy kitchen.

The Guru now made it obligatory for every Sikh to donate a fixed share of his income to the Guru's coffers, which was to be collected by the *masands* (tithe-gatherers).<sup>16</sup> This step of the Guru was revolutionary in character and far-reaching in consequences.<sup>17</sup>

Throughout the 16th century, Sikhism had enjoyed the respect of the Mughals and there was no occasion of clash with the State. The Mughal Emperor Akbar is said to have come to pay his homage, to the Guru, as mentioned earlier. But with the accession of Jahangir (1605-1627) to the throne, the orthodox forces of Islam got the upper hand. The non-violent movement had to take up arms in self-defence when the Emperor subjected the fifth Guru to a barbarously cruel death in May, 1606.

After the martyrdom of his father, Hargobind became the sixth Guru of the Sikhs. In the new situation created by his holy father's martyrdom, the Guru adopted a new way of conducting himself.<sup>18</sup> He wore two swords of 'Miri' and 'Piri', got Akal Takht built, trained his Sikhs in military warfare, changed the daily routine and the Sikhs were allowed freely to eat meat and hunt.<sup>19</sup> Although the Guru had raised a band of soldiers, he tried to avoid conflict with the State as far as possible. He even established friendly relations with Jahangir. But when Shahjahan (1627-1658) ascended the throne in 1627 the situation deteriorated and the Guru was drawn into an armed

struggle. "His three battles<sup>20</sup> against the Mughals were of a defensive character and except in the second case, where we have the very dubious story of his having forcibly rescued two horses from the Emperor's stable at Lahore, none of these was of his own seeking.<sup>21</sup> Thus, the Guru was compelled by the exigencies of time to change the course of the Sikh movement.

After Guru Hargobind's death in A.D. 1644, his grandson Har Rai succeeded him. He was peace-loving by temperament and the movement under his able leadership resumed its former character. Although the Guru stayed mostly in the submontane areas, it is said that he maintained an army of 2,000 soldiers as a precautionary measure.<sup>22</sup> The Guru busied himself in the work of peaceful organization and attracted many enthusiasts to the fold of the Sikh faith, particularly in the Malwa Region.

Guru Hari Rai was succeeded in 1661 by his son, Hari Krishan, who unfortunately died when he was hardly eight.

The next Guru, Tegh Bahadur the son of Guru Hargobind, was then acclaimed as the ninth Guru by the Sikhs in preference to some other pretenders like Dhir Mal and Ram Rai, along with a few of lesser note.

The new Guru, had visualised that the influence of the *Masands* might divide the well-knit Sikh Sangats into petty sects. Another impediment which the growing Sikh church experienced was the bigoted religious policy of Aurangzeb. The fanatical leaders of the movement started by Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi, Mujaddid-i-Alf-i-Islam', also supported Aurangzeb in his zeal of turning India into 'Dar-ul-Islam', by using the state power to make forcible conversions to Islam. Thus, the situation for the rising church was fraught with dangers from within and without. Guru Tegh Bahadur took upon himself the onerous task of averting these at the both levels. He, therefore, made extensive tours of the Malwa region of the Punjab and travelled to Bengal, Bihar and Assam to preach the gospels of human brotherhood, devotion to God and freedom of faith.

Guru Tegh Bahadur was of a deeply meditative character. He is stated to have spent his early years in seclusion at Bakala, a place near Amritsar. When called upon to assume the responsibilities of Guruship he undertook long and extensive tours towards the

east, and spread his message of the spiritually-awakened life far and wide. Feeling deeply grieved at Aurangzeb's policy of religious persecution, he moved over the areas of eastern Punjab and Haryana to steel the people's resolve to resist tyranny. His religious teaching drew upon his hostility of the State, and after being arrested, he was offered the alternative to embrace Islam or face death. He naturally refused to apostate himself. In the words of Guru Gobind Singh, his son and successor :

*"The Lord protected their paste-mark and sacred thread and performed a mighty deed in Kali-Yuga.*

*This heroic deed he performed to protect Dharma,*

*Gave up his head but not his passion.*

*To uphold the devotees of God he took this great step,*

*Gave his head, but uttered not a groan.*

*Breaking the potsherd of his body on the head of the monarch of Delhi,*

*He departed for the Celestial Realms—*

*None ever performed a mighty deed like Tegn Bahadur.*

*At Tegn Bahadur's departure the world was plunged in deep grief.*

*The world wailed, but the Celestial Realms resounded with his glory.*

Guru Tegn Bahadur's martyrdom led to far-reaching political effects. The Mughal State had, not long after, to face stiff resistance from the Sikhs. Sikh opposition contributed significantly to the collapse of the Mughal Empire.

The Sikh movement under the devoted leadership of Guru Tegn Bahadur gathered much momentum and strength. In addition the people of Northern India, particularly the Hindus, found their natural 'Saviour' in the person of the Guru. According to a very reliable tradition, the Brahmins of northern India, under the leadership of Pandit Kirpa Ram of Mattan (Kashmir) appealed the Guru to save *Dharma*, which meant the religion, traditions and ideals of India from threatened extinction by the virulent repression let loose by Aurangzeb. Even Muslims venerated him for his noble and deeply spiritual life. The Guru readily espoused their cause, for which he had to make the supreme sacrifice under orders of Aurangzeb on November 11, 1675. Guru Tegn Bahadur's martyrdom not only saved the Sikh Church from imminent dangers, but also fostered a spirit of fearlessness and sacrifice for 'Dharma' among the suffering

Hindu masses.<sup>22</sup>

After the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur, Guru Gobind Singh (earlier he was known as Guru Gobind Das or Gobind Rai), his son and successor, took several concrete steps to give a new orientation to the Sikh Church. He created the Khalsa in 1699 after baptising the 'Five Beloved Ones' and asking them in turn to baptise himself. It is really a psychological feat of transformation of the character of the community as also of democratizing the religious authority, which heretofore had vested in the personality of the Guru exclusively.

Guru Gobind Singh also gave his 'Khalsa' an obligatory external form in the shape of five Ks' *Kachh* (under-short), *Kara* (steel bangle), *Kirpan* (sword), *Kangha* (comb), *Kesh* (long hair), which contributed much to making the community a distinct entity. He also bestowed upon the Khalsa the name 'Singh' (lion). The fearless skirmishes of the Khalsa with the imperial troops during the apostleship of Guru Gobind Singh and after, bear testimony to this transformation.

Guru Gobind Singh had to fight several battles, first with the Rajput Hill Chiefs of the present-day Kangra District and later with the Mughal Subahdar of Sirhind. These battles were forced on him for the reason that the Hindu Chiefs looked upon the Guru as a rival, and being steeped in conservatism and ideas of privilege, failed to see his work of reform which aimed at ridding the Hindu society of its age-long social evils like caste, which had eaten into its vitals. The far-reaching consequences of the Guru's work, neither these chiefs nor their Brahmin mentors could obviously understand. To the Mughals, the Guru's work looked like being the rise of a revolt. In essence the Guru's transformation of the quietist Sikh society was a revolutionary plan. The Guru's forces were not equal at the time to repel the attack from the vast Mughal Empire with all its resources, and he had to evacuate from his fortress of Anandpur and to undergo terrible hardships. In the process all his sons died—two on the field of battle, and two who were still children, at the hand of the executioner. The story of Guru Gobind Singh reads like a heroic epic and is one of the most inspiring episodes in human history. His work released vast forces which ultimately liberated

and transformed north-western India and shook the Mughal rule, which had become decadent and effete and a tyranny.

Guru Gobind Singh's role as hero and liberator is well-known. What is not so well-known is that he was a great spiritual teacher, in the line of the holy men from Guru Nanak onwards and despite the fighting with the Mughals, who were Muslims, his teaching is permeated by the spirit of tolerance and human brotherhood. The vision of all creation as one and undivided finds repeated and powerful expression in the property of spiritual experience composed by him.

Looking over the history of the Sikh faith, it may be seen that right from its inception it was set on its path of development along the lines set by its founder, Guru Nanak Dev. Many new institutions developed in the course of time involving new practices which contributed to the systematic growth and integration of the followers of the faith. These helped in achieving the lofty ideals of humanitarianism and the ethical life voiced forth by the Gurus.

The institution of personal Guruship initiated by Guru Nanak and enriched by the succeeding Gurus, institutionalised the ideals of the new faith, thus motivating the masses to imbibe these ideals. As the Gurus' sacred writings had already been compiled in *Adi Granth* by Guru Arjun Dev. Guru Gobind Singh decreed to abolish the institution of personal Guruship. Since the gospel of the faith stood crystallised and eternalised in the Volume of *Adi Granth*, the Guru ordained the Holy Scripture to be recognised as the impersonal Guru of the faith for all times to come.

The institutions of '*Sangat*' and '*Pangat*' already referred to, are the other important pillars of the new church which inculcated a sense of brotherhood and equality among the members of the new society. The institution of *Sangat* or holy assembly specially emphasised that the assembly of the faithful irrespective of caste or status in life, symbolised the unity of the Godhead in diversity, thus signifying that liberation could be attained by the people's collective effort. The '*Pangat*' institutionalised the "community kitchen", which not only served the purpose of providing free food to the needy, and those seeking holy communion, but also proved a great social leveller and shattered the age-old taboos of the caste system and untouchability.



The new places of pilgrimage, the new Scripture, the new social ceremonies and the new code of moral behaviour, as gradually developed by the new Faith proved great assets for the integration of the synthesized image of Sikhism. And every succeeding Guru contributed his share to this evolutionary growth. It was, however, Guru Gobind Singh's radical steps that imparted a distinct identity to the Sikh faith, called *Panth* (the true path) in Sikh parlance. By organizing the Khalsa on democratic principles, the Guru not only gave the Sikhs a distinct identity and obligatory outward bearing, but also eliminated the chances of their relapsing into any other faith in times to come. This also paved the way for the evolution of the Sikh Misals in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries on democratic lines.

It was in this way that the Sikh Faith slowly assumed the dimensions of a full-fledged society, a nation, which has not only channelized the whole genius of its people, but also provided them with such customs and ceremonies as have come to form the basis of a new socio-cultural movement.

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## FOOTNOTES

1. R. A. Rose : *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. XI. p 507.
2. Some accounts also mention 1645 as the year of his death.
3. "The execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur proved a baptism of fire. It helped his son and successor Guru Gobind Singh to transform the Sikhs into fiery warriors. they proved themselves in the eighteenth century." S. R. Sharma. *Religious Policy of the Mughal Emperor*, p. 140.
4. "Had Nanak died without a successor there would have been no Sikhism today or at least simply another Kabirism." G. C. Narang, *Glorious History of The Sikhs*, p. 25.
5. "Guru Angad succeeded in giving a local habitation and a name to the mission of Nanak. The Sikhs now began gradually to drift away from the orthodox Hindu Society and formed a class, a sort of new brotherhood, by themselves." G. C. Narang. *Glorious History of the Sikhs*. p. 30.
6. "Guru Angad had no doubt. done something to give the Sikhs an individuality of their own. but it was under Amar Das that the difference between a Hindu and a Sikh became more pronounced and the Sikhs began gradually to drift away from orthodox Hindu Society....." Indu Bhushan Benerjee. *Evolution of the Khalsa*, Vol. I. p. 183.
- 7 Indu Bhushan Benerjee. *Evolution of the Khalsa*, Vol. I. p. 168.
8. These hymns collected in two volumes (*Pothis*) are still preserved. These *Pothis* become the nucleus for the main body of *Adi Granth*.
9. "The Guru's object might as well have been to wean his followers away from Hindu practices associated with these particular days of the year." Macauliffe. *Sikh Religion*. Vol. II. p. 79.
10. "This changed the very character of Guruship and materially contributed to the growth of Sikh power, for henceforward. the Guru was looked upon by his disciples not only in the light of spiritual guide but also as a worldly lord and a ruling sovereign." Mohammad Latif. *History of the Punjab*. p. 250.
11. Indu Bhushan Benerjee. *op. cit.*, Vol. I. p. 183.
12. "The Guru laid the foundation of the future greatness of the Sikhs as a nation. for they were enabled now to rally at a common place of worship. conveniently situated. both as regards distance and fertility of soil." Mohammad Latif. *History of the Punjab*, p. 352.
13. "Now appeared on the scene a man. who was a born poet. a practical philosopher. a powerful organizer and a great statesman. While yielding to none of his predecessors in piety and spiritual excellence. Arjun. who succeeded as Fifth Guru. excelled everyone of them in the gifts which were required for the building of a State." G. C. Narang. *Glorious History of The Sikhs*, p. 45.
14. "Guru Arjan now felt the necessity of laying down the rules for the guidance of his followers. of their daily religious duties and expiatory rites. This course would reduce his religion to consistency and hinder divergent tenents. and rituals." Indu Bhushan Benerjee. *Evolution of the Khalsa*. Vol. I. p. 193.
15. "This was of the greatest importance for the firm establishment of Sikhism for the Sikhs obtained thereby a fixed central place of worship. where the disciples

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- annually assembled round their Guru and performed their ablutions in the sacred tank". Indu Bhushan Benerjee, *Evolution of the Khalsa*, Vol. I, p. 193.
16. "Before the fifth Guru's period no tribute was exacted from the Sikhs. but presents were given by them accordings to their own discretion to their Gurus. Arjun Mal sent in his time a person to the Sikhs of each town in order to collect tithes: in that manner the Sikhs accustomed themselves to the rule of the Masand or a deputy." Mohsin Fani, *Debistan*, Vol. II. P. 271.
  17. "The Sikhs were gradually accustomed to a kind of government of their own and began to feel themselves as a family organised and a strong party with in the State. Trump. *The Adi Granth*, p. LXXXI
  18. "Unlike his father. Hargobind consistantly trained himself in martial exercises and systematically turned his attention to chase."—Sir Jadu Nath Sarkar. *Short History of Aurangzeb*, 1954, Ed. p. 156.
  19. 1. Amritsar. 2. Lehira. 3. Kartarpur.
  20. Indu Bhushan Benerjee. *Evolution of the Khalsa*, Vol. I. p. 12.
  21. "He is said to have helped Dara Shukoh when the latter fled to Punjab after his defeat at the hands of Aurangzeb". Indu Bhushan Benerjee. *Evolution of the Khalsa*, Vol. I. p. 12.
  22. "The Guru's execution undoubtedly strengthened the resistance against the religious policy of Aurangzeb and at the same time. prepared the way for the final stage in the evolution of Shikhism. Indu Bhushan Benerjee. *Evolution of the Khalsa*, Vol. II. p. 63.

## GURU TEGH BAHADUR AND HUMAN RIGHTS

FAUJA SINGH

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In order to understand the outlook that Guru Tegh Bahadur brought to bear upon the challenging problems of his contemporary social situation, it may be both useful and necessary briefly to refer back to the ideological base of the Sikh society, established by his illustrious predecessors. Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh faith, had propounded the fundamental principles which became the basis for subsequent developments under his successors. The ideology thus crystallised had at its rockbottom the belief that the world, in its essence, is a spiritual and moral order (*dharamsal*—the abode of *dharma*), all-embracing and all-pervading. The Lord of the Universe, the Truth Absolute (*satinam*) permeates His entire creation. The world is "the True One's dwelling place" (Guru Angad Dev); it is "the ocean in which all beings move" (Guru Ram Das), or "the thread on which the whole creation is strung" (Guru Arjan Dev). The mythical bull supposed to be supporting the Universe, is made out to be the self-same *dharma*, the Moral Law, born of *daya* (compassion) that holds the world in equilibrium. "God by His Will made the world; God at His Will controlleth it; He beholdeth all things set under His Will," said Guru Angad Dev. It is this Divine Will or *hukam* which constitutes the sanction behind the Moral Law or *dharma*.

Mr. D. M. Brown in his book, *Indian Political Thought from Manu to Gandhi* (p. 15), thus writes with regard to the connotation of *dharma* in ancient India: "The conception of Dharma was a far-reaching one embracing the whole life of man. The writers of Dharmshastars in the ancient period meant by Dharma not a creed or religion, but a mode of life or code of conduct which regulated a man's work and activities as a member of the society, and as an

individual it was intended to bring about gradual development of a man and to enable him to reach what was deemed to be the goal of human existence." Guru Nanak's conception of *dharma* was even more comprehensive in scope, as he disapproved of the conduct of all such people as renounced worldly life and chose to reside in recesses of mountains and forests. Mr. C. H. Payne has rightly remarked : "In the doctrines of Nanak morality has a higher place than in those of any other Hindu reformer. Few, even of the world's greatest philosophers, have laid down a more exalted moral code than is to be found in the pages of *Granth Sahib*. Purity of life is set forth as the highest object of human endeavour. Loyalty, chastity, honesty, justice, mercy and temperance are among the virtues on which vital stress is laid."

In the moral order of the conception of the Sikh Gurus, the individual (not caste as was the case in the earlier periods) had the pivotal position. He was regarded as one endowed with a unique personality worthy of all respect. The soul within him is a spark of Divine Light—*jyoti sarup*. "If thou wouldst seek God, demolish not the heart of anyone, for God lives in every heart". (Guru Arjan, *Adi Granth*, p. 1384). A two-fold objective to merge his little self with the Infinite; to uphold the cause of *dharma* in the world. In his efforts to achieve his goals, he is supposed to act in a spirit of full responsibility always realising that all his actions are subject to the supreme Moral Law. "Truth is higher than other things but higher still is the life lived in truth" (Guru Nanak, *Adi Granth*, p. 62). The world being a divine revelation, is to be shunned in no case. On the other hand, the individual must live in it, work in it, participate in its affairs, grapple with its difficulties and challenges and endeavour to make it into an ideal place to live in. The world or society is valuable and must be valued as such, it being at once the theatre of our activities, the testing ground of our faith and principles as well as the measuring yardstick of our personal attainments. Guru Nanak had roundly condemned the *jogi* and *sidh* recluses who had equated religious life with a life of renunciation. He had categorically said that a truly religious man is one who practises religion in his everyday life. "Abide pure amid the impurities of the world; thus shalt thou find the way of religion—true *jog jugat*." (Guru Nanak, *Suhi Rag*,

*Adi Granth*, p. 730). Such a religion cannot be separated from morality. The person who is not a useful member of the society contributing his mite towards its welfare, is worthless and good for nothing. In fact an individual's very salvation depends upon how sincerely and zealously he tries to serve his fellow human beings. Guru Nanak's clear injunction in this regard was : "Only he finds the true path of life, who earns his bread by the sweat of his brow and shares the fruit there of with his fellow-beings" (*Var Sarang, Adi Granth*, p. 1245).

Society which is a complex of social relations rather than a mere aggregate of individuals, if properly organised, can facilitate for the individual his task of self-fulfillment. The Gurus had made it clear that all social institutions and associations are intended to help the individual to achieve this main object of his life. Therefore, society must be organised on the healthy basis of justice, tolerance and equality and should be free from oppression of any kind. Subjection had been dubbed a curse, for it was said that under it happiness is not possible even in a dream. Likewise, encroachment upon what rightfully belongs to others was denounced. Exploitation, whatever its brand, was also condemned. All these evils, according to the Gurus, had their roots in the narrow self-interests of the people themselves. The problem could, however, be largely solved by inculcating in the minds of people a consciousness of the underlying unity of mankind. Lack of faith in the brotherhood of man blunts our vision and we easily fall into the habit of lending greater weight to dissimilarities than to similarities. To the Sikh Gurus the principle of equality was a natural corollary from their faith in the unity of Godhead. If the Creator of all human beings, God, is one, then all his creatures, irrespective of their caste, creed, colour and sex, are equal.

Equality implies tolerance of differences existing in dress, food, faith, custom etc. It is difficult for one to endure for long without the other. Equality, if it does not promote tolerance, is a sham and tolerance if it is not based on a sense of equality, is a mirage. Guru Amar Das made it amply clear when invoking God he said, "Save them, O Lord : through whatever entrance they approach."

The state as the most powerful organ of the organized society

has a vital role to play in the creation of an ideal society. Monarchy which was the established form of government then, was accepted by the Sikh Gurus as a legitimate and God-ordained institutions. Kingship was regarded as a gift from God, a reward of good deeds done in previous life or lives. Not only that the king was believed to derive all his authority from God. However, this belief in the divine origin of kingly power was different from the Western doctrine of divine right of kings in one important respect. Unlike the West, the Gurus gave no countenance to the idea that kings can act as they like, owing no responsibility to the people placed under their rule. On the contrary, it was stressed that they should always be dispensers of justice and equality and must never wield their authority arbitrarily or despotically. They are responsible to God, "King of kings", the Supreme Sovereign, for all their actions. They are only His agents commissioned to govern, in the manner of Platos' philosophising, with justice, kindness and sympathy and to promote the welfare of their people. They are to conduct their functions, so to say, as a mandate from God. Thus viewed, the monarchy or the state was held by the Gurus to be an inseparable part of the over-all moral order, intended to subserve its primary ends.

It is essential that the ruler must possess a high moral character if he is to carry out his mission successfully. As an individual, he must try to realise the same moral and spiritual aims as are necessary for other individuals. As a ruler, his responsibilities are even greater, for he is required to create, by means of benign-government, such conditions of life as are most needed to enable the individuals to develop their personalities to the full. The state is in fact meant for the betterment of the individual and not vice versa. If a king neglects his duties, oppresses the weak, indulges in activities prejudicial to the general welfare of his subjects and sets the fulfilment of his material pleasures as the primary goal of his life, he incurs the wrath of God and forfeits his mandate. God then, in His displeasure, snatches always the exalted office from him by way of chastisement and bestows it on some body else more suitable. Guru Nanak called Babar for his invasion of India a *Yama* sent by the Almighty as a chastiser of the "dogs" and "Butchers" that the Lodi Sultans ruling over North India then were.

To the above views of the origin and functions of the state not wholly unknown here or elsewhere, the Sikh Gurus gave a revolutionary turn by emphasising that kings are not responsible to God alone, but to the people as well, for whose good they are set up by God. The people with the divine spark enshrined in them, are capable of knowing and interpreting the Divine Will. In fact, the people's will is also God's will. There fore, if a ruler deviates from the path of justice and duty, it is just, the Gurus believed, to offer resistance to his wrong and unjust policies. "Both are fools—he who confers authority on those that deserve not and shameless are those who accept it" (*Adi Granth*, p. 1286). Herein lies the sanction for the people's right of resistance in the case of an unjust and tyrannical ruler who is beyond correction by any other means. The exercise of such a right is a sort of religious duty, as injustice and oppression are contrary to the Moral and Spiritual Order of God, as ordained in the world.

Granting the right of resistance inevitably led to sanctioning the use of force (*shakti*). The need for the use of force was realised immediately after the execution of Guru Arjan Dev in Lahore in 1606 A.D. and the martyred Guru's son and successor, Guru Hargobind laid aside *saili* and *topi*, previous symbols of Guruship, and put on two swords, respectively standing for the concepts of *miri* (temporality) and *piri* (spirituality). Soon after he started militarising his community so as to be able to meet tyranny with force, if necessary. The implied theory behind this way of thinking, was that force by itself is not evil, that it is its misuse which makes it so, just as we say today that it is not science as such but its misuse which is reprehensible. On the use of arms for a noble cause, Guru Hargobind's statement is unambiguous and authoritative : "*Shaster garib ki rakhya jarvane ki bhakyya*"—arms are protection to the poor and destruction to the tyrant.

As a result of the new policy adopted by Guru Hargobind, the relations between the Sikhs and the Mughals became strained and a number of open armed clashes occurred between them. Guru Tegh Bahadur who was the youngest son of Guru Hargobind, was an eyewitness to most of them and is even said to have personally participated in the battle of Kartarpur and shown rare



feats of bravery.

## II

Sikhism and Mughal rule came into being almost simultaneously in the 16th century. The founders of the two organisations, Guru Nanak and Babar, were contemporaries and by a popular but not yet confirmed Sikh tradition, they even had a meeting and exchanged ideas with each other. The remainder of that century passed off practically without any clash or disharmony between them. Rather, the long reign of the Emperor Akbar proved a great boon for the spread of Sikhism and the number of its votaries multiplied at a very fast rate.

Akbar held a high ideal of sovereignty. Unlike his predecessors, he abandoned the idea that he was primarily the king of his own Muslim co-religionists. Like a true liberal he raised himself above communal prejudices of the age and removed all discrimination between Muslims and non-Muslims in matters of public employment, taxation, religion and culture. *Jizya* and pilgrimage taxes which had all along been a great eyesore to the non-Muslims were abolished and in respect of the taxes which were retained, uniform rates for all, irrespective of creed or caste were prescribed. In the sphere of administrative and military service, an open-door policy was adopted and although the predominance of Muslim employees remained as before, opportunities of recruitment for others were greatly augmented and now it even became possible for non-Muslims to rise to the highest rung in the State ladder. Similar liberalism and equality of treatment marked the fields of religious and cultural fields.

Under the next two emperors, Jahangir and Shah Jahan, the liberal policy of Akbar was maintained to a large extent. But already certain forces had been generated by way of reaction of Akbar's policy, whose avowed purpose was to counter the new trends of liberalism in the name of safety of Islam. The leadership of these reactionary elements came from the Naqshbandis of Sirhind headed by Shaikh Ahmed and his successors. Assuming the title of *Mujaddid-*Alif-i-Thani** (Reformer of the Second Millennium), Shaikh Ahmed Sirhindi took it upon himself to bring political, social and religious affairs of the Muslims inline with the orthodox *summi*

line. His conclusions were based on his personal prejudices, upon the conditions prevalent in and around Sirhind and in the reports which the distinguished Muslim officials conveyed to him from time to time. He thought that Akbar's policies had succumbed to the unwholesome influence of Shaikh Abul Fazl, Faizi and certain other nobles who had diverted him from the line of orthodox Islam. Akbar's appointment of Hindus to high positions, marriage with Rajput ladies, introduction of *Din-i-Ilhai* and *Sijda* and celebration of Hindu fairs and festivals were all viewed by the *Mujaddid* as posing a serious danger to Islam. He cherished the apprehension that a liberal policy, such as Akbar's, would strengthen and embolden non-Muslims to weaken and ultimately liquidate the Muslim rule. This kind of propaganda by the Naqshbandis had an adverse effect, albeit limited, on the policies of Jahangir and Shah Jahan, so that each one was less liberal than his predecessor. Thus, a departure from Akbar's wide outlook began. Though it was quite slight in the beginning, the rupture grew larger and larger with the passage of time until under Aurangzeb, it assumed the dimensions of a total reversal of Akbar's tolerant policy.

Aurangzeb was the most characteristic product of this Sirhindi School of thought. He held Akbar's eclecticism to be wrong and as ill-conceived, a grave danger to Islam, both as religion and as state organisation. The vast majority of Indians being non-Muslims, the best guarantee for the safety of Islam, he thought, was that they should be kept perennially in a state of abject subjection. Any attempt, in his view, to treat them liberally would in fact be tantamount to endeavouring to undermine the very basis of the Muslim society in India. And to reinforce him in his convictions there were already certain signs of stirrings noticeable among the non-Muslims, the most striking examples of which were provided by the Sikhs in the Punjab and the Marathas in the Deccan. His heart, therefore, from the very beginning, was set on the total reversal of Akbar's policy. "The accession of Aurangzeb to the throne in 1658 heralded the triumph of Muslim theologians. He invited their intercession in the affairs of the state when after the capture of Dara he had him tried and condemned as an apostate". (Sri Ram Sharma, *Religious Policy of Mughals*, 1972, p. 127). This was bound to be so, as the object

dearest to his heart was to establish a purely Islamic state on the soil of India. The failure of the liberal-minded Dara Shikoh and later his execution spelt a great disaster to all trends to catholicity in the land just as it also marked the triumph of orthodoxy.

Aurangzeb began with puritanical measures. In the second year of his reign he discontinued the celebrating of *Nauroz* (first day of the Solar Year). A few years later, music and dancing were prohibited. *Jharokha Darshan* was discontinued on the ground that it seemed too much like human worship; *tuladan* (weighing of the Emperor's body against gold, silver and various other valuables) was given up; royal astronomers and astrologers were dismissed; drinking was stopped and public censors were appointed to enforce prohibition strictly. Severe punishments were awarded for anything that was construed by the theological as violating at four fingers and offenders against this order were penalized. Garments of golden weave were forbidden. Clay figures of birds, animals, men and women produced for children were disallowed and violations, if any, were punished. Lighting of lamps on the tombs of the saints and other persons was declared an offence. Shia Musalmans were prohibited from celebrating their festival of Muharram. Any talk on anybody's part creating the slightest suspicion of disrespect or want of respect towards Islam, the prophet, and his companions were severely punished, often with death.

But most of those restrictions were of a general nature and covered all communities. Non-muslims were singled out for discriminatory treatment in four specific fields, namely public services, construction and repair of temples, conversions and taxation. The Emperor's deep-rooted suspicion about the Hindus' bonafides seriously affected their position in the services, particularly in the higher echelons. Sri Ram Sharma, (*op.cit.*, pp. 155-56) after careful comparison of relevant figures for Hindu *Mansabdars* in the reigns of Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb has this to say on the matter : "This means that towards the end of Aurangzeb's reign there was a smaller number of Hindus occupying the *mansabs* of 1000 and above, than the number of similar *mansabdars* towards the end of Shah Jahan's reign. But the decrease in number becomes still more significant when we take into account the increase in the

total number of the *mansabdars* which rose enormously in the reign of Aurangzeb. In 1657 under Shah Jahan's there were 8,000 *mansabdars* in all, whereas in 1690 number of *mansabdars* had risen to 14,556 ..... The percentage of the Hindus in the higher ranks of the State could not have been than 50 per cent of what it was towards the end of Shah Jahan's reign."

Even before Aurangzeb, in the reigns of Jahangir and Shah Jahan, there were several instances of destruction of temples, but then these occurrences were generally part of military operations. It was only under Aurangzeb that religious consideration dominated the formulation of state policies and a carefully planned attack was launched forbidding the construction and repair of temples. The provinces of Gujarat and Orissa were among the first targets of Aurangzeb's fanaticism. Both of them witnessed wanton destruction of numerous sacred shrines. In 1666 the stone railing of the famous Keshav Rai Temple of Mathura was removed by imperial orders. Three years later in 1669 a general order was issued for the destruction of all schools and temples of Hindus. "Orders were now sent to the governors of all the provinces that they should destroy the schools and temples of the infidels" and put an end to their educational activities as well as the practices of the religion of the Kafirs." (Sri Ram Sharma, *op. cit.*, p. 171).

Soon after the issuance of the order reports of the destruction of temples began to pour in from all parts of the Empire. A royal messenger was sent to demolish the temple of Malarina in May 1669. In August, 1669 the temple of Vishvanath at Benares was demolished and later a mosque was raised on the site of the demolished building. The temple of Gopinath in Benares too was destroyed at about the same time. An attempt was also made to destroy the Shaiva temple of Jangamwari in Benares, but the idea was somehow given up for the time being. Then came the turn of the temple Keshav Rai at Mathura built at a cost of 33 lacs of rupees by Rai Bir Singh Bundela in the reign of Jahangir. The temple was levelled to the ground and a mosque was ordered to be built on the site.

Similar destruction were ordered in the various Rajput States and Ajmer, Ujjain, Bengal and other provinces of the Empire. The

temples of the Deccan, however, escaped the wrath of the Emperor because of his delicate position in the south on account of the Maratha rising. In this hour of crisis, the Sikhs suffered equally with the Hindus for "Aurangzeb ordered the temples of the Sikhs to be destroyed and the Guru's agents (*masands*) for collecting the tithes and presents of the faithful to be expelled from the cities" (Khafi Khan, *Muntkhab-ut-Tawarikh*, p. 652).

In the sphere of taxation discrimination against the non-Muslims was reintroduced. Although *Jizya* was not reimposed till 1679, the pilgrimage tax was relieved. In 1665 it was ordered that the customs duties on the Muslims be fixed at 2.5 per cent and on the Hindus at 5 per cent. For gardens Hindus were required to pay the rate of 20 per cent, whereas for the Muslims the rate was 16.6 per cent. In 1669-70 it was ordered that in a lunar year the Muslims should pay 2.5% and the Hindus 5% on the price of their cattle.

Equally critical was the position of the non-Muslims in the matter of conversions. This had occurred in earlier periods as well. Islam being a missionary religion and the ruling Muslim community being in minority, great importance had always been attached to conversion work and many ingenious devices had been employed to attain this much-desired goal. However, the tempo was greatly intensified during the reign of Aurangzeb. There is certainly a log of exaggeration in the Hindu and Sikh traditions that the Emperor made it a habit of collecting a maund and a quarter of sacred Hindu *janeus* (sacred threads) every day, but that he took considerable personal interest in the matter is well borne out. The fact that a deputation of Pandits appeared in the *darbar* of Guru Tegh Bahadur in May, 1675 and complained of the Government conducting a wholesale campaign of conversion is a historical testimony too strong to be ignored.

### III

Having seen the Sikh spiritual thought that had been emerging before Guru Tegh Bahadur appeared on the scene, which he also inherited in all its richness, and the grave challenges posed by the triumph of Muslim orthodoxy under Aurangzeb, we now proceed to a brief study of Aurangzeb's attitude towards the Sikhs.

In the very first year of his reign, sometime in July or August

1658, an incident occurred which prejudiced his mind against the Sikhs greatly. Dara who was in flight, posted a large force under Daud Khan on the Beas river to ban the passage of the river by the pursuing troops of Aurangzeb. A similar but much weaker attempt had been made by him a little earlier to block the passage of Aurangzeb's troops across the Sutlej river. On one of these occasions, Guru Hari Rai, at the request of Dara no doubt, sent his small contingent of 2,200 troops for his help. But Dara faltered and the Guru withdrew his men immediately. It is difficult to say whether it was out of any bonds of personal friendship, or in view of the vital issues at stake that the Guru took this step, but perhaps both of these considerations might have been present in his mind.

Getting the necessary handle for interference in Sikh affairs the Emperor sent for the Guru, asking him to present himself at the Court and answer the complaints made to him against the Sikh teaching. The Guru sent his elder son, Ram Rai, for this purpose. Ram Rai answered all the points raised successfully, and apparently satisfied the Emperor. However, Guru Hari Rai was not happy about his manner of replying to the Emperor's inquiries and disowned him. In October, 1661 Guru Hari Rai breathed his last and his younger son, Harkrishan, succeeded him. Aurangzeb took advantage of the change in Sikh Guruship and summoned the child Guru to Delhi. The Guru accepted the invitation and proceeded to Delhi where he had a meeting with the Emperor. While staying in Delhi, Guru Harkrishan was attacked by small-pox and passed away in March, 1664. The Emperor's prejudices, however, continued as before and in 1665 when Guru Tegh Bahadur who had succeeded Guru Harkrishan, was staying at Dhamdhan (Bangar, now Haryana), he was suddenly arrested and brought to Delhi. After a month or so, the Guru was released on the intercession of Raja Ram Singh of Amber, who had developed deep devotion to the Guru. As if this was not enough, when Guru Tegh Bahadur was returning in 1670 from Assam, he was again taken into custody and kept in confinement for about two months and a half. Again he was released and he returned to the Punjab *via* Lakhnaur.

At this time the country, particularly North India, was in the grip of the terrific wave of consternation resulting from the general

orders issued by Aurangzeb in 1669 for the demolition of old Hindu temples and schools and the ban on new constructions for their religious and educational institutions. In the course of his homeward journey from East India he had acquired ample personal experience of the feelings of awe and dismay assailing the minds of non-Muslims. As mentioned earlier in Section II, Sikhs too were made targets of official wrath and their local missionaries called *masands* were expelled from several towns and their temples were demolished. Seeing all these dark happenings, the heart of Guru Tegh Bahadur went out in sympathy to the suffering humanity. He toured extensively in the Malwa and Bangar areas and moved among the people to brace up their crestfallen spirits. Thousands of them came to have his holy *darshan* and to receive his message of courage and hope embodied in the dictum, "Fear not, nor give fear to others." After nearly a year and half of travelling about in this region, the Guru finally repaired to his head quarters, Chak Nanaki, presently called Anandpur Sahib.

Here at Chak Nanaki on 25 May 1675 a band of sixteen chief Brahmins of Kashmir sought the audience of the great Guru and narrated their tale of woe in a manner which went straight to the heart. Deeply moved by the Brahmins' appeal for help, Guru Tegh Bahadur pondered awhile and then announced his decision that he would even sacrifice his life for the sake of the afflicted humanity. The Brahmins' appeal was indeed the immediate cause of his decision. Other wise, the Guru had long been aware of the grave situation that had been developing in the country for the last so many years.

One month and fourteen days after the visit of the Kashmiri Pandits, on 8th July, Guru Tegh Bahadur nominated his son, Gobind Das, as his successor and two days after departed in the direction of Delhi in company with three of his eminent Sikhs, Diwan Mati Das, Bhai Sati Das and Bhai Dyal Das. The Government was already aware of the Guru's views and sympathies and had even issued orders for his apprehension. Only two days after his departure from Chak Nanaki, on 12 July, 1675 he was arrested along with his three Sikhs at a village called Malikpur Ranghran, near Ropar. The arrests were made by Mirza Nur Muhammad Khan, Thanedar of

the Ropar Kotwali. From Ropar the prisoners were carried under heavy guard to Sirhind where they were confined till the arrival of definite instructions from the Emperor Aurangzeb, then encamped at Hasan Abdal on the north-west frontier. On the receipt of these instructions, the Guru and his followers were removed to Delhi. The Subahdar of Delhi who was deputising for the Emperor made three conditions to Guru Tegh Bahadur, namely : (i) to show a miracle, (ii) to embrace Islam, or (iii) to suffer death. He rejected the first two conditions and accepted the third. After five days of relentless tortures, on the fateful day of 11th November 1675, all the Sikh prisoners were executed. Dewan Mati Das was tied between two wooden planks and sawn alive from the top. Bhai Dyal Das was boiled alive in a cauldron of steaming hot water. The third, Bhai Sati Das was wrapped with cotton and then set on fire. The Guru's turn came last but on the same afternoon. The old conditions were repeated by the Qazi. They were again rejected outright and the Guru was beheaded in full gaze of a large public gathering.

#### IV

What was the noble cause for which Guru Tegh Bahadur made the supreme sacrifice? What motivated him to do so? These questions may best be answered in the light of the following factors :

- (a) The ideology he had inherited from his distinguished predecessors;
- (b) the circumstances which lead to the sacrifice;
- (c) the evidence recorded by his son Guru Gobind Singh in *Bichittar Natak*; and
- (d) the stage of historical development in which the society was found at the time.

(a) The ideology inherited by Guru Tegh Bahadur from his predecessor Gurus had been noticed earlier in Section I. It will be seen from there that this ideology was based on a clearly recognised sense of social commitment. Spiritual development founded on renunciation of worldly life and social responsibilities which go with it, accordingly, was considered of little merit and life lived away from society was not commended. In this system of thought there



was no room for *banbas* (living in jungles) and *sanyas* (hermitage) which were rated so highly prior to the origin of Sikhism. Living in the midst of society and facing all its challenges bravely was a hallmark of this mode of thinking of Guru Nanak and his successors. But the basis of all social life was to be *dharma*, morality. Whatever activities one may indulge in, always the governing principle of one's conduct should be the moral values of truth, social justice, compassion, love, contentment and other such elements which may be categorised under this head. These moral values, the Gurus emphasised, are not meant for any particular segment of life but are to constitute the very bed rock of total social living embracing all aspects of society. Therefore, anything which is in accordance with *dharma* was considered right and anything which is not, was held wrong. Similarly, anybody who helps the cause of *dharma* by regulating his life according to it and by defending it when necessary was rated a good man (*sant*, *sadh* or *bhagat*) and anybody who acts contrary to it, was reckoned as a wicked man (*dushta* or *sakta*). From this is naturally followed that wickedness or tyranny, whatever its form, is to be resisted, as after the execution of Guru Arjan Dev, his son and successor, Guru Hargobind held the use of arms for the noble fight against tyranny as valid and embarked upon a well-thought out programme of militarisation of his community. An important implication of the moral basis of social life, as stressed by the Gurus, was respect for other people's modes of living and thinking. All these modes contain a degree of merit, more or less and as such are to be tolerated, if not accepted. The concept of plural society in which different approaches used by people are recognised as legitimate was an essential characteristic of the emerging Sikh ideology and any attempt to impose unity upon the people unmindful of their varying beliefs and practices was considered a violation of *dharma* and an act of tyranny. Such an act of tyranny or breach of morality ought to be resisted as a moral obligation. To sum up, acceptance of social responsibility, recognition of *dharma* as the basis of society, compassion for the suffering humanity, concern for the good of mankind, resistance to evil, if necessary with force, and acceptance of a plural society with respect for other people's modes of living and thinking were the leading

highlights of the Sikh ideology which the Ninth Guru inherited from the previous Gurus. Since it is firmly accepted among the Sikhs that the all ten Gurus thought the same way, this ideology was no mere inheritance for the Ninth Guru, but was fully shared by him.

(b) Defeat of Dara and the triumph of Aurangzeb ushered in a new era in India. Dara's defeat marked the end of Akbar's liberalism and Aurangzeb's victory portended the ascendancy of Muslim orthodoxy and of the Sirhindi school of thought. True to his convictions, Aurangzeb was determined to convert India into a *Darul-Islam* which meant rejection of tolerance of other people's modes of life and thought, whatever their merit. Along with other non-Muslims, Sikhs too had their share of troubles and difficulties on account of the new regime. Aurangzeb's interference in Sikh affairs started from the time of Guru Hari Rai, and although all his doubts and queries were satisfied authoritatively, he did not refrain from his policy of harassment. Guru Tegh Bahadur himself was arrested and kept in confinement at Delhi first in 1665 and then in 1670. Even more important than these acts of harassment was the all-out campaign of religious intolerance on the part of the Emperor started in 1669. The woes of the suffering humanity had a deep impact upon the sensitive mind of Guru Tegh Bahadur and he, both at his headquarters, Chak Nanaki, and in course of his travels through the country, endeavoured to brace up the dispirited minds of the distressed people with his brave message about shedding all fear. The appeal of the Kashmiri Pandits for help, coming towards the end, played a decisive role in so far as it helped the Guru in making his final resolve on the issue. However, from the manner in which the circumstances shaped themselves and finally led to the crucial point, it may be clear that the issues involved were wider and deeper than the compassion for a few woe-stricken Brahmins of a distant area.

(c) Guru Gobind Singh's statement in his famous composition, *Bachittar Natak*, on the martyrdom of his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur, is the most authentic of all references to the event. The opening lines of the Tenth Guru's account read as follows :

ਤਿਲਕ ਜੰਝੁ ਰਾਖਾ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਤਾਕਾ । ਕੀਨੋ ਬਝੇ ਕਲੁ ਮਹਿ ਸਾਕਾ ।

ਸਾਧਨਿ ਹੇਤਿ ਇਤੀ ਜਿਨਿ ਕਰੀ । ਸੀਸੁ ਦੀਆ ਪਰ ਸੀ ਨ ਉਚਰੀ ।  
ਧਰਮ ਹੇਤ ਸਾਕਾ ਜਿਨਿ ਕੀਆ । ਸੀਸੁ ਦੀਆ ਪਰ ਸਿਰਰ ਨ ਦੀਆ ।

The Lord (Guru Tegh Bahadur) protected their paste-mark and  
sacred thread,

And performed a mighty deed in the Kali Age.

To protect the holy he spared no pains;

Gave his head but uttered not a groan.

For the protection of *dharmā*

He did this noble deed;

Gave up his head but not his ideal).

The reference in these lines to the protection of "*their* paste-mark and sacred thread" bears an obvious connection with the appeal of the Kashmiri Pandits to the Ninth Guru for succour. But what motivated the Guru to make the supreme sacrifice of his life was a higher ideal. This has been indicated by the Tenth Guru by saying that the *saka* (great event) was for the sake of *dharmā* (*dharmā hetu*).

What Guru Gobind Singh meant by the word *dharmā*, comes out very clearly from what the Guru says about his own mission, a few pages later, in the same work :

ਹਮ ਇਹ ਕਾਜ ਜਗਤ ਮੇ ਆਏ । ਧਰਮ ਹੇਤ ਗੁਰਦੇਵ ਪਠਾਏ ।  
ਜਹਾਂ ਤਹਾਂ ਤੁਮ ਧਰਮ ਬਿਥਾਰੇ । ਦੁਸਟ ਦੇਖੀਅਨ ਪਕਰਿ ਪਛਾਰੇ ।  
ਯਾਹੀ ਕਾਜ ਧਰਾ ਹਮ ਜਨਮੰ । ਸਮਝ ਲੇਹੁ ਸਾਧੂ ਸਭ ਮਨਮੰ ।  
ਧਰਮ ਚਲਾਵਨ ਸੰਤ ਉਥਾਰਨ । ਦੁਸਟ ਸਭਨ ਕੇ ਮੂਲ ਉਪਾਰਨ ।

(For this purpose was I born into the world;

For *dharmā's* sake I am sent here by the Lord:

Ordnained to promote *dharmā* here and there.

And to demolish the wicked and the evil-minded,

Let all good people understand that I am born for this purpose :

To promote *dharmā*, to protect the good, to extirpate the evil).

Here the connotation of the term *dharmā* is so clear that there can be no mistake about its meaning. It stands for the Moral Law which indicates truth, justice, righteousness and other moral values.

Now coming back to Guru Gobind Singh's account of his father's martyrdom, referred to earlier, it would be absolutely erroneous to understand his words *dharmā hetu* in any narrow sectarian sense. Such a restricted usage of the term would be not only unfair to the

high human ideals of the great Guru, but also foreign to the long-standing valuable Sikh tradition based on the social philosophy of *dharma* previously noticed in this essay.

(d) Whether we consider the long-standing Sikh ideology preached and practised since the time of Guru Nanak, or we take into account the circumstances that led to the martyrdom of the Ninth Guru, or the evidence of *Bachittar Natak*, it becomes clear that Guru Tegh Bahadur performed the mighty deed under the inspiration of high human ideals and values. Some of these may be mentioned as : (i) Compassion (*karuna*) for suffering humanity, for oppressed and exploited people; (ii) protection of *dharma* (Moral Law) recognised in Sikh tradition as the basis of human society; (iii) resistance to tyranny resulting from a breach of the norms of *dharma*; (iv) respect and tolerance for modes living and thinking other than one's own, what is today termed as the ideal of plural society. At the then stage of historical development of Indian society, there was very little consciousness of human rights as such. Only the right of private property, not however in its absolute sense, was definitely known and also to a large extent recognised by the State. The consciousness about the human rights of speech, movement, association, worship etc. is of comparatively recent origin and has appeared everywhere as part of the struggle for democratisation of the springs of political power. So far as our own country is concerned, such a consciousness first made its appearance in the 19th century and ever since then it has been growing in strength. Before our people began to grow influences, the fort in India was held by the concept of duty tracing down its roots in the remote past of India. However, duties and rights are closely interlinked and are the two sides of the same coin. What were regarded as duties then, are in the modern period, in the presence of a strong consciousness of human rights, looked upon as correlates of rights. It is in this sense that it may be and is valid to speak of the right of freedom of conscience or worship or some other human right in connection with the motivation with which Guru Tegh Bahadur elected to sacrifice his life.

# GURU TEGH BAHADUR'S LIFE AT BABA BAKALA AND ANANDPUR

KIRPAL SINGH

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## (a) LIFE AT BABA BAKALA

The village of Bakala is situated two and a half miles distant from the Beas Railway Station in the present district of Amritsar, about twelve miles north of Goindwal, the sacred town associated with the memories of Guru Amar Das, Guru Ram Das and Guru Arjan, the third, fourth and fifth Gurus of the Sikh faith. Being close to the riverside, the place according to a local tradition was known for the abundance of cranes (*bak, bagla* in Punjabi and Hindi).<sup>1</sup> The village settlement in the earliest phase was known as Bakwala (Crane's Home) and in course of time it came to be known as Bakala. When Guru Harkrishan, the eighth guru indicated his successor by uttering *Baba Bakala*, the place came to be known as Baba Bakala because Guru Tegh Bahadur was residing there.

Amongst the Sikh Gurus, Guru Hargobind (1606-1645), sixth in the line was the first to visit Bakala. There lived a Sikh named Mihra at Bakala. He invited the Guru to visit the place. He had built a new house and had taken a vow that he would not enter the mansion till it was hallowed by the Guru. The Guru acceded to his request and visited him.<sup>2</sup> According to Giani Gian Singh, Mata Ganga, mother of Guru Hargobind came to stay here when preparatoin for the marriage of her granddaughter Viro, datughter of Guru Hargobind<sup>3</sup> were being made. A battle with the Mughals was fought on the very day when this marriage was to be solemnised. The Guru evacuated from Amritsar and shifted to a nearby village, Jhabal, where the ceremony was performed. In case it was this occasion when Mata Ganga came to Bakala, she could not have lived at the place for long, as she died in 1628.<sup>4</sup>

There is another version also. According to Macauliffe, Mata Ganga came to Bakala just after the marriage of Baba Gurdittam which was solemnised in 1681 BK (1624 A.D.). In that case she lived here for four years. The following account has been given of her death at Bakala : "She said that she had no further desire on earth to gratify and would go to dwell at her husband's feet. She gave orders that since Guru Arjan's body was thrown into the Ravi near Lohore, so should hers be cast into the Beas. Then collecting her thoughts and repeating *Japji*, *Sukhmani* and *Anand* and concentrating her mind on Guru Nanak, she went to her final repose. Four Sikhs carried her body to the river. Guru Hargobind was present on this occasion. The place where she breathed her last has been marked by Gurudwara which is near the Khalsa High School."<sup>5</sup>

Guru Hargobind had very close connections with Bakala. Not only had he devout Sikhs like Mihra who lived there, but his father-in-law Bhai Hari Chand was also a resident of this place. Mata Nanaki was the daughter of Hari Chand and Hardevi. Nanaki was married to Guru Hargobind in 1613.<sup>6</sup> This marriage was solemnised at Amritsar, where Guru Tegh Bahadur was born in 1621. His birthplace is still preserved and a Gurudwara built there, which is known as Guru-ke-Mahal (near Guru Bazar). As was the custom the young Tegh Bahadur was married in early years to Gujari, daughter of Lal Chand. Lal Chand originally belonged to Lakhnaur near Ambala and had migrated to Kartarpur. He had two sons—Mehar Chand and Kirpal Chand. Mehar Chand continued to live at Lakhnaur.<sup>7</sup> As a boy Tegh Bahadur had learnt the art of warfare and had taken part in the battle of Kartarpur. This was the last battle fought by Guru Hargobind. So bravely did he fight in the battle and he so much impressed his father that he named him Tegh Bahadur (Hero of the Sword).<sup>8</sup>

When in 1644 Guru Hargobind breathed his last at Kiratpur, after nominating his grandson Hari Rai as his successor, Dhirmal, the elder brother of Hari Rai was very much upset. He began to mobilize his men to contest the succession.<sup>9</sup> Guru Tegh Bahadur was not interested in such things. He, therefore, left Kiratpur and chose Bakala for his residence.

It was Guru Tegh Bahadur who brought Bakala into prominence. After the demise of his father he shifted to Bakala along with his wife Gujari and his mother Nanaki. There he lived for about twenty years (1644 to 1664). During these years he prepared himself spiritually for the life that was to come. His mother Mata Nanaki was convinced that the prophecy of Guru Hargobind would come out true and her son would lead the Sikhs as Guru. Similarly, Baba<sup>10</sup> Tegh Bahadur appeared to be conscious about his future responsibilities. Therefore, his long stay at Bakala paved the way for the supreme sacrifice which he made in defence of the oppressed.

Baba Tegh Bahadur had grown to be a contemplative young man. From his very childhood he was of a retiring temperament. He was given to charity. Once on the occasion of the marriage of his eldest brother Baba Gurditta, his mother gave him a fine dress. Baba Tegh Bahadur gave those clothes away to a poor Brahmin who was very needy.<sup>11</sup> That indicated his cast of mind. Bakala being a calm and lonely place, suited to his temperament. Here he was engaged in long and deep meditation.

According to Guru Nanak, the ideal life is to live pure amidst the impurities of this world. It is to live like a lotus above the surface of water and still have roots in it. Sri Tegh Bahadur's life at Bakala amply demonstrated what Guru Nanak had said. Once a friend of his asked him, "Do you think the way to liberation is to abandon the world?" His reply was, "One should certainly abandon the world as created by the ego (*Haumain*). The world existing outside the sphere of the ego should not be abandoned and it should be served selflessly."<sup>12</sup>

Baba Tegh Bahadur had some sources of income which he mainly utilized in helping the poor. He was partly provided by the income from Hargobindpura, his ancestral town.<sup>13</sup> Besides this, he used to do work with his own hands out of the earnings of which he would give something in charity and thus support himself.<sup>14</sup>

Baba Tegh Bahadur followed a definite programme of daily routine. He had a meditation cellar made in his house in which he used to sit down for contemplation. At this particular spot a Gurudwara has been constructed which is known by the name of

*Bhora Sahib*. Here he sat for contemplating in the early hours and some portion of the night. Some hours were fixed for work and some for the visitors. He avoided crowds because he shunned publicity. Occasionally he went into the nearby forest where he would spend long hours alone with nature and with God.

At Bakala, Baba Tegh Bahadur was known to be a man of a quiet nature and temperament. At times some individuals did come to him to seek clarification on spiritual matters. Once a person came and enquired, "I have often seen that servants of God generally suffer in many ways. Why should the Lord allow his devotees to suffer?" The reply was, "How could one realise the real nature of the world through suffering? The Lord shows the true nature of the world through suffering, by which it can be realised. Therefore, a *Bhakta* welcomes pain. This alone makes the devotee turn his back on what is other than his Lord."<sup>15</sup>

Once a friend said to him. "Many of the descendants of the former Guru retain *Masands* (agents) who go and bring offerings for them and thus they are rich. If you too employ *Masands* they would bring plenty of offerings for you."

His reply "The Lord is called the friend of the poor and afflicted and therefore I value His compassion and friendship much more than the wealth of the three world."<sup>16</sup>

Once a devotee asked Baba Tegh Bahadur, "What is the cause of restlessness by which most people are troubled and become unhappy?" He replied, "The cause of restlessness and its subsequent unhappiness is the absence of contentment. Moved by greed and covetousness man wishes to get more than his rightful due and desires to acquire what should belong to others."<sup>17</sup>

After about twelve year's stay at Bakala, Baba Tegh Bahadur thought of going on a pilgrimage along with his family. First they visited Kiratpur, where his relations were living. When it got known to them that Baba Tegh Bahadur was visiting the holy places, Mata Hari (Suraj Mal's wife) and some of the prominent Sikhs joined the pilgrimage party. Prominent member of this party were Baba Tegh Bahadur, Mata Gujari, Mata Nanaki, Mata Hari and Kirpal Chand (Gujari's brother). They set out from Kiratpur in 1656. On their way they visited Rupar, Banur, Kurukshetra and Hardwar. According



to *Bhat Vahi Talauda* they were present at Hardwar on Baisakhi day—29th March, 1657. After that they left for Allahabad (Prayag) via Mathura and Agra. The party arrived at Benares on June 12, 1661. From Benares it went to Gaya. From Gaya, Jaita, a Sikh of Guru Hargobind took the party to Patna. The party stayed here for about two years.<sup>18</sup>

When news of the death of Guru Hari Rai reached Patna, Baba Tegh Bahadur decided to return to Punjab, According to *Bhat Vahi Purabi Dhakhani* Baba Tegh Bahadur along with his party reached Allahabad on his return journey on March 5, 1719 B. K. (January 3, 1663). When he was near Delhi, he learnt that late Guru Hari Rai's son Guru Harkrishan was at Delhi along with his mother Mata Sulakhani, and they were staying in Miraza Raja Ram Singh's mansion at Raisena. Baba Tegh Bahadur along with other members of the family went there and conveyed to them his deep sense of sorrow and sympathy in their bereavement. Soon after that he left for Bakala, from where he had commenced his journey.<sup>19</sup>

When Guru Harkrishan, the eighth Guru declared that the next Guru would be at Bakala Guru Tegh Bahadur had been leading a life of solitude and renunciation. A number of impostors preferred their claims to Guruship. Guru Teg Bahadur, however, continued to lead his life of meditation in his underground room. Ultimately he was discovered by Makhan Shah, a Sikh merchant, and was persuaded to come out and give solace to the Sikhs. This offended one of the nephews of Guru Teg Bahadur, Dhirmal, the eldest son of Baba Gurditta, the Guru's eldest brother. Dhirmal had some mistaken notions about *Guruship* and thought it was his right to become the ninth Guru. Soon he conspired with his men to kill the Guru and plunder his house. One night his men attacked the Guru's residence and began to plunder it. The Guru offered no resistance. Sihan, one of the trusted men of Dhirmal, fired a shot at the Guru which hit him near the shoulder. These men took away everything movable from the Guru's house. Next morning when the Sikhs came to know what had happened the previous night, they were furious. Without informing the Guru all of them attacked Dhirmal's house. They broke open the doors and brought back not only the property of the Guru but also that of Dhirmal including the original manuscript

of the holy Granth which was with him. They also got hold of Sihan who had shot at the Guru. When these Sikhs came to the Guru, he looked at Sihan who fell at his feet and begged to be forgiven. He said, "O true Guru, the protector of the poor, I seek thy refuge, I am indeed a sinner, but thou art the redeemer of sinners, therefore give me life by forgiving my sin." The Guru, seeing him so humble ordered that he should be released. The Guru asked the Sikhs to return all the property of Dhirmal including the holy Granth. The Sikhs remonstrated, but the Guru remained firm and ordered that all property taken from Dhirmal should be restored to him. Though the Sikhs carried out the wishes of the Guru and returned everything to Dhirmal, they were naturally feeling depressed. Then the Guru addressed them, "To exercise forgiveness is great act. "To exercise forgiveness is to give alms. Forgiveness is equal to ablutions at all places of pilgrimage. Forgiveness ensureth man's salvation; There is no virtue equal to forgiveness. Therefore generously exercise it; never abandon this virtue, but ever preserve it in your hearts. You are ordered in the *Granth Sahib* to lay up the wealth of the Name, so that it may accompany you in this world and in the next."<sup>20</sup>

After sometime Guru Tegh Bahadur wanted to visit the places associated with the lives of the previous Gurus. He visited Goindwal, Khadur and Tarn Taran.<sup>21</sup> Then he went to Amritsar. this was his first visit to the holy city after assuming Guruship. Amritsar was his birthplace and it had been the most important centre of Sikhism during the time of his father and grandfather—Guru Hargobind and Guru Arjan. On arriving there he took a dip in the sacred pool and then wished to go inside the Temple. The priests of Hari Mandir became apprehensive lest they be ousted by the Guru and deprived of their income. They therefore shut the door against him and did not allow him to enter the Temple. Instead of protesting against this behaviour, the Guru forgave the priests. He, however, remarked that those who were rotten within and affected by greed had entered the Temple from the lure of offerings. Then the Guru visited the village Valla on his way to Bakala. Since the Guru did not want to be a source of trouble to Dhirmal and his companions, he left Bakala for good and went to Kiratpur, the town founded by his father on the bank of the river Sutlej.

## (b) AT ANANDPUR

## FOUNDATION OF THE TOWN

When Guru Tegh Bahadur was living at Kiratpur he came to know that the ruler of Kahlur (Bilaspur), Dip Chand had died.<sup>22</sup> Kiratpur was situated just on the border of the state of Kahlur and hence the people living there would have known the political developments in the neighbouring State. Dip Chand's death was a serious loss to the state, as his son Bhim Chand was a boy of only fourteen years. Nanak Chand, brother of the late Raja was appointed vizier and he proved tyrannical and imprisoned all the old officers of the State. The widow of Raja Dip Chand, Rani Champa Devi was greatly upset by these developments.<sup>23</sup> In order to get solace and spiritual guidance she invited Guru Tegh Bahadur to her place. The Guru accepted her invitation and went there with a party. The Guru remained there a guest for three days.<sup>24</sup> According to the *Bhat Vahi* the Guru was granted three villages in Kahlur state for founding a new town. The names of the villages given there were Lodipur, Miyanpur and Sahoda. According to the Sikh sources, two villages were purchased by the Guru. The names of these villages were Makhawal and Mathaur. These two Muslim villages were founded by two brother—Makhe Khan and Mate Khan.<sup>25</sup> In the District Gazetteer of Hoshiarpur (1904) it has been stated Guru Tegh Bahadur "Purchased land from the Raja of Bilaspur who then held *taluka* Jandbari." The legendary account of the place as given in the Gazetteer is as follows : "On the site of Anandpur there lived a cruel demon called Makho who had occupied the place for 700 years before Tegh Bahadur came. Tegh Bahadur determined to expel the demon, but the latter promised to depart of his own accord only asking a favour that his name might be associated with the name of the place, where he had lived so long. The Guru replied that the Sodhis (and Sikhs) would call the place Anandpur, but the hillmen and others would call it Makhawal."<sup>26</sup>

Guru Tegh Bahadur would have had many considerations in selecting the site for the foundation of his new town. It was picturesquely situated near the foot of the hills, the celebrated peak of Naina Devi rose over it at the distance of eight miles. It was on the bank of the river Sutlej. Perhaps one of the considerations was

that it was only five miles from Kiratpur, the town founded by his father where the family of his elder brother, Suraj Mal, and other relations were living. He had cordial relations with the sons of his elder brother Suraj Mal, who held the Guru in high esteem.<sup>27</sup>

After returning from visiting the widow of Raja Dip Chand, Guru Tegh Bahadur called Dewan Dargah Mal to Kiratpur and asked him to determine the exact site where the house of the Guru was to be built. Dewan Dargah Mal had been serving the household of the Guru for long. He was the Dewan of Guru Harkrishan also. It was he who had introduced his nephews—Mati Das and Sati Das who faithfully served the ninth Guru. According to *Bhat Vahi Multani Sindhi*, Har 21, 1722 B. D. Viz June 19, 1665 was fixed for foundation ceremony. The foundation was laid on the mound of the old village of Makhawal. This mound was then in the area of village Sahota. The ceremony was performed by Baba Gurditta Randhawa, son of Baba Buddha and the new *Basti* was named Chak Nanaki after the Guru's mother.<sup>28</sup> This humble beginning served as the nucleus for the important centre of Anandpur which subsequently grew around it.

The construction of three major buildings was first undertaken—the temple, the rest-house and the Guru's residence. All prominent Sikhs were asked to build their houses there. Traders and shopkeepers were invited there. When the houses were being built, a Muslim saint from Ropar came there on his way to capital of the state. After seeing the new buildings being erected he enquired what type of colony was being built there and who was building it? One of the architects replied that Guru Tegh Bahadur was building the city as his religious capital. According to *Suraj Parkash* the Pir replied, "What type of *Pir* is he who is building such large mansions for himself in this transitory world? If he is so sadly immersed in amassing wealth and property, how can he liberate his disciples from worldly desires and how can he help them to cross this fearsome ocean of life?" When the Guru heard these remarks he invited the *Pir* to his side and asked him, "May I know to what school of thought you belong?" The *Pir* respectfully replied, "I am Sufi Sayyed of Ropar where I have my *Khanqa*. You are a spiritual leader of great fame, but how do you reconcile the love of God and

spiritual life with building such costly earthly mansions and wasting your time in secular interests and pursuits." Guru Tegh Bahadur replied, "The world is transient and that indeed is the first lesson I teach. No one should live in this world thinking it to be lasting and permanent. Only foolish and ignorant people let their heart and soul sink into lust for wealth, power and pleasures of the senses. But this very world and human society are the abode of truth. In the human society abides and shines the light of God and no one who runs away from society can truly know God and participate in this divine play. The essence of all faiths leading to God and Truth is "charity and humanity" which can best be practised in the social life of the house holder."<sup>29</sup> After hearing this teaching, the *Pir* was satisfied, bowed to the Guru and went his way.

In course of time there developed two distinct localities at the place where the Guru had founded the town. Till recent times there names were preserved in the revenue record—viz Chak Nanaki and Anandpur.<sup>30</sup> The portion of the town which was extended towards the south-east was named Anandpur.

The town of Chak Nanaki was the main base of the activities of Guru Tegh Bahadur during the last decade of his life. It was here that the *masands* from various regions visited the Guru, brought for him tithes and rare articles for his use. Many Sikhs offered the Guru copies of *Japji*, *Sukhmani* and other Sikh scriptures.<sup>31</sup> It was from here the Guru undertook his eastern travels in 1665 after leaving some trusted Sikhs to supervise the construction work here.

Guru Tegh Bahadur returned to Chak Nanaki in 1672. As the news of the Guru's arrival spread around, people flocked in large numbers to have a glimpse of his personality and to seek his blessings.

In 1673 the Guru again decided to go on a tour of Malwa (present districts of Ludhiana, Ferozepur, Bhatinda, Patiala and Sangrur) and the *Bangar* areas (modern Haryana). This time the Guru was accompanied by Mata Gujari and Guru Gobind Singh, then a child. The Guru returned from this tour in 1675 A.D.<sup>32</sup>

Guru Gobind Singh came to Anandpur when he was a small child. Here he received his early education. Tutors were appointed to teach him Sanskrit and Persian. According to Khazan Singh, the

Ninth Guru appointed competent persons to teach him the military art. Guru Gobind Singh as a child proved that his disposition was that of a brave hero. Soon the Sikhs began to present him toy arms.<sup>33</sup>

It was here at Chak Nanaki that a deputation of Kashmiri Brahmins waited upon Guru Tegh Bahadur and told him of their miserable plight and persecution. The leader of the deputation was Kirpa Ram, a Kashmiri Datt Brahmin from Mattan near modern Pahalgam. He was a descendant of Brahmin from Mattan near modern Pahalgam. He was a descendant of Brahm Das who had met Guru Nanak. He had known the Ninth Guru and was convinced that the Guru could help them to tide over the crisis which had been created by the new ordinance of Aurangzeb. Aurangzeb had reversed the policy of Akbar and had ordered large-scale conversions and destructions of Hindu temples. What happened after listening to the woeful tale of the Brahmins of Kashmir has been stated by Macauliffe : "The Guru sat silent and for sometimes pondered at their request. His darling boy Gobind was then playing in the hall and on seeing his father sad and thoughtful went to him. His father spoke not, but tenderly embraced him. The boy said, 'Father dear, why sittest thou silent today? Why not regard me with thy usual look of affection? What offence have I committed that thou wilt not look cheerfully on me? The Guru taking compassion on his dear child seated him near him and said, 'My son, thou knowest nothing yet. Thou art still a child. This matter on which Kashmiris have come is of vital importance. The world is grieved by the oppression of Turks. No brave man is now to be found who is willing to sacrifice his life.' The child replied : 'For this purpose who is more worthy than thou who art at once generous and brave.'<sup>34</sup> Consequently the Guru decided to lay down his life for the sake of the oppressed people. He was martyred on November 11, 1675. This occurred in the Chandni Chowk of Delhi. His mutilated body was left unattended and none dared claim it for fear of Aurangzeb. In the evening there came a storm which provided Jaita, a Sikh of humblest caste called Ranghretta, an opportunity to escape with the Guru's revered head. The head was brought to Anandpur where the Guru's family was living. It was cremated at Anandpur where a shrine has been erected to perpetuate its memory.

## 70 GURU TEGH BAHADUR : BACKGROUND AND SUPREME SACRIFICE

At Anandpur, the following Gurudwaras are associated with the life of Guru Tegh Bahadur :

### 1. GURUDWARA GURU-KE-MAHAL

Originally it was the home of Guru Tegh Bahadur, which was built in 1665 when the town was founded. Subsequently Guru Gobind Singh lived there and his sons were born and brought up there.

### 2. GURUDWARA SIS GANJ

After the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur his head was brought to Anandpur. It was at this spot that the head was cremated by his son Guru Gobind Singh. On the actual site of cremation a platform has been raised.

### 3. GURUDWARA BHORA SAHIB

This is situated on the eastern side of Anandpur near the Gurudwara Guru-ke-Mahal. There is an underground cell eight feet deep where Guru Tegh Bahadur used to sit for meditation.

### 4. GURUDWARA MANJI SAHIB

This is situated near Gurudwara Guru-Ke-Mahal. It was here that Guru Tegh Bahadur used to address the congregations. It was here also that the group of Brahmins of Kashmir came and met the Guru to seek his aid in their plight.

## FOOTNOTES

1. Even now cranes are common in this region. The common crane is met with in the early winter, vide *Amritsar District Gazetteer* (1947), p. 15.
2. *Mahan Kosh*, Kahn Singh of Nabha.
3. *Tawarikh Guru Khalsa*, Giani Gian Singh, Languages Department, Patiala, pp. 456-57.
4. *Mahankosh* (op.cit..)
5. *Gurdwaray Darshn*, Giani Thakar Singh, Amritsar (1923), page 191. Macauliffe. *Sikh Religion*, Vol. IV, page 69.
6. *Tawarikh Guru Khalsa*, page 414, Kesar Singh Chibbar, *bansawali Nama Parkh*, Vol. II, 1972/Chandigarh, page 81.
7. For more details about Gurudwara Lakhnaur vide my series of articles on *Gurdwara Lakhnaur* in *Khalsa Advocate*, Amritsar, June 26 to September 4, 1967.
8. *Guru Tegh Bahadur--Prophet and Marartyr*, Dr Tarlochan Singh, Delhi page 80.
9. *Twarikh Guru Khalsa*, p. 64.
10. Gurus' sons were given the honorific 'Baba' (father, grandfather).
11. *Ibid*, p. 640.
12. *Guru Tegh Bahadur*—Raja Sir Daljit Singh, p. 9.

13. *Guru Tegh Bahadur—Prophet and Martyr*, p. 93.
14. *Guru Tegh Bahadur*—Raja Sir Daljit Singh, p. 9.
15. *Ibid*, p. 9-10.
16. *Ibid*, p. 11.
17. *Ibid*, pp. 11-12.
18. *Bansawali Namah*. Kesar Singh, p. 86.
19. For this whole account I have depended on *Bhat Vahis* and Dr Fauja Singh and Talib's book *Guru Tegh Bahadur* p. 19-20.
20. Macauliffe. *Sikh Religion*, vol. IV, p. 335.
21. *Twarikh Guru Khalsa*. p. 646.
22. According to the author of *Punjab Hill States*, Vol. II. p. 502. Raja Dip Chand died in 1667. But according to *Bhat Vahi Purbi Dakhani*, he died in 1722 B.K. viz 1665 A.D. The latter appears to be more probable.
23. *Bhat Vahi* writes as Champa Devi and *Punjab Hill States*. Vol. II. writes her name to be Jala Devi.
24. *Bhat Vahi Purbi Dakhani*, quoted in *Guru Tegh Bahadur—Martyr and Teacher*. Fauja Singh and Gurbachan Singh Talib, p.39.
25. *Hoshiarpur District Gazetteer* (1904), p. 213.
26. *Gurpurb Nirnay*. (Punjabi). Karam Singh, patiala, p. 164.
27. *Ibid*, p. 164.
28. *The Punjab Past and Present*, April 1975, p. 167.
29. *Guru Tegh Bahadur - Prophet and Martyr*, p. 179.
30. *Shabid Bilas* edited by Giani Garja Singh (Punjabi) Ludhiana, p. 59, (footnote).
31. *Guru Tegh Bahadur - Prophet and Martyr*, p. 177-78.
32. *Guru Tegh Bahadur - Martyr and Teacher*, pp. 77, 78 and 91.
33. *History and Philosophy of Sikhs*, Khazan Singh. Part 1, p. 163.
34. Macauliffe. *Sikh Religion*, vol. IV, p. 371-72.



## HISTORY OF GURDWARA SIS-GANJ, DELHI

MAHINDER SINGH

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Situated in the Chandni Chowk, Delhi, Gurudwara Sis Ganj is built at the hallowed spot where Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Sikh Guru, was beheaded on the 11th of November, 1675, under orders of the contemporary Mughal Emperor, Aurangzeb. Guru Tegh Bahadur, who was born on the 1st April, 1621, occupied the *Gurugaddi* on the 30th of March, 1664. These were the days when the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb had come out with all the resources at his command to terrorise his non-Muslim subjects with a view to converting them to Islam and thus fulfilling his ambition of turning this 'country of the infidels' into the 'realm of Islam'. Guru Tegh Bahadur, who inherited his predecessors' belief in the equality of mankind and freedom from oppression both religious and political, and fearlessly preached his message of fearlessness, naturally provided a focal point for the persecuted Hindu masses and stood in the way of the implementation of the religious policy of Aurangzeb.

Aurangzeb, who occupied the Mughal throne in July, 1658, after killing his brothers and imprisoning his father, gave first evidence of his religious fanaticism in the very year of his coronation (June, 1659) by ordering that while the existing Hindu temples were not to be destroyed, no new temples were to be allowed to come up.<sup>1</sup> But this early policy of moderation was gradually given up when in 1669 he issued a general order desiring the Governors of all his provinces "to demolish the schools and temples of the infidels and strongly put down their teachings and religious practices."<sup>2</sup> His orders to the Governor of Orissa are indicative of the urgency with which he wanted to implement his religious policy. "Every idol house built during the last 10 or 12 years, whether with brick or clay, should be demolished without delay and the Governors should not allow the

cursed Hindus and despicable infidels to repair their old temples."<sup>3</sup>

In consequences of the imperial policy the attacks on the Hindu temples began mounting after 1672 when orders were issued to the local officers in every *Pargana* for the destruction of the temples in their respective areas. Aurangzeb's fanaticism did not distinguish between the Hindu temples and the Sikh Gurudwaras. In one of his orders Aurangzeb is said to have directed the temples of the Sikhs to be destroyed and the Guru's agents for collecting *daswandh* and presents of the faithful to be expelled from the cities.<sup>4</sup> According to *Ahkam-i-Alamgiri*, "in compliance with the orders of the Emperor, and with the consent of the local Qazi, the Sikh Gurudwara in the town of Buriya in the paraganah of Khaizrabad of the Sarkar of Sirhind, had been demolished and a mosque had been raised on its site."<sup>5</sup>

On learning about these developments Guru Tegh Bahadur felt that he should not stay away from the Punjab when the people there were suffering under the iniquities of the Government. He, therefore, rushed to the Punjab in 1671, leaving his family at Patna, and reached Anandpur in early 1672. He was anxious to do something which would shame the rulers into reason and rouse the people out of their lethargy.<sup>6</sup> In order to preach his message of 'fearlessness' the Guru undertook an extensive tour of the Malwa region and south-eastern Punjab, exhorting the terrorstricken masses to give up all fear and to face tyranny with resolute determination. The Guru received a warm welcome wherever he went and his following greatly increased. On these journeys the Guru moved freely and did not hesitate to mix up with the Muslim devotees like Saif Khan, Muhamad Bakhsh, Bhikhan Shah and others opposed to Aurangzeb's policy of religious persecution.

The Brahmins of Kashmir, who were being ruthlessly persecuted by the new Governor of the Valley, Iftikhar Khan, thought of calling upon Guru Tegh Bahadur who had by now come to be known as the champion of the oppressed and the downtrodden. Accordingly a deputation, with Kirpa Ram Dutt as their chief spokesman, called upon Guru Tegh Bahadur at Anandpur in May, 1675, with a view to seeking his personal intervention in order to save them from further persecutions at the hands of the Governor

of their province.<sup>7</sup>The Guru is said to have told them to stick to their faith with courage and thus inspire others to follow their example. According to the Sikh traditions on being asked as to what they should do if on return they were again forced by the Muslim Governor to accept Islam, The Guru is said to have told them that they should go over to Delhi and represent to the Emperor that if he could convert Guru Tegh Bahadur, all other people including the Brahmins of Kashmir, would then voluntarily embrace Islam.<sup>8</sup>

According to popular versions the Brahmins, on the advice of the Guru went to Nawab "Zalim Khan", the Governor of Lahore, and presented to him their petition which had been dictated to them by the Guru. The Governor gladly endorsed it and gave it back to them for presenting it to the Emperor at Delhi. He gave them all necessary help for reaching there safely. They went and presented the petition to Aurangzeb. The Emperor was highly gratified to read it, as he thought that the mere conversion of one man would automatically accomplish his design. He called the Qazis and Maulvis in a Durbar and joyfully announced the contents of the petition. It is said that all received the tidings with acclamation. He told the Pandits that he cheerfully accepted the condition laid and sent them back to Kashmir making suitable arrangements for their return journey. At the same time he wrote to Iftikhar Khan, the Governor of Kashmir, to suspend the forcible conversions, for he was now satisfied that no more force was needed to implement his policy of conversion of the Hindus to Islam.

Guru Tegh Bahadur's advice to the Kashmiri Brahmins, his associations with people opposed to Aurangzeb's religious policy and his fearlessly preaching his message of fearless and the fact of exaggerated reports about the activities of the Guru by the local Muslim officials, provided the advisors of Aurangzeb with a good opportunity to support their argument that Guru Tegh Bahadur stood in the way of the implementation of his religious policy. Orders were accordingly issued for the arrest of the Guru and his companions. The Guru, who was arrested along with Bhai Mati Das, Sati Das and Dayal Das, was taken to Delhi and kept in confinement in a deserted building near the Jama Masjid.

The Sikh tradition mentions that the Emperor and his men tried

to persuade the Guru while in prison to accept Islam and also mention a dialogue between the two. A recent booklet on the subject gives the following account of the Guru's discourse with Aurangzeb.

Aurangzeb was mighty pleased to learn that Guru Tegh Bahadur had been arrested and brought to Delhi. He called the Guru to his presence and addressed him thus : "Hinduism is a false religion. It allows idol worship, it does not teach *Tauhid* (unicity). Therefore, Hindus will be punished in hell. I pity them and therefore I wish that all should be converted to Islam. It is Allah's wish that there should be only one religion, Islam. If the Hindus accept Islam they will be rewarded with wealth, high offices and land grants. In that case you will be able to retain your leadership, have many more followers and be a renowned priest of Islam which is the only true religion on earth. O Guru, accept my invitation to embrace Islam and you shall get whatever your heart's desire may be."

At this Guru Tegh Bahadur replied, "O Emperor, thou and I and all people are God's and so are all the religions which acknowledge God. If it were His Will that there should be only one religion in the world he would not have allowed other religion to exist side by side at the same time. There is none to dispute His Will. Is there not more than one road leading to Delhi, and more than one gate to enter the capital? O, Emperor you are merely a labourer and not a true servant of the Lord. You work for your selfish ends, worldly achievements, establishment of your rule, to enslave human beings to your will. And all this you wish to do in the name of religion. Even if you perform namaz, fasting, read the Quran and other things enjoined by the law, yet you are a labourer, for you do all this for reward, to secure a place in paradise. Islam is resignation to the Will of the God, and not to wish worldly things here and heaven after death."

Aurangzeb then said, "Remember, I am only obeying God's orders in converting all to Islam."

To this Guru Tegh Bahadur replied, "I know not whether you imagine that you are carrying out God's command or merely wish to hide the crimes committed to satisfy your greed and desire for power under the cloak of religion. Remember, conversion is not carried out by force or threats or by bribes. Conversion is a thing

that depends on the faith of the heart. Why did not the uncle of the Prophet become a convert to Islam? You say your religion does not allow idol worship in any form. Then where is the justification to enjoin a kind of worship to be offered to the black stone of Kaaba? O, King, you speak of unicity but you do not know what that means. All the religion believe in the unicity of God. The meaning of unicity does not end here. Remember when the self is eliminated that duality can disappear. Thus alone can one believe in *Tauhid*."

This convinced Aurangzeb that he could not win by discussion or cajolery. All his persuasive means had failed to convert the Guru to Islam. He now ordered the Guru to be removed to the Kotwali in Chandni Chowk and subject to all forms of barbarous torture. But even this failed to shake him from his resolve to lay down his life in the cause of freedom of conscience.

During another interview with Aurangzeb the Guru replied to him :

"Here O' Aurangzeb, who are you and what power have you to convert the whole world to Islam? Nay even a single man? Your own crimes which are known throughout the country are forcing you to commit further tyrannies so that cup of your sins may overflow, and the destruction of your power and dynasty be accomplished. you have been blinded by the intoxication of pride and power, but remember, the holy Guru Nanak has said, "Death laugheth over man's head, but the brute knoweth it not'. O' King, do not forget that you too shall assuredly die. He who is proud shall in due course be extirpated."

However, the above-quoted meeting between the Emperor and the Guru and the subsequent dialogue becomes untenable in the light of historical facts. The Emperor, who left Delhi on the 7th of April, 1674, for Hasan Abdal to be nearer to the scene of the punitive action against the Afghans, returned to the capital only on the 27th of March, 1676, four months after the execution of the Guru in November, 1675.<sup>10</sup> Dr Ganda Singh, in his recent article on Guru Tegh Bahadur published in *Punjab Past and Present* (April, 1975), writes that it was at Hasan Abdal that the Emperor received the reports about the Guru's talk with the Kashmiri Pandits and other accusations against him, and accordingly issued orders for his

arrest. But this difference of opinion and the controversy as to whether there was a meeting between the Guru and the Emperor does not in any way belittle the significance of this unique martyrdom of the Guru.

On finding that no amount of argument, worldly allurements or threats and tortures could persuade the Guru to renounce his own faith the Mughal officials thought of torturing his companions to death and thus setting deterrent example before the Guru. First of all Bhai Mati Das was cut in twain with a saw. He was bound between two pillars at the site to the present fountain in Chandni Chowk, renamed as Bhai Mati Das Chowk, opposite the Sis-Ganj, and a saw was applied to his head which steadily cut him in two. When blood first gushed out of his head, he washed his face with it and laughed. The executioner was aghast and asked the reason. Bhai Mati Das replied, "If I had denounced my religion I would have invited infamy. I have stood fast to my religion on account of devotion of God. Therefore, being successful, I am going to God with a blessed face. And that is the reason for my laughter." Bhai Dayal Das, another companion of the Guru was then put in a cauldron of boiling water (or oil) and Bhai Sati Das was mercilessly cut to pieces.

In spite of all these efforts to terrify the Guru into submission, he remained firm in his conviction. When pressed again to accept Islam or to work a miracle he firmly refused to do anything of the kind. The fear of death could not terrify him, and maintaining perfect equanimity he is said to have replied in the same terms as he had done before and added that, "the glory of the rule which had adopted tyranny as its creed is now at an end. He who is forcibly depriving men of their faith is without any sense of justice and equity. It is my duty to offer my life willingly for the sake of suffering humanity. Such a sacrifice alone, in which there is no shade of hate or retaliation can deliver the innocent masses from oppression and dig up the roots of such a rule and throw it into the salty ocean, since that what is dissolved in salt never revives."<sup>12</sup> This reply was conveyed to the Emperor.

Towards the afternoon one Syed Adam Shah came with a warrant for the execution of the Guru and was accompanied by

Maulvis and some of the nobles of the court. Adam Shah, who was strongly moved, begged the Guru not to lose his life but to embrace Islam. The Guru, in perfect poise of mind replied, "You proceed with your duty. I have to perform mine. My faith is dearer and more valuable than a hundred empires like the one which Aurangzeb possesses. There cannot be greater satisfaction than to leave this body, impermanent and perishable as it is, without any remorse or tinge of hate or sin."<sup>13</sup>

The Guru was taken out of the cage. He made his ablutions at the well nearby. There appeared a large crowd to witness the execution. Then the Guru leaving the well, sat on a platform under a *pipal* tree opposite the Sunehri Mosque. Taking his seat there he recited the *japji* and asked the executioner to lift his sword and strike off his neck when he bowed his head in *samadhi*. It was on the cold morning of 11th November, 1675, that the executioner Jalal-ud-Din of Samana beheaded the Guru under the pipal tree where stands at present the magnificent building of Gurudwara Sis-Ganj.<sup>14</sup>

According to the popular guides to the Sikh shrines in Delhi, the sacred place of the Guru's martyrdom passed into oblivion till the rise of the Sikh Confederacies (Misals), when one of the Sikh Misaldars, Baghel Singh, after his occupation of parts of Delhi, secured a promise from the Emperor Shah Alam II to build a Gurudwara there.<sup>15</sup> But the discovery by the present author of an old letter dated 21st November, 1869, from Raja Raghubir Singh of Jind to the Commissioner of the Delhi Division, Delhi, tracing the history of the Gurudwara was built in the reign of Aurang Shah, the king of Delhi on the land given by various persons for its erection. The letter mentions that Sardar Baghel Singh only attached some more land to the existing Gurudwara and also rejects the Muslims contention that the Gurudwara was built over the mosque destroyed by Sardar Baghel Singh and his men. In support of his contention the Raja of Jind points out in his letter that in reality there was no mosque there, but only a *Bala Khana* and that during the time of Mr. Seton, the Resident of Delhi, the whole building was pulled down in order to reflow the canal. It is also pointed out that in lieu of the buildings demolished from the banks of the canals the

concerned parties were given alternative lands.

However, soon after the retirement of Baghel Singh and his men from Delhi the Muslims of the area, who were feeling unhappy over the construction of the Gurudwara at the site of the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur and Emperor Shah Alam II accepting this arrangement, demolished the Sikh temple and built a mosque there. As the Sikh Misaldars had become busy first in meeting the challenge from the Abdali invaders and later in carving out their own independent principalities, they could not pay any attention to their historic places in Delhi. It was only during the days of Raja Sarup Singh of Jind that the sacred places of the Guru's martyrdom again attracted the attention of the Sikhs. Realizing the historic significance of the place, the Raja of Jind purchased from a local Khatri a part of the land adjacent to the mosque built by the Muslims and got a Gurudwara built on the spot. In 1865, Sir John Lawrence, the Viceroy of India, visited the place, accompanied by the Commissioner of Delhi and Raja Sarup Singh of Jind and granted some part of the ground out of the Kotwali land to be included in the Gurudwara premises. A little later the site of the four shops adjacent to the Gurudwara was given to the Raja of Jind by the local authorities in lieu of his two houses in Delhi which had been destroyed during the days of the Mutiny of 1857.<sup>17</sup> The site of these shops was passed, by the Raja on to the Gurudwara. The Raja also gave, in perpetuity the income from his *Biswadaree* estate of Raisena, for the maintenance of the Gurudwara and the regular free kitchen.

The rebuilding of the Gurudwara and the help given by the local authorities seem to have caused some unhappiness among a few Muslims of the area who encouraged Maula Bux and a Muslim lady named Beejan to represent to the local authorities that the site of the shops given to the Raja of Jind was their property and should therefore be restored to them. As the local court did not entertain their claims on the plea that since the property was in military occupation it had no right to over-rule the decisions of the military tribunals, they took the matter to the Supreme Court at Calcutta, which issued a decree in their favour. Consequently the Gurudwara and the land attached thereto was again taken possession of by the Muslims who demolished the Gurudwara building and built a mosque



there. The Raja of Jind took the matter to the Privy Council and won the case and got the Gurudwara building erected after demolishing the mosque, which building remained as such along with the historical *pipal* tree under which the Guru was beheaded, till 1930 when it was demolished and the tree cut down by the Sikhs themselves in order to build a new and more imposing building which stands there since.

From the time of its building till the time of the Akali Movement for Gurudwara Reform in the Punjab (1920-25), Sis-Ganj and other historic Gurudwaras in Delhi remained under the control of the hereditary *Mahants* and *Pujaris*. As was the case with other important Sikh shrines in the Punjab, the historic Gurudwaras of Delhi were also being used by their hereditary priests for singing praises of the 'glorious role' of the British and for offering prayers for well-being of the Viceroy and other British officials. In December, 1912, the *Pujaris* of the Gurudwara Sis-Ganj at the instance of the Raja of Faridkot, offered prayers for the speedy recovery of the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge. They also arranged for continuous reading of the *Adi Granth* and feeding of the poor till the complete recovery of the Viceroy.<sup>18</sup>

However, in 1914, hardly two years after the Sikhs of Delhi had joined in the public prayers for the recovery of the Viceroy, an incident occurred which not only changed the British attitude towards the Sikhs but also set afoot the beginning of the Akali struggle for Gurudwara reform. The Government of India, after the transfer of the capital from Calcutta to Delhi in 1911, demolished the outer wall of the Gurudwara Rikab-Ganj in order to build a straight road to the Viceregal Lodge. This action of the government spread a wave of resentment in the Sikh community in Delhi and outside and unleashed dynamic forces in Sikhism. For the first time in their history the Sikhs of Delhi gave proof of their organised strength when they took out a huge procession in Delhi on the eve of the birth anniversary of Guru Gobind Singh in December, 1914. A big Diwan was held at Gurudwara Sis-Ganj, Delhi, where the sacrilege in Gurudwara Rikab-Ganj was condemned in the most unequivocal terms and the Chief Khalsa Diwan was requested to take up the matter with the authorities. Harchand Singh, a militant Sikh leader,

tried to discuss the issue of the Rikab-Ganj in the meeting of the Sikh Educational Conference held at Jullundur in April, 1914. But as the moderate leadership of the Chief Khalsa Diwan and the Sikh Educational Conference failed to take a strong stand to get the demolished wall repaired, the militant Sikh leaders like Harchand Singh, Sardul Singh Caveeshar, Master Tara Singh and Master Mota Singh, raised a *Shahidi Jatha* which was to go to Delhi in defiance of the official orders and repair the demolished wall. The threatened action of the Sikh extremists made the Government realize the folly of its action and the authorities got the demolished wall repaired before the march of the *Shahidi Jatha* to Delhi.<sup>19</sup>

Sikh agitation over Rikab-Ganj brought the historic shrines and the Sikh community of Delhi to the forefront of the movement of Gurudwara reform and indirectly paved the way for the organised management of the Sikh shrines in Delhi, As pointed out earlier, Gurudwara Sis-Ganj and other shrines in Delhi, were so far under the exclusive control of the hereditary Mahants. It was during their agitation over the Rikab-Ganj affair that the Sikh community of Delhi in a meeting in May, 1914, passed various resolutions, one of them demanding proper management for the Sikh shrines at Delhi. In order to settle the dispute over the Rikab-Ganj and other issues a Khalsa Gurudwara Committee, Delhi, was formed consisting of seven members to be elected as follows :

1. Four members from Delhi Province to be elected by Delhi Khalsa Sangat.
2. Three members to be elected or nominated as under :
  - (a) One member to be returned by Sri Darbar Sahib (Amritsar) and the four *Takhats*, Akal Bunga Sahib (Amritsar), Sri Kes Garj Sahib (Anandpur), Patna Sahib (Patna) and Hazoor Sahib Nander (Deccan);
  - (b) One member to be nominated by the Darbars of Patiala, Jind, Nabha, Kapurthala and Faridkot States;
  - (c) One member to be elected by the Khalsa Diwan and Singh Sabhas affiliated to the Chief Khalsa Diwan.<sup>20</sup>

But as the above Committee was dominated by the Chief Khalsa Diwan and other loyalists from the Sikh states, the Sikhs of Delhi protested that they had not been given any representations.

Sardar Bahadur Boota Singh complained that "neither the Gurudwara of Delhi nor the old resident Sikhs of Delhi were represented and so this committee stood self condemned."<sup>21</sup>

The Sikh agitation over the Rikab-Ganj affair, a product of the growing religious and political awakening and consequent unrest among the Sikhs, provided a platform for the nationalist elements in the community. It also brought the nationalist and militant leadership to the forefront and indirectly rejected the pro-British landed interests in the Sikh community. The incident also marked the beginning of the powerful Akali Movement in the twenties of the twentieth century and brought the Sikhs to the forefront of the movement of nationalism in the country.

The Sikhs of Delhi and their shrines again attracted the attention of the forces of Indian Nationalism when, during the civil disobedience movement of 1930, the police opened fire on Gurudwara Sis-Ganj, Delhi, and consequently injured a few people, who had taken shelter in the Gurudwara premises. The action of the local police greatly agitated the Sikh masses in particular and the nationalist forces in the country in general. The following account of the incident appears in the Sis-Ganj Enquiry Committee Report Published by the Shromani Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee :

"On the 6th May, 1930, there was universal hartal all over India in connection with the incarceration of Mahatma Gandhi on the previous day. Delhi observed the hartal in the same way. Naturally all round there was great excitement. Crowds of people with bands of volunteers paraded the streets shouting the usual slogans and picketing certain places like the District Court and other offices which remained open. It seems that some minor incidents happened here and there which led to more or less serious developments in the course of the day. We learn that a certain officer of the political department while on his way to his office, tried to push his car through a very big procession which was passing near the Post Office. Finding it impossible to make his way he tried to reverse the car in a rash manner, and either intentionally or unintentionally or in the heat of the moment, he injured a few persons, thus causing a great resentment amongst the crowd. A few minutes later, another European passed that way; and either the

processionists took him to be the same man who had reversed the car and injured their comrades, or owing to the prevailing excitement they insulted and handled him rather roughly. It was also said that at another place, the Additional District Magistrate also received very bad treatment at the hands of the crowd. It also transpired according to our report that this sort of thing went on for about one or two hours, although no one was seriously injured. There were very few cases in which the people had really transgressed the law of non-violence, although they were in a state of intense excitement, as one could expect from a mob on such a day. Later on, the police tried to disperse them and inflicted very severe lathi blows on some of them, so much so that some of the injured persons had to be removed to the Kotwali. Prompted by various motives a great many people directed their footsteps towards the Kotwali. Some must have gone there through idle curiosity or love of sight-seeing; others, perhaps, were in an angry mood and wanted to know what was going to happen to their friends and associates. Yet another section might have gone to the Kotwali with a view to looking after their injured friends and relatives and rendering them such relief and assistance as it was in their power to do. It is apparent that from the hour people began to throng this part of the city till the final tragedy which occurred there, the police made several charges on them with a view to dispersing them. Each attack of course, added to the number of casualties. The wounded were removed to the Kotwali, where they received first-aid treatment. Up to this hour the Gurudwara was left undisturbed, so much so that the usual readings from *Guru Granth Sahib* continued without interruption. About 3.30 p.m., according to the evidence of the Manager, corroborated by some other witnesses, two stones were thrown into the Gurudwara, one of them falling on the *Rumalas* of the *Guru Granth Sahib*. This made the Manager remove the Holy Book to a place of greater safety. The Manager went and lodged a complaint with the Deputy Superintendent of Police in charge of the Kotwali, who made a counter-charge that some stones had been thrown from the Gurudwara side on the Kotwali. The number of people in the Gurudwara at that time was swelling, as it gave a commanding view of the streets and the people standing there.

Some were just watching the happenings of the days in the streets; others were of course, listening as usual to the recitations or were engaged in personal talks. At about 4.00 p.m. three lorries full of policemen came to the Kotwali obviously to strengthen the force there. The policemen from two lorries got down and reached the Kotwali safely, but one lorry, the last one, received a shower of brickbats from near the Fountain which is situated across the road opposite the Kotwali. The brickbats injured a number of policemen as they came out of the lorry, but most of the bricks hit the roof of the lorry. The driver ran away for fear of being himself hit. The other policemen who came to the help of their comrade, also received brickbats. However, they managed to get to the garden of the Kotwali, and according to the official version, about 15 to 20 policemen lay injured in the garden in front of the Kotwali. The police at this stage made a very strenuous attack on the crowd with a view to stopping those missiles, and it seems that a number of people went into the Gurudwara from amongst the crowd to take shelter in its precincts .....<sup>22</sup>

According to the non-official report, as soon as the firing stopped, the police in a body entered the Gurudwara Sis-Ganj to arrest people who in their opinion were all guilty by being in the Gurudwara at that time; and, in the heat of the moment, they forgot or overlooked, or intentionally went with their shoes on. Police entry into the Gurudwara with shoes on was considered to be a great insult and sacrilege to the holy place. One of the eye-witness, Sardar Bahadur Basakkha Singh, a Government contractor of Delhi, in his evidence before the non-official Enquiry Committee said. "We felt it was a great insult to the Gurudwara and thereby to the Sikh religion; and, not only we alone felt it, but as the Gurudwara belongs to the Panth, every Sikh felt this insult."<sup>23</sup> According to the report two Sub-Inspectors of the police also abused the people and violated the common canons of decency and propriety. The report described the whole thing as "a great tragedy which was most regrettable from every point of view" and held the police guilty of entering the Gurudwara precincts with shoes on; dragging one Sikh by the hair and damaging the portrait of Guru Gobind Singh. The Committee demanded that the Government should offer compensation to the

local Gurudwara Committee for the loss and also compensation to those who had received injuries in the Gurudwara. It also demanded that the authorities concerned should express regret for the insult done to the Gurudwara and punish the officers responsible for this action.<sup>24</sup>

The incidents following the firing on Gurudwara Sis-Ganj and the earlier official action in demolishing the outer wall of Gurudwara Rikab-Ganj brought about cohesion among the local Sikhs and from then onward the prominent Sikhs of Delhi started taking active interest in the management of Sis-Ganj and the other historic shrines in Delhi. Association of the local Sikh Sangats and some rich Sikh contractors with the Gurudwara Management resulted in various improvements in the Temple. Some of the rich Sikh contractors thought of re-building the Gurudwara and providing more commodious and magnificent structures. But realising that the demolition of the existing structure involved the risk of injuring the Sikh sentiments, no one could dare to take the initiative in the matter. However, after a good deal of thinking on the subject, a contractor of Delhi, named Surat Singh, took the initiative in demolishing the existing old structures in which he was supported by other responsible persons of the metropolis. Thus the old building having been demolished, a modern structure according to the approved plans came up in 1939 on the debris of the old building. In the process the historic *Pipal* tree under which the Guru was beheaded was also cut off, thus sacrificing an object of great historical and spiritual significance for the sake of architectural beauty and grandeur.

As the provisions of the Sikh Gurudwaras and Shrines Act, passed in July, 1925, as a result of Akali agitation for Gurudwara reform, did not apply to the Sikh shrines outside the Punjab, Sis-Ganj and other historic shrines in Delhi continued to be managed by the local committee of managements nominated by the Sikh Sangats. Rai Bahadur Basakha Singh and Sardar Narain Singh, both of whom had greatly contributed towards the construction of the new building of the Gurudwara, remained connected with the management of Sis-Ganj for a pretty long time. After the death of Rai Bahadur Narain Singh, his son, Sardar Bahadur Ranjit Singh became the President of the Delhi State Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee.

In 1942, Sardar Mohan Singh replaced Sardar Bahadur Ranjit Singh as President of the Committee.

Till 1941, the Committees for Gurudwara Management in Delhi were formed on the basis of nominations by the local Sangats. Instead of formal elections of the Committees, as was the case in the Punjab, in Delhi the Sangats used to nominate five representatives—the *Panj Piyaras* to look after the Gurudwara management. In 1941 a regular Committee for the management of Sis-Ganj and other historic shrines in Delhi was formed and got registered under the Religious Endowments and Charitable Trusts Act of 1860. Under the new constitution prepared in 1941, a committee of 15 members was set up for the management of Sis-Ganj and other historic shrines in Delhi. But right from its inception till the present time the various committees for the management of the historic Gurudwaras in Delhi have been more or less a replica of the central body of Gurudwara management in Punjab—the Shiromani Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar. And whichever leader of group came in power in the Akali politics at Amritsar, virtually controlled the management of the Sikh shrines in Delhi. Initially out of the 15 member Committee only three were elected by the Sikh Sangats of Delhi and twelve were to be nominated by the Shromani Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee.

However, in 1947 the historic Sikh shrines of Delhi and their managing bodies gained greater significance as a result of a large number of Sikhs coming from Western Punjab and settling in Delhi after the partition of the country. The local Sikh Sangats, whose number had greatly swelled, demanded fair reprisenation in the matter of the management of the Sikh shrines in Delhi. As a result, in 1947 the number of the members of the managing committee to be elected by the local Sangats was increased from three to eight, while the number of the members to be nominated by S. G. P. C. was reduced from twelve to seven, the majority vote thus passing from the hands of the nominated element to those of the locally elected representatives. Now a full-fledged Delhi Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee came into existence with an annual budget of four to five lakhs of rupees. The present (1976) income of the Delhi Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee exceeds one and a half

crores of rupees (Editor).

Sis-Ganj and other historic Sikh shrines of Delhi have remained under the control and management of the Delhi Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee since its inception in 1947 up to the present time (With the exception of four years of Delhi Sikh Gurudwara Board from May, 1971 to March, 1975). The Shiromani Akali Dal and the Shiromani Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee Amritsar, as also the provisions of the Sikh shrines outside the Punjab, a study of the management of the Gurudwara Sis-Ganj and other Shrines in Delhi shows that the Sikh Gurudwaras and Sikh politics of Delhi could not remain free from the over-bearing power and influence of the Akali politics at Amritsar. Earlier, when the very first Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee was formed in 1941, out of 15 as many as 12 members were nominated by the S.G.P.C. Later, when in 1947, the composition was changed and local Sikh Sangats were given a majority by electing eight members S.G.P.C. nominating only seven, the management of Sis-Ganj, and other Gurudwaras still continued to be under the virtual control of the party in power at Amritsar, as those local representatives alone could be elected to the Delhi Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee whose candidature was sponsored by the Shiromani Akali Dal, Amritsar. The changes in the political groups and leadership at Amritsar have been invariably affecting the control and management of Sis-Ganj and other Sikh shrines in Delhi as also the Sikh politics of the metropolis.

#### FOOTNOTES

1. Aurangzeb's Benares. *Firman* addressed to Abul Fazal. 28 February. 1659. quoted in J. N. Sarkar's. *History of Aurangzeb*, Vol. III. p. 281.
2. Quoted in the *History of Aurangzeb*, *ibid.*, pp. 283-84.
3. Quoted in S. S. Bal's "Circumstances Leading to the Martyrdom of "Guru Tegh Bahadur", published in the *Punjab Past and Present*, April, 1975, p. 107.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 108.
5. Quoted in Ganda Singh's "Guru Tegh Bahadur", published in the *Punjab Past and Present*, pp. i-ii, April, 1975.
6. *Ibid.*
7. According to popular traditions of the Guru. after listening to the woeful tale of the Barhmins thus remarked. "The world is grieved by oppression of the Turks. No brave man is now to be found. He who is willing to sacrifice his life



shall free the earth from the tyranny of the Muhammadans". On hearing these words, his nine yearold son, Gobind Rai, replied 'For that purpose who is more worthy than thou who art both generous and brave.' Guru Tegh Bahadur was delighted to see that young Gobind Rai was fully conscious of the moral and spiritual responsibility of the Guru towards suffering humanity. The ninth Guru accordingly promised the Kashmir Brahmins that he would come to their rescue and asked them to send a petition to Emperor Aurangzeb through the Governor of Lahore, that Guru Tegh Bahadur was prepared to come to him and discuss the matter of his religious policy with him.

8. *Suraj Parkash*, Ras 12. Ansu 29.
9. J. B. Bali, *Sis-Ganj : Story of the Historical Sikh Shrines of Delhi*, pp. 53-56.
10. Ganda Singh, "Guru Tegh Bahadur", published in the *Punjab Past and Present*, April, 1975, p. iii. The arrest of the Guru and his meeting with Aurangzeb have raised some controversy. While the Sikh traditions emphasise that the Guru was not arrested but he himself disclosed his identity to the Emperor's men during his visit to Agra, recent research on the subject based on the entry in the *bahis*, proves the point of the Guru and his companions having been arrested at Malakpur, not far from the Guru's headquarters at Anandpur. See for details Dr. G. S. Anand's "Arrest and Execution of "Guru Tegh Bahadur". published in the *Punjab Past and Present*, April, 1975, p. 115-16.
11. *Ibid.*, n. 9, p. 57.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
14. The Guru's execution at Delhi at the hands of the Muslims executioner Jalalud-Din on the orders of Emperor Aurangzeb is above any doubt and has been recorded in reliable contemporary sources such as *Khulasat-ut-tawarikh*. See for details G. S. Anand's, "Arrest and Execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur". *Punjab Past and Present*, April, 1975, p. 166-67. "Jeewan de Kujh Vakiyat Sambandhi Bhulekhe". being published in the Commemoration Volume on Guru Tegh Bahadur by the S. G. P. C.
15. *Sis-Ganj : Story of the Historical Sikh Shrines of Delhi* gives the following account about the origin of Sis-Ganj : "The sacred place passed into oblivion till 1790 when Baghel Singh captured Delhi and secured the promise from Shah Alam II to restore all the places connected with the lives of the Gurus to the Sikhs. Accordingly, he set out to locate the exact place where Guru Tegh Bahadur had been beheaded. When Baghel Singh failed to get any clue about the sacred place he called for the old residents and started investigations. His labours bore fruit and he ultimately found a woman who came forward with a statement. 'My husband was a *Bahishiti*, waterman, who was asked to sprinkle water on that particular spot. One day he took me there and showed me the place. I can go with you and tell you the place.' She pointed out the Pipal tree under which the execution had taken place and where a mosque was now standing. Baghel Singh sent the information to the King and early morning set out to demolish the mosque. Five hundred Sikhs were doing the work when a multitude of Muslim fanatics appeared on the scene to protect the mosque.

The Sikhs, though heavily outnumbered and armed with spades and shovels, only scattered the mob. When Muslims represented this to the King he told them that the Sikhs had agreed to leave Delhi after capturing it on his assurance that all their historical places connected with the lives of the Gurus would be restored to them and that he could not go back on his word. Meanwhile Baghel Singh ordered his Sikhs to plunder the Jagirs of Saadat Ali Khan and Abdur Rehman who were in the forefront of the mob. At this the Amirs begged his pardon. They also conceded in writing the Sikh's right to establish a *gurudwara* on the holy spot. The papers were sent to the King who was very much pleased and granted the Gurudwara a Jagir of Rs. 4000/- from a village named Pipli." (pp. 60-61).

16. The name 'Aurang Shah' mentioned in the letter as 'the King of Delhi' does not find any mention in the genealogies of the Mughal rulers of India. Though Aurangzeb is nowhere mentioned as 'Aurang Shah', a number of well-informed colleagues and friends of mine with whom I have discussed this problem do not rule out the possibility of the Raja of Jind mentioning Aurangzeb's as 'Aurang Shah'. And there is also a possibility that during the last days of Aurangzeb's rule the Sikhs might have been allowed to raise some sort of memorial and to pay their homage at the place where their Guru was martyred, as the Jain community had been allowed to build their temple near the Chandni Chowk under the orders of Aurangzeb, conveyed through a royal *fuman* inscribed on the bronze plates and still preserved with the temple authorities.
17. Handwritten letter dated 21st November, 1869 from Maharaja Ragubir Singh of Jind in the records at the Delhi State Archives, Delhi.
18. Telegram dated 24th December, 1812, from the Sikh Prayer quoted in Sangat Singh's *Freedom Movement in Delhi*, pp. 193-94.
19. See for details Sardul Singh Caveeshar : "Gurudwara Rikab-Ganj da Jhamela" (Punjabi) in *Punjab* (ed. by Dr. Ganda Singh), pp. 12-13.
20. Quoted in Sangat Singh's *Freedom Movement in Delhi*, p. 208.
21. *Ibid.*
22. *Report on the firing into the Gurudwara Sis-Ganj Delhi*, published by the S. G. P. C., Amritsar, 1930; also see Ruchi Ram Sahni's *Struggle for Reform in Sikh Shrines* (Chapter on Firing in Sis-Ganj).
23. *Report on the Firing*, p. 20.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

## THE PROPHET OF ASSURANCE

J. S. GREWAL

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Towards the end of March, 1664, Guru Harkrishan died in Delhi after indicating to the Sikhs present that his successor was to be found at Bakala. Some of the prominent Sikhs of Guru Harkrishan arrived at Bakala in August to request Tegh Bahadur to assume Guruship in accordance with his nomination by Guru Harkrishan. Tegh Bahadur accepted the office. He was forty-three years old at this time.

It is safe to assume that Guru Tegh Bahadur knew that he was assuming a difficult office. He had seen much in life. Born at Amritsar on April 1, 1621, he had received education and training under the direct supervision of his father, Guru Hargobind. Sikh theology, music, horsemanship and the use of arms occupied much of his time before he participated in the battle of Kartarpur in 1635. For nine years then he stayed at Kiratpur where Guru Hargobind lived in his customary grandeur, maintaining hundreds of trained horsemen and matchlockmen till his death in 1644. The eldest son of Guru Hargobind had died in his lifetime and he chose his younger grandson, Hari Rai, as his successor, ignoring the elder Dhir Mal, because of his worldly-mindedness. This nomination was not accepted by Dhir Mal who established himself at Kartapur as a rival Guru. In contrast with Dhir Mal, Tegh Bahadur accepted the nomination of Hari Rai with grace and moved to Bakala with his wife, Mata Gujari, and his mother, Mata Nanaki.

After twelve years of retirements at Bakala, Tegh Bahadur visited Guru Hari Rai at Kiratpur in 1656 and probably in accordance with his wishes, went to visit important centres of Sikh *sangats* in the eastern provinces of the Mughal Empire. Meanwhile, Guru Hari Rai died in 1661 after nominating his younger son, Harkrishan, as

his successor, ignoring the elder Ram Rai who had tried to ingratiate himself with Aurangzeb during the lifetime of his father. Guru Harkrishan was called to Delhi by the Emperor and both the brothers were there in March, 1664, when Sri Tegh Bahadur returned to Delhi. To accept the Guruship of the Sikhs in 1664 on the demise of Guru Harkrishan was to go against the wishes of Aurangzeb. Sri Tegh Bahadur was well aware of this. Therefore, his assumption of the office of Guruship, undoubtedly an affront to Aurangzeb, was an act of great courage.

In its proper historical context, Guru Tegh Bahadur's decision to guide the destinies of the Sikh Panth was indeed a momentous decision. Guru Nanak and his four successors had made the Sikh Panth a kind of state within the Mughal Empire. Every Sikh had virtually two loyalties : one to the Guru and the Panth and the other to the Mughal State. So long as the Sikhs did not have to choose one out of these two loyalties, there was no difficulty. After the executions of Guru Arjan in 1606, Guru Hargobind obliged the Sikhs to make their choice by openly defying the Mughal government. The majority of the Sikhs chose to side with him in his new attitude, but not all. Furthermore, Dhir Mal, who did not accept Guru Hari Rai as the Guru and put forth his own claims to be successor of Guru Hargobind, was not disposed to offend the rulers in any way. Similarly, when Guru Hari Rai nominated Harkrishan as his successor, Ram Rai felt encouraged to put forth his rival claims. And Ram Rai was patronized by Aurangzeb. Both Dhir Mal and Ram Rai were supported by some *masands* who were surely 'pro-establishment' in their attitudes. This precisely was the posture adopted by the followers of Prithi Chand and his son Miharban also. Thus, in 1664 there was no one to adopt the independent attitude of Guru Hargobind. By assuming the *gaddi* of Guruship, Sri Tegh Bahadur imposed this task upon himself.

With this background, the pontificate of Guru Tegh Bahadur becomes highly significant. He was opposed at Bakala by Dhir Mal. He abandoned Bakala. At Amritsar he was not welcomed by the followers of Miharban. Travelling through the Majha and the Malwa regions, he reached Kiratpur in the summer of 1665 and founded Makhowal. A few months later he was again travelling

towards the eastern Sikh *sangats* when he was arrested by the Mughal officials and kept in custody for over a month.

From 1666 to 1670 he stayed outside the Punjab, visiting places like Prayag, Benares, Buddh-Gaya, Patna, Monghyr, Malda, Dacca and Dhubri (in Assam). On his return to Delhi in 1670 he was kept under surveillance for more than two months before he was allowed to go to Bakala and Makhawal.

During 1673 and 1674 Guru Tegh Bahadur undertook intensive work in the Malwa, inspiring people with confidence and encouraging them to face all odds and difficulties. This was his silent but sure protest against Aurangzeb's aggressive policy of persecution. In 1675 he received the *Brahmins* from Kashmir who had come to represent the plight of their co-religionists against the high-handed measures of the Mughal Governor of Kashmir. The effect of Aurangzeb's persecutory measures was felt in other parts of the Empire also. Guru Tegh Bahadur decided to defend the freedom of conscience which the Emperor was denying on principles as well as in practice. Before he could meet the Emperor, he was arrested and taken to Delhi. There he was kept in confinement for a few months. As a proof of his nearness to God he was asked to perform a miracle. He refused to admit even the propriety of such an attempt. Alternatively, he was asked to embrace Islam. He refused. The result was his execution in the Chandni Chowk at Delhi in November, 1675.

Guru Gobind Singh in his *Bachittar Natak* wrote in commemoration of Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom :

'Without a murmur he gave up his life for the sake of holy men. For the sake of *Dharam* he gave up his head. He did not divulge the secret of his nearness' to God. The true devotees of God shun the magical tricks of a miracle. Guru Tegh Bahadur did what none else could do. He defied the ruler of Delhi to the point of sacrificing his life.'

Guru Gobind Singh was deeply influenced by the unqualified commitment and unflinching courage of his father and predecessor. Ratan Singh Bhangu, whose *Panth Prakash* testifies to the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur as a source of inspiration for the succeeding generations of Sikhs, attributed the fall of the Mughal

Empire to the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur :

*Henceforth did the power of the Mughals start declining;  
Henceforth did the kingdom of the Delhi start disintegrating.*

Thus, about the significance of Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom one answer has been given by Guru Gobind Singh and another by Ratan Singh Bhangu. Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom symbolizes for all times the spirit of supreme sacrifice for an ideal; in his case, the ideal of the freedom of conscience. Also, the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur became an essential link in the chain of events which led to the decline of the Mughal power and its eventual elimination from the Punjab.

The essential significance of Guru Tegh Bahadur's pontificate lies in the fact that in a profoundly historical sense he rejuvenated the central stream of Sikh history and became a moral and historical link between his father and his son. He paved the way for the achievement of Guru Gobind Singh who gave a new unity to the Sikh Panth and enabled it to defend the claim of conscience against the government of the day. The political freedom of the Sikhs during the eighteenth century was a logical as well as a historical development from the freedom of conscience defended by Guru Tegh Bahadur and ensured by Guru Gobind Singh.

Guru Tegh Bahadur's profound link with the original founder of the Sikh Panth is equally evident from his *bani* which propounds the same theology, the same spiritual message and the same path as had been propounded by Guru Nanak. Guru Tegh Bahadur uses a score of epithets for God. The most frequently used epithets are Rama and Hari, followed by Prabhu and Gobind. Occasionally, he refers, to God as Swami, Deva, Madho, Niranjan, Murar, Dina Nath, Brahm, Pritam, Bhagvant, Din Bandhu, Narain, Chintamani, Kanhai, Bhagavan, Raghunath and Gosain. God, for Guru Tegh Bahadur, is transcendent as well as immanent : He is *aginat, apar, alakh, niranjan, nirlep, alep, niara* : He is also *manārup* and *sarbnivasi*.<sup>2</sup> These attributive names have their roots in the religious thought of India. God is within man as well as in the universe. He is perfect; He is Almighty, and He is merciful. He is the remover of sins; He is the remover of suffering; He is the remover of fear; and He is the protector of his devotees. God is the creator of everything; and

He alone is eternal.

The universe is God's creation (*rachma*) and is subject to annihilation. Whatever is visible is subject to annihilation 'like the shadow cloud'. The universe is God's *maya* : it is like a mirage; it is a 'mountain of smoke', it is like a 'wall of sand'. In contrast with the truth of God's eternity, the universe is false, precisely because it is not everlasting. Similarly, the human body is false (*jhū, mithia*); only Rama (God) within is true (*sācho*).

However, man is attracted by *maya* which includes almost everything except God. *Maya* is His bondwoman, but for man *maya* is like a mirage, ever-present but always elusive. Attachment to perishable things serves as a snare for man : riches, power, human ties, the body and pleasures, for instance. Man remains engrossed in *maya* because of his five adversaries : *kama, krodha, lobha, moha* and *ahankāra*; which stand in his way of understanding God's omnipotence and his own nothingness.

Engrossment in *maya*, aided by the inner adversaries of man, keep him chained to the cycle of death and rebirth, and he does not attain to salvation. Guru Tegh Bahadur uses various synonyms for salvation, *mukti, jivan-mukti, pad-nirbana, nirbhai pad*, for example. Occasionally, the epithets *baikunth* and *gian* are also used for the human existence is a rare opportunity for realizing that purpose. The person who does not know that purpose is asleep, not awake; he is *durjan, murkh, gawar, andh* and *agaiani* steeped in ignorance (*durmati-kummati*). Opposed to *durmati* or *kummati* is *gurumati*, and he who is attuned to *Gurumati* is *gurumukh*. For such a person two other epithets are used by Guru Tegh Bahadur : *sādh* and *sant*. Those who have adopted the path of salvation (*mukti panth*) are addressed as brother (*bhai*) and friend (*mit*). An ordinary person is addressed as *prani, nar* or *jan*. But everyone is invited to follow the path of salvation.

To discard heedlessness and indifference, to be aware of the transmigratory Noose of Death, is the first step on the way of salvation. To refrain from evil acts (*pap*) is another. To join the *sādh-sangat*, to take refuge with the Guru, to listen to his instruction and to seek knowledge from him is to ensure one's progress on the path. Sensual pleasures are to be renounced by cultivating a high

degree of detachment from *maya*. The idea of detachment is given primacy by Guru Tegh Bahadur : man should not simply escape the stranglehold of *kama, krodha, lodha, moha, ahamkāra*<sup>3</sup>, riches, goods, power and the comforts of *maya*, he should also remain psychologically indifferent to joy and sorrow, praise and blame, happiness and suffering, honour and dishonour, nectar and poison, gold and dust, love and fear. He should remember the omnipotent and omnipresent Lord and offer loving devotion (*preet, bhakti*) to Him through *simran, kirtan and bhajan* and by appropriating the Name (*nam*). He should seek God within himself. Through God's grace, then, he may attain salvation.

In the *bani* of Guru Tegh Bahadur we find echoes of the primary concerns of Guru Nanak. If there is no reference to contemporary forms of religious belief and practice it is precisely because Guru Tegh Bahadur, as a successor of Guru Nanak, takes for granted his evaluation of those beliefs and practices as futile in terms of salvation. Political power for Guru Tegh Bahadur is a part of *maya* : it is a 'wall of sand'. Power in the hands of others presents no threat of Guru Tegh Bahadur. God for him is the annuler of all fear (*bhai-bhanjan*). The state of salvation for him is a state of fearlessness (*nirbhai pad*). His life exemplifies his own maxim : 'I do not cause terror to anyone: nor do I entertain fear of any.'

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#### FOOTNOTES

1. The Original, *Sirar* (not, *Sirr*, Secret) means passion. (Editor).
2. *Ad Seriatim*, these mean : beyond count: endless: uncompassable; untainted by Maya (Niranjan. Nirlep, alep. all have this implication): *Niara* (unique. unattached, of infinite forms, residing in all creation, immanent). (Editor)
3. These are the 'five evils' of lust. wrath. avariciousness, stupor and egoism.

## INTER-RELIGIOUS RELATIONS DURING MUSLIM RULE IN INDIA

ANIL CHANDRA BANERJEE

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Indian religions had succeeded in absorbing the alien faiths brought into the country by Greek and Central Asian invaders; but Christianity which arrived along with the Syrians driven by persecution from their homeland was able to not only to maintain its separate identity, but even to secure converts, although it could never transcend its regional character. The Zoroastrians who left their homeland after the Arabian conquest did not lose their identity after settlement in India. Apparently India was losing her traditional urge for bringing foreigners within her own religious fold.

The advent of Islam in India brought into clear relief this trend in the religious history of the country. The political and military power of the Muslim Arabs stimulated the expansionist movement which had started in pre-Islamic days. Again, the conquest of Persia threw into the hands of the Muslim Arabs the rich inheritance of Persian maritime trade. Islam being a missionary religion, saintly propagators of the faith followed the tracks laid down by soldiers and merchants. This happened not only on the west coast of India, which was geographically contiguous to the Muslim countries, but also on the far-off east coast—in the Chittagong region (now in Bangladesh). The usual trade route from the Arabian and Persian Gulf ports to posts to China passed through the Gulf of Palk and the Bay of Bengal.

In the seventh and eighth centuries Arab expeditions threatened the coastal regions in western India. The conquest of Sind marked the climax of this politically aggressive policy. In the field of religion its effect was the virtual elimination of Buddhism together with considerable weakening of the roots of Hinduism in Sind. No such

revolutionary change could take place in the Malabar region where Arab settlements began about the end of the seventh century. There they grew in importance and prosperity as colonies of traders, patronised by the Zamorin; but political power was not aimed at. The most striking success of proselytizing activities was the conversion of the last of the Cherman Perumal Kings. Arab settlements grew up on the east coast as well, and the Coromandal region came to be known as *Ma'bar* (passage) from the Arab trader's point of view.

In South Indian Brahminical Hinduism, weakened to some extent by its rivalry with Buddhism and Jainism, faced a growing challenge from Islam as it entrenched itself in the coastal regions. The old faith found itself in need of defence through fresh interpretation of its basic message; and that defence was provided by Sankaracharya who initiated a process of metaphysical renovation of *Sanatana Dharma*. No essential feature of his philosophy was borrowed from or influenced by Islam. His system took no note of the popular appeal of Islam—of its message of social equality—to the caste-ridden Hindu society of his age. But the *Bhakti* cult stepped in, simplifying philosophy into emotional fervour and humanising social rigidity by slow and halting recognition of the worth of man irrespective of birth and occupation. The theory that the idea of salvation through *Bhakti* was borrowed from Christianity is no longer seriously upheld, nor is it possible to attribute it to the influence of Islam. The origin of the *Bhakti* cult has been traced to Vedic literature; it was reinterpreted in a new social context by the Tamil Alvars who flourished between the seventh and twelfth centuries. In the case of philosophers of the *Bhakti* cult, it is possible to recognize for the essential truths of their own faith; it would, however, be going too far to trace conscious indebtedness.

The emphasis on the metaphysical reorientation of the old faith gradually receded into the background, and the urge for adjustment of religion with social need became more compelling, after Ramanuja. It was through Ramananda, a North Indian Brahmin, that the *Bhakti* cult found a congenial home in the upper Ganges valley. He belonged to the spiritual and social needs of the common people. A similar trend had already been initiated in Maharashtra by the Varakari

sect, and it is quite possible that Ramananda was in contact with the Pandharpur teachings.

Although there are conflicting traditions about the dates of Ramananda's birth and death, there is no doubt that he found Muslim rule well established in North India. His teachings on religion, and on social problems connected with religion, provide the first available instance of the impact of Islam on Hinduism in the heartland of India. A Brahmin by birth, born at a great holy place (Prayaga) and educated in scriptures at another (Benares), trained in the *Visishtadvaita* system of Ramanuja, he was not expected to stray in material points from the path of orthodoxy. But he found Islam entrenched in a recognized position not only in the political, but also in the religious life of the country. Its liberalism in respect of social practices must have appeared as a formidable threat to the orthodox Hindu community of his age. At Benares he came in contact with learned Muslims, and —gifted with a mind which was not closed to new ideas despite loyalty to the *Sastras*—he must have probed into their religious ideas.

He found Hindu society seeking refuge in a shell of orthodoxy: blind insistence on forms at the cost of the living spirit of religion appeared to be the sole condition of self-preservation. But no society could survive through a negative policy. His response to this crisis took three forms. Carefully avoiding insistence on either *jnanamarga* or *karma-marga* which were open only to the higher castes he commended *bhakti-marga*, which could be followed by every one irrespective of birth and education. This was qualitatively different from the metaphysically-oriented *bhakti* of Ramanuja in which rationalism occupied a far more prominent place than simple emotional fervour. Ramananda's aim was to fulfil the requirements of socially ignored or despised classes which held the *Sastras* in awful veneration without feeling the impact of their injunctions on their hearts. He realized that Hinduism could save itself only by bringing itself down to the level of the overwhelming majority of its adherents; the shackles developing through the ages had to be cut off and the domination of the priests as the symbol of religious discipline was to be eliminated. There could be no bolder task for a Brahmin who inherited the old tradition, but Ramananda proceeded

without hesitation. 'He deemed form of adoration superfluous, by incessantly uttering God's name.' Neither knowledge of the *Sastras* nor priestly service was needed for 'incessantly uttering God's name'. The 'name' itself was given a form (Rama) which was more familiar to the people of North India than Vishnu and Narayana, which had greater appeal in the South. To Ramananda North India owed that emotional fervour which found lyrical expression later in the immortal verses of Tulsidas.

The new message which Ramananda sought to spread among the people had to be put in the simplest linguistic form which would not be beyond their grasp. He propagated his ideas through oral teaching. Benares, where he lived, was an excellent centre because the holy city attracted pilgrims from all parts of the country. It was extremely unusual for a Brahmin to ask the people to by pass the customary rituals, to play that unorthodox role at the greatest centre of orthodoxy in the country, and to use the common man's simple tongue instead of the ancient vehicle of religious discourse (Sanskrit). He left nothing in writing, presumably because he was temperamentally a preacher rather than a philosopher, spending a cloistered life in stimulating new processes of thought and in putting them in the classical form. The orthodox community did not accept him as a philosopher *cum* religious teacher like Ramanuja, whose teachings have survived for centuries through his scholarly writings. But his memory lingered in the modest mud-huts of the Gangetic plains : religious songs attributed to him enjoyed wide popularity among the common people in North India. A hymn attributed to him survives in the Granth Sahib. It is possible that the system of singing the name of God through simple musical compositions in popular language, which was initiated in the South by the Alvars, was introduced into the North by Ramananda and developed by Kabir and the Sikh Gurus. The substitution of Sanskrit, the language of the learned, by the languages of the masses—in the Tamil country, in Maharashtra, in the Gangetic plains, in the Punjab—was in itself a revolution. Socially as also linguistically, religion descended to the level of the common people.

The third point in Ramananda's programme of socio-religious adjustment was the relaxation of the rules of caste. He admitted to

his *sampradaya* disciples from all castes, even from the Muslim community, and called them the 'liberated'. He liberalised the culinary and kindred rules observed by the orthodox Ramanuja *sampradaya*, thus removing to some extent the barriers which fragmented Hindu society. He is not known to have sponsored so revolutionary a social change as inter-caste marriage.

Even a superficial scrutiny of Ramananda's prescription for the decadent Hindu society would show that he did not draw his ingredients from Islam. The *Bhakti* cult, as already pointed out, was drawn neither from Christianity nor from Islam; it had a Vedic ancestry, and despite changes in its character and emphasis through the ages it never lost its purely indigenous spirit. The adoption of the people's tongue as the vehicle for the expression of the spiritual urge had no novelty : this is what the Alvars and the Buddhists and the Jains before them had done. Here Ramananda was more radical, and more responsive to the common people's needs, than the preachers of Islam. Although they delivered oral discourses in regional languages, Arabic remained the language of daily prayer; and with the exception of a few Sufis like Baba Farid, they put the Persian garb on their religious compositions. There was no relaxation of the rigid rituals of Islam for the benefit of Indian converts; lapses continued to be frowned upon by the orthodox leaders of Muslim society with the same zeal as the Brahmin priests applied in condemning their own straying folk. Islam, of course, recognized no caste: but there were recognized social distinctions which resulted in virtual fragmentation of society, even though the barriers were comparatively easy to cross. Here again, Ramananda appears to have looked backward to indigenous traditions and practices rather than to the teachings of Islam. Buddhism, which was not yet completely dead, was associated with the idea of relaxation of caste rules. In the so-called lower classes of Hindu society caste distinctions were far less scrupulously observed than they were in the upper classes. That seems to have been the model which Ramananda chose to follow : he did not call for the total abolition of caste as Guru Nanak was to do after him.

Ramananda's impact on Hindu society survived in two forms : the emphasis on *Bhakti* and the use of the people's tongue as a

substitute for Sanskrit. But orthodox Hindu society was strong enough to resist the relaxation of caste rules and even to engulf the liberal movement so far as this aspect was concerned. Macauliffe writes : 'Most of the present followers of Ramananda appear to have completely fallen away from his teaching, and observe caste rules with the utmost strictness'.<sup>2</sup> But the over—all success of Ramananda's work is to be judged by his main purpose viz. the liberalisation of the traditional socio-religious structure of the Hindus as a defensive measure against the progress of Islam. That purpose was largely served; although Islam influenced Hindu life and thought in North India in various ways, it achieved no more than limited success in the sphere of conversion in that region, although it had a much better record in Eastern and North-Western India. In the Punjab, and this was due in no small measure to Ramananda's grasp of the problem and the remedies devised by him. His appeal did not lose its force by lapse of time; the inclusion in the Granth Sahib of a composition attributed to him shows that his message had a special meaning for seekers of Truth even in the seventeenth century and even in a region far away from Benares.

Two other features of Ramananda's work deserve notice. First, the Muslim rules of his times left him free to pursue his activities for rejuvenation of Hinduism. There is no record—not even a legend—of persecution in his case. The story of his life, and of the development of Hinduism in the Gangetic plains, would have been different if the Muslim State had been committed to a policy of proselytization. It is also evident that there was nothing against Islam as a religion, or against the Muslims as a community, in his teachings. Of the religious reformers who directly followed his trail, simplifying and liberalising his teachings and thereby making the movement more meaningful and responsive to new socio-religious urges, the greatest undoubtedly was Kabir, who probably a Muslim by birth.

Kabir himself says that he was 'awakened by Ramananda'.<sup>3</sup> There are chronological and other difficulties in the way of taking him as a direct disciple of Ramananda, but the traditional story of some kind of contact between the two is supported by a statement in the *Dabistan* : '...at the time when he was in search of a spiritual guide, he visited the best of the Musulmams<sup>4</sup> and Hindus, but did

not find what he sought; at last somebody gave him direction to an old man of bright genius'.<sup>5</sup> Apparently he was not fully satisfied with the teaching of Islam—his ancestral religion—and found solace in those of Ramananda. His mystical love of God might have been influenced by Sufism;<sup>6</sup> 'a Nath background' may also be postulated as a possibility.<sup>7</sup> But he was in general agreement with the Vaishnava tradition in treating love of God as the crucial element in the pilgrimage for salvation. Although his compositions contain philosophical and technical terms, he seems to have been unfamiliar with sacred languages and ancient scriptures. In any case complete freedom from metaphysical speculations as also external rituals marked his teachings. His Muslim ancestry made it easier for him to condemn caste rules. His cosmopolitan background explains Macauliffe's statement : 'Kabir has written works which all religious denominations can accept...He deemed worthless the rules of caste and the Hindu and Muhammadan religious observance'.<sup>8</sup>

Kabir considered himself to be 'the son of Allah and Rama'. He looked beyond the superficial doctrinal divergences and said : 'The religion of those who understand is one, whether they are *Pandits* or *saikh's*. He found the seed of communal strife in religious insincerity in both communities : 'Hindus call upon Rama, the Mussalmans on *Rahman*, yet both fight and kill each other, and none knows the truth'.<sup>9</sup> This statement clearly shows that inter-religious relations were not yet normalised : much ground was still to be covered before a stable adjustment could be reached.

Tradition tells us that Kabir had to face the threat of persecution in the reign of Sikandar Lodi. Apart from the fact that the second Lodi Sultan lives in history as an intolerant ruler, it appears to be very likely that Kabir's Muslim origin exposed him to the wrath of the orthodox section of the ruling community. It was one thing to turn a blind eye to what a Hindu preacher did within his own community; it was an entirely different thing to allow a person who was a Muslim by birth to say : 'The Hindu and Turk have one path which the True Teacher has pointed out.'<sup>10</sup> A Brahmin named Bodhan was put to death for the offence of declaring in the presence of some Muslims that 'the religions of both the Muslims and Hindus, if acted on with sincerity, were equally acceptable to God.'<sup>11</sup> The charge



against Kabir was that those who paid heed to what he said remained neither Muslims nor Hindus. His accusers included Muslims, who looked upon him as a betrayer of Islam, as well as Brahmins in whose eyes he was an intruder into the sacred field reserved for them.

Kabir's career illustrated the virtual impossibility of bridging the gulf between Hinduism and Islam by evolving a simple creed which would teach adoration of God, eliminate scriptural philosophy, recognize the equality of all human beings irrespective of caste, and free man's approach to God through abandonment of rituals. Neither of the two religions was prepared to surrender its identity; and as the liberal forces gathered momentum, the old faiths strengthened the shackles of rigidity. 'The seed of the message of the unity of Hari and Allah was not evidently sown on a fertile soil and did not sprout'.<sup>12</sup>

But the spirit of the teaching of Ramananda and Kabir did not die out; it was kept alive by the disciples—traditionally eleven in number—of the former as also by the *kabirpanthis*. Those disciples inherited and propagated Ramananda's message; it is unlikely that all of them were initiated by him personally. They belonged to different castes and territorial regions; collectively they reflected the all India character of the *Bhakti* cult. Guru Arjan selected some hymns of these *bhagats* for inclusion in the Granth Sahib. This was recognition of the spiritual value of these compositions as also of their enduring impact on the popular mind. The *bhagats*, owed nothing to orthodox Islam, but their ideas had a close resemblance with those of the Sufis. The compositions of two Muslim *bhagats*, Shaikh Farid and Bhikan, found a place of honour in the Granth Sahib.

Bengal Vaishnavism was a tributary of the mainstream of the *Bhakti* cult. It had its beginning before the appearance to a poet of the pre-Islamic period.....Jaidev.....is found in the Granth Sahib. Vaishnavism was given a classical form by Chaitanya (1486-1533). A learned scholar born in an orthodox Brahmin family at Navadwip, a well-known centre of Sanskrit learning, he derived his teachings from the *Bhagavata Purana* and its mores was the Radha-Krishna cult which prescribed that liberation could be attained only through

a passionate love for Krishna, i.e. God. Primarily a mystic, he did not entirely reject customary rituals and caste rules; but caste and creed were not regarded as barriers to liberation and one of his most favourite disciples was a Muslim who was named Haridas : i.e. Servant of Hari. Though rooted firmly in the scriptural tradition of *Bhakti*, the movement was essentially popular in character; it had a special appeal to the lower orders of the Hindu society, and the new method of worship through *kirtan* (singing of devotional songs) deprived the Brahmin priests of their pre-eminence in the religious life of the people. Social changes followed, resulting in relaxation of caste rules relating to inter-dining and inter-marriage. The despised vernacular, crippled by the dominance of Sanskrit as the language of religion and by that of Persian as the language of administration, rose into a new dignity as the vehicle of the people's religion. A new literature, primarily lyrical and biographical, sprang up. Altogether there was a very impressive rejuvenation of Hindu society and Hindu religion in Bengal.

It was, however, not entirely regional in its impact. Chaitanya made extensive tours of pilgrimage in South, West and North India. In his later years he lived at Puri, and it was through his influence that Bengal Vaishnavism found a congenial home in Orissa. Through his influence, again, the ancient sanctity of Brindaban (in Uttar Pradesh) was revived; his followers made it a great centre of Vaishnavism.

This socio-religious upsurge owed nothing—positively—to Islam; there is no trace of Islamic or even Sufistic influence on Chaitanya's teachings although the emotional fervour in the Radha-Krishna cult might remind one of the compositions of Sufis like Shaikh Farid. Negatively, however, it was a product of the challenge of Islam. Like Ramananda, Chaitanya sought to place Hinduism in a defensible position; and despite his strong personal links with orthodoxy—birth, the environment at Navadwip, training in and mastery of ancient learning—he found in liberalism the strongest strategy for the preservation of Hinduism. There are striking similarities between these two reformers although they belonged to different schools of ancient philosophy.

As noted earlier, Islam came to the south-eastern region of

Bengal through the coastal area of Chittagong, before it came as a political power through Bihar. The first conversions were made by Muslim saints whose sacred task was facilitated by the weakness of Hinduism and the decadence of Tantric Buddhism in the eastern districts. During the post-conquest centuries proselytization was accelerated by political pressures on the part of the ruling class. It was not necessarily the settled policy of the State, formulated and enforced by governors and sultans, which demoralised and tempted the politically helpless and socially disintegrated Hindus. Perhaps a much stronger instrument of coercion was the petty tyranny exercised by Muslim officials, particularly the Qazis, who dominated the countryside. In Bengal, Islam was not localised particularly in urban centres, as it was in North India; it took firm roots in the scattered villages. Coercion and temptation were supplemented by the missionary efforts of *Pirs* and *Mullahs*, some of whom survived in the people's memories for centuries. Several Sufi saints contributed to the popularisation of Islam. The only remedy which the leaders of Hindu society could think of was to rigidly enforce the orthodox rules of religion and caste, apparently in the hope that an insuperable barrier would thereby be raised between true Hindus and Yavanas. This policy had in many cases the exactly opposite effect; Hindus ostracised for deviations from orthodox found shelter in Islam.

Scattered references in medieval Bengali literature throw light on the character and intensity of the challenge from Islam. Chaitanya's career as a reformer had its beginning in a confrontation with the Qazi of Navadwip. He infused into Hindu society a new moral ardour that cleaned to some extent the Augean stables which orthodoxy had nourished for centuries. The task of meeting the challenge was earnestly taken up, and a happy accident was the fact that the moral and spiritual appeal of Islam was considerably weakened. Vaishnavism not only preserved Hinduism in Bengal; it influenced Muslim society in different directions, and the compositions of about a dozen Muslim Vaishnava poets have survived the ravages of time.

In the North-West, Sultan Mahmud was the first 'bridegroom' who 'hasted from Kabul to seize by force as his bride the wealth of Hindustan', in the powerful words of Guru Nanak. In the trail of the

conquering armies in the eleventh century came a new faith, a new culture, a new way of life; and a continuous stream of warriors, administrators, theologians and saints crossed the mountain passes till practically the end of Muslim rule in India. Islam, representing the might and majesty of the ruling power, and aided by thriving Sufi sects, made comparatively easy conquests. It became, and remained, stronger in the Punjab than it ever was in Bengal, because it was geographically contiguous to the Muslim countries beyond the Indian frontiers and was in a position to maintain continuous contact with its homelands. Hinduism, however, was no less weak than it was in Bengal; the same disintegrating forces—rituals, superstitions, caste—were at work, and the Jogis—demoralised by their abominable practices—were among the claimants for the people's support.

Owing to the geographical proximity of the Punjab to Persia where Sufism had its origin, this province became the chief centre of the several Sufi orders which established themselves in India. After its migration to this country, Sufism could not long remain free from environmental influence. Vedanta, as also the survivals of Buddhism in Afghanistan and North-Western India, had some ideas to offer to the Sufis, particularly the Chishtia guided by Baba Farid. Apart from fostering the mingling of diverse religious forces, the Sufis adopted the local language for purposes of oral communication with the local people: obviously they could not be approached through Persian. Khwaja Muin-ud-din Chishti, settled at Ajmer, probably used old Hindi; Baba Farid, settled at Pak Patan, most likely used old Punjabi.

This Sufi practice might have provided a working precedent for Guru Nanak's adoption of Punjabi as the sole medium of his communication with the people. There were other precedents too, provided by the sponsors of the *Bhakti* cult in the Tamil country, in Maharashtra, and in North India. It was necessary to use the people's language for propagating and developing a people's religion. The distinction of Sikhism lies in the fact that it raised the people's language to the unprecedented status of the language of the sacred scripture.

Within a century of the establishment of the Sultanate at Delhi

liberal forces in Muslim society began to assert themselves. Amir Khusrau, for example, stated in his *Nuh Sipahr* that these were certain basic similarities between the religious beliefs of Hindus and Muslims. e.g. the eternity and all-powerfulness of God. Although he did not approve the worship of stones and plants, he realised that from the Hindu point of view these objects merely typified the power and majesty of God. Such understanding could not be expected from the spokesmen of Islamic orthodoxy. The pious Barani regretted that 'desire for the overthrow of infidel and the abasing of idolators and polytheists does not fill the hearts of Muslim kings.'<sup>13</sup> Firuz Shah Tughluq proudly claimed that he 'killed those leaders of infidelity who seduced others into errors.'<sup>14</sup> Jahangir used similar words in the *Tuzuk* in his account of Guru Arjan's tragic end.

Although political necessity and practical wisdom served as restraints on the policy advocated by Barani and his fellow thinkers, persecution was used continuously as an instrument of government. Even Amir Khusrau triumphantly described the destruction of Hindu temples and advised the political authorities not to allow the Hindus too much power and opportunity. This indicates widespread public support, within the Muslim community, of the policies pursued by rulers like Firuz Shah Tughluq, Sikandar Lodi and Aurangzeb. As a result the peaceful missionary activities of the Sufi and other Muslim saints lost much of the moral appeal to the Hindus who became accustomed to associate Islam with methods repugnant to genuine spiritual fervour. Persecution and coercion secured converts, but those who remained loyal to their ancestral faith nourished bitter resentment. So the gulf between the two communities remained fairly wide.

Akbar grasped the real nature of this problem and devised a broad-based solution. It was not enough to give up the time-honoured practice of destroying temples and killing infidels on various pretexts. It was necessary to relieve them of a crushing feeling of inferiority which prevented the flowering of their potentialities and to harness them to the service of the State through a system of partnership. The abolition of the *Jeziyeh* changed the basic character of the State; the Hindus were not simply to be tolerated on condition of payment of a penal tax; they were to be recognized as full citizens. Whatever

early Muslim jurists might have said on the true import of the *Jeziyeh*, it was in practice a penal tax and Hindu resentment against it was not based solely on the financial ground. It was a label of inferiority, of distrust, and of suppression. Once this label was removed, the Hindus came much nearer to their Muslim fellow-citizens, and there was a revolutionary change in the socio-religious atmosphere.

To that change Akbar's deviation from Sunni orthodoxy made a significant contribution. His spiritual quest led him to the conclusion that the ultimate Truth was not the monopoly of any particular religion. As no true Muslim of his age could admit the existence of truth in any religion other than Islam, he was in a sense an apostate. But what he really intended to do was 'to free Indian Islam from Arabicism and adopt it to the need of India as the Persians had evolved Shiaism to make Islam suited to their national genius'. Shivaji wrote in his letter on the *Jeziyeh* to Aurangzeb : 'That architect of the fabric of empire (Akbar)...admitted the admirable policy of universal harmony (*sulh-i-kul*) in relation to all the various sects, such as Christians, Jews, Muslims, Dadu's followers, sky-worshippers (*falakis*), *malakia*, heathens (*ansaria*), atheists (*daharia*), Brahmins and Jain Priests'.<sup>15</sup> Consistent with this purpose was the promulgation of *Din-i-Ilahi*, of which the underlying principle was *Sulh-i-kul* (universal harmony). Akbar was too practical to think of an amalgamation of Islam and Hinduism; with ceremonials, practices and a high priest (Abul Fazl) of its own. *Din-i-Ilahi*, was really 'a socio-religious order on brotherhood, designed to cement diverse communities in the land'. It died a natural death as a result of the abandonment of *sulh-i-kul* by Akbar's successors.

The revival of Sunni orthodoxy started in the last years of Akbar, though not with his patronage. Under the leadership of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi, the spokesman of the Naqshbandis; it continued till it reached its climax in the reign of Aurangzeb; its first significant victory was the execution of Guru Arjan; its continuing vitality was demonstrated through the execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur. As the Hindu community was too scattered and disintegrated to make any effective protest, the duty of speaking for *sulh-i-kul* fell upon the Sikhs; two of their Gurus sacrificed their lives, and a third suffered

imprisonment, because they represented a cause which was vital to the survival of non-Muslims under Mughal rule. The helplessness of the Hindus found clear expression in the Kashmiri Pandit's deputation to Guru Tegh Bahadur; in him they hoped to find—and did find—a saviour at a time when their own community could not provide leadership in resistance to Mughal persecution. There were local rebellions, organized by the Jats, the Satnamis and the Bundelas; but in these cases religion was mixed up with other issues, and there was no clearly defined demand for religious freedom.

The reimposition of the *Jeziyeh* provoked a far stronger reaction which was reflected in Shivaji's historic letter to Aurangzeb. Speaking as the champion of Hinduism he wrote :

'If you believe in the true Divine Book and Word of God (i.e. the Quran) you will find there that God is styled *Rabb-ul-alamin*, the Lord of all men, and not *Rabb-ul-Muslimin*, the Lord of the Muhammadans only. Verily, Islam and Hinduism...are (diverse pigments) used by the true Divine Painter for blending the colours in the outlines (of His picture of the entire human species). To show bigotry for any man's own creed and practices is equivalent to finding fault with the Painter.'<sup>6</sup>

Such appeals were not likely to deflect Aurangzeb from his policy of reversing all that Akbar had aimed at and achieved. From his point of view it was Akbar who had 'altered the words of the Holy Book' and it was his sacred duty to correct the mistakes of the 'architect of the empire'. He thought of his Creator as *Rabb-ul-Muslimin* : He was totally impervious to the fact that his Hindu and Sikh subjects worshipped Him as *Rubb-ul-alamin*. His concept of God regulated his concept of State and society. It sundered Indian life into an incoherent unit of fighting twins.

The advent of Sikhism practically coincided with the foundation of the Mughal Empire; the growth of a new religion synchronized with the consolidation of a new political order. Sikhism had strong links with the *Bhakti* cult: Namdev, the great *bhagat* of Maharashtra, settled in the Punjab in his last years, and the compositions of Ramananda and Kabir figure in the *Granth Sahib*. But the Sikh *Panth* had distinctive characteristics which were entirely lacking in the *sampradayas* constituted by the followers of Ramananda, Kabir and Chaitanya; and the Sikhs developed a new way of life which

gave them a new identity as a social group. The founder of Sikhism introduced a concept of Guruship which was fundamentally different from the traditional idea of spiritual guidance by individual Gurus. The continuity of a single *spiritual* personality through a succession of different *physical* personalities provided a unique bond of unity. The emphasis on the futility of rituals simplified and purified religion and brought it within easy reach of the humblest individual. Unqualified rejection of caste, frank recognition of equality of man, admission of women to a respectable status in the family as also in society, insistence on earning one's own bread and sharing it with others; these indicated a striking departure from the familiar norms of medieval society.

Doctrinally Sikhism was based on its own tenets. Its concept of God differed not only from the prevailing Hindu idea of a hierarchy of divinities, but also from the Semitic view of monotheism. It rejected the authority of ancient scriptures; here its difference with Hinduism and Islam was fundamental. A religion without rituals was opposed to one of the basic features of Hinduism and Islam alike. The great preachers of the *Bhakti* cult had endeavoured to reform religion and society without crossing the boundary walls of Hinduism. Their success was limited; orthodoxy was persistent and strong, and in course of time it virtually swallowed the reformed sects. Sikhism survived because from the very beginning it put itself outside the stretched hands of orthodoxy by developing doctrinal as also organizational unity.

The Mughal Government's friendly relations with the Sikh Gurus, developed according to the principle of *sulh-i-kul* in Akbar's reign, were interrupted violently by his successor's decision to "put a stop to the fifth Guru's "vain affair" or to bring him into the assembly of the people of Islam."<sup>17</sup> Seventy years later Jahangir's grandson made a similar attempt and inflicted similar punishment on Arjan's grandson. Throughout the seventeenth century the hostility of the Mughal State towards Sikhism took different forms. The climax was reached in Aurangzeb's reign. A situation developed in which Guru Tegh Bahadur found it necessary to 'put an end to his life for the sake of holy men' and thereby 'protected the frontal marks and sacrificial threads of the Hindus.'<sup>18</sup> These words of Guru Gobind



Singh reflect at once the extent and gravity of the religious crisis created by imperial policy and the elevation of Sikhism to a level transcending sectarian differences. The ninth Guru was certainly no worshipper of 'frontal marks and sacrificial threads'; but he approached Aurangzeb's policy of forcible conversion from the general standpoint of freedom of faith and took up the cause of that freedom at the risk of his life.

The better elements in Muslims society—Sufi saints like Mian Mir, Nawab Saif-ud-din (his name appears to be Saif Khan—Editor) of Saifabad who received Guru Tegh Bahadur as an honoured guest, honest traders like Nabi Khan and Ghani Khan who managed Guru Gobind Singh's safe journey from Machhiwara to Kanetch after the disaster at Chamkaur—were friendly towards the causes upheld by the Gurus. Sikhism attracted converts from Muslims ranks. It was not against the Muslims as a community, or against Islam as a religion, that guru Gobind Singh 'swore eternal war'. He preached : 'Allah and Abhekh are the same; the Puranas and the Quran are the same. It is the one God who created all'.<sup>19</sup> He recognized the temporal sovereignty of the Mughals.<sup>20</sup> He explained his mission in *Zafarnama*: 'The same God who has made you emperor of the country has blessed me with the sovereignty of protecting the poor and the downtrodden, and with fighting for the cause of righteousness.'<sup>21</sup> His father had undertaken an extensive tour in the Malwa region to check mass conversion and to 'protect the poor and the down-trodden' against oppressive officials and landlords. Guru Gobind Singh gave his own mission a wider connotation when he claimed that he 'assumed birth for the purpose of spreading the faith, saving the saints and extirpating all tyrants.'<sup>22</sup>

After Guru Gobind Singh's death the struggle initiated by him assumed a professedly political character. It was realised that the type of religious freedom for which Guru Tegh Bahadur had made the supreme sacrifice could not be realised within the political framework of the Mughal Empire. The evident decadence of the Padshahi seemed to provide an excellent opportunity for the establishment of the Khalsa *Raj*. What appeared to be a dream in 1708 became a reality even before Abdali's final departure from the Indian soil six decades later.

## FOOTNOTES

1. Macauliffe, VI, 104.
2. *Ibid.*, 126.
3. *Bijak, Ramaini*, 77. (Also Bhai Gurdas, Var X. 15—*Editor*).
4. *Ibid.*, 48.
5. Troyer and Shea. I. 186.
6. Westscort. *Kabir and the Kabirpanth*, 20.
7. McLeod. *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*, 155.
8. Macauliffe. VI. 126.
9. Tara Chand, *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture*, 165.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Tabaqat-i-Akbari*, I, pp. 322-323.
12. R. C. Majumdar. *The Delhi Sultanate*, 565.
13. *Fatawa-i-Jahandari*.
14. *Futuh-i-Firuz Shahi*. (Elliot and Dowson, II, pp. 380-381).
15. J. N. Sarkar. *Shivaji*. 306.
16. *Ibid.* 309.
17. Rogers and Beveridge. *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, I, 72.
18. Macauliffe, V. 295.
19. *Ibid.* 275.
20. *Ibid.* 305.
21. Trilochan Singh. *Guru Tegh Bahadur*, 331.
22. Macauliffe. V. 301

## SOME PROMINENT FEATURES OF CIVIL LAW UNDER MUSLIM RULE IN INDIA

SRI RAM SHARMA

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When Austin defined law as the 'command' of a 'sovereign' to those who 'habitually obeyed him', he started a controversy which has still not come to an end. Earlier criticism centred round the concept of the 'sovereign' and his 'subjects'. But attention has now come to be concentrated on the concept of the 'command'.

Most contemporary European travellers failed to find any law in Mughal India; they found no legislator currently functioning whose commands they could exalt to the status of law, even though they predated Austin and his concepts. Some of them notice changes in the 'Law' as it affected them; the varying rate of custom duties which some Mughal Governors sought to exact; but though they record the change, they usually ascribe it to the waywardness of the Mughal Government and its administrators who, they seem to tell their readers, behaved as they liked, though for themselves they believed that the administrator should follow the previous practice—the current law—and not depart from it.

The present concept of law is much wider than that of the European travellers or of Austin. Those who followed Austin—Gray, Holmes, Kelsen, Hart, Frank, Williams, Ron and several others—have distinguished several varieties of 'laws' which would not be covered by the concept of 'commands' of a 'sovereign' to the obeyed by 'subjects'. Most of these varieties fall into the field which is covered by civil law, hence our concern with them here.

Some law—and civil law at that—lays down procedures prescribing formalities and conditions which the citizens intend to assume themselves or which they wish others should assume to make their intentions effective for contracting of marriages, making of

wills and entering upon contracts with others.

There are the laws conferring powers on public officials; they give them power to hear and determine certain types of disputes. These may include provisions for laying down the procedure to be followed by the 'court' and prescribe the qualifications, of those who would form such a court and, keeping the procedure laid down and composition of the court, may define the validity or otherwise of their decisions.

The complexity of modern life has led to the emergence of 'subordinate legislatures' to whom the power to make laws on certain subjects may be delegated. Their 'laws' would be valid only if they cover any of the subjects 'delegated' to them and their composition conforms to the requirements of the law creating them. Apparently we may believe that occasions for delegating the law-making power could not have arisen in medieval India, but we would have to go deep into this question to come to a final conclusion whether some sort of civil law did not create or recognise such authority.

Laws, especially some taxative laws today, may be seen to discourage or encourage a certain type of social behaviour. Both as taxative laws as well as laws affecting social conduct such laws would form a part of the civil law even if the taxation laid down be punitive in nature. We would have to find out if such laws existed in Muslim India.

Then there is custom. Its field in the ordering of life has been dwindling in the modern world for several centuries now. Custom is held to be law today only if the courts recognise it and would decide cases in accordance with it. But sometimes the area of social conduct covered by custom may not be amenable to the jurisdiction of the courts. This abstention from interference need not always be proclaimed positively by the lawmaking sovereign, it may arise out of non-interference over the years.

When we examine the prevailing custom and its place in medieval India, we may surprisingly find rival agencies at work eroding the field at one time covered by custom. When laws such as those requiring payment of taxes run counter to strong inclinations, our compliance with them might not be habitual.

Another field of civil law is said to cover the question of

succession in the right to rule. Apparently it may concern a very small section of people in a state but its implication may be wider; the succession of one among the several possible may affect the lives of citizens in a way different from the one in which the success of another might have affected them. Here the problem of the validity of earlier laws might be raised. This again falls in the field of civil law.

Then again there is the problem of the area which the governing or ruling authority may validly cover. Today in the written constitutions of democratic countries this is provided by writing fundamental rights into the constitution and giving the courts the right to enquire and decide whether any law is or is not within the declared freedom for legislative action. This is the transformation through the centuries of the old formula which held that some laws were divinely ordained and were thus beyond human—and even royal and princely—interference.

There are then rules which in one way or another create or impose 'obligations' without any threat of criminal prosecution. These rules where the social pressure for conformity to them is great and the prospect of consequences to those who deviate or threaten to deviate from them serious would again fall within the field of civil law.

Underlying all laws and supporting the entire legal edifice there are what have been called 'rules of recognition.' These cover both the civil and the criminal law. Whereas in the field of crime punishment by 'courts' for their violation might be said to be a safe guide—some held that not the statute but the decision of the court enforcing it is the 'law'—in the field of civil law other criterions have to be applied.

There is, last of all 'the law' with regard to the officials; their recruitment, their compensation and their tenure besides multiplicity of other matters which their employment raises in most states. Except rules regarding rebellion, corruption and terrorising those who may have been placed under their care where punitive results may be said to follow their deviation from the official code of conduct, the rest of their activities would certainly fall in the field of civil law now as in the past.

Last of all, in the modern world there is the civil law of torts aiming at providing individuals compensation for harm suffered by them as the result of the wrong conduct of others. Its primacy in the civil law today stands recognised but where it stood in our period has yet to be ascertained.

The Muslim rule in India is sometimes said to begin with the Arab attack on Sindh in the eighth century. But this proved an isolated affair and it was only in the beginning of the eleventh century that Muhmud established his authority in the Punjab, Multan and the North-Western Frontier. The Ghaznavids were overthrown by the Ghorids who in the first decade of the thirteenth century really founded the Muslim rule in Northern India. The hill states of the Punjab and U. P. and most of Rajputana did not come under Muslim rule before the fourteenth century when loose Muslim authority was asserted in the south and Gujarat. The extreme south even then did not pass under the control of Delhi. The establishment of the Vijayanagar empire took a sizeable part of the Deccan from under the Muslim control. Under the Tughlaqs Rajputana was wrested from Muslim control; indeed here Muslim rule was shortlived. Babur defeated Rana Sanga, but was content to leave the Rajput's States mostly alone. Humayun lost all vestiges of control in this area and even when Sher Shah re-established Muslim rule in Rajputana, his short reign did not do much for Muslim rule in Rajputana. Akbar started a series of conquests in Northern and Central India. By that time Vijayanagar had been defeated and the greater part of this Hindu area passed under Muslim rule. But Tanjore, Mysore and the local Nayaks elsewhere kept their authority for long; it is doubtful whether all their territories ever came under Muslim rule. Shivaji's conquests in Tanjore, Karnatak and Mysore re-established Hindu rule in these territories, wiping out all vague claims of some of the Muslim rulers in the area fro overlordship in it. Aurangzeb's conquest of Golkanda seems to have re-established firmer Muslim rule there, but the Marathas did not leave him much in peace. His last years in the Deccan were spent rather in campaigning than in ruling. Finally, the Marathas ousted Muslim authourity in most of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Mysore and Berar. Sahu's formal acknowledgement of the Mughal emperor as his overlord was more a gesture of gratitude

to the memory of Aurangzeb who had let him live as a Hindu while he was a prisoner in his custody, than a declaration of political subordination to his successors.

The nature of the Muslims rule in India has been grossly misunderstood. As I have explained in my studies of the nature of the state in medieval and Mughal India, the Muslim rulers never attempted to set up an Islamic state in India. Some zealous Muslim rulers followed a vigorous anti-Hindu religious policy, but neither Firuz Tughlaq nor Sikhander Lodhi and not even Aurangzeb was able to set up—or even attempt to set up—an Islamic state in India under their control. As a matter of historical fact the Islamic state of the theologians even elsewhere had long been a dearm, not even a sweet dream, but a bitter dream to some of them. It would be wrong, therefore, to assume that the Muslim civil law was imposed on all these living under the Muslim rule.

The first prominent feature of civil law under the Muslim rule was that it differed with the religion of the person. Primarily the Muslims were governed mainly by a different law from that applicable to the non-Muslims. But there was a further classification even among the Muslims. Only the foreign Muslims were usually governed by the Muslim civil law. Here there were four schools of lawyers, though we need notice two divisions only. The majority of the Sunni Muslims followed one group of interpreters of the Hadith, the law, while the Shias followed their own commentators. The rulers of Bijapur and Golkanada were Shias and so were the Muslims of Kashmir. Shias coming from across the western frontier joined the Mughal army and came to occupy sometimes important places in civil administration. Though occasionally there was an attempt at persecuting the Shias, usually they were left alone to pursue their own way of life. Their personal law applied to them in the civil matters.

But among the Indian converts to Islam there were many classifications. Some trading classes had come to form separate groups, the Bohras and Khojas for example. Engaging in trade, they soon found the strict Muslim law against charging interest rather irksome. Soon their sprawling trade activities seemed to have made them cling to the local laws of inheritance or to a modification of it

which differed radically from the orthodox law in this connection impossible. Aurangzeb tried to impose orthodoxy on them, but it is reasonable to believe that his pressure resulted only in the appointment of Sunni Imams among them who were content with leaving their flock free in the matter of the civil law applicable to them. We have no reason to believe that their law with regard to lending money on interest and investing large sums in trade on their own or on behalf of others came to be changed. We have to remember that upto 1937 when the Shariat Act of that year made the Muslim personal law applicable to all Muslims in British India, they were governed by their own laws of inheritance and even of marriage. They could not but have been governed by their own civil law during the Muslim rule as well.

Along with them there were warlike Muslim tribes of the Salt Range who kept up tribal forms of organisation and with it whatever tribal law they had. The 'Chiefs' eking out a scanty living from the bare rocks of the area supplemented by occasional raids into the more 'settled' and richer areas needed a personal law of their own to cover their adventurous lives. Their marriage laws and laws of inheritance continued to be different during the Sikh and the British period and naturally here again we must assume that these were different under the Muslim rule as well.

Converts made in India could be easily divided into three classes. The Rajputs, the agriculturists and skilled labourers and the masses. In spite of much that has been written about the conversion from the depressed classes as a bid for their freeing themselves from the shackles into which Hinduism is said to have kept them bound, there is not much evidence to prove that mere conversion led to the improvement of their status. Of course, Islam sometimes provided chances for social moveability, but only to those who thus moved out were able to better themselves. The lower classes of Muslims in what was East Bengal occupied generally no better position in the society than the comparable classes of Hindus did even in the nineteenth century. The Muslims Jats, the Arains—whatever their predecessors might have been known during the Muslim rule—the oilmen, the dyers and other skilled labourers found no profit in giving up their customary law as to marriage and inheritance and continued



living under it. Of course, their marriage might have been registered before the Qazi, but the public ceremony of marriage as current in the community might have been good enough for all except the very rich or socially ambitious. We find this continuing upto the British period.

The Muslim Rajputs continued to observe the Hindu prohibitions with regard to marrying near relations. Their laws of inheritance became an admixture of tribal practices, the customs of their own group among the Hindus and Muslims law. Though they had broken away from the Hindus of the same sub-caste, they continued taking their quarrels to the tribal Panchayats rather than to the Qazis. As was revealed in the first quarter of the twentieth century, there were Rajput converts to Islam on whom the new faith sat very lightly. Their descendants in Bharatpur, Alwar, some districts of U.P. and parts of Rajputana were known as Malkanas in the twentieth century. Some of them even sported Hindu names. The Muslim civil law hardly touched them and many of them were easily reabsorbed among the Rajputs in the twenties of the twentieth century. They continued to be governed mostly by the Hindu law applicable to the various sub-castes among the Rajputs, with whom they had parted company. They observed the marriage restrictions as to consanguinity as practised by the Rajputs. At their marriage ceremony Hindu priests officiated, though it is probable that such ceremonies were held in secret during the Muslim rule. Of course the Qazi registered the marriage, but it is doubtful if his registration was simply a record of fact or a ceremony necessary under the law.

It is sometimes held that the Hindus were governed by the 'Hindu Law'. This statement raises several questions. What was 'the Hindu Law' which is said to have been applicable to the 'Hindus'? Who were reckoned 'Hindus' to whom this law was made applicable by the law-givers of the time? As even in subsequent centuries only the Brahmins, Rajputs and equivalent castes known by other different names in many localities were subject to this law in the medieval period. The Khatri of the Punjab and U. P. were not generally recognised as Kshatriyas during this period, notwithstanding the claims of their successors during the British period. They had greater affinity with other trading groups known by different names as

Aggarwals, Vaishyas, Mehtas and even the Jain trading classes. The dividing line between the 'Dvijas' subject to the Hindu law generally was the claim to the sacred thread at 'the proper time.' We know, however, in the families of Sodhis and Bedis—Khatris as they were reckoned to be—men were invested with the sacred thread during the Mughal period. But it is doubtful whether they continued wearing the thread, as in some classes of the Khatris it was worn at the time of investiture only and discarded thereafter. Even among the Rajputs the thread investiture ceremony usually preceded the marriage ceremony.

So the Hindu civil law differed with the caste of the citizens. The larger part of the population—the cultivators, the peasants, the labourers, the artificers of various types was governed mostly by the customary law of the group concerned. We are apt to forget that this was so even in modern time till the enactment of the Hindu Code. This personal law covered both the marriage and rules of inheritance. It is wrongly believed sometimes that the rules of marriage were uniform in Hindu India, mostly governed by the rule of consanguinity as laid down by Manu. But even among the highest of Brahmins the concept of forbidden relation differed in the north and south. A maternal uncle is a very desirable bridegroom even among the highest Brahmins in Maharashtra and the south, whereas in the north the idea is repellent. Manu's seven classes of marriage really defined the rights in property of the offspring of parents brought together in various ways. But the law of inheritance now applied to the orthodox marriages alone. The commentators writing during the Muslim rule had dropped out all other kinds of matrimonial relations. This applied to the Brahmins including Mohiyals, Rajputs, Khatris, Banias, Aggarwas and Jains. Other classes were mostly governed by the customs of the group. Various shorter methods of contracting marriages flourished. Divorce was permissive among the peasantry. The rights in the wife were, in some classes, sometimes subject to sale, purchase, barter and even mortgaging. Where these practices prevailed widow remarriage was permitted as a matter of course; it was compulsive in some groups where a woman was as much an additional 'hand' in performing the labour in which the family was engaged.

Polyandry was prevalent on the extreme fringes of the country among some tribal people. Again it was governed by custom, which was well recognised by the rulers.

Malabar had its own laws of inheritance among the Nairs. Here properly was transmitted through female descendants. This customary law stood sanctioned by the state.

Thus the personal law of the citizens depending upon the religion, sect, caste and sub-caste of the citizens was governed for most of the citizens by customs. For the orthodox Muslims it did revolve round the Muslim law as interpreted from time to time by great scholars and expounded by the Qazis. Ultimately the production of the *Fatāwai Alamgiri* under Aurangzeb gave such Muslims a code which could be easily referred to. The orthodox Hindus swore by Manu, Yajñvalakya and Prashar, but in actual practice what they followed were the commentaries or expositions on earlier commentaries being produced from the thirteenth to the seventeenth centuries.

Inheritance raised two further problems in Hindu law—the law of adoption and the law as to wills. Most commentators on the Smritis or their earlier commentaries expounded the law of adoption; the ceremony to complete the adoption and the consequences as to the claims to inheritance by the adopted son to the property of his natural father. Just as witnesses to a valid marriage were necessary, so were the witnesses to the ceremony of adoption as well. In both cases the ceremonies had almost always to be public, if not publicity proclaimed. Wills did not receive as much attention from the jurists; they do not seem to have been frequently made; 'the law' as to the joint family property almost made them extralegal. We do not have rare cases of contests as to wills made.

In the Muslims law again wills do not seem to have any valid character in the period. Aurangzeb is said to have made two wills. One was obviously invalid, as it instructed his successors how to divide 'his' empire after his death. But under Muslim law he had no personal claim to the empire as a property and could not give direction as to its disposal after his death. The second will gave instructions about his burial and defraying its expenses. This again does not seem to have been acted upon. Earlier in his reign we find him

refusing to act on a will by one of his public servants, who had instructed that one of his daughters be married to a prince. The testator had been born Shia, but had several times proclaimed his adherence to the prevalent Sunni faith. He did this in this will as well. The prince refused to marry the girl for the obvious reason that she was born a Shia and her adherence to the Sunni faith could not be taken seriously.

But religion did not govern the personal law of the citizens alone. The taxative law made a distinction between 'the faithful' and 'the infidels'. Throughout the Sultanate period Hindus paid the *jizya* except under Zainul Abidin in Kashmir, who is reported to have abolished it for a time. Except under Firoz Tughlaq and Sikandar Lodhi who seem to have prohibited the holding of Hindu fairs, a pilgrimage tax was levied during this period. Akbar abolished first the pilgrimage tax and then the *Jizya*. The pilgrimage tax was levied for some time under Shah Jahan but was remitted later on, though revived under Aurangzeb who reimposed the *jazyya* as well. Under Aurangzeb there was a distinction in the rate of the sale tax levied on the Hindus and the Muslims. The Hindus paid it at a rate double that charged on the Muslims. The rate for *Sar-derakhti* for the gardens was 1/6 of the produce for the Muslims and 1/5 for the Hindus.

Another prominent feature of the civil law that emerged under the Muslim rule in India was the use of written documents of various types which were used as evidence in the civil law or which became the basis of the civil suits. They included the documents such as a *Tanashah*, acknowledging a debt incurred. Sale deeds including those concerning sale of slaves, sale of building and land under cultivation. Mortgage deeds of houses were executed. In civil suits there are documents in which the writer stands surety for party's being present when called upon to do so. Some very curious documents were executed as surety on behalf of the soldiers who had probably been absent without leave for some time. The forfeiture of the amount on the the absence of the soldier again naturally gave rise to a civil process against the surety whatever might have happened to such a 'habitual' offender. Slaves were freed by written declarations. Accounts were settled between debtors and creditors by deeds

proclaiming 'no dues'. An interesting document seems to assert the acceptance of the status of a slave by one who had married a girl presumably under someone else's protection. We hear of forged documents asserting indebtedness. When an attempt was made to realize the claim the nature of the document relied upon in support came to be examined and the claimants had to forego his claims. Almost all types of 'instruments of conveyance' used today in India are found in use during the larger part of period. The language of these instruments in their affirmative part follows the form which they had taken during this period, particularly during the Mughal period.

Of course girls, and Muslims girls at that time, had no rights of their own. No cases of breach of promise to marry could arise. A father could, however, certainly institute a civil suit against the father of a girl for breach of his promise to marry her to the son of a complainant. Obviously a similar suit could be instituted by the father of a girl as well under similar circumstances.

Suits against wrongful possession of land again formed as civil suit to be decided by the revenue officers.

So far as the Hindus under the Muslim rule were concerned, civil suits among them were decided by Panchyats of various forms and differing composition. One or more villages might have a communal Panchayat, deciding cases where personal interests of the citizens clashed with those of the community as a whole. Similarly depending upon the number of persons following a particular occupation, one or more villages had Panchayats dealing with cases arising among these pursuing that occupation and sometimes the group of similar occupations. There were, in the cities, similar corporations dealing with disputes among their members. Above such functional corporations there was a Nagar Sabha under a Seth or a Chief citizen. The 'City Council' dealt with problems concerning the interests of all the citizens taken together. When a commander of the fort of Surat under Aurangzeb tried to levy extra-legal extortionate levies on Hindu traders, they all left Surat in a body and did not return to Surat till they had been assured by the Governor of Gujarat that these orders would not be enforced. This entire 'non-cooperation' movement was well organised under well-recognised

city leaders. Though this is a unique case, there is no reason to believe that the city organisation it refers to was non-existent elsewhere. Like traders all over the world, it was more interested in its members making money peacefully and without attracting much attention. It is possible that the deal to get the Hindu temples at Surat spared from destruction, had been carried through a similar organisation. These Panchayats and corporations were not only to perform judicial functions. they carried out many social and cultural functions.

In some important centres of Hindu cultures—Benares and Nasik for examples—there were corporations of learned Brahmins whose verdicts as to the relevant Hindu Law, when in dispute elsewhere, were sought for by those concerned. As all civil law was a part of 'Dharmashastra', their opinions were formal declaration of the Hindu law concerning the case in dispute. In fact those opinions were much like the declaratory judgements of the Supreme Court of India today. We find rulers—and even lesser administrators—referring some questions to such learned bodies. When Shivaji and Sambhaji desired to get some Marathas readmitted into Hinduism reference is said to have been made to the learned Brahmins at Nasik and with their opinion prescribing a course of action, the persons concerned were readmitted to Hinduism after they had performed the stipulated penances.

Of course, the Hindu Panchyats and corporations decided cases because they were allowed to decide them. Akbar is said to have formally given this recognition but the Panchayats and corporations functioned throughout the medieval period because they were allowed to function.

The Qazi was a state official and paid for by the state. Besides deciding cases, he functioned as a registrar-general as well, registering marriages particularly, but lending the weight of his status to other documents either by registering them or otherwise becoming a party to their execution.

As now, complaints against the Qazi and other who dispensed justice were frequent. Guru Nanak declared in the *Adi Granth* that no one could hope to have justice from a Qazi unless his palm was greased. It is true that in an age when state administrators were

extravagantly paid, their remuneration was very paltry. As the pious and learned they were supposed to have been above such worldly consideration as their salary. But like Lord Bacon in contemporary England; they seem not to have been beyond temptation. Sher Shah would not even trust them with his orders for their own appointment. We find a case in Mughal India where forgery to support the claims of a party to a civil suit seems to have been resorted to by a Qazi. But in a face to face society of the times, disputes do not seem to have been as frequent or as recklessly started as they are today.

In a case before court it was usual to strike the issue in dispute between the parties and distribute the burden of proof very often as is done today. The complainant having made the original averment in the suit was not competent to buttress it by an oath. It was the respondent to whom only this form of declaration of the truth or otherwise of the complaint was available. We must remember that during these six centuries people took oaths much more seriously than they do today. The law applicable to a case was seldom in dispute, the facts alone had to be found. For this purpose oath taking provided a simple and easy procedure.

Hindus, we learn, would not take oaths in Qazi's courts at least. If their civil disputes were brought to such courts, they had to be decided on evidence. Here if the opposite party was Muslim it could claim that Muslim witnesses be produced to support the claim. This might have led to stalemates in some cases when obviously the remedy lay in removing the case to a different court.

With regard to procedure it must be remembered that no provision existed for appeal from the decision of 'a lower' court to 'a higher court.' No such division among courts existed during the Muslim rule. The court where a suit was instituted had the right to render a 'final' and almost an 'infallible' decision in the case. But the complainant had to execute a declaration that the case stood decided and he was satisfied. When the case was taken elsewhere, it appeared there as a complaint about the complainants not securing justice. The case was tried *de novo* from the beginning. Some cases were taken to courts of wider jurisdiction covering the entire Sarkar or even the province as complaints against the honesty of the court where the suit might have been instituted earlier.

We hear quite a lot about administration of justice by the heads of the state. But our records tell us that cases brought to such courts were few and far between. Shah Jahan had to appoint an officer to secure complaints which he could hear in his own court. All the drumming up for such supplicants does not seem to have produced more than four to five cases for the royal judge! The case could not have been different in other reigns and on different times. Citizens did not like to pursue their civil quarrels in public courts. The majority of the inhabitants being Hindus, they seldom, if ever, resorted to state courts; they preferred to take the decision of the elders in the Panchayats or preferably in private. The absence of litigation or its rarity was not a tribute to the strict justice rendered by state courts; it was due to the habit of a majority of citizens refusing to resort to them.

How futile sometimes the lodging of a case in the Emperor's court could prove is borne out from the case of Shayam Ram v Kaisari Singh reported in the *Akhbarat* of the province of Ajmer in the forty-sixth year of Aurangzeb's reign. Shayam Ram claimed that six years earlier he had agreed to purchase 80,000 maunds of corn from the agents of the Maharaja of Jodhpur and paid Rs. 230 in advance. The respondents neither delivered the promised amount of corn nor did they pay back the money. Shayam Ram lodged a complaint in the Emperor's court who sent the case for enquiry and report to the Faujdar and on its being ineffective, to the Governor of Ajmer. Commissioners were sent from Ajmer to Jodhpur for local enquiry. The respondents denied the claim and filed a written declaration to that effect. On the commissioner's reporting this to the Governor at Ajmer, the Governor asked him if he could produce any witnesses to support his claim. He declared that his witnesses at Jodhpur would not give evidence in his favour on account of the fear of the opposite party. He submitted, however, that he was prepared to give up his claim if the respondents denied it on oath. The case now had been remitted to the court of a Qazi who called upon the respondents to repeat their denial on oath. The Vakil of the Maharaja now asserted that the respondents being Hindus would not take the oaths in court. The Qazi reported the facts to the Governor who was inclined to summon the respondents to his 'court'.



The Vakil again intervened and declared this was objectionable probably as this presumed that there was some truth in the complaint. The Governor submitted the paper to the Emperor and 'asked for further instructions.'

Two more cases throw some light on the jurisdiction of and the procedure in the courts in Aurangzeb's reign. Tulsidas brought a complaint in the Governor's court that one Bulbal Das owed him Rs. 4000. He produced the written acknowledgement of the debtor about the money. The Governor ordered that under the circumstances he better resort to the court of local Qazi. A commercial dispute was brought to the court of the Governor by Tulsi Das who stated that he had started business in partnership with Pir Muhammad Vohra and contributed more than Re. 50,000 to the joint venture. He now proposed to withdraw from the enterprise but his partner would not pay back Rs. 50,000 which lay in the joint venture with Vohra. The Governor ordered that the case be sent to the Faujdar for deciding it according to the fact and the law.

## II

STUDIES IN THE GURU'S SACRED WORD



## GURU TEGH BAHADUR'S BANI— SPIRITUAL AND ETHICAL TEACHING

DR. BHAI JODH SINGH

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59 Padas and 57 Slokas of Guru Tegh Bahadur are included in the holy *Guru Granth*, distributed as below in various musical measures :

Gauri 9; Asa 1; Devgandhari 3; Bihagra 1; Sorathi 12; Dhanasri 4; Jaitsari 3; Todi 1; Tilang 3; Bilawal 3; Ramakali 3; Maru 3; Basant 5; Sarang 4 and in Jaijwanti a new measure, added by him, 4.

It is generally believed that the *Bani* of the Ninth Guru was incorporated in the Holy volume under the various musical measures at Talwandi Sabo, now called Damdama Sahib, by Guru Gobind Singh when he stayed there for some months, after the battle of Chamkaur, in 1705. But modern research has brought to light some manuscript copies of the Holy volume transcribed much before that. Sardar G. B. Singh, the author of *Puratan Biran* (old volumes) in Punjabi mentions on page 215 that he found in *Dacca Sangat a Bir* (volume) which was finished on Aghan Vadi 7 Samvat 1732, 17 days after the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur at Delhi. Copying must have begun much before that, most probably before the Ninth Guru left Anandpur. This Volume contains all the Slokas composed when the Guru was imprisoned at Delhi. It is surmised that these Slokas were brought to Anandpur along with the head of the Ninth Guru and entered in the *Dacca Sangat* manuscript at the proper place. He also found some copies in which the whole *Bani* of the Ninth Guru is given at the end after adding new blank pages to the *Bir*. Professor Gurbachan Singh Talib in his book jointly written with Dr. Fauja Singh of the History Department of the Punjabi University, also gives details of a *Bir* no 97 in the Reference Library

of Shiromani Gurudwara Committee, Amritsar, on page 119 : "This bears on the Colophon the year 1739 (Bikram Era) which would work out to be 1682 of the Christian Era. This copy purports to be made at Damdama Sahib one of the Gurudwaras at Anandpur Sahib". These facts show that the hymns of the Ninth Guru were circulated among the several *Sangats* much before 1762 A.D.

The Sikhs believe that five successors of Guru Nanak, whose *Bani* is included in *Guru Granth Sahib* further clarified and emphasized what the first Guru had taught. Professor S. Radhakrishnan in his book *Religion and Literature*, published by Hind Pocket Books (P) Ltd., Delhi-32 has summarised the teachings of Guru Nanak on several topics in a chapter entitled. *Adi Granth and the Sikh Religion*. About *Gurubani* he says :

"The word of the Guru is the music which the Sikhs hear in their moments of ecstasy; the word of the Guru is the highest scripture. By communion with the Word we attain the vision unattainable".<sup>1</sup> i.e. we realise Him pervading His creation. "Guru Arjan says about the holy Granth, "The Book is the abode of God."<sup>2</sup> The hymns are set in music. We find in the *Adi-Granth* a wide range of mystical emotion, intimate expressions of personal realisation of God and rapturous hymns of divine love."<sup>3</sup>

When we analyse the teachings of the Ninth Guru we shall find the same teachings, but with emphasis on different aspects suitings the circumstances in which he found himself.

When Guru Tegh Bahadur assumed the leadership of the Sikh faith, the cruel and bigoted Emperor Aurangzeb reigned in Delhi. As we have previously seen, he had imprisoned and starved to death his own father, killed his own brothers—Dara Shukoh and Murad—and disgraced his eldest son Muazzam, who afterwards succeeded to the throne as Bahadur Shah. On account of all his crimes he was heartily hated even by his own co-religionists. He then sent for his priests and asked them what he was to do to regain the sympathy of Muslims. His Counsellors said he could only do so by converting the Hindus to Islam. He should send money and other presents to Makka and Mecca. His priests should take them and bring him credentials from those holy cities to know that he was an orthodox and religious Muslim. All this being done, he was to issue

proclamations throughout the empire that the Hindus should embrace Islam, and that those who did should receive jagirs, State service and all the immunities granted to royal favourites. The Emperor took the advice of his friends and all the plans suggested were adopted.

"The experiment of conversion was first tried in Kashmir. There were two reasons for it. In the first place, the Kashmiri Pandits were supposed to be educated, and it was thought that if they were converted, the inhabitants of Hindustan would readily follow their example; secondly Peshawar and Kabul, Muslim countries were near, and if the Kashmiris offered any resistance to their conversion, the Mahammadans might declare a religious war and over power and destroy them. It was also believed by the Emperor without foundation to it, as it afterwards turned out, that the Kashmiris might be tempted by promises of money and government appointments, because the beggary and meanness of the inhabitants of that country was proverbial."<sup>4</sup>

Throughout the teachings of the Ninth Guru, therefore, love of mammon and worldly goods is strongly deprecated, so that for their sake the inhabitants of Hindustan be not tempted to change their religion. If the bulk of the Hindu majority changed their religion in fear or greed, there was a great danger of the Sikh minority being persecuted and crushed.

*"O Man, hold firmly to this truth in thy mind:  
The whole word is like a dream and like a dream  
will soon be no more. A man may elaborately build a wall of sand,  
but it will not last even for a short while.  
Similarly transient are pleasures of Maya (mammon) why art thou  
entangled in them, O ignorant man". (Sorathi 8)*

(A God-illuminated person is not one who wisely talks about gnosis, but a person knowing his soul to be immortal.) He does not fear anyone nor does he terrorize others." (Sloka 16). Guru Amardas proclaimed : "Man, thou art an image of light, realise thy source." The Ninth Guru emphasized this truth : "Good men, know this body to be mortal. Recognize God that dwells in it alone to be everlasting." (1 Basant).

In *Gurubani* terms such a Maya and Prakriti, used in Sankhya and Vedantic literature have been employed, but their connotation

is different. Sankara says Maya is neither real nor unreal. It is *anirvachani* i. e. inexpressible in words. It is some power outside Brahman and when it envelopes Brahman, it limits Brahman into *jiva*. But in *Gurubani*, "Maya is a slave of the Lord, it serves those in constant communion with Him."<sup>6</sup> Maya functions to hide the reality. "Maya makes us forget God, creates delusion and makes man, love the other."<sup>7</sup> *Gurubani* does not picture the universe as a creation of Prakriti or Maya. "The world comes into existence by His decree (*Hukam*), but *Hukam* cannot be described in words. By his decree *jivas* come into being."<sup>8</sup> Liberation does not come through knowledge, but by the destruction of egoism by being in tune with the Infinite. The *jiva* does not become Brahman when his ignorance is destroyed. "The rivers and streams fall into the ocean, but do not know its extent."<sup>9</sup>

In the Mul-Mantra, i.e. the basic creed of Sikhism, God has been described as *Ajuni*, which means that he does not take birth. He is unborn. The Gurus were opposed to the Hindu doctrine of *Avatarvad*, but in their hymns you find they used names for God which the masses used for the incarnations of Vishnu, e.g. Rama and Krishna. Guru Arjan in the Bhairoon measure condemns those in very strong terms who on the birthday of Sri Krishna place the idols in a cradle and sing, lullabies rocking the supposed new-born child to sleep :

*Those who sing lullabies commit a grievous sin.  
May that mouth burn which says the Lord enters the womb.  
He is neither born nor does he die;  
Neither comes he nor goes.  
The Lord of Nanak pervades everywhere. (4.1.)*

But in Majh he addresses God as 'Murari'. In *Sabad Hazare* of Guru Gobind Singh we find the same. In the 4th Sabad he calls God 'Nilkanth' (a name of Siva), Madho, Murari, (the names of Krishna), but in the next *sabad* in *Kalyan*, he says :

*"Put your faith only in the Creator and not in His creation.  
Consider Him to be the Supreme Lord, who is from the beginning,  
is never born, who is unconquerable and indestructible".*

All this means that having explained to the masses that the Formless one does not come into the world they used all the names

that Hindus or Musalmans were using to denote the object of their worship.

Another fact that may puzzle some scholars is the use of analogies from the Pauranic lore. The stories of the liberation of the Courtesan, of Ajamal, the Elephant, the Hunter and Draupadi, the wife of the Pandvas were current among the Hindu masses and the Gurus used these to emphasize the efficacy of the Name. Says Bhai Gurdas, "If the nurse Putana<sup>10</sup> was saved, it does not mean that poisoning others is á good act. If Ajamal was saved, men should not soil their souls by committing adultery." And to emphasize this he says :

"If someone in a fall from a date-palm tree did not break his limbs, don't you climb a date-palm tree and let yourself fall in the belief that you too would be unhurt."<sup>11</sup>

Analogy is an illustration, not a logical reason. The Guru used these old stories to emphasize the efficacy of the Name in saving such great sinners and exhorted his listeners to enshrine the Name in their hearts to save themselves.

During the times of the Gurus it was a general custom amongst those who wanted to work for their spiritual progress to retire to the mountain caves or forests. This practice had continued from the time of the Upanishadas. Swami Vivekananda on page 182 of his English translation of the Yoga of Patanjali, called *Raj-Yoga* gives the following quotation from *Svetasvatru Upanishad* :

In (lonely) places, as mountain caves, where the floor is ever free of pebbles or sand, where there are no disturbing noises, from men or waterfalls, in places helpful to the mind and pleasing to the eyes, yoga is to be practiced (mind is to be joined)". 11.10.

When the practice of Hatha-yoga started then too similar directions were laid down for its practice. In Chapter II, Sloka 12 of *Hathayoga Pradipka* by Sri Atmaram Swami it has been laid down : "The place where Hatha Yoga is to be practised should have the following qualifications :

'The practitioner of Hatha Yoga should live above in a small Matha or monastery, situated in a place free from rocks, water and fire, of the extent of a bow's length, in a country where begging is easy and which is ruled over by a virtuous king



where there is no disturbance.'

Though the social and political conditions in the country under went a great change by the invasion of the foreign hordes and their establishing them as rulers of the country, the Yogins went on following the old directions irrespective of the fact that the religion of the invaders who became rulers was opposed to their own. This escapist tendency was harmful for society. Guru Nanak admonished the Siddhas on the Golden Mountain for this. Says Bhai Gurdas, "The Siddhas asked Nanak how the residents of the plains below fared. The Baba replied, 'Naths, the moon of truth is invisible in the darkness of falsehood. The ignorant yogins only know how to cover their bodies with ashes everyday. The Siddhas have hidden themselves in the mountains, who will lead the masses to cross the stream of samsara?'. The Gurus, therefore, preached against this tendency. Says the Ninth Guru, "Why go to search forests (to find Him). He who dwells in all hearts but remains ever pure, pervades thy heart also. Just as fragrance fills the rose and reflection the mirror, the Lord pervades all without a break; search Him inside thee. The Guru hath revealed this knowledge that the Om pervades inside and outside. Saith Nanak, without knowing thyself the scum of doubt will not be removed".

All the schools of Indian philosophy have laid salvation or freedom from transmigration as the goal for the individual, but they differ in the description of this final achievement. The Nyaya and Vaisesika scholars believe that the soul (Atman) is an eternal and all-pervading substance. The qualities of the soul are cognition, desire, aversion, pleasure, pain, etc. These cannot belong to any physical substance. So, there must be an immaterial substance called 'soul' of which they are the qualities. The soul is different and distinct from the body. The senses, the mind and the stream of consciousness. "..... With the attainment of liberation through knowledge of the reality, the soul becomes free from its connection with the body and has no experience of pleasure and pain or consciousness of any kind."

The Sankhya and Yoga schools consider *Purusa* and *Prakriti* as two coeval entities. Rishi Patanjali points to a God, but he is not the creator of *Purusas* (souls) or *Prakriti*. The nature of the soul is

pure consciousness unchanging and abiding. "The bondage of the self is affected by its identification with the *buddhi* and egoity. And this identification is due to the reflection of the pure spirit in the *buddhi* and the consequent failure on the part of the spirit to distinguish itself from the former. This non-discrimination results in the identification of the two, which further leads to the identification of the pure self with the successive series of evolutes. It is for this reason that the pure spirit which by its intrinsic nature is free and pure, risen above pain and sin and moral and intellectual defects, comes to feel its subjection to all these limitations.

It is, however, the presence of pain, which sums up all the limitations and defects, that compels the spirit to think about the means of delivery from its meshes. Hence the necessity of philosophical knowledge. It is the theoretical and practical conviction that the subject as pure spirit is by its very nature free from all contamination of pain and misery that ultimately leads to its emancipation. The emancipation is achieved by the discriminative knowledge that the self is entirely different from and unaffected by the not-self. This, however, is not easy to achieve. The theoretical conviction must mature in direct realisation of the truth".<sup>11</sup> The cessation of pain is what a saved soul gains. There is no mention of bliss which the Vedanties assert.

The *Purav Mimamsa* deals with Dharma which produces prosperity like heaven. Jainism, Saharswamin and Prabhakra have not spoken of moksa. Kumarila and Saliknatha and their followers could not ignore it, since the system would not be complete or perfect without it. Kumarila understands it as freedom from rebirth, the cause of pain and suffering. For this the past *karman* should be exhausted through experience without any residue to produce a body. The seeker for liberation should not perform any prohibited action or any action for reward, since both these would generate new bondages. He should do both compulsory and conditional (*nitya* and *naimittika*) the omission of which would produce sin and suffering".<sup>12</sup>

What the Vedant philosophy of Samkara says on this subject has already been touched upon briefly. When through knowledge a *jivatma* realises the truth 'I am Brahm', the shackles of Maya break

and it regains the bliss natural to it.

But the conception of the Supreme Reality in *Gurubani* differs from all the Six Schools of Philosophy. The God of Guru Nanak is 'Karta Purakhu'. Unlike the Purusha of Samkhya He is not a mere witness of the show that Prakriti displays. He is both efficient and material cause of the universe, unlike the God of Nyaya and Vaisesika schools. The Gurus rejected the Karma-kand or the ritual portion of the Vedas which the *Purva Mimamsa* lays stress upon. He is not Tatastha like the Brahman of Samkara. He Himself creates, sustains and destroys the universe. All animate and inanimate substances in the world have been created by Him. So, the *jivatma* is to realise these facts and try to be in the tune with the Infinite. By destroying its egoism it achieves the supreme object of its life. 'By singing His praises thy impurity will be removed and the poison of 'Haumain' (egoism) spread all over will be destroyed."<sup>13</sup> To the question, "What present should we offer to have a vision of His court? What words should we utter to win His love?" Guru Nanak replies in Pauri IV of *Japu*: 'Meditation on His name and His glory in the ambrosial hours of the morning. Our actions procure us this vesture (body), but the door of liberation is opened through His grace." Our meditation should be so intense "That we may realize His presence everywhere." In Pauri xx of *Japu* the first Guru proclaims : "If the hands, feet, or body are covered with dust, they are cleansed by washing them with water. If clothes are made unclean. by use of soap they are washed of impurity. If Buddhi (intellect) is defiled by sin, love of the Name will purify it." In the light of these teachings we shall now analyse the hymns of the Ninth Guru.

*"The person who has given up his egoism (haumain) by recognising God as the creator, shall get deliverance; be sure of this truth, O my mind".* (Sloka 19)

*"Consider the man, who meditates God day and night as His image. Between God and His servant there is no dissimilarity— recognize this to be true".* (Sloka 29)

*"Sing the praises of God, good men;*

*You have got the priceless human birth : why waste it?*

*Take refuge with God who purifies sinners and the support of the holy.*

*Why forget Him, by whose remembrance the Elephant got rid of*

*his fear.*

*(Gauri 2.5)*

**But a man cannot serve God and mammon both. Hence the Guru says :**

*"Give up pride and attachment to mammon, and devote your heart to the worship of God.*

*Saith Nanak, this is the way to salvation— through the teachings of the Guru find it." (Gauri 2.4)*

**Of the use of the mere study of religious books :**

*Religion is a matter of experience. You have to realise the truth, which the religious scriptures point out.*

*"Good men, rest comes only when a man seeks and finds the asylum of Hari.*

*The study of Vedas and Puranas should result in the remembrance of God's Name.*

*The person whom greed, delusion, wealth, sense of possession and indulgence in sensual pleasures do not attract and for whom pleasure and pain are alike, is the image of God."*

*So is he who considers hell and heaven, nectar and poison and gold and copper alike.*

*"For whom praise and dispraise are the same, and on whom greed and attachment have to effect. Consider him only enlightened whom pain and pleasure do not entrap.*

*Nanaka; consider such a person saved." (Gauri 2.7)*

**For purifying the heart and getting it rid of inclinations towards sin, remembrance of the Name is the only remedy. Washing the body in the water of sacred rivers may remove the dirt of the body, but such bathing does not remove the foulness of the mind.**

*"Without the Name of Hari man is subject to sorrows; Without devotion doubt is not removed—the Guru has revealed this secret.*

*Bathing at sacred places and fasts are of no avail, if one does not take refuge in God.*

*Yoga and sacrifices will bring no reward to him who neglects to praise Him.*

*Forsaking pride and attachment to worldly pleasures, one should sing the praises of God.*

*Says Nanak, the mortal who acts thus will be a Jivan Mukta i.e. is saved whilst alive. (Bilawal 2.2)*

Without devotion to God life is wasted.

*"He who does not devote himself to God, has wasted his life bear this in mind.*

*He who has not his mind under control will not get any reward for pilgrimages and fasts, this truth I proclaim.*

*Just as a stone placed in water is not pierced by it,*

*Regard the man who has no devotion in him to be hard-hearted in the same way.*

*In this Kali-Age liberation is obtained through the Name, the Guru has revealed this secret.*

*Saith Nanak, that man is great who sings the praises of the Lord."*

*( Bilawal 2.3)*

Guru Arjan has proclaimed in *Sukhmani*, Sloka and Pauri I of Ashatpadi IX that the entire character of him who enshrines God's Name in his heart is changed :

*"Ho, who enshrines the Name in his heart sees God pervading all beings.*

*Every second he worships the Lord.*

*Nanak, he becomes an Apars (untouched by Maya) and he saves all.*

*Falsehood does not touch his tongue.*

*His heart longs for a vision of the Impeccable.*

*He does not cast an evil eye on the womenfolk of others.*

*He loves the company and service of good men,*

*He has controlled his sense and is free of the five evils.*

*Nanak, amongst millions there is one such Apars."*

The Ninth Guru in the measure *Basant* says :

*"Mother, I have obtained the wealth of the God's Name.*

*My mind is rid of running hither and thither—*

*It has found its rest.*

*Illusion and desire of possession have departed from my body— the pure knowledge of God has dawned.*

*Greed and delusion do not touch me now. .*

*I have grasped firmly devotion to God.*

*The doubt about birth and death is no more.*

*Now that I have obtained the jewel of the Name,*

*All desire has been removed from my mind :*

*It is now absorbed in bliss.*

*He alone sings the praises of Hari, on whom the Ocean of Grace showers His compassion.*

*Saith Nanak, such wealth is found rarely by some through the Guru's  
Word."* (Basant 3.3)

For purifying the mind in order that it may contain the Name, ethical conduct is indispensable. In the very first hymn in *Gauri*, Guru Tegh Bahadur has emphasized this point :

*"Good men : discard pride of mind.  
Flee day and night lust, wrath  
and the company of evil men.  
He who regards pleasure and pain, honour  
and dishonour as alike.  
And rises above joy and sorrow—  
Such a one knows the Truth.  
He renounces praise and obloquy and seeks  
to achieve the state that is inexpressible.  
Nanak, this way is hard—*

Only the rare God-instructed man knows it. (*Gauri* 2.1)

Again :

*"Do not think that the yogi knows the right way in whose mind you  
see avarice, attachment to wealth and worldly possessions.  
Recognise him only as a yogi who engages neither in praise nor in  
obloquy of others and to whom gold and iron are alike, and  
who has risen above pleasure and sorrow.  
Such a man, who has stabilized his restless mind that was running  
in all the ten directions, is to be regarded as emancipated,  
saith Nanak."* (Dhanasari 2.3)

*Liberation is attained by him  
"Who in pain is not affected by it,  
Who has no attachment to pleasure and is fearless,  
and who thinks of gold as a cold of earth.  
Neither does he indulge in praise nor cavalling at others.  
And has no greed, delusion of pride in him. He remains aloof from  
happiness and sorrow and cares not for honour or dishonour.  
He gives up all hope and desire, and has no desire.  
Him lust and wrath do not touch.  
In the heart of such a man does Brahmin abide.  
A man who the Master favours follows this way  
of life and he is absorbed in the Lord, just as  
water merges into water."* (Sorathi 2.11)

Transience of worldly things must be recognised by a person who seeks spiritual progress. While performing worldly duties

towards his near and dear ones he must not forget his duty to God. Our relations with wife, children, brothers, sisters, friends and companions end with death. The Guru reminds us that even our body which accompanied us when we were born, is left behind when we depart. The Guru wants man to ponder over these truth and not neglect his spiritual life.

*"Wake up, O mind, wake : why dost thou sleep negligently?*

*The body that was born with thee will not  
accompany thee when thou shalt depart.*

*Mother, father, progeny and other relations, to  
whom thou remainst attached,*

*Will consign thy body to the flames when life departs from it.*

*Know that thy affairs with the world*

*last only as long as thou art alive.*

*At thy death the whole thing will pass off like  
a dream; so sing of the praises of Hari."*

(Tilang 2.2)

*"O mortal, remember Him night and day.*

*Every moment thy life is passing away  
like water from cracked pitcher.*

*Why dost thou not sing the praises of Hari, thou  
ignorant fool :*

*Thou hast forgotten death, entangled in  
false covetousness.*

*Even now if you chant the praises of Hari,  
nothing is lost.*

*Saith Nanak, by devotion to Him thou shalt attain  
the state of fearlessness"*

(Tilang 2.1)

Every creed has some external forms. "While the meaning is alive in these they are not only harmless but pregnant and life-giving. When we come to think that they possess in themselves material and magical virtues. then the purpose which they serve is to hide God from us and make us practically into atheists."<sup>14</sup> At the time of the advent of Guru Nanak split-eared yogins who followed Gorakh Nath had a large following among the masses of the Punjab. They admitted both Hindus and Mohammadans to their sect. They laid great stress on outer forms. Guru Nanak in measure *Suhi*, hymn 7 drew their attention to this aspect of their practice.

"Yoga does not consist in the patched coat nor in the staff and rubbing ashes on the body. Nor does yoga consist in ear-rings nor in

close-cropping the hair. It does not consist in sounding the horn. The way to yoga is found when we remain in tune with the Impeccable amidst worldly temptations. Mere talk cannot turn a man into a yogi. He who considers all men equal is alone to be called a yogi."

The Ninth Guru says on this theme :

*"Man, thou didst not embrace the teachings of the Guru :  
of what avail is the shaving of thy head or donning ochre-coloured  
robes;*

*Thou has forsaken truth and adopted falsehood;  
thus hast thou lost the goal of life.*

*Thou hast filled thy belly by deceitful methods and slept like a beast.  
The way to devotion to God thou didst not learn and didst  
sell thyself to mammon.*

*Thou didst entangle thyself with sensual pleasures and  
forget the Jewel of the Name.*

*Thou didst remain ignorant and didst not remember God;  
thy life was wasted.*

*Saith Nanak : Lord! exercise thy own virtue of forgiveness.*

*The mortal always errs." (Sorathi 1.10)*

It has been mentioned earlier in this script that in the *Jaijwanti* measure we find only the four hymns of Guru Tegh Bahadur. In these he has emphasized the transitoriness of worldly pleasures and possessions and urges man to devote himself to the Name and thus attain the goal of life. We may in the end reproduce what is stated in these four hymns.

*"Remember Rama, remember Him.*

*It will stand thee in good stead.*

*Forsake following the illusion and take shelter with  
Consider the pleasures of the world transitory; this whole  
paraphernalia is short-lived.*

*Wealth of which thou art so proud will pass of like a dream;*

*The empire of the whole world is a wall of sand.*

*The servant of God, Nanak says, thy body will perish.*

*Moment by moment passed yesterday,*

*Today is also passing similarly. (2.1)*

*"Worship, O worship God, thy life is fast passing.*

*What shall I tell thee again and again?*

*Thou understandest not, thou ignorant man :*

*Thy body shall melt like a hailstone before long,*



*Give up all doubts and meditate on the Name of God.*

*In the end this alone is what will accompany thee.*

*Give up like poison the sensual pleasures.*

*and enshrine the praise of Hari in thy heart.*

*Nanak, the servant of God, reminds thee—*

*Thy opportunity is slipping." (2.2)*

*"O man, what shall be thy lot? To the name of God didst thou not  
lend thy ear in this world, and remained totally engrossed in  
sensual pleasures and didst not turn away thy mind from these.*

*Thou wast born a man, but didst not remember God even for an  
instant. Thou hast become a slave to gratification of lust and  
hast got thy feet shackled.*

*Nanak, the servant of God warns thee—This world is like a dream.*

*Why dost thou not remember God, slave mammon is?" (2.3)*

*"Thy life is passing in vain*

*Day and night thou dost listen to religious books yet thou dost not  
understand the truth, ignorant man.*

*Death is approaching and thou hast nowhere to flee from it.*

*Thy body, which thou regardest as permanent shall return to dust;  
why lost thou not remember God,*

*O thou who are without shame and ignorant?*

*Nanak, the servant of God tells thee to give up pride in thy heart  
and devote thyself to God and thus live thy life in this world."*

*(2.4)*

#### FOOTNOTES

1. ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਨਾਦੰ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਵੇਦੰ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਰਹਿਆ ਸਮਾਈ। (Japu)
2. ਪੋਥੀ ਪਰਮੇਸ਼ੁਰ ਕਾ ਥਾਨੁ। (Sarang V. 2. 90)
3. Pages 140 and 149.
4. M. A. Macauliffe. *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. IV. 1st edition, pp. 366-369.
5. ASA Chhant. Guru III. 2. 7.
6. Var Siri—Sloka 2. guru III.
7. Anand. Pauri 19.
8. Japu 2.
9. Majh. Chaupade 2.89. Japu. 23.
10. Name of the nurse set by Raja Kamsa of Mathura to poison the infant Krishna. She attempted to suckle him out of her poisoned breast. The infant refused to suck and the poison killed her.
11. HPWE. pp. 223 and 226.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 268.
13. Sukhmani XIX. 7.
14. Froude. *Short Studies*, Vol. I.

# VAIRAG IN GURU TEGH BAHADUR'S BANI

TARAN SINGH

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## I

All Scholars of the *bani* of the Gurus, particularly of the sacred compositions of Guru Tegh Bahadur, are unanimous in the opinion that the central theme of the *bani* of Guru Tegh Bahadur is *vairag*. None of context of *Gurubani* or the Guru Granth, the scripture of the religion of Sikhism. *Vairag*, in terms of the Indian tradition of religion, is generally known in that context also, quite vaguely; but it has hardly been ever defined precisely, so far as Gurumat or the Sikh way is concerned. In the Indian tradition of religions, *vairag* is almost synonymous with renunciation of the world : Gopi Chand and Bharthari practiced *Vairag*, abdicated worldly life. Bairagis, the followers of Ramanand, are not householders; almost half-naked, they wander from one sacred place to another all their life and live on begging. Of course, *vairag* has been slightly changing from one religion to another; yet, basically, the term has stood for the renunciation of the worldly life, the householder's life, for intensive devotion or *bhakti*.

The term *vairag* is a compound; the first component 'vai' meaning 'without' or 'sans', and the second part 'râg' meaning love, harmony, enchantment, attraction, etc. Thus, the term has variously been translated as dispassion, detachment, non-attachment and it has been interpreted as turning away from worldly-pursuits, dispassion towards the objects of the world, having no attraction for the worldly pleasures of wealth and power or unaffected by surroundings or by opinion, would be a better translation of the term, and it would be the one which would go closer to the spirit in which Gurumat has employed the word. *Vairag* should not mean 'selfish isolation'.

In the context of Gurumat, the spirit of which can be understood rightly only if a view of the entire *bani* of the *Guru Granth* as well as of the course of the Sikh history, both in the Guru period and later periods, is kept in mind, the term *vairag* does not mean renunciation of the householder's life, nor is its purpose merely *bhakti* or devotion to the Supreme Being. In Gurmat, *vairag* is an attitude of the mind, and not an act, be it of complete renunciation for whole hearted devotion, it is a way-of-life, worldly life, which rules out any contempt for the reality of life, worldly objects or surroundings; it is an attitude of self-sacrifice for the good of all; it aims at the spiritual development leading to the realization of the Supreme Reality. affirms returning to humanity for the amelioration of its lot of suffering; it is not pessimistic or escapist in essence; rather, it is dynamic, radical and revolutionary. Guru Nanak Dev, who expounded the religious philosophy which later was called Sikhism, has summed up, in *Sidha Gosti*, his views on the right form of *vairag* after his many discussions with the Siddhas who were also believers in the Indian way of *vairag*. The Siddhas, in that *bani*, assert that they live away from the paths which laymen trod, implying that they had renounced the householder's life. Guru Nanak Dev explains to them that such renunciation would not do, rather, they should live the worldly life, but should keep awake there in and should not trespass and transgress another's home, committing theft and adultery. His central point in the composition *Sidha Gosti* is that man should live in the world as detached as the lotus lives in water or a duck swims across a stream without allowing its wings getting wet, that is, man should so live with all the worldly objects that he can transcend them and its not soiled and spoiled by the evil of the world. The Guru has succinctly put his view of true *vairag* thus :

*"As the lotus liveth detached in waters,  
as the duck floateth care-free on the stream,  
So doth one cross the Sea of Existence, his mind attuned to the  
Word."*

A Brahm-gyani (man of realization) of Guru Arjan's conception, as given in *Sukhmani (VIII.1)*, is the one who lives 'nirlep' (unattached—not affected by the worldliness), and not the one who has renounced the life of the householder. The *Jivan-Mukta* (liberated

while alive) of his conception (*Sukhmani—IX. 7*) is also one who is unaffected by the surroundings and circumstances but not the one who is a recluse, ascetic or wanderer in forests.

*One whose self loves to obey the Lord's command may be called  
jivan-mukta.*

*Joy and sorrow to such a one are alike :*

*Ever in bliss, never does he grieve.*

*Alike to him a clod of earth and a lump of gold :*

*So are amrita and nauseous poison.*

*Honour and neglect he holds alike;*

*And king and beggar to him are the same.*

*One whose practice in life be such,*

*Such a one, Nanak, would be known as jivan-mukta.*

Such *vairag* is to be practised in life: it is not running away from life.

In the same strain has Guru Tegh Bahadur defined the ideal person and the ideal living.

*One who by suffering is unperturbed;*

*Not swayed by pleasure, attachment or fear.*

*Holds gold and dust alike;*

*Is free gratification at practise or pain at censure,*

*Is above avarice, attachment and conceit;*

*Is untouched by pleasure and pain;*

*Holds praise and dispraise alike;*

*Has renounced lure of the world and coveteousness,*

*And frees himself from all desire.*

*Abjures lust and wrath—*

*In the mind of such a one does the Creator dwell.*

*By grace of the Lord alone does man.*

*Learn this way of life.*

*Saith Nanak : Such a one is merged into the Lord,*

*As water into water.*

*(Sorath. Hymn XI)*

The central theme of Guru Tegh Bahadur's *Bani* is *Vairag*, but it is the *Vairag* of Gurumat's idealism; it is the *vairag* of living pure amidst the impurities of life; it is living unsoiled amidst the impurities, of worldeness; it is the *vairag* of self-transcendence; it is the *vairag* of self-denial and self-sacrifice for the good of all. True Gurumukhs (Guru-oriented persons) who are daily remembered in the Sikh *Ardas* (congregational prayer) for the highest sacrifices they made for

humanity to have true life of justice, freedom and faith were such *vairagis* and not those who had renounced the worldly life. Guru Tegh Bahadur himself sacrificed his life so that freedom of conscience and faith for all should be preserved. If the aim be to leave the worldly life, Where is the need to sacrifice oneself for the householders and worldly men? He did preach the life of non-attachment, or detachment, in his *bani*, in order to achieve a higher purpose, which can be arrived at only through *bhakti*.

## II

Guru Tegh Bahadur has preached *vairag* or non-attachment which, in essence, is the antithesis of attachment. "Attachment", according to the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*,<sup>1</sup> may be considered in three relations : (1) attachment to the things of senses, (2) to objects of affection, (3) to the fruits of actions. Guru Tegh Bahadur preaches detachment from (1) the things of senses, (2) objects of affection and (3) fruits of actions, but at the same time points towards the higher purpose of *bhakti* or meditations on the Name. But, Knowing fully well that man is not so constituted as to easily give up the pursuit of pleasure in things of the senses, objects of affection and fruits of action, he builds up a good, rational case for detachment from them. He points out the deceptiveness and unworthiness of the objects of senses such as property, wealth and pleasures of the palate. He emphasises their true nature which is non-real, ever-changing and thus unfaithful to their possessor. He points out that worldly possessions do no good to the soul of man which is his self; rather, they produce egoism, vanity and pride which degrade man spiritually, emotionally and socially. He urges that it is folly to pin any hope on the objects of senses and affections, even on the fruits of the so-called acts of piety. Mother, father, wife, children are the objects of affection, but they are never the true friends of man; they are selfishly attached and do not last with man. Similarly he declares that all pious acts such as bathing at sacred places, fasting, giving away charity, are worthless, as they fill the doer with arrogance and egoism which are degrading. Such thoughts as these induce *vairdg* or non-attachment towards these objects.

Guru Tegh Bahadur has expressed these thoughts on *vairag* in highly moving and touching poetry, hymn and *slokas*. Let us examine

a few illustrations.

(1) *Vairag* from the things of senses :

He points out that the things of senses act like poison and ultimately kill the love of God in man. He drifts away from meditation on the Name which is the real purpose of life and thus fails to realize the truth.

*One who has renounced the poison of worldliness,  
And has turned indifferent to it—*

*Saith Nanak : Listen my mind to my words,*

*Reckon such a one indeed to be truly fortunate. (Sloka 17)*

'Maya' is a highly obtruse term in Indian philosophy. Broadly speaking, it stands for the principle of creation which creates things of various hues and colours; forms and smells, tastes and sounds which attract man and make him oblivious of his true pursuit of *bhakti*. The Guru exhorts man to renounce such *Maya*.

*One who has renounced Maya and avarice*

*And is indifferent to the lure of the world,*

*Saith Nanak : Listen my mind to my words—*

*God indeed abides in his soul. (Sloka 18)*

Man's attachment to his own body is great. He is proud of his robust health, fine physique and fine looks. It is a matter of daily experience that beauty perishes, bodies pass away and only ashes remain in their place.

*My friend, this fine frame of thine*

*Of which thou art proud, may perish in a moment.*

*Saith Nanak; That man alone is true victor*

*Who has devoted himself to God.*

*(Sloka 42)*

Repeatedly, the Guru has called the things of senses or of the world things of dream which pass away as does a cloud and vanish like a mountain of smoke. He proclaims the real truth from the house tops :

*Listen man, grasp firmly this truth :*

*This whole universe is as a dream, shattering in an instant.*

*Man labours to build a wall of sand, crumbling soon after :*

*As is this wall, so are pleasures of the world,*

*In which thou fool; art entangled.*

*Wake up before it be too late.*

*Turn to devotion to the Lord;*

*Saith Nanak : I have proclaimed to thee*

*The inner truth of the vision of men of God. (Sorath 9)*

This 'mountain of smoke' is not to last long. The Name alone is the true support for the man.

*My mind, why hast thou neglected devotion to God's Name?*

*One so neglecting it,*

*After dissolution of the body falls under Yama's power.*

*Know this world to be no more than a mountain of smoke :*

*What reasoning has made thee believe it lasting?*

*Nothing will last with thee, realize this—*

*Neither wife nor wealth nor home.*

*Devotion to God alone will thy support be in the hereafter.*

*Saith Nanak : Devote thyself to God with constancy. (Basant 4)*

These hymns make one ponder. They proclaim an empirical truth which is a matter of daily experience. However, the Guru too knows the nature of man and wonders at it :

*My devotee friends,*

*Behold! Such is this creation of God;*

*Amidst the universal play of death*

*Man considers himself immortal.*

*Strange is this beyond words. (Gauri 2)*

(2) *Vairag* from the objects of affection :

Guru Tegh Bahadur has drawn attention to the sad fact that all the near relations, even one's wedded wife, are self-seekers. They are after their own comfort and pleasure. They do not love one to whom they are related, but their own selves. They appear to love you but only till the time you serve their purpose. As soon as life departs they push him out of doors and leave him. All other objects are forsaken too :

*All the usages of life while life lasts—*

*Mother, father, brother, progeny, friends and the partner of the home,*

*The moment life forsakes the body, all look upon man as ghost—*

*Keeping him not for one half hour and push him out of doors.*

*Ponder this deeply; this world is like a mirage.*

*Saith Nanak : Devote thyself ever to the Divine Name*

*And thus find liberation (Dev-Gandhari 2)*

Love of worldly relations and friends is false and hollow. They are all extremely selfish and seek their own comfort. The

Guru says :

*Worldly love is false, hollow :  
Wife, friends and others, however near  
Seek nothing but their own comfort.  
All cling to possessions and their own benefits.  
And wonder of wonders: nothing in the end lasts with man.*

*(Dev-Gandhari 3)*

Man, in the end, is cheated and betrayed by his wealth, woman and status:

*Wealth, woman status—all that thou takest to be thine;  
Believe the word of Nanak, none of these shall abide with thee.*

*(Sloka 5)*

Man gets many companions in prosperity, but in adversity, they all leave him:

*Many profess to be man's companions in his hour of prosperity;  
None befriends him in adversity.  
Saith Nanak : Render devotion to God which in the end will thy  
succourer be.*

*(Sloka 32)*

God alone is man's constant companion :

*Friends and companions have all departed;  
None has been constant.*

*Prays Nanak : In this hour of agony God is my support.*

*(Sloka 55)*

Thus does the Guru drive home the lesson of the falsehood of all worldly relations who are the objects of affections.

(3) *Vairag* from the fruits of actions :

Even good men pin their hope on the ritualistic pious acts. They believe that the same would stand them in good stead and save them from the 'noose of Yama.' They do ritualistic bathing, give charity and expect to be saved. But alas; acts performed from desire do not bring salvation and man stands bound in transmigration. It is only devotion to God that liberates man. Ritual acts produce arrogance in man which again is a bondage hard to break. This is the Guru's verdict :

*He whom ritual bathing, fasting, charity full with arrogance—  
All his pious acts, saith Nanak,  
Are as little worth as is the elephant's bath.*

*(Sloka 46)*

The Guru announces profoundly that all ritual practices are completely barren. Nothing without devotion to the Lord is



productive for the release of man :

*Know this to be the truth :*  
*One without devotion to the Lord*  
*Has made waste of his human incarnation.*  
*One engaging in ritual bathing, fasting,*  
*Without disciplining his passions—*  
*Know this for truth—*  
*Barren is all his ritual practice.*  
*As a stone lying in water is not soaked.*  
*Even such know ye the man without devotion.*  
*In Kali-yuga liberation comes from devotion—*  
*Such is a hidden truth revealed by the Master.*  
*Saith Nanak : He alone is worthy is whom is devotion to the Lord.*  
*(Bilawal 3)*

All the traditional paths followed for liberation are futile. Only devotion to God lifts illusion and true enlightenment comes to man. One need develop *vairag* from all types of practices :

*To live without devotion to the Lord is to be full of sorrows;*  
*Illusion lifts not except through devotion—*  
*Such is the mystic truth revealed by the Guru.*  
*What good ritual bathing, fasting,*  
*Without seeking shelter in the Lord?*  
*Yoga-practice, sacrifices—*  
*Barren all without devotion to the Lord.*  
*He who removing his egoism and attachment*  
*Chants the Lord's praises,*  
*Saith Nanak : Such a one truly is a jivan-mukta (Bilawal 2)*

### III

With all attachments crossed over, true realization dawns. Man surrenders to the Lord, seeking His grace. This alone saves him.

*Lord, protect Thou my honour :*  
*With heart filled with Yama's terror have I sought Thy shelter,*  
*Thou Ocean of Grace :*  
*Me, a fallen sinner, a benighted fool, avaricious, this evil-loaded*  
*career now repels.*  
*Ever-present fear of death now burns me through*  
*Means of liberation have I sought in all directions.*  
*The secret of the Immaculate Lord dwelling in the heart has eluded*  
*me.*  
*Unendowed with noble qualities, devotion, austerities—*

*What device may now avail me?*

*Nanak, helpless, has fallen at Thy feet, a seeker after grace :*

*Redeem him Master, from Yama's terror. (Jaisari 2)*

New realization comes with *vairag*. Truth is then driven home :

*Youth is past; old age has at last overcome this body.*

*Saith Nanak : My self, in love devote thyself to God :*

*Thy allotted span is coming to a close. (Sloka 3)*

God appears to be of higher value than anything else :

*Saith Nanak : Listen my mind! why hast thou neglected God,*

*Who has given thee life, prosperity, status, joy and noble mansions?*

*(Sloka 8)*

Ultimately comes the realization :

*God alone is giver of all joy, none else.*

*Saith Nanak : Thou art saved only through contemplating Him.*

*(Sloka 9)*

As *vairag* develops in man, he engages himself in loving devotion. All distinctions between the Lord and the devotee cease. The devotee merges with the Lord.

*One who night and day engages in loving devotion,*

*Know him to be the very image of God.*

*Believe this from Nanak : Between God and His devotees no distinction is. (Sloka 29)*

This state is the state of man's perfection and that is his true destiny.

#### IV

Now, the man who has become the image of the Lord and all distinction between him and the Lord has ceased, has a divine role to play. The *vairagi* contemplates God and reaches perfection. Thereafter he returns to the people of the world to liberate them. He never returns to objects of senses or affections, nor seeks fruits of his devotion, but seeks to liberate other men from the charm of the object of sense and affection. A *vairagi* has that capacity. The Guru asserts :

*One who renounces egoism, avarice and pride.*

*Saith Nanak, shall be liberated himself and liberate others.*

*(Sloka 22)*

How does the man of realization who had started devotion to God after developing *vairag*, liberate himself and others? What is

his own liberation? What is the form of liberation he brings to others, his fellow men? The Guru has defined liberation of the devotee in these couplets :

*One who is untouched by joy and sorrow :  
By avarice, attachment and egoism—  
Saith Nanak : Such a one is indeed an image of God!*

(Sloka 13)

*One indifferent to praise and dispraise;  
One to whom gold and iron are alike—  
Saith Nanak : Listen my mind to my words,  
Know such a one to be liberated.*

(Sloka 14)

*One to whom joy and sorrow are one :  
One who treats friend and foe alike—  
Saith Nanak : Listen my mind to my words,  
Know such a one to be liberated.*

(Sloka 15)

A liberated one never loses his balance. He is always in poise, whatever the circumstances. He is unaffected by the external conditions of life. His equipoise is never upset. He is prepared for all eventualities. His freedom is dearest to him and not gold and pleasures. He is an enlightened man. He understands the transitory nature of joys and sorrows, riches and poverty, pleasure and pain, praise and dispraise and knows that all of them are bondages. Thus, he is prepared to sacrifice these for the liberation of his soul and for the liberation of the souls of others. He develops a strength by meditating on the Name. That strength is the courage to sacrifice all and everything for the preservation of the liberty of the soul. This is the spiritual strength. Two couplets (slokas) of Guru Tegh Bahadur present a wonderful thesis which concerns the destinies of all people and which indicate the role a spiritually liberated person is to play in the circumstances.

Those couplets are :

*When strength is gone, bonds grow up, and they grow too strong to  
be shattered.*

*Saith Nanak : He alone is the support to rescue as He once did for  
the Elephant.*

(Sloka 53)

*When strength comes, bonds are shattered, all efforts begin to avail.*

*Saith Nanak : All is in your hand, Lord;*

*Be you my aid.*

(Sloka 54)

Liberation is the antithesis of bondage and strength is that of weakness. Guru Tegh Bahadur stands for strength and liberation, believing that all forms of strength come from spiritual strength and all types of freedom—political, social, religious, economic, intellectual and emotional—flow from the spiritual liberation. The Gurus stood for the fullest freedom of man, and not partial. The fullest freedom is possible when all bonds—political, social, religious, economic, intellectual, and such others—are snapped and broken. Guru Tegh Bahadur had realized that the time to strike against all bonds and those who were the creators and preservers of those bonds had come. He, however, knew fully well that this should be supported by the courage to sacrifice everything—things of the senses, objects of affection and even life—by the Indian people who want liberation and freedom from the foreign yoke, social and religious bonds and from their own emotional and intellectual shackles. Guru Nanak had pointed out the religious, cultural and political degradation and degeneration which had come with rule by the foreigners.

*In the Kali age Atharvan is the Veda,*

*and the name of the Lord has become Allah.*

*The rule is of the Turks and Pathans,*

*and blue wear has become the fashion.*

*(Var Asa 13)*

Guru Tegh Bahadur declared that a true 'gyani' (enlightened one) is he who is not afraid of anyone and who does not overawe anyone :

*One who overawes none, nor does yield to anyone in fear.*

*Saith Nanak : Listen my mind to my words,*

*Proclaim such a one to be enlightened.*

*(Sloka 16)*

He wanted his compatriots and the general masses of India to develop fearlessness in order to strike against the oppressors—political, social and religious. Such fearlessness could come from the courage to place everything at the altar of liberty. Such patriots should be prepared to sacrifice their possessions, relations and themselves. That courage could come from the inner spiritual strength only. To give courage, the Guru preached this philosophical truth :

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*Note* : English rendering of Sloka 53 and 54 is by the present writer.

*May may only worry over what can be averted.*

*Saith Nanak : On this path of life*

*Nothing is lasting; all is evanescent.*

*(Sloka 51)*

*All that is created, must one day perish.*

*Saith Nanak : Leave alone all these entanglements :*

*Devote thyself to God.*

*(Sloka 52)*

Guru Tegh Bahadur was leading the people of India in the direction of liberty, freedom, dignity and self-respect. That was the motivation behind his *vairag* and *bhakti*. Spiritual liberation is incomplete without political, social, religious, economic, cultural and intellectual freedoms. Hence fearlessness, enlightenment and strength are his key-terms in the slokas (1-57). These are the tools with which all bonds can be broken. His *vairag* is the courage to sacrifice. He sacrificed himself and all that was his.

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(Note : Professor Gurbachan Singh Talib's English rendering of the *bani* of Guru Tegh Bahadur has mostly been used in this article).

## TRANSCENDENT POETIC VISION OF GURU TEGH BAHADUR

ATTAR SINGH

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Guru Tegh Bahadur belongs to an uncommon galaxy of poets whose ethereal word assumed and achieved substantiality of history. In the historical act of the self-chosen martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur for the sake of upholding *Dharma* and the total integrity of man enshrined the same vision of human glory which was originally realised in his divine hymns. Both the Bani and the martyrdom are eternally linked up in a grand design, the one illuminating the other at the same time as providing the ultimate justification for it. Not only the historical circumstance of Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom, but also its existential and ideological content impart to his entire life and all his deeds including his works an aspect of greatness which is really hard to define. The nobility of the cause, the dignity with which the Guru bore his suffering and went through all the passions leading up to the laying down of his life, the utter selflessness of his endeavour throughout his sojourn on earth, all point towards a remarkable capacity for self-transcendence. And it is this quality of transcendence which provides the integrating principle for his poetic compositions.

As in his life and most glorious death, so also in his works. Guru Tegh Bahadur is concerned primarily with the two-fold problem of the human situation and the human choice. The socio-historical situation of his times is best illustrated by the fact of and the circumstances leading up to his own supreme self-sacrifice. An oppressive state structure characterized by its growing alienation from the people, the exclusivist ideology with its concomitant fanaticism and intolerance, which sustained it, the choking up of all avenues for dissent and protest, the ruthless suppression of liberal

tendencies even amongst the Muslim mystics and men of God—all combined to generate an atmosphere of violence and cruelty, terror and hatred. The dehumanizing influence of such a socio-political set-up is described by succeeding generations of poets of the Sikh tradition right from Guru Nanak onwards. All the oppressive and intolerant societies have one thing in common : their agents seek to bring their captives and victims down to their own animal level. Guru Nanak has given us vivid pictures of rulers and their lackeys as predatory animals or as butchers and the ruled as morally blind, ignorant and utterly demoralised and dead in soul.

- (1) ਰਾਜੇ ਸੀਹ ਮੁਕਦਮ ਕੁਤੇ । ਜਾਇ ਜਗਾਇਨਿ ਬੈਠੇ ਸੁਤੇ ।  
ਚਾਕਰ ਨਹ ਕਾ ਪਾਇਨਿ ਘਾਉ । ਰਤ ਪਿਤੁ ਕੁਤਿਹੇ ਚਟਿ ਜਾਹੁ ॥ (1)
- (2) ਰਤੁ ਪੀਣੇ ਰਾਜੇ ਸਿਰੇ ਉਪਰਿ ਰਖੀਅਹਿ ਏਵੇ ਜਾਪੈ ਭਾਉ ॥ (2)
- (3) ਅੰਧੀ ਰਯਤਿ ਗਿਆਨ ਵਿਹੁਣੀ ਭਾਹਿ ਭਰੇ ਮੁਰਦਾਰੁ ॥ (3)

Truely speaking, one begets the other as almost a natural consequence. The pervasive gloom, could be dispelled only by acts of steadfast faith, stoic courage, ennobling heroism and ultimate transcendence of self, of which Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom is the supreme example.

As one enters the poetic world of Guru Tegh Bahadur, one is awakened to a subtle but sure change of atmosphere, a sort of atmospheric depression somewhere betokening an impending storm. It is the same territory with its well-defined features that was discovered and chartered by the Sikh poetic tradition. The same moral fervour, a similar awareness of the prevalent dichotomy between appearance and inner reality, form and content, profession and practice and an identical concern for man's regeneration both ethical and spiritual. The total cultural ethos in which this awareness and concern is embedded and the diction, the idiom, the symbolism and the image-patterns through which it is externalized and articulated also remain the same. It could not be otherwise. The broad uninterrupted stream of Sikh culture which had kept evolving for almost two centuries before him formed an integral part of Guru Tegh Bahadur's religious ministry. He was deeply nurtured in this tradition and it shaped his metaphysical sensitivity and aesthetic sensibility. And yet there is no missing the individual creative genius

which realized itself in hymns of undying import and impact.

The major distinctive feature of Guru Tegh Bahadur's *Bani* is the sense of mounting crisis both lyrical and moral, personal and social to which it alludes explicitly as also in an implied manner. This sense of crisis is mostly described in existential terms of fear of death or as in the mytho-poetic situation of Gajendra, the mythical lord of elephants caught in the tentacles of an octopus dragging it to deeper waters and death and saved by divine intervention.

- (1) ਬਲ ਛੁਟਕਿਓ ਬੰਧਨ ਪਰੇ ਕਛੁ ਨ ਹੋਤ ਉਪਾਇ  
ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਅਬ ਓਟ ਹਰਿ ਗਜ ਜਿਉ ਹੋਹੁ ਸਹਾਇ ॥53॥  
*All strength is gone; thrown in bonds in this frame;  
No effort may avail,  
Prayeth Nanak in this extremity;  
Lord, you alone are my support;  
Succour me as you once did the Elephant.*  
ਸੰਗ ਸਖਾ ਸਭ ਤਜਿ ਗਏ ਕੋਊ ਨ ਨਿਬਹਿਓ ਸਾਥ ॥  
ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਇਹ ਬਿਪਤ ਮੈ ਟੇਕ ਏਕ ਰਘੂਨਾਥ ॥55॥  
*Friends and companions have all departed;  
None has been constant.  
Prays Nanak : In this hour of agony God is my support.*  
ਹਰਿ ਜੁ ਰਾਖਿ ਲੇਹੁ ਪਤਿ ਮੇਰੀ  
ਜਮ ਜੋ ਤ੍ਰਾਸ ਭਇਓ ਉਰ ਅੰਤਰਿ  
ਸਰਨਿ ਗਹੀ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਨਿਧਿ ਤੇਰੀ ॥  
*Lord, protect Thou my honour :  
With heart filled with Yama's terror have I sought, Thy shelter.  
Thou Ocean of Grace,  
Me, a fallen sinner, a benighted fool, avaricious—this evil-  
loded career now repels.*  
ਪ੍ਰਾਨੀ ਕਉਨ ਉਪਾਉ ਕਰੇ ॥  
ਜਾ ਤੇ ਭਗਤਿ ਰਾਮ ਕੀ ਪਾਵੈ ਜਮ ਕੇ ਤ੍ਰਾਸ ਹਰੈ ॥  
*Man by what effort mayst thou find  
Devotion to the Lord and be free of Yama's terror?*  
ਅਬ ਮੈ ਕਉਨ ਉਪਾਉ ਕਰਉ ।  
ਜਿਹ ਬਿਧ ਮਨ ਕੇ ਸੰਸਾ ਜੂਕੇ,  
ਭਉ ਨਿਧਿ ਪਾਰਿ ਪਰਉ ॥  
*By what device shall I rid my mind  
Of doubt, and cross the Ocean of Existence?*



ਕਾਲ ਫਾਸ ਜਬ ਗਰ ਮੈ ਮੇਲੀ ਤਿਹ ਸੁਧਿ ਸਭ ਬਿਸਰਾਈ  
ਰਾਮ ਨਾਮ ਬਿਨ ਯਾ ਸੰਕਟ ਮੈ ਕੇ ਅਬ ਹੋਤ ਸਹਾਈ ॥  
*Indifferent to devotion to the Lord,  
Overwhelmed with terror  
As death's noose gripped my neck.*

Whether interpreted in the socio-historical context or in more direct human terms this sense of crisis is the key-note of Guru Tegh Bahadur's poetic compositions. While reading Guru Tegh Bahadur's hymns and slokas one is impressed by the clear-cut and well-defined choices which he projects : the choice between a purposeful living and animal existence, moral courage and individual pursuit, bondage to the human situation, to which are endemic the pains of existence, ageing, disease and death, on the one hand and freedom from bondage on the other.

- (1) ਏਕ ਭਗਤਿ ਭਗਵਾਨ ਜਿਹ ਪ੍ਰਾਨੀ ਕੇ ਨਾਹਿ ਮਨੁ ॥  
ਜੈਸੇ ਸੂਕਰੁ ਸੁਆਨ ਨਾਨਕ ਮਾਨੇ ਤਾਹਿ ਤਨੁ ॥  
*One whose heart is denuded of devotion to God—  
Saith Nanak : Little different is he from the filthy hog or hound.*
- (2) ਤਰਨਾਪੇ ਇਉ ਹੀ ਗਾਇਓ ਲੀਓ ਜਰਾ ਤਨੁ ਜੀਤਿ ॥  
ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਭਜ ਹਰਿ ਮਨਾ ਅਉਧ ਜਾਤੁ ਹੈ ਬੀਤਿ ॥  
*Youth is past; old age has at last overcome this body,  
Saith Nanak : Myself, in love devote thyself to God :  
Thy allotted span is coming to a close.*
- (3) ਸਾਚ ਛਾਡਿ ਕੈ ਝੂਠਹ ਲਾਗਿਉ ਜਨਮੁ ਅਕਾਰਬੁ ਖੋਇਓ ॥  
ਕਰਿ ਪਰਪੰਚ ਉਦਰ ਨਿਜ ਪੇਖਿਓ ਪਸੁ ਕੀ ਨਿਆਈ ਸੋਇਓ ॥  
*Forsaking holy truth, hast thou followed falsehood and made waste of thy life;  
Benefited thyself through deceit and slept thoughtless like a beast.*
- (4) ਲੋਭ ਗ੍ਰਸਿਓ ਦਸਹੁ ਦਿਸ ਧਾਵਤ ਆਸਾ ਲਾਗਿਓ ਧਨ ਕੀ ॥  
ਸੁਖ ਕੇ ਹੇਤਿ ਬਹੁਤੁ ਦੁਖੁ ਪਾਵਤ ਸੇਵ ਕਰਤ ਜਨ ਮਨ ਕੀ ॥  
ਦੁਆਰਹਿ ਦੁਆਰਿ ਸੁਆਨ ਜਿਉ ਡੋਲਤ ਨਹ ਸੁਧ ਰਾਮ ਭਜਨ ਕੀ ॥  
*Enmeshed by avarice in all directions it rushes,  
Impelled by lure of pelf,  
To man pursuit of pleasure only brings pain,  
And drives him to abase himself before others;*

- Like a dog he knocks about from door to door.*
- (5) ਲੋਭ ਮੋਹ ਮਾਇਆ ਮਮਤਾ ਫੁਨਿ ਅਉ ਬਿਖਅਨ ਕੀ ਸੇਵਾ ॥  
 ਹਰਖ ਸੋਗ ਪਰਸੈ ਜਿਹ ਨਾਹਿਨਿ ਸੋ ਮੁਰਤਿ ਹੋ ਦੇਵਾ ॥  
 ਸੁਰਗ ਨਰਕ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਬਿਖੁ ਏ ਸਭ ਤਿਉ ਕੰਚਨ ਅਰੁ ਪੈਸਾ ॥  
 ਉਸਤਤਿ ਨਿੰਦਾ ਏ ਸਮ ਜਾ ਕੇ ਲੋਭੁ ਮੋਹੁ ਫੁਨਿ ਤੈਸਾ ॥  
 ਦੁਖੁ ਸੁਖੁ ਏ ਬਾਧੇ ਜਿਹ ਨਾਹਿਨ ਤਿਹ ਤੁਮ ਜਾਨਉ ਗਿਆਨੀ ॥  
 ਨਾਨਕ ਮੁਕਤਿ ਤਾਹ ਤੁਮ ਮਾਨਉ ਇਹ ਬਿਧਿ ਕੇ ਜੇ ਪ੍ਰਾਨੀ ॥  
*One untouched by avarice, attachment, egoism and pursuit  
 of evil passions,  
 And one risen above joy and sorrow—  
 Know such a one to be God's own image.  
 Indifferent is he to heaven and hell,  
 Amrita and poison, copper and gold;  
 So also to praise and calumny;  
 Unconcerned with attractions of avarice and attachment:  
 One not bound by pain and pleasure—  
 Know such alone to be enlightened.  
 Saith Nanak : Know such a one to be truly liberated.*
- (6) ਸੁਖੁ ਦੁਖੁ ਦੋਨੋ ਸਮ ਕਰਿ ਜਾਨੈ ਅਉਰੁ ਮਾਨੁ ਅਪਮਾਨਾ ॥  
 ਹਰਖ ਸੋਗ ਤੇ ਰਹੈ ਅਤੀਤਾ ਤਿਨਿ ਜਗਿ ਤਤੁ ਪਛਾਨਾ ॥  
*He alone has known the Essence  
 Who meets indifferently pleasure and suffering,  
 Worldly honour and neglect,  
 And has risen beyond joy and sorrow.*
- (7) ਸੁਖੁ ਦੁਖੁ ਜਿਹ ਪਰਸੈ ਨਹੀ ਲੋਭੁ ਮੋਹੁ ਅਭਿਮਾਨੁ ॥  
 ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਸੁਨ ਰੇ ਮਨਾ ਸੋ ਮੁਰਤਿ ਭਗਵਾਨੁ ॥  
*One who is untouched by joy and sorrow.  
 By avarice, attachment and egoism—  
 Saith Nanak : Such a one is indeed an image of God.*

It will be noted that while Guru Tegh Bahadur invariably evokes the images of animality in his projection of the people given to carnal pleasures and baser temptations, he visualises an aspect of divinity in those awakened souls who are able to achieve the transcendent state. The former are referred to as hogs and dogs and beasts demeaning themselves for petty transient gains. But the latter emerge

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*Note : English rendering of Guru Tegh Bahadur's Bani are from Gurbachan Singh Talib (Guru Tegh Bahadur—Martyr and Teacher).*

here as incarnations of God himself.

It is not difficult to see that by formulating the choices in such a sharp manner Guru Tegh Bahadur is only providing the objective correlative not only of his own times but of the human situation as a whole as well. Any crisis in human affairs is characterised by pushing forward the fundamental human issues and by projecting the dilemma in an either/or situation. The works of Guru Tegh Bahadur clearly posit such a situation. Guru Tegh Bahadur's poetic gaze is constantly fixed upon the moment of truth not only of man's life in general but of his contemporary situation in particular, too. The thrust of his poetry is neither mystical nor metaphysical. It is unrelentingly moral. He envisions on the one hand those rare men of God aspiring towards the quality of divinity who refuse to compromise on the questions of fundamental human significance and on the other, those who exist merely on an animal level enmeshed as they are in their daily petty thrifths and private obsessions with lust, pelf and power. Obviously in the evolving crisis the hope of humanity lies with the former who are able to break themselves free not only of material and corporeal attachments but also of inner hesitations and fears. In so doing they also blaze the trails of glory for others to follow :

- (1) ਮਾਈ ਮੈ ਧਨੁ ਪਾਇਓਂ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ॥  
 ਮਨੁ ਮੇਰੇ ਧਾਵਨ ਤੇ ਛੁਟਿਓਂ ਕਰ ਬੈਠੇ ਬਿਸਰਾਮੁ ॥  
 ਮਾਇਆ ਮਮਤਾ ਤਨ ਤੇ ਭਾਗੀ ਉਪਜਿਓਂ ਨਿਰਮਲ ਗਿਆਨੁ ॥  
 ਲੋਭ ਮੋਹ ਏਹ ਪਰਸਿ ਨ ਸਾਕੈ ਗਹੀ ਭਗਤਿ ਭਗਵਾਨੁ ॥  
 ਜਨਮ ਜਨਮ ਕਾ ਸੰਸਾ ਚੁਕਾ ਰਤਨੁ ਨਾਮੁ ਜਬ ਪਾਇਆ ॥  
 ਤ੍ਰਿਸਨਾ ਸਕਲ ਬਿਨਾਸੀ ਮਨ ਤੇ ਨਿਜ ਸੁਖ ਮਾਹਿ ਸਮਾਇਆ ॥  
 ਜਾਕਉ ਹੋਤ ਦਇਆਲੁ ਕਿਰਪਾਨਿਧਿ ਸੋ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਗੁਨ ਗਾਵੈ ॥  
 ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਇਹ ਬਿਧਿ ਕੀ ਸੰਪੈ ਕੇਉ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਪਾਵੈ ॥ (17)
- Mother mine : the true wealth of God's Name have I found;  
 Thus has my mind stopped from straying and found poise.  
 Maya and possessiveness have left my self;  
 Pure enlightenment has arisen.  
 Devotion to the Lord have I grasped;  
 Avarice and attachment defile me not;  
 Doubts of innumerable births have ended,  
 As the jewel Name came to my hand:*

*All yearning vanished from me  
Through absorption in joy of fulfilment.  
Devotion comes to him alone  
On whom descends the grace of the Ocean of Grace.  
Saiih Nanak; This wealth a rare devotee alone may find.*

- (2) ਜੇ ਨਰੁ ਦੁਖ ਮੈ ਦੁਖ ਨਹੀ ਮਾਨੈ ॥  
ਸੁਖ ਸਨੇਹੁ ਅਰੁ ਭੈ ਨਹੀ ਜਾ ਕੈ ਕੰਚਨ ਮਾਟੀ ਮਾਨੈ ॥  
ਨਹ ਨਿੰਦਿਆ ਨਹ ਉਸਤਤਿ ਜਾ ਕੇ ਲੋਭੁ ਮੋਹੁ ਅਭਿਮਾਨਾ ॥  
ਹਰਖ ਸੋਗ ਤੇ ਰਹੈ ਨਿਆਰਉ ਨਾਹਿ ਮਾਨ ਅਪਮਾਨਾ ॥  
ਆਸਾ ਮਨਸਾ ਸਗਲ ਤਿਆਗੈ ਜਗ ਤੇ ਰਹੈ ਨਿਰਾਸਾ ॥  
ਕਾਮੁ ਕ੍ਰੋਧੁ ਜਿਹ ਪਰਸੈ ਨਾਹਿਨ ਤਿਹ ਘਟਿ ਬ੍ਰਹਮੁ ਨਿਵਾਸਾ ॥  
ਗੁਰ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਜਿਹ ਨਰ ਕਉ ਕੀਨੀ ਤਿਹ ਇਹ ਜੁਗਤਿ ਪਛਾਨੀ ॥  
ਨਾਨਕ ਲੀਨ ਭਇਉ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿਉ ਜਿਉ ਪਾਨੀ ਸੰਗਿ ਪਾਨੀ ॥ (18)
- One who by suffering is unperturbed;  
Not swayed by pleasure, attachment or fear.  
Holds gold and dust alike;  
Is free from gratification at praise or pain at censure,  
Is above avarice, attachment and conceit;  
Is untouched by pleasure and pain;  
Holds praise and dispraise alike;  
Has renounced lure of the world and covetousness,  
And frees himself from all desire,  
Abjures lust and wrath—  
In the mind of such a one does the Creator dwell.  
By grace of the Lord alone does man  
Learn this way of life.  
Saiih Nanak : Such a one is merged into the Lord,  
As water into water.*

- (3) ਉਸਤਤਿ ਨਿੰਦਿਆ ਨਾਹਿ ਜਿਹਿ ਕੰਚਨ ਲੋਹ ਸਮਾਨਿ ॥  
ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਸੁਨੁ ਰੇ ਮਨਾ ਮੁਕਤਿ ਤਾਹਿ ਤੇ ਜਾਨਿ ॥  
ਹਰਖ ਸੋਗ ਜਾ ਕੈ ਨਹੀ ਬੈਰੀ ਮੀਤ ਸਮਾਨ ॥  
ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਸੁਨਿ ਰੇ ਮਨਾ ਮੁਕਤਿ ਤਾਹਿ ਤੈ ਜਾਨਿ ॥  
ਭੈ ਕਾਹੁ ਕਉ ਦੇਤਿ ਨਹਿ ਨਹਿ ਭੈ ਮਾਨਤ ਆਨਿ ॥  
ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਸੁਨਿ ਰੇ ਮਨਾ ਗਿਆਨੀ ਤਾਹਿ ਬਖਾਨਿ ॥  
ਜਿਹ ਬਿਖਿਆ ਸਗਲੀ ਤਜੀ ਲੀਓ ਭੇਖ ਬੈਰਾਗ ॥  
ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਸੁਨ ਰੇ ਮਨਾ ਤਿਹ ਨਰ ਮਾਥੈ ਭਾਗ ॥  
ਜਿਹ ਮਾਇਆ ਮਮਤਾ ਤਜੀ ਸਭ ਤੇ ਭਇਓ ਉਦਾਸ ॥

ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਸੁਨ ਰੇ ਮਨਾ ਤਿਹਿ ਘਟਿ ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਨਿਵਾਸ ॥

ਜਿਹ ਪ੍ਰਾਨੀ ਹਉਮੈ ਤਜੀ ਕਰਤਾ ਰਾਮ ਪਛਾਨ ॥

ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਵਹੁ ਮੁਕਤਿ ਨਰੁ ਇਹ ਮਨ ਸਾਚੀ ਮਾਨ ॥

(19)

*One indifferent to praise and dispraise;*

*One to whom gold and iron are alike—*

*Saith Nanak : Listen my mind to my words,*

*Know such a one to be liberated.*

*One to whom joy and sorrow are one;*

*One who treats friend and foe alike—*

*Saith Nanak : Listen my mind to my words,*

*Know such a one to be liberated.*

*One who commits no aggression,*

*Nor yield to another's aggression—*

*Saith Nanak : Listen my mind to my words,*

*Proclaim such a one to be enlightened.*

*One who has renounced the poison of worldliness,*

*And has turned indifferent to it—*

*Saith Nanak : Listen my mind to my words,*

*Reckon such a one indeed to be truly fortunate.*

*One who has renounced worldliness and avarice*

*And is indifferent to the lure of the world,*

*Saith Nanak : Listen my mind to my words—*

*God indeed abides in his soul.*

*One who has discarded egoism*

*And knows all to be images of the Creator—*

*Saith Nanak : Know such a one to be truly liberated.*

Guru Tegh Bahadur has described at length both aspects of human situation, the bondage as well as the freedom. The truth of the matter is that in his description he has dilated more upon man's bondage to his actuality while he has laid greater emphasis upon the possibility of man's deliverance from it. In hymn after evocative hymn and *shloka* after austere *shloka* Guru Tegh Bahadur has given us pictures of wide-spread moral decay, of total lack of purpose in human pursuits, of spiritual blindness, of ignorance of any broader perspective, and of deadening of soul which characterised the human landscape of his times. All that pulls the man down into abysmal depths of moral degradation is described by him in most vivid terms. The cupidity, avarice, lust, lack of perspective, craving for pleasure are presented in well-etched descriptions. All these are not simply

symptomatic of the crisis. They, as a matter of fact, are the fountain-heads of the crisis itself. For Guru Tegh Bahadur the real crisis is not that of outer situation, but of inner values. Man's bondage ensues not so much from the circumstances of his enslavement as from his acceptance of that state as final and non-negotiable.

In sharp contrast to this picture of human decadence we find a vision of a new man emerging : detached and yet committed to a higher moral purpose, composed in the face of difficulties and yet daring, defiant, but free from malice. This man is an integrated whole and is not pulled apart by conflicting distractions. There are occasional flashes in the poetry of Guru Tegh Bahadur in which this new man is realised. As we know, the word was to become flesh only in the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur himself and was to be further realised in history a little later in the form of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh. In Guru Tegh Bahadur's works we hear distinct intimations of this new man; aware of the tests of steel and fire through which he was to pass and at the same time informed by an inner certitude and a resolute self-assuredness.

- (1) ਰਾਮਨਾਮੁ ਉਰਿ ਮੈ ਗਹਿਓ ਜਾ ਕੈ ਸਮ ਨਹੀ ਕੋਇ ॥  
ਜਿਹ ਸਿਮਰਤ ਸੰਕਟ ਮਿਟੈ ਦਰਸੁ ਤੁਹਾਰੇ ਹੋਇ ॥ (20)  
*In this hour have I lodged the Name of God in my heart—  
God's Name that is supreme over all,  
Whose meditation annuls all suffering,  
And favours the devotee with a sight of the Divine Face.*
- (2) ਬਲ ਹੋਆ ਬੰਧਨ ਛੁਟੇ ਸਭ ਕਿਛੁ ਹੋਤ ਉਪਾਇ ॥  
ਨਾਨਕ ਸਭ ਕਿਛੁ ਤੁਮਰੈ ਹਾਥ ਮੈ ਤੁਮ ਹੀ ਹੋਤ ਸਹਾਇ ॥  
*Lo! strength has arrived;  
The bonds are snapped asunder:  
All efforts begin to avail.  
Saith Nanak : All is in your hand, Lord :  
Be you my aid.*
- (3) ਭੈ ਕਾਹੂ ਕਉ ਦੇਤਿ ਨਹਿ ਨਹਿ ਭੈ ਮਾਨਤ ਆਨਿ ॥  
ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਸੁਨਿ ਰੇ ਮਨਾ ਗਿਆਨੀ ਤਾਹਿ ਬਖਾਨਿ ॥ (22)  
*One who commits no aggression,  
Nor yields to another's aggression—  
Saith Nanak : Listen my mind to my words—  
Proclaim such a one to be enlightened.*

The challenging tasks which were emerging for the followers of the Sikh Gurus called forth a universal man who could transcend all distinctions. It is this universal man who emerges in the works of Guru Tegh Bahadur. This man is conceived as capable of transcending all the differences whether emotional, such as between pain and pleasure or praise and criticism; social, as between friend and foe and material, as between gold and dust. The only distinction valid for this transcendent man is moral and spiritual, i.e. between truth and falsehood and between the truthful and the false. If we refer back to the unregenerate man as described by Guru Tegh Bahadur, we find that this man is not only disintegrated by conflicting pulls and temptations, but is also assailed by a sense of alienation, a feeling of loneliness and a crippling fear of death. Man could regain his human estate only by reversing this process of disintegration and gradual relegation to the animal level. The entire burden of Guru Tegh Bahadur's poetry is to pull out man from the fragmented universe of his private hopes and fears and to reintegrate him from within and with higher and nobler tasks. Only by being so integrated could man rediscover his humanity and attain his fullest human stature. The humanity, of which man had been deprived or which he had himself forsaken, had to be earned back the hard way.

As compared with the disintegrated and degenerate man assailed interminably by inner doubts, fears and uncertainties, the transcendent man delineated by Guru Tegh Bahadur is self-composed, dignified and dispassionate, the qualities expressive of an inner strength rather than of ascetic renunciation. Guru Tegh Bahadur's intent nowhere is to disparage and call into disrepute the human pursuits as such. What he, like other Sikh Gurus, decries is disorientation of these pursuits from the higher spiritual goals and ideals. Rejecting alike both extreme indulgence and extreme renunciation, Guru Tegh Bahadur demands self-denial with a view of affirming and establishing self-transcendence as the only purposeful pursuit of man. It is remarkable fact that the poetry of Guru Tegh Bahadur does not betray any ill-feeling even against the worst of his persecutors and oppressors. This silence is a very eloquent testimony to his close adherence, in practice, to his own

vision. For the transcendent man of Guru Tegh Bahadur's vision the deliverance does not lie in wishful disappearance of opposition from without, but in the resolution within to disregard and rise above it. In the dramatic conflict of the two attitudes, despair and defiance; utter helplessness and unswerving determination depicted in memorable couplets Guru Tegh Bahadur actually attempts a correlation of the actual with the possible, of the real with the ideal.

The major strains of Guru Tegh Bahadur's poetry are lyrical and didactic. But both of these partake of the same quality : a high seriousness devoid of any false sentimentalism. And both strive towards the same effect : moral awakening. Whereas the lyrical is free from any suggestion of self-indulgence or self-pity, the didactic avoids self-righteousness.

- (1) ਅਬ ਮੈ ਕਉਨੁ ਉਪਾਉ ਕਰਉ ॥  
ਜਿਹ ਬਿਧਿ ਮਨ ਕੇ ਸੰਸਾ ਚੂਕੈ ਭਉ ਨਿਧਿ ਪਾਰਿ ਪਰਉ ॥  
ਜਨਮੁ ਪਾਇ ਕਛੁ ਭਲੇ ਨਾ ਕੀਨੇ ਤਾ ਤੇ ਅਧਕ ਡਰਉ ॥  
ਮਨ ਬਚ ਕ੍ਰਮ ਹਰਿ ਗੁਨ ਨਹੀ ਗਏ ਯਹ ਜੀਅ ਸੋਚ ਧਰਉ ॥  
ਗੁਰਮਤਿ ਸੁਨਿ ਕਛੁ ਗਿਆਨ ਨ ਉਪਜਿਓ ਪਸੁ ਜਿਉ ਉਦਰੁ ਭਰਉ ॥ (23)
- By what device shall I rid my mind  
Of doubt, and cross the Ocean of Existence?  
In life have I done little that is good—  
Greatly this frightens me.  
Neither from the mind's depth nor word nor action,  
Have I devoted myself to God—  
This causes me anguish.  
Listening to holy teaching has left me not illuminated :  
All my life have I indulged in animal pleasures.  
Prayeth Nanak : Lord! fulfil thy law—  
Then alone may I, fallen being, be liberated.*
- (2) ਹਰਿ ਜੂ ਰਾਖਿ ਲੇਹੁ ਪਤਿ ਮੇਰੀ ॥  
ਜਮ ਕੇ ਤ੍ਰਾਸ ਭਇਓ ਉਰ ਅੰਤਰਿ ਸਰਨਿ ਗਹੀ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਨਿਧਿ ਤੇਰੀ ॥  
ਮਹਾ ਪਤਿਤ ਮੁਗਧ ਲੋਭੀ ਫੁਨਿ ਕਰਤ ਪਾਪ ਅਬ ਹਾਰਾ ॥  
ਭੈ ਮਰਥੇ ਕੇ ਬਿਸਰਤ ਨਾਹਨ ਤਿਹ ਚਿੰਤਾ ਤਨੁ ਜਾਰਾ ॥  
ਕੀਏ ਉਪਾਵ ਮੁਕਤਿ ਕੇ ਕਾਰਨਿ ਦਹਦਿਸਿ ਕਉ ਉਠਿ ਧਾਇਆ ॥  
ਘਟ ਹੀ ਭੀਤਰਿ ਬਸੈ ਨਿਰੰਜਨੁ ਤਾ ਕੇ ਮਰਮੁ ਨ ਪਾਇਆ ॥



ਨਾਹਿਨ ਗੁਨੁ ਨਾਹਿਨ ਕਛੁ ਜਪੁ ਤਪੁ ਕਉਨੁ ਕਰਮ ਅਬ ਕੀਜੈ ॥  
ਨਾਨਕ ਹਾਰਿ ਪਰਿਓ ਸਰਨਾਗਤਿ ਅਭੈ ਦਾਨੁ ਪ੍ਰਬ ਦੀਜੈ ॥ (24)

*Lord, protect Thou my honour :*

*With heart filled with Yama's terror have I sought Thy shelter,  
Thou Ocean of Grace :*

*Me, a fallen sinner, a benighted fool, avaricious—this evil-  
loaded career now repels.*

*Ever-present fear of death now burns me through.*

*Means of liberation have I sought in all directions.*

*The secret of the Immaculate Lord dwelling in the heart has  
eluded me.*

*Unendowed with noble qualities, devotion, austerities—*

*What device may now avail me?*

*Nanak, helpless, has fallen at Thy feet, a seeker for grace :*

*Redeem him Master, from Yama's terror.*

(3) ਅਬ ਮੈ ਕਹਾ ਕਰਉ ਰੀ ਮਾਈ ॥

ਸਗਲ ਜਨਮੁ ਬਿਖਿਅਨਿ ਸਿਉ ਖੋਇਆ ਸਿਮਰਿਓ ਨਾਇ ਕਨ੍ਹਾਈ ॥

ਕਾਲ ਵਾਸ ਜਬ ਗਰ ਮੇ ਮੇਲੀ ਤਿਹ ਸੁਪਿ ਸਭ ਬਿਸਰਾਈ ॥

ਰਾਮ ਨਾਮ ਬਿਨੁ ਯਾ ਸੰਕਟ ਮੇ ਕੇ ਅਬ ਹੋਤ ਸਹਾਈ ॥

ਜੇ ਸੰਪਤਿ ਆਪਨੀ ਕਰਿ ਮਾਨੀ ਛਿਨ ਮੇ ਭਈ ਪਰਾਈ ॥

ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਯਹ ਸੋਚ ਰਹੀ ਮਨਿ ਹਰਿ ਜਸੁ ਕਬਹੂ ਨ ਗਾਈ ॥ (25)

*Mother mine! what help have I in this state?*

*All my life wasted in evil courses.*

*Indifferent to devotion to the Lord.*

*Overwhelmed with terror.*

*As death's noose gripped my neck.*

*Who may succour me now in this hour of agony?*

*Wealth which I took to be mine fell off in a moment.*

*This thought haunts Nanak :*

*Never have I engaged in devotion.*

In the above lyrical verses we find that Guru Tegh Bahadur is able to evoke human pathos without resort to the familiar mystical symbolism of love, separation, communion etc. The despair externalised here is related to the moral dilemma, a reference to which has been made above. Similarly in all his didactic poems there is a constant hearkening to the lost perspective. What he wants man to abjure and eschew is shown up in the broader human

perspective as transient, perishable, momentary and hence ultimately unenduring and unavailing. One can easily see that teaching here is not by way of preaching, but through the method of relating human reality to overall human wisdom.

To heighten the lyrical impact the Guru coined vocatives of ਮਾਈ, ਮਨ ਰੇ, where he did not use the form of direct self-address. In the didactic verses the vocatives commonly used are ਸਾਧੋ, ਰੇ ਨਰ ਪ੍ਰਾਨੀ. Thus we see that in whatever mode of expression he chose, a certain process of abstraction is at work. By reorienting the human situation as such or personal experience of its to a higher moral goal, or the verities of human wisdom Guru Tegh Bahadur liberates both as far as possible from relatedness to the contingent and invests them with the transcending context of the necessary. Seen in the overall perspective of his main concern with the fundamental issues of human existence : life, meaning and significance of human endeavour, this transformation of the poetic modes assumes added relevance as another detail of his transcendent vision.

Passing from the consideration of the content, both intellectual and emotional, of the poetic compositions of Guru Tegh Bahadur and their modes of expression of their imagery, we are struck again by the same austerity of outlook. Gone is all symbolism except for the traditional poetic diction and idiom. Image patterns of water and bubbles, of painting on the wall, of walls of sand, mountains of smoke, of water leaking from a cracked pot, of gold, iron and dust, of dreams and illusions, of passing youth, of family relations etc. The mythopoetic allusions to Gaj, Ajamal, Ganika, Dhruva etc., or the cultural constructs such as *Dharma*, *Mukti*, *Yoga*, *Gun Gāyan* etc., are all informed by the quality of dispassion and detachment. By and large these images, illusions and references are transparent and emotionally neutral devices. Here again we find that the effort of the poet is not to allow anything to cloud the vision and to distract from the concentration upon the main moral concern by attracting attention unto itself. The emotional charge is provided by the total religious tone and tenor and is heightened by the experiential and existential realisation. This is in keeping with the over all philosophy

of poetry at work in these compositions. And that is of sub-ordination of the poetic art to a higher purpose. This is the type of poetry which is not fully realized by indulgence in itself alone but becomes alive only by being received in a state of mind properly attuned to its essential moral and spiritual concerns. The poetry here discharges an ennobling function of releasing man from bondage to himself and relating him to the task of discovering his human integrity and realising it in acts of ethical and historical choice.

Guru Tegh Bahadur's works constitute the latest compositions included in the *Adi Granth*. By a strange coincidence these compositions bear close formal resemblance to the earliest ones i.e. the works of Shaikh Farid, spanning a gap of about five centuries. Not only in the matter of contemplative wisdom, economy of expression, and austerity of rhythm, but also in the matter of simplicity of poetic structures Guru Tegh Bahadur's compositions have much in common with those of Shaikh Farid. Both in *Padas* and *Slokas*, Guru Tegh Bahadur utilizes a bare minimum of poetic frame to receive and contain his vision, which is both immediate and direct. The central core of his compositions is a message which brooks little clothing or ornamentation. They move because they are utterly genuine and sincere and not because of any contrivance on the part of the poet. This is the type of poetry in which the message transcends the medium and the life in turn transcends both : all the three bound in an over—transforming harmony.

#### FOOT NOTES .

1. Malar M.I.
2. Ibid.
3. Var Asa M. I.
4. Sloka M. IX. 53
5. Sloka M. IX. 55
6. Jaitsari M. IX
7. Sorath M. IX
8. Dhanasari M. IX
9. Maru M. IX
10. Sloka M. IX. 44
11. Sloka M. IX. 3
12. Sorath M. IX. 10
13. Asa M IX

14. Gauri M. IX. 7
15. Gauri M. IX. 1
16. Sloka M. IX. 13
17. Basant M. IX. 3
18. Sorath M. IX. 11
19. Sloka M. IX. 14-19
20. Dohra 57 (I)
21. Dohra 54
22. Sloka M. IX. 16
23. Dhanasari M. IX. 4
24. Jaitsari. M. IX. 2
25. Maru M. IX. 2

# CONCEPTION OF JIVANMUKTI IN GURU TEGH BAHADUR'S HYMNS

DR. L. M. JOSHI

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## INTRODUCTION

Indian Philosophy can be called 'existentialist' in the sense that its central problem has been human *existence*. Quite early in the history of human thought Indian sages had discovered that human existence is *conditioned*. The discovery of human predicament—that is, of man's *conditioned existence*—and its corollary, the quest of an unconditioned sphere, constitutes the greatest achievement of Indian thought. We may at once say that the conditioned existence is called *samsāra*, *karma*, *bandhana* or *māyā*, while the unconditioned sphere is called *nirvāna*, *mukti*, *moksa* or *kaivalya*.

All the characteristics that characterize human existence, such as birth, aging, disease, nescience, decadence, suffering and death, are inherent in man's temporality. Since change is inherent in temporality, there can be no permanent peace and bliss in conditioned existence. Conditioned existence, therefore, is called *samsāra*. The word *samsāra* signifies not only change, journeying, and wandering through a series of embodied existences, it also signifies suffering, unpleasant situation and bondage. Human existence is conditioned not only by historical and concrete factors—geographical, political, social, economic, religious, intellectual and psychological—it is conditioned also by trans historical factors summed up in one word, *karma* or *māyā*.

Having discovered historical and transhistorical conditions of human existence, Indian teachers of spiritual wisdom also discovered the unconditioned goal of man's striving. The quest of freedom from change, the efforts towards deconditioning the conditionings, led them to the discovery of the unconditioned (*asamskṛta*) or the

Timeless (*akāla, kālātīta*). To attain this goal is to go beyond historicity: the vision of the Timeless takes one across the realm of the temporal. This attainment is called ultimate release. A person who succeeds in deconditioning all conditionings inherent in temporality while still faring in the temporal realm is called a *jivanmukta*, emancipated while alive. This, in brief, is the heart of the doctrine of *mukti*.

It is a distinguishing feature of Indian religious history that a variety of perspectives of *mukti* and *jivanmukti* have been offered by the various systems of thought and faith.

#### METHODOLOGICAL REMARKS

Guru Tegh Bahadur (*circa* A.D. 1621-1675) refers to *mukti* several times and describes the state of *jīvanmukti* in some detail in his *bānī*. In this essay it is proposed to analyse and discuss the principal elements of the doctrine of *jīvanmukti* as found in his hymns. The subject is a profound one and a study of its treatment by a seventeenth century saint-poet demands, on the part of a student, a good knowledge of the background of the subject.

The ideal of *mukti* and the *bhaktic* way to it constitute a most important stand in the theology of the entire range of medieval Indian religious literature. Some of the terms and concepts or the figures of speech and the figures of thought that we come across in the *bānī* of the Ninth Teacher of Sikhism presuppose much of the moral and spiritual heritage of classic Indian thought. These terms and concepts are used by Guru Tegh Bahadur within the framework of a theistic soteriology which is, by and large, common to all medieval Indian theologies belonging to the *bhakti* tradition.

The same terms and concepts, however, have also been used by several non-theistic soteriologies, for example, by Jainism, Buddhism, the Sāṃkhya-Yoga, which are of greater antiquity than all the *bhaktic* cults. But there are differences between metaphysical presuppositions of theistic and non-theistic systems. These differences are of considerable importance, and therefore we have to keep in mind the difference in the meaning of those terms and concepts that are employed commonly by both theistic and non-theistic traditions.

Let us not be misunderstood here. The religious philosophies

of India fall into two broad groups : non-theistic and theistic. Jainism, Buddhism, the Sāmkhya and the Yoga are non-theistic. They do not acknowledge the reality of God, as creator and governor of the universe. Vaisnavism, Saivism, Sāktism and Sikhism are theistic systems. Belief in the existence of God or Supreme Power as creator and governor of the universe is a fundamental feature of these faiths. It is not necessary to discuss here the differences between theistic and non-theistic religions, nor is it relevant to these introductory remarks to point out the mutual doctrinal differences existing among the theistic religions themselves.

The relevance of bringing in the idea of God lies in this that the term *mukti* is extensively employed in the literature of theistic as well as non-theistic religions, but the conceptions and techniques of achieving *mukti* in theistic and non-theistic religions are not identical. The doctrine of God has influenced the doctrine of *mukti* in all theistic systems. The non-theistic systems, on the other hand, have worked out their conceptions of *mukti* without any relation to the idea of God. In short, the theistic soteriologies differ fundamentally from the non-theistic soteriologies.

The conception of *mukti* in theistic religions is thus different from that in the non-theistic religions. Like the word *mukti*, the word *nirvāna* and *yoga* are also universally employed in the literature of Jainism, Buddhism, Hinduism and Sikhism. But their meanings are not identical in all these systems. Mere identity in linguistic expression should not mislead us. One and the same meaning of *mukti* may be found in several or even in all the religions, but this cannot be concluded beforehand. The meaning and conceptual content of the word *mukti* have to be ascertained after a thorough investigation into the context of its occurrence in a particular text or group of texts belonging to a particular religious tradition.

#### MUKTI AND JIVANMUKTI

The word *mukti* is derived from the root *muc* which means 'to liberate'. The word means liberation, emancipation, freedom, deliverance or release. In its technical sense it means ultimate release from conditioned existence. It is a metaphysical concept according to which supreme peace and final beatitude are attained by cutting off the bonds and fetters. As a religious value of the highest order

*mukti* or *moksa* is the final goal, the end of religious culture. It is a name for spiritual perfection. He who attains *mukti* transcends good and evil; the philosophy behind the ideal of *mukti* insists that it is impossible for a liberated being to do evil or to be lured by good. The attainment of ultimate release from *samsāra* or the realm of metempsychosis follows only when desires and passions are completely eradicated.

Some of the cognates of *mukti* or *moksa* may be mentioned here with a view to illustrating its different aspects. The word *siddhi*, 'success' or 'perfection', is sometimes used as a synonym of *mukti*. In a few texts *mukti* is clearly associated with *amratvatva*, 'immortality'. Both the words, *siddhi* and *amrta*, have played an important part in the soteriological theories of medieval *siddhas*, *yogins* and *nāthas*. The Buddhist Pali literature is replete with the discourses on *vimutti*, 'liberation' and *visuddhi*, 'purification'. Both the words are synonyms of *nibbāna*. The term *visuddhi* implies purification of the heart by destroying cankers or impurities; it is achieved by putting an end to the roots of *karma* and rebirth. The term *nibbāna* (*nirvāna*) indicates on the one hand, extinction of the fire of passions (*klesas*) and craving (*trsnā*), and on the other hand, attainment of the Immortal Realm (*amatapada*). One of the important cognates of *mukti* is *bodhi*, 'awakening' or 'enlightenment'. This word indicates the important position of wisdom (*prajñā*) in the total conception of *mukti*. The word *kaivalya* means 'isolation' or 'detachment of the spirit from the matter'. Its special meaning fits in the pluralistic systems of Jainism, and the Sāṃkhya-Yoga where bondage is conceived in terms of the association of soul (*ātman*, *purusa*) with matter or *karma*. Two more cognates of *mukti* are *nihsreyas* 'that which is certainly superior' or 'final beatitude' and *apavarga* 'culmination' or 'fulfilment'. All these words, viz., *mukti*, *moksa*, *siddhi*, *amratva*, *vimutti*, *visuddhi*, *nirvāna*, *bodhi*, *kaivalya*, *nihsreyas*, and *apavarga* mean the ultimate release or supramundane goal understood from several points of view adopted by several systems of Indian thought.

The origin and development of the idea of *mukti* is an important subject of research which, however, falls outside the scope of the present article.



The ideal of *mukti* is practical and realizable. A saint who attains *mukti* is called *mukta*, 'liberated'. Several terms such as *buddha*, *arhat*, *siddha* and *suddha* refer to the liberated person and are synonyms of *mukta*. Attainment of liberation while one is still living and moving on the earth is called *jīvanmukti*. A person who has attained *mukti* in this very existence is called *jīvanmukta*. 'liberated while living'. Such a saint is freed from impurities that beset conditioned existence; he transcends the limitations of phenomenal life and he is not reborn in *samsāra* after his death. Wearing his last body he performs his functions of body, mind and speech without being defiled by them.

The conception of *jīvanmukti* is found first in the early Buddhist and Jaina scriptures. Sākyamuni lived as a *jīvanmukta* from the time of his attainment of Enlightenment till he discarded his physical frame. Vardhamāna Mahāvīra also lived as a *Jīvanmukta* after attaining *kevalajnāna* and reformed the ancient sect of Jainism. All the *arhats* known to Buddhist and Jaina traditions are believed to have achieved *jīvanmukti*. The *Dhammapada* (verse 89) describes those perfected beings whose impurities have been destroyed, who are luminous, and who are emancipated in this very world (*khināsavā jūtimanto te loke parinibbutā*). In another verse we find the following picture of an *arhat*: 'His mind is quiescent, quiescent are his speech and deed; he has thus become a quiescent one when he has obtained liberation by right knowledge' (*Dhammapada*, verse 96).

The earlier Upanisads discuss the conception of *moksa* and describe the qualifications for knowing and seeing the *ātman*, the Self, or the *brahman*, Divine Power, but they rarely present us with a picture of one who has known and seen *ātman* in this very life. The idea of *jīvanmukta* appeared in the Brāhmanical texts after the *arhats* of the Sramanic tradition had eminently demonstrated the validity of the ideal of attaining release while one is living in the world. The *Mundaka Upanisad* (III. 2.5-6), a text of post-Buddhist origin, refers to the seers who are satisfied with knowledge, who have perfected their souls, who are free from passion and are quiet, who are purified through renunciation and meditation, but states that they attain the Divine Abodes (*brahmalokesu*) at the end of time (*parāntakāle*) and are liberated beyond death (*parāṃritāh*

*parimucyanti*).

The *Bhagavadgītā* (V. 28), however, seems to refer to a *jīvanmukta* when it describes a *muni* intent on *moksa*, who controls his senses, mind and intellect, who has eradicated desires, fear and anger, as ever released (*sadā mukta*).

It is in the Mahāyana Sūtras, Sāstras, such as *Astasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā*, the *Karunāpundarīka*, the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, the *Mahāvāyānasūtrālamkāra* and the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, etc., that one comes across a detailed treatment of the ideal of *jīvanmukti* practised by a *bodhisattva* and its moral justification.

The *Muktikopanisad*, a text posterior to Rāmānuja, states that those who study and understand the meaning of 108 Upanisads become *jīvanmukta* and remain so till the destruction of their deeds already commenced. This text also distinguishes between *jīvanmukti* and *videhamukti* or deliverance after the dissolution of the body. Here one is reminded of the early Buddhist view of two stages of liberation, viz. *sopadhisesa-nibbāna* or 'liberation with the body still remaining' and *anupadhisesa-nibbāna* or 'liberation without the body remaining'.

According to the *Pārānandasūtra*, an early medieval Brāhmanical tantra, *jīvanmukti* means 'to have a vision of the Deity worshipped' (*svopāśyadarsanam jīvanmuktih*). This, of course, is a definition offered from a particular cultic standpoint well known to the *tantras* and the *purānas*. In the *Sabdakalpadruma* of Rādhākāntadeva, a *jīvanmukta* is defined as free from all bonds and established in God (*akhilabandhārahito brahmanisthah*). This again is a definition peculiar to a doctrine in which *mukti* consists in communion with God. According to the *Jīvanmuktiviveka*, there are three means of obtaining *jīvanmukti*, viz. *tattvajñāna* or knowledge of the Truth, *manonāsa* or cessation of the activities of the mind, and *vāsanāksaya* or destruction of instincts and habit-energies. All the sources tell us that the immediate gain of *jīvanmukti* is peace and joy.

JIVANMUKTI IN GURU TEGH BAHADUR'S BANI

The dominant theme of Guru Tegh Bahadur's composition is spiritual liberation and way to it. The state of liberation is called *mukti*, *nirbān padu* and *nirbhai padu*. The liberated being is called

*mukta* and *giāni*. The Guru discusses the way to liberation (*mukti panth*) and describes the virtues and characteristics of a liberated person in detail.

The idea of God is at the centre of Guru Tegh Bahadur's soteriology. Although God is called Rām, Hari, Gobind, Prabhu, Brahm, Murāri and Swāmi or Lord, He is not conceived anthropomorphically after the Puranic fashion. He who knows God as the one and only reality is a knower indeed, a *giāni*. Such a person practices constant mindfulness with regard to the Lord God. This constant mindfulness of God's presence is called *nām-simran*. This is the way to liberation.

Guru Tegh Bahadur says that God is the master of joy (*bhugti*) and liberation (*mukti*). He is therefore the supreme object of human devotion. In the first stanza of his composition in *rāgu Gaudī* he tells us that those who discern the Truth (*tatu, tattva*) and seek the unconditioned (*nirbān, nirvāna*) transcend pairs of opposites. They are even-minded towards both happiness and suffering, honour and insult, and they remain untouched by joy and grief.

The path of liberation consists of devotion to God: leaving pride, delusion and attachment to possessions one should give one's heart to singing the glory of God. He alone is delivered in whose heart dwells God. Since God is all-pervasive and formless we cannot conceive of His abode as a kind of heaven. And heaven (*surag, svarga*) is not the goal of a devotee in Sikhism. In the following lines Guru Tegh Bahadur describes the main characteristics of a liberated being :

"He who is free from greed (*lobh*), delusion (*moh*), attachment (*māyā*), egoity (*mamtā*) and slavery of sense-pleasures (*bikhiyan ki sevā*), and who is untouched by joy and grief, he is indeed an image of God; he who considers heaven and hell, nectar and poison, gold and copper, praise and slander as equal (*sam*); he who is not bound by greed and delusion nor by suffering and happiness, know him to be an awakened one (*giāni*). Says Nānak, this kind of person should be acknowledged as liberated" (*Sabdārth Sri Gurū Granth Sahib*, Vol. I, p. 219). A similar description of the sage (*muni*) of fixed understanding (*sthitaprajna*) is found in the *Bhagavadgītā* (II. 56-57) :

"He whose mind is not agitated in sorrows, who has lost desire for pleasures, and whose longing, fear and anger have departed, is called a sage of fixed understanding. He who has no desire for anything, feels neither delight nor aversion on encountering good or evil, his understanding is steady."

Happiness and fearlessness are the characteristics of a perfect devotee. He alone is happy who sings the virtues of God; the other folk misguided by the cosmic illusion (*māyā mohiā*) do not attain the Fearless Abode (*nirbhai padu*). The means of liberation (*upāu mukti*), according to Guru Tegh Bahadur, is devotion to God. One goes beyond the ocean of transmigration (*bhav sāgar*) by singing the praise of the Merciful (*karunāmai*) (*Sabdārth Sri Gurū Granth Sāhib*, Vol. I, p. 220)

Spiritual liberation is figuratively called 'extraction' or 'lifting up, (*udhār, uddhāra*) even as bondage is likened to drowning into the deep waters of repeated becoming (*bhaujalu, bhav sāgar*). God's name alone lifts up the drowning devotee and takes him across.

The path of liberation (*mukati panthu*) is opposed to the path of gathering wealth. He who spends his life in amassing wealth incurs a two-fold loss; he neglects his duty toward God and prolongs his bondage. Since wealth is not an eternal possession, the efforts in gathering it are ultimately vain. Human life is rare and precious, therefore one should spend it in the quest of liberation. In a significant line, the Teacher points out that singing God's praise, service of the teacher and acquisition of knowledge constitute the way of liberation (*Sabdārth Sri Gurū Granth Sāhib*, Vol. II, p. 632)

A remarkable description of one who is established in God, who has realized his spiritual end, and who moves in the world but is above the world, is found in the eleventh stanza composed in the measure *Sorathi*. This hymn, which belongs to the finest pieces of ascetic poetry and sums up the classical conception of a *jīvanmukta*, deserves quotation in *extenso*. A free translation of this hymn is as follows :

*"He who is not distressed by suffering;  
From who pleasure, love and fear have departed and who treats  
gold even as clay;  
Who is free from slander, praise, greed, delusion and pride;*

*Who is not influenced by joy and grief nor by honour and insult;  
Who has renounced all hopes and intentions and remains free from  
worldly longing, who is untouched by lust and wrath—the  
heart of such person is the abode of the Holy'*

*Through God's blessing (gurū kirpā) a man discerns this technique  
(jugati);*

*Says Nānak, such a being is indeed merged into God like water  
into water" (Sri Gurū Granth Sāhib, pp. 633-34).*

Almost a similar picture of a liberated one is given by the Gurū in the third stanza of his composition in the measure *dhanāsari*. Here the character of a true sage (*jogi yogin*) is outlined and he is identified with a liberated being. Such a sage neither indulges in slandering nor in eulogizing others and he treats gold and iron alike. He has gone beyond joy and grief. He is called a sage (*jogi*) because he has firmly fixed the fickle mind which runs in ten directions. Such a being should be known as liberated (*Sabdārth Sri Gurū Granth Sāhib*, Vol. II, p. 684).

Traditional Brahmanical religious practices come in for criticism in the sacred writings of the Gurūs. Guru Tegh Bahadur declares that going on pilgrimage to holy places (*tirath*) and ceremonial fasting (*brat*) are of no avail in the absence of Divine refuge. Likewise, asceticism and sacrificial rituals performed by those persons who forget God's glory become fruitless.

Ascetic practices become meaningful and rewarding only when they are accompanied by loving devotion to God. Thus the Gurū says that he alone is a *jīvanmukta* who abandons both pride and delusion and celebrates the virtues of God. Ascetic practices include control of the mind and the senses as well as suppression of passions and desires. These ascetic practices form an essential part of the Sikh spiritual culture. The Gurūs, however, stress that these practices alone cannot lead one to liberation. Devotion to God is *sine qua non* for obtaining *mukti* in this life and beyond this life. This belief in the efficacy of *bhakti* is indeed the hallmark of medieval Indian theism. Guru Tegh Bahadur says that God has revealed this secret (*bhedu*) that in this dark age (*kali, kaliyuga*) liberation is obtainable only through devotion (*nām*). This view is upheld also by Tulsidāsa who compares *nāma* with the desire-yielding tree (*kulpataru*) and says

that it is the abode of weal and the only succour of beings in the *kali* age (*Sabdārth Sri Gurū Granth Sāhib*, p. 831; *Rāmācaritamānasa*, pp. 11-14).

Pride is the greatest folly of man; it is opposed to devotion which demands humility and utter self-surrender unto God. In his second hymn in the measure *sārang*, Guru Tegh Bahadur states that one can attain liberation instantaneously (*mukati hohi chhin māhi*) if one gave up pride (*abhimānu*) and took refuge with the quiescent ones (*sāntan*).

The word *sant* (it occurs in the Pali canon numerous times) means quiescent, quiet, calmed or pacified. It is an epithet of a sage who has extinguished the fire of passions, who has quietened his boisterous senses, who has calmed his restless mind, and who has thus become a quiescent one. The Sanskrit form of the word *sānta*, 'peaceful' or 'quiescent', also connotes the same meaning as, for example, in Samkarācārya's phrase *upasānto āyamātmā*, 'this Self is quiescent', that is, the Self is of the nature of peace. He who knows the Self becomes quiescent like the Self.

In the devotional literature of medieval India, especially in the sacred writings of the Sikh Gurūs, the word *sant* is a synonym of *sādḥ* or *sādhu*, which literally means a 'good one'. The implied meaning of *sant* and *sādhu* in the devotional literature is a man who has found peace in devotion to God. As we have seen in the foregoing discussion of the way to liberation, one finds peace in devotion to God only when one has eradicated passions and extinguished desires. A *sant* of Guru Tegh Bahadur's conception is therefore the one who is at peace even in *samsāra*, who has stilled his thought and who is in harmony with the Divine scheme. It may be mentioned in passing that Sūradāsa has employed the word *harijana* in the sense of *sant* understood theistically. The word *harijana* literally means 'God's men' or 'Divine beings'. Mahatma Gandhi's use of this word has a different meaning and should not be confused with that found in the *bhakti* literature.

Finally, we should review the conception of a *jīvanmukta* assumed up by Guru Tegh Bahadur in his *salokas* preserved at the end of the Sikh canon. Generally, speaking, here the Gurū repeats his views expressed in his other compositions. Below is given a free

translation of the relevant verses and afterwards comment on them.

*"He who is not contaminated by pleasure, pain, greed, delusion, and pride, says Nānak, such a person is an image of God.*

(13)

*He who neither praises nor slanders and treats gold and iron alike, says Nānak, know such a person to be released.*

(14)

*He who is free from joy and grief and considers enemy and friend alike, says Nānak, know such a person to be released.*

(15)

*He who does not commit aggression against anyone, nor bears other's aggression, says Nānak, acknowledge such a person to be wise.*

(16)

*He who has completely given up addiction to sense-objects (bikhiā) and assumed the garb of renunciation, says Nānak, consider such a person to be truly fortunate.*

(17)

*He who has shaken off illusion and egoity and has become wishless in all respects, says Nānak, in his heart dwells the Holy.*

(18)

*He who has abandoned egoism and recognized the creator God, says Nānak, acknowledge him to be truly released."*

(19)

(Sabadārth Sri Gurū Granth Sāhib, Vol. II. pp. 1426-27)

The foregoing translation may be supplemented by the following commentary. Renunciation has been the banner of Indian thought. Guru Tegh Bahadur lays particular emphasis on renunciation (*bairāg, vairāgya, virāga, virati*). This is obvious from his hymn in *Gaudi, Sorathi* as well as the *salokas*. Again and again he asks the seeker of liberation to renounce greed, delusion, infatuation or attachment, conceit, egoity and the sense of ownership. Control of the mind and the senses is the heart of renunciation. One thing which is characteristic of the entire *bhakti* tradition and certainly of Sikh religious heritage is that renunciation must be accompanied by loving devotion to God, the Holy One. Renunciation is essential for attaining *jivanmukti*; it is impossible to become a *jivanmukta* without emptying the basket of individuality which is full of desires and passions. But mere renunciation is not a sufficient means of going beyond the whirlpool of *karma* and *samsāra*. Intense love of God is certainly a more potent means of achieving *mukti*.

How shall we know that one who has unselfish and boundless love of God has attained *mukti*? One may love and adore God with all one's might and spirit and may eventually attain release after

death. Such a released one is not available to those who are in *samsāra*. Release or *mukti* becomes sociologically meaningful and relevant only when its fruits are shared with other fellow-beings. Here comes in the ideal of release here and now—the ideal of a *bodhisattva*, a saviour god, a *jivanmukta*. We can recognize such a being by his actions of body, mind and speech. He is an extraordinary being; his characteristics are not shared by those who are unfree and unenlightened.

Guru Tegh Bahadur clearly sets forth those characteristics that distinguish him who is released while alive. He transcends the pairs of opposites: he has gone beyond the reach of those things that characterize the ordinary run of mankind. Thus he is impartial toward both friend and foe holds gold and dust alike, desires neither ownership nor honour, knows that the phenomenal world is evanescent and ultimately unreal. Since he does not expect anything from any body, he has spent up his desires and uprooted all passions, he is neither subject to nor a source of fear. He is an embodiment of friendliness and universal loving kindness. Such in brief, is the nature of a *jīvanmukta*, an enlightened being, who has been gone beyond all conditions while still wearing his last physical frame. His presence in the world of beings is for the benefit of the latter. Having released himself, he works for the release of others (*āpan tarai avuran let udhār, salok 22*).

In conclusion, a consideration may be given to the meaning of the word *bikhiā* in *salok 17*. Here it is translated as 'addiction to sense objects'. Some translators have taken this word for *bikh* (Sanskrit *visa*) 'poison'. Such a meaning is improbable. The peculiar form *bikhiā* is due to the exigencies of metre as is clear from the line : *jih bikhiā sagali tajīlīo bhekh bairāg*. The present rendering, 'he who has completely given up addiction to sense-objects and assumed the garb of renunciation' is based on the assumption that the word '*bikhiā*' is a contracted or shortened form of '*bikhiā sakat*' occurring in the sixth hymn in measure *sorathi* of Guru Tegh Bahadur : *bikhiā sakat rahio nis bāsūr nah chhūtī adhamāī*. This may be translated as follows : '(you have) remained addicted to sense-objects day and night (and therefore your) bondage has not been cut off.' The word *adhamāī* literally means 'meanness' or 'sinfulness': its religious



meaning in this hymn is 'the state of bondage' (*bandhan*). Addiction to sense-objects or sensuality has prolonged bondage, says the Gurū.

The nearest Sanskrit form of the word *bikhiā sakat* is *visayāsakti*, 'addiction to sense-objects' or 'intense love of sense-pleasures.' Guru Tegh Bahadur stresses that *bikhiā* or *visayāsakti* should be discarded before one can attain release while alive. The addiction (*āsakti*) to sense-objects (*visaya*) and pleasures derived from them runs counter to the love of God. He who seeks spiritual release must first release himself from the prison-house of sensuality.

Bibliographical details of the works mentioned in the text are as follows :

1. Guru Tegh Bahādur's, *hymns* have been studied and translated directly from the *Sabdārth Sri Gurū Granth Sāhib*, Vol. 1-4 (editor (s) not mentioned) published by the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, Amritsar, 1969 (reprint).
2. *Dhammapada*, Pali text edited by Bhikkhu J. Kashyap in the *Khuddakanikāya*, Vol. I, Nalanda, 1959.
3. *Mundaka Upanisad*, edited by Jagadish Sastri in the *Upanisatsamgraha*, Delhi, Motilal Banarasidass, 1970.
4. *Bhagavadgītā*, Gorakhpur, Gita Press, 1959.
5. *Astasāhasrika Prajnāpāramitā*, edited by P. L. Vaidya, Darbhanga, Mithila Institute, 1960.
6. *Karunāpundarīka*, edited by Isshi Yamada, London, University of London, 1968.
7. *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, edited by N. Dutt, Patna, K. P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1966.
8. *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra*, edited by S. Bagchi, Darbhanga, Mithila Institute, 1970.
9. *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, edited by P. L. Vaidya, Darbhanga, Mithila Institute, 1960.
10. *Muktikopanisad*, included in the *Upanisatsamgraha*, see No. 3. above.
11. *Pārānandasūtra*, edited by Swami Trivikrama Tirtha, Baroda, Oriental Institute, 1931.
12. *Sabdakalpadruma* of Rādhākāntadeva, published by Motilal Banarasidass, Delhi, 1961.
13. *Jivammuktiviveka*, quoted after P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmasāstra*, Vol. V, part 2, Poona, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1962.
14. *Rāmacaritamānasa* of Tulsīdāsa, edited by Visvanath Prasad Misra, Varanasi, Kashiraja Edition, 1962.

## THE POETRY OF GURU TEGH BAHADUR

DARSHAN SINGH MAINI

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If poetry is, in an important sense, a continual exercise in asceticism and self-sacrifice, then that brief body of verse which Guru Tegh Bahadur has bequeathed to us, and which we find enshrined in the *Guru Granth* is surely unique in purity and purpose even in the annals of religious poetry. For, outside of the poetry of his grandfather, Guru Arjan Dev, and of his son, Guru Gobind Singh, we know of few compositions that authenticate so soulfully and magnificently the paradox of poetry and life, or of poetry *in* life. Surely, the meaning of his martyrdom is as much to be found in the events of the day that propelled his agonised psyche, brimful of compassion, as in those hymns and couplets which become one long lament over the creature folly of man lost in dreams of self, power and pride. Undoubtedly, we have here a rare example of the coalescence of verse, vision and life. One is, indeed, tempted to suggest a *poetics of sacrifice*.

It may again be pertinent to point out that the manner in which the apostolate came to Guru Tegh Bahadur reveals a pondered and studied life-style. Not till he had been located and proclaimed *Guru* did he elect to walk out of that willed obscurity which provided the key to his vision of life. No wonder, his verse is but an effortless testimony to the energies that lit up that vision. When the moment of *assumption* arrived, he was ready for the great ministry. The song became celestial as it reached out after the essences earned in silence and prayer. That's why, there is a certain unmistakable quality of pathos and rigour about it. It's as though Guru Tegh Bahadur has been vouchsafed an epiphany that warranted heights of visionary heroism.

This poetry—59 hymns and 57 *slokas* or couplets—then, is a sustained elegy of a kind, mourning in different musical measures the state or condition of man bound on 'the wheel of fire'. A moving lyric and elegiac tone is superbly maintained in song after song with equal felicity of image and metaphor. Indeed, a relentless dialectic of life and death is set up so that even the common listener or reader is forced to face the chaos and horror of existence divorced from God. Within this dialectic, the themes of the transience of life and the ineluctability of death on the one hand, and of the *uniqueness* of man's estate in the order of creation and the Grace of God on the other, are worked out without respite. It is marvellous indeed how the divine maestro plays upon these *motifs* in endless variations. The incremental strain in the end becomes a symphony of suffering.

Guru Tegh Bahadur's preoccupation with the theme of impermanence and mortality in his verse shows no sorrow over the short sojourn of man in this world. The keen edge of grief and the abiding nostalgia which we generally find in lyrics of this nature do not form part of his vision. On the contrary, the anguish here stems from the thought of separation from the Lord. The annulment of this state is sought with a view to achieving the desired consummation. No wonder, the world is seen as an insubstantial pageant, and life as an ebbing dream. This idea is so deeply ingrained as to suggest a settled disregard for the beauties and allurements of life. The metaphors of shadow, cloud, smoke, sand, spume, bubble and mirage etc. continually present human existence as something unreal, illusory and deceptive. The irony of man's existence or fate is never lost sight of.

*My devotee friends.*

*Be hold! such is this creation of God!*

*Amidst the universal play of death*

*Man considers himself immortal.*

*Strange is this beyond words.*

*Man gripped by lust, violence, attachment*

*Has put away from his mind the Divine Image,*

*And holds eternal this mortal frame,*

*Insubstantial as dream at night-time.*

*All that is visible is mortal as passing cloud-shadows.*

*Nanak, Servant of God has known this world to be insubstantial,  
And for Divine protection prays.* (Hymn II in *Gauri*)

In another hymn in *Telang*, man's ignorance of his true state is stated thus :

*"Each moment thy life flows off as out of broken pitcher. Ignorant fool! Why neglect devotion to the Lord?"*

Inevitably, where life is regarded as *maya* or illusion, death assumes a central position in the scheme of things. However, it's not seen as a 'ravisher' or as a 'bridegroom', but as an awesome 'hangman' waiting to cast his 'noose' round your neck. The dire and horrendous nature of that reality, calculated to jolt the sinful and slothful man into an awareness of his precarious purchase on life, is also brought home to us through terrifying animal imagery.

*Behold Death, prowling around  
Like a terrible beast of prey with fangs showing;  
One day it must clutch at thee—have no doubt of it.*

(Hymn I in *Sorath*)

The death motif in the Ninth Guru's verse is pervasive to the extent, we begin to see life's cease as the only reality in a world of shifting shadows and dreams. Obviously, this relentless and heavy accent on death reveals, at the same time a sense of equanimity in the contemplation of that frightful event. A settled serenity characterises Guru Tegh Bahadur's attitude in this regard. He has conquered the fear of death, and later his martyrdom in the cause of *dharma* and truth may thus be seen as fore-shadowed in his verse. In other words, the deed vindicates the vision. "Ripeness is all", to use Shakespeare's memorable line. "The Nirvana principal" of Freud—"the effort to reduce, to keep constant or to remove internal tension due to stimuli"—may be extended to include the primal essence of *nirvana* as *mukti* or *moksha* or deliverance from the cycle of birth and death. Death, viewed thus, holds no terrors; it becomes the *medium* of that ultimate peace which all saints crave.

It will be misleading, of course, to conclude from what has been said above that Guru Tegh Bahadur viewed life as such with complete disregard of disdain. True, life's blandishments do not attract him, and he is indifferent to its material satisfactions, but this is merely to say, he has again and again emphasized in his verse

the power of sensual pleasures, wealth, position and authority etc., and he knows that the common man is destined to seek his salvation within such confines. What, therefore, matters is the cultivations of a sensibility which learns to view these "blessings" in the context of moral order and spiritual advancement. Indeed, life is even regarded as a "precious jewel", a unique opportunity earned by us after aeons of dumb agony and darkness. To be born human amidst countless creatures that constitute the lower orders of life is to have already achieved distinction.

*After wandering through various births for aeons,*

*At last hast thou attained the human incarnation.*

*Saith Nanak : This is thy occasion to find union with the Lord—*

*Neglect devotion nowise!*

(Hymn II in *Sorath*)

Thus, all life's beauties are to be turned into a beautiful vision, whereby the glories of heaven become the measure of our reach and grasp. To remain pitifully attached to them is, on the contrary, to invite perpetual *dukha* or suffering.

Such a view of life obviously subsumed the ubiquity of evil. In Guru Tegh Bahadur's verse, there are few purely metaphysical assumptions in regard to this problem. That's to say, evil in its primeval, atavistic form (as in Christian theology, for instance) does not quite appear here, though perhaps evil in man's unconscious is by implication countenanced here and there. For the Guru, evil exists in all types of attachments whose purpose is animal pleasure. Even the wariest of ascetics is seldom free of taint.

*In the sinful heart is lodged lust.*

*Therefrom the mind irrepressible cannot be snatched back.*

*Yogi, wandering ascetic and recluse—*

*All are caught in its noose.*

(Hymn II in *Basant*)

Evil, then, subtly invades all minds, for it's lodged in unappeased desires and appetites. Its progeny include avarice, envy, passion, pride, violence, egoism, slander etc. One in a million, says the Guru, is able to survive "the worldly poison", and achieve transcendence.

The source of all suffering in Guru Tegh Bahadur's view is the maverick mind of man, Restive and ungovernable, it is continually foraging for fresh fields of desire. Visions of lust and power and greed possess it, and thus, the sense of value and judgement is

clouded. Its intractable nature is the subject of so many hymns and couplets that the style itself reflects the preoccupation of the Guru with this theme. *Mana re or Re mana* i.e. "O my mind", thus become the *signature* phrase that launches one poem after another.

*My mind, what evil thoughts hast thou grasped?  
Keeping absorbed in the pleasures of lust and slanders,  
And neglected of devotion.* (Hymn III in *Sorath*)

Or

*Mother mine, this mind is nowise in my power;  
Running day and night after evil courses, how I restrain it?  
Impervious to holy teaching,  
Seeking other's wealth,  
Coveting their womenfolk,  
Making waste of all this life!  
Maddened by heady liquor of worldly pelf,  
Blind to words of Divine wisdom—  
Ignorant of the Immaculate Lord's mystery,  
Whose dwelling is in the heart.* (Hymn VII in *Sorath*)

Thus, the disciplining of the mind is considered, as in the poetry of Guru Nanak, something supreme and godlike. A person who is able to cultivate poise and stillness, and can hold "dust and gold", or "joy and sorrow" or "friend and foe" alike merges into the Lord as "water into water". However, in the end, deliverance comes as an act of Grace. No amount of knowledge, wisdom, wit or cunning is of any avail without it. This basic concept of Sikhism is given utterance in varying metaphors. In one of these, God is referred to as "the Ocean of Grace".

Again, Guru Tegh Bahadur comes down heavily upon those who seek salvation through empty and ritualistic fasting and bathing, pilgrimage and prayer. These worldly 'pieties' in no way ensure a passage to eternity. So long as one's heart is entangled in worldly pursuits and pleasures, there can be no complete annulment of pain and suffering. Only a realisation of the inner reality can lead one into realms of truth. But such a state is vouchsafed to only the elect few. Millions of householders pitifully cling to their worldly belonging even when age and decay have overtaken them. In a number of hymns and couplets, the Guru draws the erring mortal's pointed

attention to senescence and approaching death, and to the need for resipiscence or the recognition of one's error.

When we turn from the theme and thought of Guru Tegh Bahadur's verse to his language and idiom, imagery and metaphors, allusions and analogues, we are obliged to view his poetics in the context of the literary tradition of the times. The 17th century neo-classical style, which was the prevailing or dominant mode of expression in Northern India when Guru Tegh Bahadur assumed his apostolate in 1664 is appropriated with skill and ease. Unlike Guru Nanak and the other earlier Gurus who composed their verses in Punjabi and used Braji Hindi sparingly, the Ninth Guru employed chaste Braji throughout. However, it may be pointed out that his language which in the eastern districts of the Punjab assumed the form of neighbouring Punjabi dialects. Thus the *bani* of the earlier Gurus provides not merely thematic or doctrinal, but also, linguistic continuity, in a manner.

To begin with, his hymns are composed in various classical Indian *ragas*, and, as such, are musical in essence and structure. Not only that, they also reflect the meaning and spirit of these measures which between themselves cover almost the entire gamut of human emotions. Again, the rigour which characterises the Guru's thought in certain hymns is aptly mirrored in striking and strong ropes, just as his humility and sweetness are seen in images of tenderness and compassion. For instance, the unregenerate sinner or the heedless hedonist immersed in sensuality is shown as "incorrigible as cur's tail", and as "a stone lying in water unsoaked." Besides the canine image, almost always used in a pejorative sense, there are other animal images suggesting sloth, rankness, appetite, filth and grime etc in human nature when it is untouched by light. One such image is that of the hog (Sloka 44) 'One whose heart is denuded of devotion to God—Saith Nanak : Little difference is he from the filthy hog or hound'. Similarly, images of death range from "Yama's noose" and "a beast of prey with fangs" to one's dear and near one shunning his ghost after life is departed. Guru Tegh Bahadur's eschatology is obviously severe and unsparing.

Each hymn has a characteristic invocation style, and generally

begins with *Sadho* or "Devotee friends", *Mai* or "Mother, mine", and *Mana Re/Re Mana* or "O my mind". Such a form of invocation, though traditional in Bhakti poetry, gives the hymns nostalgic reverberations. Since these are all lyric outpourings of a soul in bliss, even the severest of them show a deep and abiding compassion. This is not a poetry born of tension and tumult, but of peace and poise. The element of longing for the Lord does give it a passionate intensity, but this intensity bespeaks ardour and devotion rather than conflict or torment.

Guru Tegh Bahadur's use of classical myths, allusions and symbols in the established literary tradition of medieval poetry is calculated to aid understanding. The myth of the rescue of the Elephant from the Crocodile when it prayed to the Preserver, Lord Vishnu, and the stories of the redemption of the courtesan, Ganika, and of the sinner, Ajamal, were so common in Hindu religious lore that the common reader or listener toward whom these hymns were chiefly directed felt the full force of these moving hymns. Not only did these allusions ensure continuity and universality, the style also gained in compactness and density. However, there is no crowding or hurrying of images. The words and figures fall in their places as of right. To be sure, there are also common images of beauty and fulness as in the following hymn in *Dhanasari*, though their appeal stems from the unusual and refreshing union of the rose and mirror images.

*Why seekest Him thou in waste places?  
The Lord all-pervading, eternally immaculate,  
fills all thy being,  
As does the fragrance the rose,  
The reflection the mirror.  
The Lord ever abides in us :  
Seek Him inside the self,  
Know, inside ourselves and outside is He alone.....  
This truth the Preceptor has revealed.  
Saith Nanak, Servant of God;  
Without contemplating ourselves the filth  
of illusion disappears not*

It will be seen that the hymn characteristically ends with the



name of Nanak, the First Sikh Guru, in whose name all the Gurus composed their poetry in succession. The hymns of Guru Tegh Bahadur thus appear in the *Guru Granth* as verses of "the Ninth Bride of God." Besides being a mystical mode of expression, it's clearly an exercise in humility and self-effacement. The successive apostles were no poets in the ordinary sense of the word; they were inebriated saints who in denying their own identity reached supreme heights of poetic expression through the lyric ardour of their possessed imaginations.

Guru Tegh Bahadur's poetry is restricted to a few dominant *leitmotifs*, and though slender in volume, burns fiercely like a flame. Its purity comes from a disciplined mind. The great sociological and political concerns of Guru Nanak's poetry—poverty, injustice, exploitation, iniquity, war and plunder etc.—are apparently not encountered here in any overt form. Since the dominant note in his verse is *Vairag* or *dispassion*, it's under-standable that the affairs of the world left him somewhat untouched and uninvolved. Since his whole vision is other-worldly, and since life here is viewed as a more dream, and man, as a handful of dust, the immediate problems of polity and society do not engage his attention. Which is, however, not to suggest that he distanced himself in the manner of a recluse. As one deeply agonized over the state of man, his humanist concern is seen time and again in a unique marriage of compassion and dispassion. The imagination of pity has also become the imagination of indignation.

Our last view of Guru Tegh Bahadur composing verses during his imprisonment in Delhi prior to his martyrdom in 1675 is something so sublime as to make us ponder the problem in awe. A noble and consecrated saint at utter peace with himself is contemplating his approaching death with a fortitude rare in human history. The 57 slokas or couplets, some of which were presumably composed in Aurangzeb's prison—the concluding section of the *Guru Granth*—constitute a unique paean of exultation and transcendence. Nearly all the themes of his earlier hymns are repeated, but now the immediacy of death—a major theme in itself—gives these couplets a compelling urgency. The receding tableau of life flits past the

Guru's vision to disappear in the effulgence of the promised shores. From the bank of time on his side of eternity, a great soul is poised for the joyous leap. The concluding couplet affirms his triumphant and abiding faith in the immanence of God and in the imminence of his union with Him.

*In this hour have I lodged the Name of God in my heart—  
God's Name that is supreme over all,  
Whose meditation annuls all suffering  
And favours the devotee with a sight of the Divine Face.*

*(Sloka 57)*

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Note : The English renderings of the hymns and couplets used in the article are by Professor G. S. Talib (*Guru Tegh Bahadur : Martyr and Teacher* by Fauja Singh and Gurbachan Singh Talib. Punjabi University. Patiala. 1975).

## THE CLASSICAL TENOR OF GURU TEGH BAHADUR'S POETRY

SANT SINGH SEKHON

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In the literature of the age of religious and cultural renaissance in India—a period almost contemporaneous with the Renaissance in Europe—the *Guru Granth* presents a remarkable collection from Bhakta Kabir in the east, Bhakta Namadev in the West and Sheikh Farid in the north. The style of Bhakta Kabir, marking the beginning of the classical style in Hindi poetry and that of Sheikh Farid the beginnings of modern Punjabi, seem to stand at two extremes. They are, respectively, the true ancestors of modern Hindi and modern Panjabi. But whereas the work of Bhakta Kabir was carried further by Goswami Tulsidas and numerous others, that of Sheikh Farid in the Panjab had to undergo some vicissitudes. It may not indeed have survived had not the Sikh Gurus, aspiring to transcend Hindu-Muslim differences, incorporated it in their canon. Truly, Guru Nanak can be said to have carried on the literary tradition of Sheikh Farid and he has been followed by the third and fourth Gurus, Amardas and Ramdas, and within a narrower range, by Bhai Gurudas. But the direction the Sikh literary tradition seems to have taken would not have led it to Lahore. It was in the direction of Delhi, Agra and Benares, the literary centres of Bhakha or medieval Hindi. The question seems to have been decided by Guru Arjan Dev in whose poetry various forms of Panjabi find place in, for example, *Dakhanes* and some other parts. Guru Arjan is perhaps at his classical best in *Bara Maha Majh*, which is by all standards a classical paradigm of Hindi poetry, with the unmistakable colouring of Panjabi.

The sixth, seventh and eighth Gurus are not known to have left any poetic creations and, in the stream of Gurubani, Guru Arjan is followed by Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth in Guru Nanak's line.

The poetry of Guru Tegh Bahadur, however, forms quite a small portion of the total canon as available in *Guru Granth*, of whose total pages, 1430, it would hardly cover more than about 40. It comprises in all some 504 lines, of which nearly one-fourth are found as *slokas* with which the volume of *Guru Granth* closes.

These *slokas*, 57 in all, and the 59 *shabads* or hymns show a distinctive style in the entire corpus of the *Gurubani*. They are inspired by the emotion of dispassion (*vairagya*) which is recognised as the general tone of the religious spirit over almost the entire world, east and west—though the other Gurus, from Guru Nanak to Guru Arjan, seem to synthesize this emotion with feelings of more positive social import.

Why Guru Tegh Bahadur's poetry is inspired almost entirely by the spirit or emotion which at times is close to the tragic temper, is a question that is seldom asked and answered by Sikh scholarship, though everybody has felt and remarked it.

One answer may be that Guru Tegh Bahadur came to assume the leadership of the community at an age past forty. About twenty years of his life he had spent, if not as a recluse, keeping rather out of touch with the main current of the community's life which was marked by conflict with ambitious antagonists from within and with the imperial authority growing increasingly suspicious of the empire within empire as it must have seemed to the Mughal rulers. Though it is not to be assumed that Guru Tegh Bahadur's poetry was composed during the years of his life of a recluse—the inclusion of the name of *Nanak* in it is alone sufficient to demolish that assumption—still, it would not be unreasonable to assume that the spirit of a recluse has got carried over into it. Perhaps for this reason, the poetry of Guru Tegh Bahadur is to be placed in the category of classicism in the literary history of north India in general and of Hindi in particular. And it goes to the credit of Hindi literary taste and scholarship that this poetry is accorded a place of esteem in that tradition.

In the literary tradition of India as a whole, the various popular religious leaders figure as poets of considerable excellence. The Vaishnavite poets of Bengal are an outstanding example. Kabir and some others like Ravidas stand in the same category in the Gangetic

plain. In the north the Sikh Gurus occupy even a more eminent place, not only because their followers made history and thus exalted their preceptors. The compositions of the Gurus show in ample measure their characteristic philosophical and egalitarian approach. However, one feature marks all of these poets. They cannot be put in the straight-jackets of any formal school of Indian poetry. Their work defies most of the canons of classicism and formalism. They show a supreme disregard for formalism, *riti* as it is called in Indian literary tradition. They do not feel tied down to rules of metre and rhyme, and of rhetoric as laid down in the classical treatises of poetics. Yet their poetry does not at all give any impression of being the work of amateurs in the art. Their disregard is the privilege of mastery, and their deviations from the strict rules of prosody and rhetoric, from metre and rhyme are so many variations on the musical scale. Indeed, one thing that has been remarked of them is that they do not subscribe to the rules of prosody, that their form is more properly musical. However, their verse can be scanned and categorised as the commonly accepted verse forms, with musical variations. They seem to follow the prosodic forms as the underlying pattern or form on which they ring variations with supreme mastery. Guru Nanak takes great liberty with prosodic forms, but nowhere does he give the impression of having a weak hold on the art of poetry. The main prosodic forms, *dohira*, *chaupai*, *dawayya* and *sawayya* can easily be marked as the pattern forms. And in so far as there is a departure, it generally invariably contributes to the richness and beauty of texture.

Guru Amardas and Guru Ramdas take even greater liberties with prosody. In Guru Ramdas's compositions the formal variations in many places are astounding indeed.

In Guru Arjan's compositions there is a clear return to the more regular, classical form, though even in his famous poem, *Sukhmani*, the pattern, *chaupai*, shows variations in plenty. The most regular poem prosodically is his *Bara Maha* in *Raga Majh*. That is why it has been termed above as his most completely classical composition. The same might be said of *Sukhmani*, which from beginning to end follows as uniform pattern of arrangement.

Guru Tegh Bahadur's compositions are not as copious or

numerous as Guru Arjan's. But they are in tone and style about the most classical in the *Guru Granth*.

It may be useful to clarify the sense in which the term 'classical' is used here. In form, 'classical' means which has been perfected by long usage from one practitioner to another, from generation to generation, from age to age. Guru Tegh Bahadur's compositions fulfil this condition generally and not only in the context of the *Gurubani*. For, leaving aside the compositions of the *Siddhas* and *Nathas*, which are available only in oral tradition, a large body of hymns written by the admirers and disciples of the hymn-makers, forms a major literary tradition from the beginnings of the modern Indian languages. This tradition descending through the *Vaishnavites* of Bengal, Ramanand and Kabir of Benares, Tulsidas, the author of *Ramayana* and Surdas of Vrindavan and Mirabai of Rajasthan, as well as from Guru Nanak in the *Guru Granth*, finds its continuation in Guru Tegh Bahadur's hymns. Not a word that is extraneous or superfluous, except those current features of expression which are the classical style's very own; not a variation that is not sanctioned by usage, not a phrase that is anything but a more polished idiom of the style has found place in them.

The verse form in Guru Tegh Bahadur's compositions is patterned perhaps on the musical phrase and note, but in its streamlined simplicity it shows a prosodic discipline which would silence the doubts of the most fastidious.

In modern times when symbolism, imagism and other creeds have come very much in vogue, it is often claimed that poetry is a composition of images, not a sequence of statement. But this view is certainly unclassical, if not altogether anti-classical. All classical poetry is, in fact, the poetry of statement. It is adorned and beautified, sometimes rather too profusely from the strictly classical point of view, with simile and metaphor, as even ordinary speech is adorned, mainly to cope with the intensity of emotion. But it relies basically on the linguistically and verbally straight, unilinear, one-dimensional statement. Irony and ambiguity may be introduced here and there for specific, short-term effect, but the matrix is straight and regular. The aim is not to confound or test the reader, but to impress upon him the intensity and urgency of meaning. There is a balance between

intellect or wit on the one side and emotion and sentiment on the other, so that the over-all effort is that of what the English neo-classicists (Augustans) called 'reason' as opposed to the free imagination, romantic wonder or metaphysical mystification. Indeed, when Guru Nanak expresses wonder at the workings of the universe, he makes use of the device of statement, of repetition, with variations of the correlative terms—it is not romantic wonder, but a rationally qualitative and quantitative astonishment, as in front of a scene of pictorial and formal beauty, of visible, dimensional grandeur, or pious serenity—all that the human intellect and emotion can cope with. And when the object is beyond it, a simple, straight surrender is the reaction, as when Guru Nanak says after a sustained statement or description that he does not know further. And even when he claims that what he says has been vouchsafed to him by God himself, as when he speaks of the miserable plight of the common people before Babar's hordes, the theme and substance are all so human and social. He does not claim to be having apocalyptic visions which are believed to be exclusively experienced by those claiming to be the elect. Guru Tegh Bahadur, similarly, never cares to rise above the human aspect—intellectually and emotionally—in the tradition of his great master and spiritual ancestor.

It is not necessary to fall back on the musical tradition to establish the prosodic form of Guru Tegh Bahadur's verses. For instance, his very first verse in the *Guru Granth* in *Raga Gaudi* : *Sadho man ka man tiyago*. The metre, except for the first line which is shorter ostensibly to give a musical orientation to the hymns, to set the tune, so to say—is 16-12 *matras*, a form of stanza, *dawayya*, used as commonly as the *doha*, in Gurubani, and in Panjabi poetry down to modern times, at least up to Bhai Vir Singh. This is the form used in eight of the nine hymns in *Raga Gaudi*. In the ninth and last verse, a variation is struck, by adding two *matras* at the beginning of the second half in lines that come after the musical direction (*rahau*).

In the only hymn in *Raga Asa*, the metre is again that of the regular *dawayya*. In the three hymns in *Raga Dev-Gandhari*, there are again variations on the same form, with an ellipsis of two *matras* at the end of the line in first hymn, and of one *matra* in each of the

other three—this latter being the common permissible variation.

In the first sixteen hymns, there is one common end-rhyme to all lines in the hymn. In the next ten hymns, a change in rhymes is made with the third line, or after the *rahau*. In some other hymns also the rhyme arrangement is thus varied, sometimes in the last two lines of the hymn, or there may be a change of rhyme after every two lines.

In three hymns in *Raga Basant*, the metrical form is different, the *chaupai* with variations. *Raga Jaijivanti* is used in the *Guru Granth* only by Guru Tegh Bahadur and in which there are four hymns. The verse form here is a slightly varied form of the common *Kabitt*, with thirty-one or thirty-two *varanas* or letters in each line arranged in four internally rhyming groups and a common end-rhyme to all the lines. In the *slokas*, of which there are fifty-seven in all, and which come near the end of the *Guru Granth* and are recited at the close of all ceremonial occasions, birth, wedding, death, etc., the form is the common *doha* or *dohira* with 13-11 *matras*, except that the *slokas* numbered 38 and 44 are in *soratha*, an inverted form of *dohira*.

The first line of each hymn also shows remarkable regularity—the first part of the line is excised and its place occupied by a *single* word of exhortation or address like *sadhho, prani, man re, nar*, or a word or phrase rhetorically its equivalent, such as *birtha, yeh man, sabh kichh, jugat, Hari ki* and such others.

In diction also Guru Tegh Bahadur's verse is remarkable for its classical purity and discipline. One characteristic of classicism is its evolution and cultivation of a verbal technique, a terminology and diction which correspond to the phenomena, social and natural, in religious life or ethical discipline. The *Siddhas* and *Nathas* sinned against the true classical spirit in carrying this cultivation too far. *Gurubani* is the least addicted to it. For instance, the *Siddhas* and other ascetic denominations have evolved terminologies for their ascetic practices. The *Vaishnavites, Savities, Tantriks* and *Saktas* have all of them their distinctive terminologies. For instance, the *Siddhas* use the image *baghan* (she-wolf) for the world or worldly life or for woman. Kabir also makes considerable use of such terminology. *Gurubani* shows in this respect a healthy, disciplined



eclecticism. But as the Sikh way of worship and spiritual discipline gets established and stereotyped, such a terminology does become somewhat complex and elaborate. In Guru Tegh Bahadur's diction, the range of this terminology becomes limited and linear. The same terms, like *maya*, *kama*, *krodha*, *moha*, *abhimān*, *dukt-sukh*, *harakh-soga*, *ustati-ninda*, *bairi-mit*, *kanchan-mati*, *sut-dara*, *dhan-sampāt*, are used once and again, but with such rhythmical virtuosity, that instead of tediousness, they produce an effect of pleasing familiarity and intimate ease. Guru Tegh Bahadur says what was often been said in the religio-spiritual lore of India, but with a chasteness and moral dignity so that the word or phrase never misses its mark. Just as direct statement in Guru Tegh Bahadur's poetry outvies imagery and irony, repetition outvies variety and novelty.

For instance, in his very first hymn in *Raga Gaudi* Guru Tegh Bahadur says :

*Ascetics, relinquish vanity of mind,  
Lust, anger, company of the wicked—  
Shun these day and night.  
He who regards pleasure and pain with an equal mind,  
And honour and disregard,  
Remains unaffected by joy and grief—  
He has indeed recognised the reality of this world;  
He discards both praise and dispraise, strives for the absolute.  
This is difficult, indeed, Nanak;  
Rarely possible only for a Guru-oriented devotee.*

These are the simplest words of moral and spiritual exhortation ever used by a religious teacher or preceptor but they strike such a chord in the heart of the listeners throughout north India, that this hymn is often sung by the most celebrated as well as the commonest practitioners of the art.

In the second hymn in the same *raga*, the Guru says :

*Ascetics, this world is a divine construction—  
While a part meets with destruction, another is believed to be  
everlasting;  
This wonder is incomprehensible.  
Gripped by lust; anger and fatuity,  
Man loses sight of the Divine figure,  
Regards as true his own body which is unreal*

*as the night's dream.*

*Whatever seems is all transient as the shadow of a cloud.*

Nanak regards this world as a myth and takes refuge with the Lord.

In these two hymns, there is hardly an apparent metaphor or simile. except for 'false as the night's dream' or 'transient as the shadow of a cloud.'

If we were to put Guru Tegh Bahadur's poetry into any of the classical Sanskrit categories of rhetoric, it would certainly not fit in the category of *alankar*. It is preeminently the rhetoric of the *rasa* category, and its particular *rasa* is *karuna* or compassion. But the diction may equally well be put in the category of *Auchitya*.

The effort of *karuna* or compassion is created effortlessly by the use of a diction put into wide currency, for the use of prince and peasant alike, by men of religion and common human sophistication. It does not appeal certainly to the young except for its sheer music, that of a song 'sweetest because it is saddest'. In the ceremonial recitations of *Guru Granth* in Sikh homes even on happy occasions it is befitting, because it moves the old and wistful in the congregation and passes over the heads of the young and the gay. It is sad, as death, the end of human life is sad, but does not for that reason occupy the mind overmuch. It is said for those who want to cultivate for a while the mood of resignation and sadness.

What the English literary philosopher and critic, I.A. Richards, has termed 'stock response' has been used to good effect in Guru Tegh Bahadur's poetry, at it has been in the poetry of Dante which is religious and of Shakespeare. While these two are wide-ranging, and touch all the chords of the human psychic organ, Guru Tegh Bahadur is content to strike a single chord. His is the poetry of the unichord (*Iktara*). But the culture and sophistication of this unichord music is truly astounding. The child looks with a single mind at life, the old man on death and the hereafter. There is a singleness of feeling in the poetry of Sheikh Farid also, who seems to have composed his Panjabi verses in old age, as is evident in the text. But Guru Tegh Bahadur was not an old man when he composed his verses. He died at the age of fifty-five. It is believed that the *slokas* were composed while the Guru was lodged in Aurangzeb's prison.

But that obviously cannot be said of the fifty-nine hymns.

As has been said above, the composition of these hymns cannot be assigned to the period before Guru Tegh Bahadur has assumed the onerous charge of leading a community that was living in a precarious state of cold war with the mighty Mughal Empire. And he had not taken his charge lying down. Ram Rai, the elder brother of Guru Harikrishan, had been cut out of the succession of Guru Hari Rai for leaning too far in order to keep the Emperor Aurangzeb in good humour. Aurangzeb, on his side, cannot be said not to have understood and noticed the implications of Ram Rai's disinheritance. And when he contrived to hold a discourse with the over-young Guru Harkrishan, he may have been impressed, but he was not a person to have overlooked an affront. Though he was advanced in age, he could have, in the self-assurance of men of success regarding themselves as men of destiny, decided to wait for the child-Guru to grow to manhood.

But as it happened, Guru Harkrishan left this world all too young, and was succeeded as Guru by one who had fought valiantly in one of the battles his father, Guru Hari Gobind, had to fight with the lackeys of the empire. Perhaps he earned his name in that battle, and fully justified it. Aurangzeb must have been put on regard when his man succeeded to the Guruship. We learn from history that the internment which ended with the Guru's decapitation was not his first capture and interment. He had been captured a couple of years earlier too, and diplomatically taken to Assam by Sawai Raja Ram Singh. And when the Guru returned from his peregrinations in the eastern provinces, he cannot have escaped Aurangzeb's notice either. So it can be said that for all the Brahmins of the world, the Guru was living constantly under the shadow of imperial hostility and death.

It is not necessary to refute the charge that Guru Tegh Bahadur was a disturber of peace. The hill chiefs in whose midst the Sikh centre of Anandpur was growing into a seat of spiritual, and as its inevitable consequence, secular power, state within the state, regarded him as such. The Emperor must have, on their reports, taken the same view. Or rather his view regarding Guru Tegh Bahadur as the lead of a potential rebellion must have been strengthened.

Under the shadow of death, the Guru's compositions would naturally be tinged with disillusionment with worldly shows which indeed gives strength in moments of trial. The Guru's disillusionment was coupled with his faith in God's grace to His devotees. This grace however, would not be miraculous intervention, but God's aid to man to find fulfilment in an ideal way. The constant strain of disillusionment and faith did not need any very elaborate rhetoric for its expression. It had sufficient native strength to flow out in pure unichord notes with variations on themes like dispassion, exhortation to discard worldliness and to follow the path of devotion.

Wordsworth was indeed adopting only another version—the democratic version in keeping with the spirit of his age—when he said that poetry must speak in the simple language of the peasant. Before him Milton had also wanted poetry to be simple, though sensuous and passionate. Guru Tegh Bahadur gave to his poetry the simplicity of the preacher's word, who takes an austere view of life and does not attach too much value to it. There is a great strength in the sadness of the man who stripes worldly shows of all value. Such is the secret of his simplicity of diction and rhetoric. One reason of this simplicity is of course the extremely limited range of its reaction to the external situation. Inevitable death and disillusionment with the futile struggle for wealth and pomp are the main themes of Guru Tegh Bahadur's poetry.

In such a range of themes, the argument cannot cover a wide area. On one side, there is this world, the world of wife, son, friends and social relations, and on the other side inevitable death which man, engrossed in the world, forgets. It seems Guru Tegh Bahadur had to illusions about the end that lay in store for him, ever since the first summons had come from the relentless Emperor, if not indeed from the moment he succeeded to a position made all the more hazardous by Ram Rai's defection and finding a place of favour in Aurangzeb's court. Consider, for instance :

*False is all attachment to this world.  
Everyone is caught in the meshes of his own interest,  
Be it wife or friend.  
All this commence of living!  
Mother, father, brother, son, friend,*

*And then the wife of the house!  
All this constitutes but a mirage,  
If one delves deep in one's mind.*

And then these words of the last days :

*All strength is gone, the bonds have closed,  
There is left no way or means.  
Say, Nanak, the only refuge is in the Lord,  
May he come to the rescue, as to the elephant's.*

To which the inevitable response of a brave mind is :

*Strength returns, the bonds are broken,  
All ways are there to avail.  
Nanak, everything is in Thy hands,  
Thou alone will come to save.*

Guru Tegh Bahadur's verses are the poetry of catharsis that the human spirit needs in moments of happiness as well as grief, pleasure as well as pain. No wonder, his *slokas* form the concluding part of Sikh ceremonial on occasions of joy as well as grief.

It is often remarked that the kind of non-attachment, unworldliness that Guru Tegh Bahadur and, for that matter, the entire Guru tradition preaches, cannot be practised by common humanity. It is not realistic, it is incompatible with normal life, its duties and burdens. The Guru tradition is not oblivious of this fact. It openly admits that only a few, the elect, can practise this non-attachment. Thus Guru Tegh Bahadur says, Nanak, there is one in millions who recognises truth through the Guru.

(*Dhanasari*, 2.2)

*Says Nanak, this kind of wealth  
the rare, Guru-devoted, achieves.*

(*Basant*, 3.3)

*Nanak, there is but one in millions,  
Who keeps the Lord in mind.*

(*Sloka*, 24)

The majority of humanity remains engrossed in things of the world. To the modern mind this overwhelming concern at the evil that pervades the world would sound unrealistic, even irrational. Why should it be assumed that the common householder, the worker and the peasant, are given over to evil in being engrossed in their daily cares and duties. Why should love of wife, son and family lead to estrangement from the Lord? But this is precisely the assessment and the great concern of the classical mind. It brings to

mind the existential anguish that has characterised a widely prevalent school of thought in modern Europe. Guru Tegh Bahadur and, in fact, the *bhakti* tradition of India under alien Turkish and Mughal rule seems to anticipate this anguish of existence. But whereas the modern existentialist way of thinking seeks escape from it through a personal 'Thou and I' relation with God, the *bhakti* and the Guru traditions seek it through the mediation of the Guru.

*Nanak says, this way of emancipation  
You may find by devotion towards the Guru. (Gaudi, 2.5)*

The common man is according to the Guru's classical way of feeling engrossed in evil by being engrossed in this world and estranged from the Divine :

*Ascetics, this mind cannot be restrained.  
It lives with restless desire, that is why  
it does not remain stable. (Gaudi, 2.4)*

*Given this rare human tabernacle,  
Man lives his life in vain,  
The love of maya becomes his great crisis,  
it absorbs him.*

*He does not devote himself to the Divine  
that is in him and outside always with him. (Gaudi, 2.6)*

*O mind, why have you gone mad!  
Your life gets shorter day and night,  
greed has made you cheap. (Gaudi, 3.8)*

*Man, fear sinning unawares. (Gaudi, 2.9)*

*Whom may I tell the tale of my mind?  
Caught in greed, it runs in all directions,  
in expectation of wealth;  
In search of pleasure, suffers great misery,  
serves one master after another. (Asa, 2.1)*

*Everyone claims it is mine,  
everyone's mind is fastened to self-interest.  
(Devagandhãri, 2.3.6.38,47)*

*O mind, what false wisdom you have learnt!  
Attracted by another man's wife and  
speaking ill of others.  
You have not devoted yourself to the Lord.  
You do not know the way of emancipation,  
running after amassing wealth,*

*In vain tied to what will not stay with you in the end. (Sorathi, 3.3)*  
*Attracted by another's wealth, another's*  
*wife, you have wasted your life. (Sorathi, 3.7)*

Escape from this anguish lies, of course, in dedication to the Divine. Guru Tegh Bahadur cites again and again the classical examples of Ajamal, Ganika, the prostitute, Dhruva, the child prince, and the elephant.

Another characteristic of the classical tradition is its metaphysicalisation of reality. Its spirituality would of its nature be metaphysical; the morality is metaphysical too. Indeed, all the phenomena of social life are metaphysicalised. To the classical mind murder is a sin, not crime. Adultery is not a breach of faith with the spouse, but a sin. It is not enjoined upon man to be honest, truthful, sincere and straight forward for the sake of a healthy social life, but in order to please the Lord. Virtue is to be cultivated not for its social utility, but for its own sake, nay, for the rewards that it will fetch in the life hereafter, in the Divine court. The aim is, of course, social and utilitarian, but the method is transcendental, metaphysical. To be socially useful one has to transcend the phenomena of this world. A dim view is taken of the social structure which is called this world—*ih jagat*. He who can rise above the compulsions of this world, will automatically become virtuous. earn merit here and hereafter. And the best way to transcend the compulsions of this world is to devote oneself to the Divine, to be *deva-prayana*, in the words of the Gita, to pray, according to the western religions, Christianity and Islam. One is reminded in this context of a verse of a Persian Muslim poet :

*When on the Last Day,*  
*life will dissolve,*  
*The first question asked will be*  
*about Namaz (prayer).*

Among the *bhakti* creeds of India, and in Sikh belief and practice it is the singing of the praises of the Lord that is the trigger to pull to achieve all social and spiritual aims. In Guru Tegh Bahadur's verse, singing the praises of the Lord is elevated to the highest level, as the only way to escape the compulsions of *maya* or this world's temptations. It is emphasised again and again :

*The praises of the Lord do not enter man's mind;  
 Day and night does he remain absorbed in maya,  
 How can he sing praises (of the Lord)?  
 Ascetics, sing the praises of the Lord!  
 This human life is an invaluable gift,  
 Why must you spend it uselessly?  
 Give up pride, attachment to maya,  
 And then fix your mind on singing of the Lord!  
 May someone put sense into this mind  
 gone astray;  
 Hearing the Vedas, the Puranas, and the  
 saints' preachings,  
 It does not even for a moment sing the praises  
 of the Lord.  
 Says Nanak, that man alone is happy,  
 Who sings the praises of the Lord;  
 The rest of the world is caught in the  
 grip of maya,  
 Unable to attain to the fear-free state.  
 Nanak says, singing of the Name,  
 Get across the ocean of being!  
 Not having sung the praises of the Lord,  
 You must passed your life in vain!*

This dominance of the lyrical mood is man's communion with the Divine is as old as the birth of the human species. It is when he falls into this frame of mind that man transcends for the moment the otherwise heavy burden of worldly affairs. Thus is set up the tension between *maya* and man, and man can overcome it only with the aid of song.

The following lines of the English poet Wordsworth are well worth quoting in this context :

*The blessed mood,  
 In which the burthen of the mystery,  
 In which the heavy and the weary weight  
 Of all this unintelligible world is lightened :  
 That serene and blessed mood,  
 In which the affections gently lead us on—  
 Until, the breath of this corporeal frame  
 And even the motion of our human blood  
 Almost suspended, we are laid asleep*



*In body, and become a living soul.....*

Though Wordsworth is regarded as anti-classical in the history of English poetry, this precisely is the classical way of escape from the world, what the Indian tradition since Vedantic times has cultivated as the main feature of its reaction to reality. This indeed marks the evolution of incantation from magic to religious prayers.

This dialectical tension between social necessity and personal unattachment marks the historical career of the Guru-tradition in the Panjab. Guru Nanak often resolves this tension in his poetry, perhaps because he was not yet involved in social action in relation to the state power in India. But in him also the resolution is constrained to indicate the necessity :

*Nanak sings the poems of bloodshed,  
Pouring libations of blood.*

Guru Arjan and Guru Tegh Bahadur were required to pour these libations. Their verbal reaction is not that of the desperate fighter but of the passive martyr. Not a word in this poetry of the tyranny and oppression that is raised over their heads for the pending blow. It is the classical mood of negation. The purely passive denial—negation—of Guru Tegh Bahadur is followed by the negation of the negation by Guru Gobind Singh, just as the austere—one should say, classical—tragedy by Guru Gobind Singh's career in this world is followed by the melodrama enacted by Banda Bahadur, leading to a gloriously successful culmination in the first half of the nineteenth century. And the chain of failure and success has by no means come to an end. In Guru Tegh Bahadur we see the beginning of the second play in this chain of the *Vichitra Natak*, the wonder-drama.

# III

## THE PHILOSOPHICAL AND SPIRITUAL BASES OF THE SIKH RELIGION



## THE CONCEPT AND TRADITION OF MARTYRDOM IN SIKHISM

GURBACHAN SINGH TALIB

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To go to the root of the word, *martyr* is from the Greek and means *witness*. In its implied sense it signifies one who by his supreme sacrifice for his faith bears witness to its truth, and to his own passionate adherence to it. In a world wherein aggressors and tyrants have always tried to impose their own foul designs on others, so as to deflect them from the path held by the latter to be right, the situation for the enactment of the high tragedy of martyrdom has been constantly recurring. Only in the ancient world the record of tyranny and the idealistic resistance to it have generally been incomplete or mixed up with much mythological matter. The result of this has been that the clear picture of the episode of martyrdom, the relevant factors in the situation, the ideals cherished and the full emotional significance of the sacrifice have been brought out only in historical times, when fairly reliable and detailed accounts of martyrdom have been recorded by sympathetic and imaginative witnesses. Given such witnesses, what would ordinarily be viewed as mere incidents of death and brutality, take on the character of the upholding of cherished ideals to death, in the eye of a power held to be divine, whose higher purposes are fulfilled through the tragic conflict represented in the act of self-immolation involved in martyrdom. But to postulate these different elements in the situation is to anticipate what should find mention in greater detail in the paragraphs to follow.

In the Muslim tradition the parallel term for martyr is *shaheed* (Arabic) which literally signifies the same, that is, witness. Both in classical Greek and Arabic the formulation of these parallel terms each of which is built round the same image, would indicate the

history of the moral and spiritual struggle of races and tribes sharing common cultural traditions in the lands inhabited by the races known as the Semitic. While the Greek writers' mind would be deeply influenced by the sufferings of the Jewish people at the hands of tyrannical Egyptians, Babylonians and such others, and later, the story of Jesus' sacrifice, the Muslims had besides, their own celebrated martyrs among the Prophet's followers and descendants, led by his grandson, Imam Hussain. It is from the Muslim tradition that the term *shaheed* came into India, and like so much else from the Muslim cultural background, got acclimatized in the social milieu of the Sikh people in a manner as to acquire a new and extended significance among them, because of the peculiar turns the history of the Sikh people took since quite an early period in the growth of their Church. All the classical elements of the phenomenon of martyrdom have been present in the religious history of the Sikh people in a remarkable degree. And remarkably enough, to describe this all-important phase of their racial experience, the Sikhs took the term *shaheed* from the tradition and vocabulary of Islam, at the hands of whose avowed followers their suffering came. Their own steadfast faith and courage they expressed through the Muslim term, *shaheed*. It is doubtful if before the Sikhs' use of this term in India, any other non-Muslim people had adopted this term to designate a great phase of their accumulative experience. After the currency which this term got at the hands of the Sikhs, it became common coin in referring to the sacrifices of all non-Muslims in India who fell while serving their faith or, as in the patriotic struggle against British rule in their country.

Not that the particular moral and spiritual experience known as martyrdom has not existed in India—the existence of the account of tyrants known to mythology and classical epics would sufficiently vouch for the existence of the various elements in such a situation—still, one would be at a loss to find a word parallel to *martyr* or the *shaheed* of Islam. Turning to the dictionaries of Sanskrit, where such a term may be expected to figure, all that one finds are a few coinage to correspond with the English word *martyr*: Apte's *Students' English-Sanskrit Dictionary* has entered against 'martyr' one or two phrase-parallelts, such as *deh-tyagin* (sacrificer or forsaker of one's

body, *i.e.* life.) For *martyrdom* again, we have *jivantyaga* (renouncing life), *deh-nyasa* (surrender of body). So, for this important concept, all that we find are a few, perhaps inadequate, coinages which hardly reflect the great act redolent of the spiritual struggle and sacrifice that is implied in martyrdom.

Such absence of an adequate term, however, should not be supposed to imply that the spiritual attitude accompanying martyrdom was unknown to the people of India in ancient times. On the contrary, to meet the challenge posed by tyranny and evil, voluntary suffering undertaken for self-purification or for arousing the conscience and will to resist in others was a common phenomenon. There were instances of Brahmins, rishis and other holy persons, deflecting a tyrant from his evil designs through the resolve of self-immolation. While mass struggles on the pattern of the Gandhian *satyagraha* may not have occurred, instances of what may be called individual *satyagraha* were frequent. Any infringement of the code of *Dharma* by a potentate or tyrant would draw to his portal some person held holy, who would give up food and resolve to fast unto death, unless the wrong was righted. A tyrant, however powerful, would not dare risk the wrath of the divine powers in allowing a holy man so protesting to die. It would be perfectly legitimate to list such acts as forms of martyrdom, for in these all the elements of martyrdom are present, except the very last one of dying at the tyrants hand. That what constitutes martyrdom is not solely the fact of death or decapitation, but the firm and solemn resolve to lay down one's life without flinching from a holy or noble cause, would be discussed in some detail in the paragraphs to follow. Here, this may only be mentioned to indicate the spiritual and moral content of martyrdom. A term drawn from the Sanskrit and in popular use among our people is *sankalpa*, which stands for a firm resolve, a vow to achieve some moral result. This *sankalpa* is the spiritual preparatory stage towards martyrdom. And of this we have continuing evidence in the millennia-old history of the Aryan people, to whom the contemporary generations of non-Muslims in India are the heir.

As said earlier, in the absence of proper historiography in ancient India, it is difficult to establish the facts of martyrdom. All

that can be speculated is that in the earlier phases of their colonization and conquest of the Indian mainland, the Aryans must have had their martyrs. Numbers must have fallen by the sword or arrow of the aborigines, Dravidians and others, who resisted the Aryan march into their homelands. There must have been stray armed men caught, some 'holy' men ambushed and murdered, and others who would refuse to yield or to divulge secrets to the foe. All such were martyrs. Their sacrifices must have been honoured. Yet it is strange that such experience found no term to designate it. Perhaps the virile Aryan people set greater store by heroic fighting to defend the moral values, than to passively lay down one's life and thus bearing witness to faith.

Dying for one's faith and presumably becoming a martyr has, however, scriptural sanction in the Gita within the Hindu tradition. In the chapter on *Karma Yoga* (The Yoga of Action) in the context of the surrender unto God of the 'fruits' of Action, says the Lord :

*Sreyam svadharmo vigunah pradharmat svamusthitat  
Svadharme nidhanam sreyah pradharmo bhayavahah* (III-35)

(One's own dharma, though imperfect, is  
better than the dharma of another well-discharged :  
Better death in one's own dharma;  
The dharma of another is full of fear.)

What is implied in the sacred Gita text is that Arjuna being a Kshatriya, must not shun the battle. But it has obviously also a wider implication, and inculcates heroic martyrdom in adhering to the duty of sacrifice of life for one's faith.

As hinted above, irrespective of whatever gaps there might be in language, the fact of martyrdom existed. Only the classical Indian mind, eschewing to view human life as tragedy, viewed it on the contrary as the triumph of Right. Such triumph, instead of the fearless sacrifice of life offered by a noble soul, was viewed more directly to come through divine intervention in the form of the destruction of tyrants and evil-doers. One instance among others, of such triumph is the steadfast faith of the child-saint Prahlada, who threatened with death by his demon-atheist (Daitya—obviously non-Aryan) father, was however, succoured by the Lord in the form of the Lion-Man (Narasimha) incarnation. This story is a household word and

part of the tradition of the Indian people. The point of mentioning it is that Prahlade has all the characteristics in respect of his holy resolve, to die for his devotion, of the saint martyr. Only through divine intervention, he is spared the last agony and sacrifice of life. The protection of Draupadi's honour from the tyrant Duryodhana seeking to dishonour her in the court, is another instance of divine intervention. So also numerous other instances form popular mythology. Religious persecution, as mentioned above, has not been unknown in ancient India and obviously there have been martyrs to faith, among those who did not subscribe to the theistic Vedic religion, no less than among the followers of the Vedas, as one or the other religious tradition became dominant in the State. To have withstood aggression and persecution, to have met death or, short of that, borne privation whatever these have occurred, have been acts calling for the admiration, and in cases of extreme suffering, the homage of mankind. It is such people, facing persecution and not forsaking the ideal, who have worn the crown of martyrdom, be they at the end of their trails, left dead or alive, whose resolve has been one of great dynamic forces of history. Historical movements originate in the resolve of the strong-willed and those prepared to sacrifice personal convenience. And in the broadest definition, such people are martyrs.

Incidents of religious persecution in ancient India are, however, mentioned. Followers of the non-Vedic faiths, the Jainas and Buddhists have now and then been persecuted, in some cases with death. One of the rulers who is said to have collected the heads of Buddhist monks was Pushyamitra. In the case of the Brahminical revival of the post-Buddhistic era, there is mention again of persecution of Buddhists. It is difficult to authenticate all the facts, and to separate sectarian propaganda from genuine history. While there was obviously reconversion of Buddhists to Hinduism on a large scale, it is not likely that anything like the incidents of Muslim hostility towards Hinduism occurred, involving hardship and death.

Thus, while India has had its unnamed martyrs, about whose sacrifices only the vaguest conjectural and indirect information is available, it is among the Semitic and generally what are called the 'Middle Eastern' races that clear and authentic records of martyrdom are available. And by the same token, in India too it is after the



establishment of Muslim rule that instances of martyrdom are easily traceable and become numerous. The cause of such a phenomenon is to be found in the inevitable conflict between the conquering faith of Islam and the long-established traditions of what is loosely known as Hinduism. Conflict led to persecution off and on and to martyrdom being faced by the spirits, steadfast to their ancestral and national faith.

In order to illustrate the statement about the availability of records on martyrdom, we may not have to go into a detailed study of the 'Middle Eastern' faiths and the manner in which religious conflicts and consequently persecution and martyrdom became a phenomenon of frequent occurrence in these societies. While India has had as mentioned already, its phases of religious persecution in early times, at some period in the post-Buddhistic ages, it appears that the numerous sects and sub-sects falling within the ambit of Arya-Dharma, later known as Hinduism drifted towards a kind of ecumenism, a deliberate attempt at forging relationships through myth among the deities of the sects prevalent among the people. With the gods and their progeny having some contacts among themselves in any part of the Hindu cosmic time, the spirit of understanding, tolerance and a general vision of unity at the base developed, albeit such a vision was obviously vouchsafed mainly to the small thinking section of Indian humanity. While sect no doubt wrangled with sect, with occasional fights, on the whole a spirit of accommodation also prevailed. There was hardly any bitter conflict in the sense in which we know it in several eras in the history of Islam or Christianity. The Upanishadic philosophy of Immanence and the pantheism from which the Hindu mind did not shrink, along with a mythology narrating tales of the inter-relationship of gods of the various denominations cumulatively bred a spirit of tolerance and accommodation. The state policy of great monarchs like Ashoka and Harshavardhana and others less celebrated confirmed in the Hindu mind a spirit whereby the leaders of faith and thought and their followers learnt to agree even when differing strongly. Even such facts as the extreme forms of untouchability and total emphasis on the external forms of religion did not however, erode his attitude of tolerance. Sects differing from others in numerous ways did not

persecute those with whom they differed. In such a situation while suffering there was bound to be, of the particularly social fact of persecution and martyrdom hardly any instances may be found.

Suppression of other faiths and peoples has been witnessed on a vast scale, as for example, in the persecutions to which the Jewish people have been subjected right from the pre-Mosaic age, through the domination by Babylon, and later by the Romans. In subsequent times come wave after wave of persecution—by the Christians in a number of lands, by the Muslims and later, at the hands of the Nazi regime in Germany and elsewhere. A race that has stood so much persecution over three millennia, has obviously its martyrs, both those named and prominent, and the vast numbers of those who have remained unnamed. As Islam spread with lightning rapidity in Iran, there were again the martyrs to their faith among the Zoroastrians who did not submit to renounce it. The number of such must have been comparatively small though, since the millionfold conversion of the entire population of a large country over a short period, is a unique phenomenon in the history of the spread of religion. There were the other martyrs, those who did not meet their death, but set sail for the distant shores of India, with all the hazards of a perilous sea-journey to an alien land. These exiles from home were martyrs to their faith no less than those who might have lost their lives at the hands of the marauder or the executioner.

While the Sufis particularly did make attempts, feeble though, in India to create an atmosphere of inter-religious goodwill, and that the masses on the whole remained unconcerned with adding rancour to the religious scene, the ugly fact of religious persecution nevertheless does face as prominently. This was symbolized by the desecration of the religious places of non-Muslims, the imposition of *jizya* and of civic disabilities. The scene is one of bigotry and the suppression of the vast majority of the population. Over this period, while conversions to Islam, both by propagation and missionary work and coercive methods went on, a running conflict may be traced, in which armed resistance and individual martyrdom of those who refused to apostatize themselves, went on side by side. Not much is preserved about those who met calmly the threat of death and thus became martyrs to their faith. But apart from a few martyrs who

stand out, there must have been the unnamed thousands, men and women, who suffered and immolated themselves.

In the folk-songs preserved over the centuries in Punjab, which embody, in however elementary a style, the race-history of the region, there is deeply touching mention of the simple country women who burnt or otherwise destroyed themselves rather than submit to the lust of the persecutor, be he Turk, Afghan, Uzbek or Mongol. The story of Padmini, Rani of Chittor is only the most celebrated of such episodes of self-sacrifice. Leaving aside the historical authenticity of this famous story, what is important to note is that this was only in a way the archetype, the greatest such incident. Thousands other took place in town and countryside, wherever the power-intoxicated conquerors sought to take advantage of the defenceless women-folk of the conquered population. That such deprivations were of frequent occurrence, is testified besides other body of evidence, by Guru Nanak's great *Dirge* over the helplessness of the Indian people in a group of four hymns, known collectively as *Babar-Wani* (Babar's Aggression). Such situations stimulated among the women sought to be dishonoured as also among the more heroic among the men-folk of their race, the spirit of self-immolation. This truly was martyrdom. The Sikh people have been particularly sensitive. bearing themselves in a highly disciplined puritanical character, to the dishonour of the women-folk by power-drunk marauders, and have on several occasions, even when they were themselves hunted and persecuted by the Mughals in the early and mid-eighteenth century, fallen upon large hordes to rescue the captured women folk in India. Of this, instances may be studied in any detailed history of the Sikh people.

Christianity provoked in the early centuries a long series of persecutions, resulting in the martyrdom of thousands in Rome and other parts of the Roman Empire. Excruciating torture and death continued for hundreds of years to be the fate of those who stood by the faith of Jesus, the Christ, till it became the official religion of the Roman Empire, and later, of the Eastern (Byzantine) Empire. In the course of its long history, Christianity has seen a long string of martyrs, who resisted what they considered to be the wrongs of the powerful establishment, the Papacy, which for several centuries was

a super-state, with the zeal to suppress all non-conformity and revolt. This chapter is deeply tragic, and sets off the patient suffering of those who unflinchingly met their death as a result of the operation of the ecclesiastical law, which sought to shut out enlightened thinking and defended established privileges and dogmas through terror and the chicanery and casuistry of courts whose entire procedure leaves us stunned with our present-day notions of just laws and civic rights. These persecutions became particularly frequent from the sixteenth century on, as the challenge of the power and privileges of the Papacy grew in the Protestant movements in the various countries of Western Europe. In earlier centuries, those who demanded the removal of injustice in society, like the Lollards in England or the semi-legendary followers of Kava the blacksmith in Iran, were persecuted and victimized.

The Papacy came down with a heavy hand also on new thought in the sciences—Galileo and Bruno providing the examples, though the former escaped only by tactfully compromising with the persecutor. The brutal suppression of the Protestants in the Netherlands, France and England—the last in the reign of the 'bloody' Mary, and the long history of the Inquisition as the instrument of suppression of dissent provide capital examples of determined persecution and no less determined resistance to it by those whose spirit and temper was essentially that of martyrs. The horrible persecutions by the Puritans, themselves victims of persecutions, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the American colonies of the Quakers, enacted a similar drama on the periphery of the Christian world. In the East, while brutality and bloodshed on a large scale has occurred during wars and particularly the invasions of the Mongols over many parts of Asia, anything like the long-drawn out and doctrinaire persecution that became a settled part of the application of the dogma to facts of society is almost unknown. Nor has the East known anything like the repeated *pogroms* of the Jews, which gave that unhappy race a subhuman status, to be treated almost as noxious vermin. As may be seen in the course of this article, in the East, including India, under particular rulers spurts of persecution were there, but these were more or less sporadic. Persecution is the genesis of course, of the situation in which heroic

and dedicated spirits enact the great and noble drama of martyrdom.

The Christ-figure has become the archetype of the martyr, particularly because of the continuing influence of the crucifixion over the millennia and in the lives of countless millions and the global and universal significance this great event has acquired. The steadfast, innocent sufferer for truth at the hands of ignorant or immoral wielders of authority is the ideal martyr, whose example not only inspires others to similar feats of self-sacrifice, but confirms the ideals defended by the original martyr in the minds of vast numbers of people, so that his message spreads and becomes what has been called the seed of the church. It would however, be proper to keep Jesus the Christ as a case apart, because of the divinity believed to be enshrined in Him. His figure however, is the archetype of the martyr as stated above. And in describing his 'passion' the Christian tradition has not excluded from his life and death the human element, which is essential in the situation of martyrdom. Not the super-human, but the human transcending the human fear and frailty rises to the exaltation of martyrdom. Christ's crown of thorns and the 'stigmata' on this holy frame are truly the brand of the martyr.

Islam brought into India a whole new civilization, which itself was a composite mainly of elements Jewish and Hellenic, besides of course, what the soil and tradition of Arabia lend to it. Later, this faith acquired a tradition of learning, culture and subtle philosophical thinking as a result of the painstaking work of a long line of scholars and savants of Iranian extraction. This corpus of a composite culture expressed itself through the Persian language, the base of which was the Arabic conditioned to be the vehicle of philosophical thought. So, with the establishment of Muslim rule over the whole of Northern India, west and east, came new concepts and a new vocabulary to express these. A large number of these concepts and the terminology expressive of these passed from the learned circles into the experiences and world of reference of the common folk. Hundreds upon hundreds such, pertaining to everyday needs of life, administration, law, morality and even philosophical ideas within the comprehension of the average person can be cited as examples. Leaving aside a detailed exposition of this fact, we may confine ourselves to the concept under study here—that of the martyr. For

this, the Muslim term from the Arabic, *Shaheed* must have come fairly early. '*Shahadat*' (testimony, affirmation) is at the very basis of Islam. The Muslim fundamental creed, affirming faith in Allah and Muhammad as His Prophet, is called *Kalima-e-Shahadat* (the Formula of Affirmation). The second finger on the right hand, raised while testifying solemnly is known in Persian, as *angusht-i-shahadat*. So, while joining the Muslim fold or while laying down one's life for it, the deed performed is designated as *Shahadat*. The formula enunciated at the time of accepting the Muslim faith is : *Ash-hadu an la Ilaha wa ash-hadu an Muhammadar Rasul-Allah*. One of the early application of the term *Shaheed* is to Imam Hussain, grandson of the Prophet, who fell on the battle field of Kerbala along with a number of members from his own family and his tribe, Benu Hashim and from other tribes supporting his cause. This cause the Islamic world in general has regarded as just, and Imam Hussain's opponents have been branded as tyrants and aggressors. The earliest application of the term traditionally, is to those who fell fighting on the Prophet's side in the battle of Badr, about which Allah says in the Koran that not the Prophet, but Allah shot the arrows that brought the victory. To fix further the connotation of the term is a *hadith* (saying) attributed to the Prophet : *Man mata ala hubba-e-Muhammad (in) waal-e-Muhammad (in) mata shaheed (an)*. (Who has died for love of Muhammad and for love of the progeny of Muhammad has died a martyr).

In the Indian context the term *shaheed* came to be applied to the Muslim *ghazis*, soldiers and others who fell fighting against the Hindus, described as 'infidels' by their opponents. So common was this term in popular use, that it came to be applied to any Muslim who died in such conflict. Strange and hair-raising stories were narrated of these Muslim defenders of their faith. It was believed that always at the midnight hour the *shaheed* (mistakenly called *Saiyed* popularly, after the label held sacred among Muslims) would come out of his grave, in full panoply, habited in green, the Muslim colour, and would harm anyone, who stood in his way. He was reported to overturn cots in which an unbeliever might be sleeping, and would wreak vengeance for any disrespect shown to his tomb. Many people averred seeing the *shaheed* (*saiyed*, as he was called)

and his doings.

A great figure of a martyr, fixed through the centuries in the popular Muslim mind, was that of Mansur-al-Hallaj, the famous mystic who was impaled at Baghdad early in the ninth century, for uttering words that orthodoxy took to be blasphemous. Mansur's cry of *anal Haq* (I am the Truth; I am God) has been variously interpreted, and right from the beginning, he has been acclaimed as hero and martyr rather than as blasphemer. He is the great archetype of the martyr and during more than a thousand years since his death, has been a common poets' counter to express the idea of great love, faith unto death, the holy passion for truth, and fearless pursuit of the ideal. All these and such others are the characteristic spiritual traits of the martyr.

Another great martyr of the Muslim world, only less celebrated is Shams-i-Tabriz, a Sufi who was the preceptor of the great philosopher of Sufism, Jalaluddin Rumi. That he was martyred appears to be beyond doubt, though the attendant circumstances are vague and have passed into legend. In India, his mode of martyrdom is stated to be being flayed alive. A miracle is associated with him that the sun itself came down close enough to bake a piece of meat for him.

A large crop of martyrs were given to the Islamic world by the Mongol incursions of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The Mongols at that period were still unconverted to Islam, and in the literature of the period are referred to as *kafirs* (infidels). Soon after, however, they are converted to Islam *en masse* and became orthodox Muslims and great defenders of the faith. In India, Prince Muhammad, son of the Sultan Balban, was killed in an ambush by the Mongols in 1286, and he was honoured as *Shaheed*. The great poet Amir Khusrau wrote a celebrated *marsiya* (lament) on him. The concept of *shaheed* has been varying with whatever causes and values at a particular period are held sacred and worthy of defence. The poet Iqbal, in his famous visionary epic of moral idealism, *Javid-Namah* (Book of Immortality), has honoured Tipu Sultan, who fell fighting against the British in 1799, as *Sultan-i-Shaheed*.

While the concept and term for martyr (*shaheed*) remained a part of Muslim tradition, unlike so many other concepts borrowed

from Islam, it did not make any impact on the Indian mind as a whole. Muslim conceptual words such as *Pir*, *Shaitan*, *nek*, *bad*, *dozakh*, *bihisht*, *tawiz*, *ilm*, and so many others had entered into the ready vocabulary of the Indian people, along with thousands of others, conceptual as well as concrete in their signification. *Shaheed* however, was not one of these. The Hindu mind somehow did not formulate such a concept. There were ascetics and anchorites, heroes who fought in defence of faith and other cherished objects and sentiments. But the peculiar situation of passive though self-prompted and meaningful suffering for a cherished ideal does not appear to have figured as a form of sacrifice in the Hindu canon. As stated in the opening part of this essay, a form of *satyagraha* has practised by the holy and the spiritually exalted. Only such protest did not lead to death. Fear of Divine vengeance was too strong to leave the tyrant free to deal with the *satyagrahi*, as he might be called, and a *denouement* this side of tragedy was brought about. Those who did lay down their lives, as there must have been quite a number through the centuries—Buddhist and Jain monks for example, who are reputed to have suffered during the period of the Brahminical revival in the early centuries of the Christian era—have not been canonized individually or collectively as martyrs.

The Sikh mind, purely because of its tendency from the very inception of this faith to chalk out a line of orientation for itself away from Brahminical orthodoxy and other forms of the expression of the religious idea current among sects which were rooted in Hinduism, however far they might in course of time have strayed from its central path, adopted an eclectic attitude towards Islam. Thus arose the urge to adopt such Muslim concepts and terms as in the course of the three centuries of its existence had entered into the popular and sufistic Muslim tradition. This however, as has been made clear so often by the more balanced thinkers on Sikhism, did not imply cutting adrift from the Hindu people or their sentiment and history. The Sikh, whose approach is eclectic as well as based on Guru Nanak's special revelation of the vision of the Supreme Being, the spiritual path and duty, has through his history, brief though it be, kept culturally close to the history of the development of the Hindu world vision, and has continued to share with the Hindu



most of his decencies of life and sentiments. There never has been a total break and cleavage between the two, despite some recent trends at emphasizing differences.

Among the terms which the Sikh faith has adopted not only for the common objects and actions of daily life, but for certain spiritual values, the following facts may for example be considered. Guru Nanak and his spiritual successors have employed without discrimination the Muslim names for God—*Allah* and *Khuda* and attributive names, like *Rahim*, *Kadir*, *Karim*. Certain other terms rooted in Muslim sources, represent key-concepts in Sikh spiritual thought. One such *Sahib* (adopted meaning, Master) so frequently standing for God in the Sikh sacred literature, and in use as a substantive as well as an honorific to designate sacred objects, is from the Arabic. *Khasam* (Khasm) with the adopted meaning also of master, and similarly employed in reference to God, is also from the Arabic. *Hukam* (the cosmic moral Law) is again from the Arabic. So are *Nadar* (the divine glance of grace) and *Karam* (grace). *Mehar* (kindness, compassion, grace) is from the Persian, which came to India via Islam, A term like *Salamat* in the holy text of *Japuji* affirmed of God, is intended to express the idea of the eternity and immutability of the Creator. Later, with Guru Gobind Singh who had to fight the Mughals with all their fanaticism, more conceptual terms came from Muslim sources. The very name for the reascent, militant Sikh church, *Khalsa* is from the Arabic. So it is key-word in the Sikh salutation, *Fateh*. Two terms expressive of the form of the ideal society and state of the Sikh conception are *deg* (the cauldron, plenty, benevolence) and *Tegh* (the Sword), both from Muslim sources. The Sikh institution of free service of food in every Sikh temple is called *Langar*, again from the Muslim sources. So are certain terms adopted earlier—*Pir* (Preceptor), *Murid* (disciple), and *Baba* (revered elder, particularly in reference to Guru Nanak). In the compositions of Guru Gobind Singh, despite his armed clashes with the Mughals, there is a flood of substantives and epithets from the Arabic in designating the Supreme Being. So large is this element, and so often out of the usual track of familiar, popularized Perso-Arabic vocabulary, that without a proper glossary the average reader may not be able to follow it.

It is in such a background and tradition as the one mentioned just above, that the adoption by the Sikh people of the term *shaheed* in a way as to make it peculiarly a part of their own tradition, may be seen. Since the later nineteenth century, with inter-religious polemics becoming common in northern India, there has been a kind of cultural commerce among the Muslims, Christians, Sikhs and Hindus of the Punjab and its neighbouring areas, despite the acerbity of the theological controversies. One consequence of this has been the adoption of vocabulary across the frontiers of faiths. In this process, the Arya Samaj section of the Hindus too adopted the term *shaheed* to designate such Hindus as could be described as martyrs to their religious convictions, particularly at the hands of Muslim fanatics. Later still, those who lost their lives in the freedom struggle against the British Government, were freely given the appellation *shaheed*. This is a fact too well-known to need elucidation. But the point is that long before the Arya Samajist Hindus of the Punjab and the patriots of northern India, the Sikhs had adopted the term *shaheed*, right from the early eighteenth century, when thousands of them laid down their lives for defence of their faith and those human values which under the despotic rule of the later Mughals were being trampled under foot. While this phenomenon was not new, since right from the beginning of the Muslim domination, non-Muslims had to face sectarian coercion and from time had also to lay down their lives rather than apostate themselves.

The Sikh persecution at the hands of the Mughals when it came about, had a ferocity, bitterness, persistence and concentration in time and such a mass character as made it a unique chapter in the history of the Muslim domination of India. Hence, finding themselves caught in an unprecedented situation, facing persecution of the fiercest character, the Sikhs took from the Muslim tradition the very term *shaheed* to designate such of their brethren as had earned the honour so to be described. So great was the impact on the Sikh mind of the mass martyrdom undergone by the noblest and the best among them, that one of their twelve *misals* or federating clans came to be known as *Misal Shaheedan* (the Clan of the Martyrs). This *misal* was so named because of the celebrated martyr, Baba Deep Singh *Shaheed* who fell in 1760 (Samvat 1817) defending the

holy Hari Mandir at Amritsar. Since those times the term *shaheed* as mentioned above, has become in a special way a part of the Sikh vocabulary to designate fidelity to their faith, in a manner in which no other non-Muslim group in India or elsewhere has adopted it. Prior to this period in the eighteenth century, the term must already have gained wide currency among the Sikhs. Since then and after, it has been applied to all those who wore the crown of martyrdom within the faith, from Guru Arjan and Guru Tegh Bahadur and those who suffered death along with him, to the hundreds of thousands who in the course of the eighteenth century and after, met their end while defending the faith.

To recall the sacrifices of the martyrs throughout the course of Sikh history is a part of the Sikh tradition while offering the daily prayer morning and evening and as a matter of fact, at all times. *Shaheeds* are in this context mentioned along with the faithful followers of the holy Gurus (*murids*). The details of the persecution suffered by them are recalled on these occasions, such as being sawn alive, boiled to death, broken on the wheel, having themselves flayed alive and suffering such other barbarous tortures. The sacrifices of the woman who under the Mughal subahdars of Lahore were martyred there, had to grind huge loads of corn in captivity, and had their infants butchered before their eyes, are recalled too. Among the supreme martyrs mentioned are the five Beloved Disciples of Guru Gobind Singh and his four sons (*sahibzadas*.) All these circumstances would only confirm the statement made earlier about the phenomenon of martyrdom and the term *shaheed* being especially an integral part of the Sikh tradition.

To mention some post-eighteenth century portions of Sikh history, the term *shaheed* is applied for example, to the *Kuka* (Namdhari) crusaders hanged or blown away from guns at Malerkotla around 1870. It is applied to those who braved British bullets in the *Komagata-Maru* episode of 1914-15, while asserting their right to live as equal citizens along with the whites in the British Empire. Their objectives were, as is well-known, revolutionary. This was the first time that the term *shaheed* was applied to those engaged in a political struggle, apart from those whose struggle involved in some manner the religious conflict. Not long after, all who died

while attempting to free the holy Nankana Sahib, birth-place of Guru Nanak, from the corrupt hereditary priests and a little later, in the struggle to free the Sikh shrines from the control of the British-appointed *mahants* (abbots), were designated as *shaheeds*. And since then, about fifty years ago, the term has been in very wide vogue, and has overstepped its earlier religious associations, to cover all who made the supreme sacrifice in pursuit of some socially approved ideal. As social consciousness has grown, and the traditions of struggle against entrenched authority and privilege has taken deeper and deeper roots, any kind of sacrifice, voluntary or involuntary has indiscriminately been described as martyrdom (*shaheedi*, which is the popular form of the Arabic *shahadat*.)

In the Sikh Scripture, the Granth Sahib, clearly expressed injunctions to the true devotee are found not to shrink from making the supreme sacrifice in a holy cause. Such injunctions and exhortations, a few of which shall be referred to below, were followed by the Sikhs in the course of their history in their true spirit. Not only did they stand up to tyrants in general, but succoured from the marauders from across the borders of India and from within the land, helpless women who were being carried away for concubinage. Guru Nanak, in the text known as *Alahuniyan* (Dirges) expressing with deep compassion thoughts on death, makes a transition into moral idealism when he declares :

*Folks! revile not Death :*

*Death is not an evil, should one know how truly to die.*

*The death of heroic men is holy,*

*Should they lay down their lives for a righteous cause.*

(*Adi Granth*, page 579)

This is truly a call to mankind not to shrink from sacrificing life, should a noble cause present itself. Guru Nanak, in another context, through the symbolism of sport, offers the same exhortation :

*Shouldst thou be eager to join the game of love.*

*Enter my street with thy head placed in thy palm :*

*On stepping on to this path,*

*Sacrifice thy head without demur*

(*Guru Nanak*. Sloka 20, page 1412)

Kabir, always quoted with approval in the Sikh scripture, and

getting a place therein next only in importance to the Gurus themselves, expresses thus the spirit of true heroism :

*The sky-resounding kettle-drum is sounded;  
The heart is pierced with the passion for righteousness.  
The hero, entering the field,  
Fights on without quailing.  
Know that man to be a true hero who fights in defence of the  
defenceless;  
Hacked limb by limb, he still flees not the field.*

(Maru, page 1105)

Guru Gobind Singh in a prayer addressed to the Lord, seeks the boon of laying down life on the field of battle, fighting to defend righteousness :

*Lord! grant me this boon :  
Never may I turn back from righteousness;  
May I never turn back in fear when face to face with the foe;  
May I ever instruct my mind to chant Thy praises :  
And when the end arrives,  
May I fall fighting on the field of battle. (Chandi Charitra-231)*

Another text glorifying the spirit of martyrdom occurs at the close of the Epic *Krishnavatar* (Stanza 2492) in Guru Gobind Singh's *Dasam Granth* :

*Blessed be he whose tongue lauds God,  
And who in mind contemplates holy war.  
This perishable frame shall not last;  
Let man through sacrifice sail in the ship of glory,  
And thereby swim across the ocean of the world.  
His body the home of spiritual poise,  
His mind aglow like a lamp lit;  
With the broom of God-realization,  
Should he sweep away the dust-heap of cowardice.*

The martyr has ever been held up as one deserving high veneration in the Sikh tradition. True martyrdom lies in the preparedness to suffer without flinching. Two hymns, one of Kabir and the other of the Maharashtra devotee Namdev, narrate in powerful, rapid strokes the moment of supreme sacrifice that these holy men had to face, one by being ordered to be trampled under the feet of an elephant, and the other by being beheaded. Their offence, not stated, was obviously their spreading among mankind the spirit

of idealism above sect and dogma, that would be anathema to be bigoted upholders of orthodoxy. These two hymns by these men whose spirits did undergo the experience that is characteristic of the true martyr, are given below in English rendering. Each is a compressed heroic epic. To take Kabir's first :

Bhuja bandh bhila kar dariyo  
*Arms pinioned, was I thrown down in a heap :*  
*The mahout in a rage was picking the elephant on the head;*  
*The elephant was rushing along shrieking :*  
*May I be a sacrifice to this wonderful spectacle :*  
*Lord! My strength is all Thine.*  
*The Kazi urged the mahout to goad on the elephant,*  
*Threatening, "Mahout : I will cut off thy head.*  
*Strike the beast : Race it!"*  
*The elephant, meditating on God, budged not :*  
*In his heart had entered the Lord—*  
*Meditating : What offence has this holy man committed;*  
*Why is he thrown in a heap to be trampled?*  
*The elephant bowed again and again to the heap before it.*  
*This moved not the benighted Kazi.*  
*Thrice was the trial made;*  
*Still his hard heart would not melt.*  
*Saith Kabir : The Lord is my preserver;*  
*His servant's life is in the Fourth State.*

(Raga Gaund, Kabir, p. 870)

Namdev, whose persecutor was like Kabir's some Muslim potentate, has expressed his experience which touches highly poetic and inspiring. His too is the temper of the true hero and martyr, facing a situation calling for steadfast heroism in the face of terror.

*Sultan poochhai sun be Nama :*  
*Said the Sultan : 'Hear thou Nama.*  
*Let me see what thy Rama will do for thee.*  
*Nama was bound by the Sultan's order.*  
*Who declared arrogantly;*  
*Let me see the power of Hari Vithal.*  
*Either bring to life this slaughtered cow,*  
*Or else I shall cut off thy head.*  
*Said Nama : "Great King, how may this happen?*  
*What is slaughtered, cannot be made to live.*  
*No power have I to effect anything;*

*All that happens is Rama's doing."  
 The King at this was in a mighty rage.  
 And set a great elephant at Nama.  
 Nama's mother lamented and cried.  
 She said : "Leave Rama : Why not worship Khuda?"  
 Said Nama : "For saying this, I no more am thy son,  
 Nor thou my mother.  
 Even though this body perish, I still will sing Hari's praises :"  
 The elephant struck at Nama with its trunk;  
 But Nama was saved through Divine protection.  
 Said the King : "Kazis and Mullahs do me obeisance,  
 But this Hindu has humbled me,"  
 The Hindus petitioned the Sultan : "Grant our prayer,  
 Free Nama : take gold of equal weight for him."  
 Replied the Monarch : "If I accept your offer, I fall into hell;  
 How may I repudiate faith and follow worldliness?"  
 With fetters on his feet Nama yet clapped his hands,  
 Singing praises of the Lord.  
 Let Ganga and Jamuna flow back to their sources,  
 Nama still will not give up worship of Hari.*

*(Abridged. Bhairon. pages 1165-66)*

The twin supreme martyrdoms in the Sikh tradition are Guru Arjan's (1606) and Guru Tegh Bahadur's (1675). Few details of Guru Arjan's sacrifice have been preserved for us, except the general account of the tortures inflicted on him, such as putting him in a cauldron of hot water and pouring parched sand over his body. The brief account in Jahangir's *Tuzak* (Memoirs) leaves no doubt as to the torture (*Yasa*) and execution (*siyasat*). Jahangir's account seeks to make his sacrifice mainly political, in as much as he is punished as one who is reported to have aided the rebel prince Khusrau. The traditional Sikh accounts have muddied the noble act of the Guru's sacrifice as being the result of a sordid dynastic conspiracy and the vendetta of a Khatri, Chandu with hurt family pride. There may be some element of truth in the account about the family conspiracy. The report reaching Jahangir was obviously distorted, and he in any case was, on his own statement, prejudiced against the Guru as the head of a creed which the orthodox among the Muslim divines looked upon as heretical and anti-Islamic. So, this was a case of religious persecution, and like many others in a similar situation,

the Guru was offered the choice between accepting Islam and death. The Guru, like other noble souls in the Sikh tradition spurned the cowardly alternative of the horrible death, inflicted in the tradition of the code of Changez Khan (*Yasa*). For a glimpse of the Guru's spiritual state, besides the account in *Guru Partap Suraj Granth* of Kavi Santokh Singh, we have the noble stanza in the *Vars* of Bhai Gurdas, given below in English rendering. Kavi Santokh Singh's account, no doubt substantially true, sets down the Guru as listening to holy music by a minstrel who came seeking him near the place of his martyrdom at Lahore. Transcending the pain and suffering, he rendered his life to God in perfect peace of the spirit. This account has been immortalized in one of the sublime passages of spiritual poetry in Bhai Gurdas, as mentioned above. This stanza, with the opening line, *Rehande Guru dariyao vich meen kuleen het nirbani*, is cryptic and symbolic, yet invaluable as depicting Guru Arjan's state of the soul. An English rendering is given below :

*As creatures of water are one with the waves of the river,  
So was the Guru immersed in the River that is the Lord :  
As merges the moth at sight into the flame.  
So was the Guru's light merged into the Light Divine.  
In the extremest hours of suffering nothing entered his mind except  
the Divine Lord.  
Like the deer who hears no sound but the hunter's drum.  
Like the bee wrapped inside the lotus.  
Passed he the night of this life as in a casket of joy;  
Never did he forget to utter the Lord's Word  
Even as the Chatrik fails never to utter his cry;  
To the man of God joy is the fruit of devotion and meditation in  
holy company.  
May I be a sacrifice unto the holy Guru Arjan!*

(*Var XXIV, 23*)

In respect of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the accounts though still far from full, are more detailed than about Guru Arjan. Details of Aurangzeb's religious policy of the suppression of non-Muslims have come down from several sources, thus placing Guru Tegh Bahadur's sacrifice in the centre as the defence primarily of the right of the Hindu population to the practice of their faith. The accounts of the Guru's arrest on two different occasions only confirm the popular



view that he was an eyesore to the Mughal court as one whose teaching strengthened among the people the determination to face hardships and death than to renounce their faith under coercion. Guru Tegh Bahadur thus defended *Dharma*, which is righteousness, under a regime which had taken the path of oppression and tyranny. He stood for those values and decencies which the soul of India has evolved and cherished for millennia, and which are some of the noblest ideals held by humanity. His sacrifice, therefore was for a cause than which none could be higher.

Besides the accounts of the Guru's arrests, his journeys in the Punjab, Haryana and areas to the east, the invaluable testimony of *Bachittar Natak* the autobiographical fragment of Guru Gobind Singh, is there to depict the spirit and essence of this sacrifice. By the side of this scriptural testimony, all speculations of historians and all research based on partial and prejudiced sources loses its value. This testimony, eloquent though terse, embodies within the scope of a few lines a whole heroic epic. It may be reproduced here in an English rendering :

*The Lord protected their paste-mark and sacred thread,  
And in Kali-Yuga performed a mighty deed.  
To defend the righteous he spared no sacrifice:  
Gave away his head, but uttered not a groan.  
For defending righteousness he enacted this great deed;  
Sacrificed life, but not his ideal.  
He spurned the exhibition of theatrical acts of miracle-mongering,  
Such as would shame devotees of God.  
Breaking the potsherd of his body on the head of the monarch of  
Delhi,  
He departed for the celestial realm :  
None ever performed a noble deed like Tegh Bahadur's.  
At Tegh Bahadur's departure the world was plunged in grief,  
The world wailed,  
But the celestial Realms resounded with his glory.*

Into the last act both of Guru Arjan and Guru Tegh Bahadur may be seen the culmination of lives whose every moment had been a living martyrdom, to live for God and mankind, to serve and to spread the light of truth. To the martyr, his sacrifice is an act of God to be accepted in the spirit of the fullest resignation. Should

God design his life for fulfilment in the way of living out his days in action, he follows that in the spirit of perfect poise. Should it please Him to send him pain and death, that is no less willingly accepted. It is by such an attitude that the martyr's life stirs great changes in societies and nations. His example becomes the source of inspiration for others to mould their own lives on a similar model.

While the essence of the teachings of Sikhism in relation to life-experience is transcendence of suffering through perfect resignation, this spirit is expressed in greater detail and with a deeper power to touch the mind in Guru Arjan's *Bani* or sacred Word. As one contemplates his teaching, one feels as though his spirit, in its prophetic moments felt the suffering that was, through the inscrutable working of the Divine Law, to be his portion. And in his sacred Word is an expression of the spirit that lays pain and suffering aside, and as in the poem of Bhai Gurdas mentioned earlier, despite suffering 'his night of his life was passed as in a casket of joy'. Says Guru Arjun :

*'Under the wing of the Lord not a hot breath of air shall touch me;  
I am begirt with the miraculous protective Arc of Rama.  
Suffering fails to penetrate to me.'* (Bilawal—79, page 819)  
*'Whatsoever be Thy will, Lord! is sweet to me;  
All I crave is the wealth of Thy Name.'* (Asa—93, page 394)

The same spirit pervades Guru Tegh Bahadur's teachings. One out of a number of instances may be given here, of the expression of the spirit of resignation, spiritual poise and merging of the spirit into the Divine Reality :

*Jo nara dukh main dukh nahin manai  
One who by suffering is unperturbed;  
Not swayed by pleasure, attachment or fear,  
Holds gold and dust alike;  
Is free from gratification at praise or pain at censure.  
Is above avarice, attachment and conceit;  
Is untouched by pleasure and pain;  
Holds praise and dispraise alike;  
Has renounced lure of the world and covetousness.  
And frees himself from all desire,  
Abjures lust and wrath—  
In the mind of such a one does the Creator dwell.*

*By grace of the Lord alone does man*

*Learn this way of life.*

*Saith Nanak : Such a one is merged into the Lord.*

*As water into water.*

The martyr must meet his end in perfect poise and the spirit of non-violence—not the non-violence that arises from the helplessness of one subdued by puissant tyranny, but by that spiritual state wherein all rancour, all bitterness and thought of revenge has been cast out from the mind. The martyr is in the hands of God alone; from God comes his trial and to God alone he addresses his thoughts in his last moments. Without such a stance, his death would fail to attain to the noble state of martyrdom. Guru Tegh Bahadur's last thoughts were only of the great task of guiding humanity along the path of righteousness which his trials had supervened to leave uncompleted. To the continuance of his great mission he is reported to have addressed his thoughts, like his grandfather Guru Arjan about three quarters of a century before him. The martyrdom of each of these two great souls led to far-reaching historic consequences in transforming the character of the Sikh church from mere congregationalism to the crusading character. That however, was later history on either case.

The spiritual state of Guru Tegh Bahadur is depicted in the last Slokas entered under the title-head 'Mahalla IX' in the *Granth Sahib*. While certain modern scholars would continue to dispute the historical character of these *slokas*, and would seek more positive proofs of their being in fact composed by the Guru in Aurangzeb's prison in the Kotwali of Chandni Chowk in Delhi. Sikh tradition has all these three centuries accepted these as of the composition of the last days of the Guru in incarceration. Of the *Bani* of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the Slokas alone are inscribed on the arches and pillars of the magnificent Sis Ganj Gurdwara, erected over the spot where now three centuries ago, he was martyred. This is in keeping with their traditionally accepted character as the last words, so to say, of the Guru. They are his 'testament' to his family, to his disciples away from him and to mankind in general. They embody the vision of the realization of the inevitability of the end of man's existence, the futility of regret over losing what must be lost, the dream-like

evanescent character of the world whose possessions man so greatly values. These slokas express further, the permanence alone of God's truth, of sincere devotion to Him and the spirit of those who so devote themselves. All sorrow is transmuted and transcended in devotion to God, and His sight is revealed to the seeker, annulling all suffering. Not a bitter word or hint of desperation or frustration is in these words, the noblest testament of a great soul departing this life with the vision of a mission being fulfilled through his sacrifice. There is the perfect assurance of one who feels he is in the hands of God, whose purposes are being fulfilled through his sacrifice. The Slokas here referred to, are given in translation below :

*Know my friend,  
This visible world is all frail, mortal.  
It crumbles away, Nanak tells thee,  
As wall of sand.  
Rama departed this world,  
So did Ravana of vast progeny.  
Saith Nanak : Nothing lasts—  
The whole world is unreal as dream.  
Man may only worry over what can be averted.  
Saith Nanak : On this path of life  
Nothing is lasting; all is evanescent.  
All that is created, must one day perish.  
Saith Nanak : Leave alone all these entanglements :  
Devote thyself to God.  
All strength is gone : thrown in bonds in this frame;  
No effort may avail.  
Prayeth Nanak in this extremity;  
Lord, you alone are my support  
Succour me as you once did the Elephant.  
Lo! strength has arrived;  
The bonds are snapped asunder;  
All efforts begin to avail.  
Saith Nanak : All is in your hand, Lord!  
Be you my aid!  
Friends and companions have all departed;  
None has been constant.  
Prays Nanak : In this hour of agony God is my support.  
Nothing shall last but God's Name Immortal.*

*The holy devotees of God,  
 And God the support of the universe.  
 Saith Nanak : Few in this world are such  
 As have devoted themselves to the holy Word of God.  
 In this hour have I lodged the Name of God in my heart—  
 God's Name that is supreme over all,  
 Whose meditation annuls all suffering,  
 And favours the devotee with a sight of the Divine Face.*

In the same spirit of perfect non-violence in thought is the transcript of it, some twenty years after the event of the martyrdom, by Guru Gobind Singh in *Bachittar Natak*, already referred to. Not a hint herein of bitterness, not a hard word for the fanatical tyranny of Aurangzeb's policy :

*Breaking the potsherd of his body on the head of the monarch of  
 Delhi,  
 He departed for the celestial Realm :  
 None ever performed a noble deed like Tegh Bahadur.  
 At Tegh Bahadur's departure the world was plunged in grief;  
 The world wailed, but the celestial Realms resounded with his glory.*

## PARMARTHA : THE SUPREME OBJECTIVES AS DEFINED IN SIKH THOUGHT

J. S. NEKI

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*Knowing not what we ought to Know  
Considering not what we ought to consider,  
In utter madness our days pass by.  
Our passions are strong, and discrimination weak,  
And Parmārtha, alas, we pursue not!*

—*Sorath Ravidas 1.2. p. 658<sup>1</sup>*

And what is this *Parmārtha* one is enjoined upon the pursue?  
Salvation—from what? Deliverance—out of what condition?

In the Sikh scriptures, the final purpose of life is described as the return to the Original State (*nijghar*) from which we have erred away. And this original state, according to Sikh thought is one of enlightenment :

*O my mind! thou art of the nature of Light.  
Recognize thou thy Original Self!*

—*Asa 3, Chhant Ghar 3.5. p. 441*

Lured away by carnal cravings, conditioned by exigencies of Existence, constrained by social compulsions, cramped by fears, doubts and delusions contorted by error and superstition, convulsed by emotions and excitement man veers away from his original luminous state into one of nescience. Then from this secondary state of nescience, he seeks Deliverance, which is *liberty* from all compulsions, *freedom* from fear, sorrow and grief, *salvation* from sin and error and *emancipation* from doubt, delusion and superstition. Such a state of Deliverance has been called '*Mukti*' in Hinduism and *Nirvāna* in Buddhism. Both these designations have also found acceptance with the Sikh Gurus and references to *Mukti* and *Nirvāna* abound in the *Guru Granth*. However, as Kapur Singh<sup>2</sup>

observes, the Gurus imparted to these terms somewhat different interpretation. In the Hindu and Buddhist thought, the fact of individuation is considered to be evil in itself; and *Nirvāna* or *Mukti* is a state of its annihilation. *Nirvāna* involves the blowing out of *viññana* which build on *Vedanā* and *Saññā* and is the cause of *citta-sankhāra*.<sup>3</sup> 'Complete extinction of individually without loss of consciousness' characterises this state. Since personality is the blossoming of individuality, *Nirvāna* becomes the cessation of personality.

The same hold true with regard to *Mukti* as well. *Mukti* is liberation from *samsāra*, which is another name for the cycle of birth and growth of personality.

*Mukti* (or *moksha*) has been acclaimed as the *summum bonum* almost universally by the various Hindu schools of philosophy. Yet, according to the special emphases of these distinctive systems, it has acquired a variety of shades of meanings. According to *Nyana* connotation, *mukti* is the emancipation of the *Atmā* from the carnal bondage of sense organs; while according to *Vaisesika*, it is the detachment from the *gunas*. *Sankhya-yoga* considers *mukti* to be a cessation of the state of ignorance wherein the *Purusa* erroneously considers itself indistinct from *Prakritic* existence. For the *Purva Mimamsaks*, *mukti* connotes cessation of suffering. However, Vedantins hold that it is not merely cessation of pain and suffering but also positively a blissful state. For Shankara, *mukti* is not the acquisition of a new state, it is the rediscovering of that nascent original state of the human soul which has somehow become shrouded in ignorance. It is thus reacquiring what is already with us. However, this reacquisition involves the dismemberment of individuality which is nothing but an illusion created by *māyā*.

*Mukti* also finds copious mention as the *summum bonum* in the Sikh scriptures, especially the *Ādi Granth*. Yet a new distinct stress is discernable in its Sikh connotation. "An individual is not an evil mirage to be destroyed and disregarded, but the very foundation on which the whole of human religious activity is to be built... . It (*mukti*) is liberation from its limitations and sickness, and it is not its dissipation and destruction."<sup>4</sup>

*The Ego, no doubt, is a profound malady,*

*But a cure also can be found for it.*

—*Asa Var 1, Slok 2.2.7, p. 466*

The Sikh concept of *mukti* is thus not the dissolution and dismemberment of personality, but the recognition and transcendence of its cramping limitations through spiritual growth. It is higher state of consciousness—beyond the three mundane states.

*The deluded man is attached to the three gunas,*

*The God-man attains to the fourth state.* —*Sri 3. 11.44. p. 30*

It is a state in which pride, attachment and illusion are allayed and *Nām* is the mainstay :

*"Cast off, all pride, and the love of māyā*

*And attune thyself to the all-pervading Lord.*

*This, indeed is", sayeth Nanak, "the way of*

*Deliverance."*

—*Gauri 9.2.5. p. 219*

Traditionally, in both the Sankhya and Vedanta schools, two kinds of *mukti* are described—*videha* or non-corporeal *mukti*, to be attained after death; and *jivan mukti*, attainable during the life-time. It is the latter which receives greater emphasis in the Sikh thought. In the traditional concepts of *jivan mukti*, a negation of the mundane pursuits of Life, is implied as a precondition. This is not so in the Sikh concept.

*So perfect is the Guru's Path (to Deliverance),*

*That even whilst thou makest merry, wearest (apparels)*

*and eatest (delicacies),*

*Dost thou get Emancipated.* —*Gujri Var 5, Slok 5.2.16 p. 522*

It appears, the negative concept of *mukti* was not altogether satisfying to the gurus. There are allusions in the *Ādi Granth* to *mukti* being considered something short of the *summum bonum*. For example,

*I seek no dominions, nor Deliverance<sup>s</sup> either*

*I crave solely for the Love of His Lotus-feet.*

—*Devangandhari 5.3.29. p. 534*

While the Gurus did not decry or discard the concept of *mukti* as a supreme objective, they simultaneously adopted *sahaja*, a concept of more positive, connotations, coming from the parallel *Agama* tradition. Like *mukti*, this was also adapted before it was adopted.

In the Sikh parlance, *sahaja* refers to a state of 'mental and



spiritual equipoise without the least intrusion of ego; unshaken, natural and effortless serenity attained through spiritual perfection.<sup>6</sup>

The word *sahaja* is derived from Sanskrit twin roots : *saha*, together, and *ja* born. Thus, it means born together (with oneself), hence, innate. It signifies innate nature, of one's natural, spontaneous self, shorn of all external conditioning influences that cramp the soul. *Sahaja* is, thus, renascent freedom or liberation of the soul.

Before the term became current in Sikh scriptures it had already passed through a series of historical vicissitudes. The basic concept came from the left-hand Tāntrik cults in whose parlance *sahaja* signified a protest against the formalism of orthodox religion. They described the bondage of artificial conventions and affirmed the non-transgression of the natural. *Sahaja*, was, thus, the basic tenet of the Indian antinomianism.<sup>7</sup>

The schools of *Sahajayana* Buddhists, *Nātha* Yogis, and *Sahjāya* Shaivites, all in their own time and in their specific way emphasized the cultivations of *sahaja*—but they were all in a sense *Tāntrik* in outlook for the *raison 'd etre* of these schools was to be found in particular sexoyogic practices as a part of religious *sādhana*.<sup>8</sup> The *Sahaja Panthīs*, a Vaishnavite sect, associated with the names of Swarup and Damodar etc., carried out their meditation with a young beautiful damsel seated in front of them. Thus it is that they meditated upon Lord Krishna, who is considered the greatest of all aesthetes.

However, the followers of these sects, in fact, seem to have pushed their antinomian protest to its utmost limit and held that the most meritorious acts are such natural ones as eating and drinking which sustain life, sexual intercourse, which propagates it, and the natural functions which give it ease. In actual practice, it really amounted to a total surrender to carnal appetites. As a result of this, these cults went into disrepute and the original concept of *sahaja* became besmirched with questionable ethical connotations. Its reintroduction into the Indian mystic lore by the Sikh Gurus signified a new turn in the history of this term for they invested it with a new breadth of meaning and mystical import coupled with sublime ethical aesthetic connotations that conducted to the elevation of the soul.

For the Sikh Gurus, as mentioned above, man's original nature

was of the nature of light (*Asa 3, Chhant 5*) or intuitive knowledge, A reattainment of this natural self, with its attendant peace and equipoise, is *sahaja*. In this state, life is unaffected by any artificiality or put up appearances for they are but the defences of the empirical ego (*haumain*) and that, in *sahaja*, is quelled. Then with a basic dispositional spontaneity, love, goodness and compassion blossom forth from the Being. This widened concept of *sahaja* signifies a transcendent state—one beyond the ordinary modes of being (*gunas*), beyond the habitual levels of consciousness (*jāgrit, supan* and *sukhopati*) and beyond the illusion of duality or *māyā*.

To appreciate fully the breadth of meaning of the Sikh concept of *sahaja*, it may be looked at from various aspects. In its *cognitive* aspect, it can be seen as a state of illumination, one of heightened consciousness, mystical awareness (*sahaja rahas*), or intuitive knowledge. In this state the duality of subject and object (which results from a process of individuation and egoformation) vanishes. Since all feelings of duality basically develop round the subject-object dichotomy, with the dissolution of the latter, dualities of any kind disappear, distances vanish (*Gauri Guar 5, asht 4.4.*) and reality comes to be perceived with the impact of immediacy. In its *conotive* aspect, *sahaja* is a state of freedom—wherein everything happens with natural ease (*sahaja subhae*). Spontaneity is the ground of every kind of behaviour—vegetative, emotive as well as moral. On the emotive or aesthetic plane, it signifies the discovery of the great harmony within as well without. In *sahaja*, as it were, an inner door (*dasum dwār*) of aesthetic perception opens up, and one directly perceives the rhythmicity of one's Being weave an 'unstruck melody' (*anhat nād*) which is accompanied by a pervading feelings of an unconditioned bliss (*sahajanād*).

A deeper significance of existence seems to emerge in *sahaja*. When one becomes oriented to it, emotional turbulence ceases. Pleasures and pains pass like ripples over the surface while the mighty deep underneath remains unruffled. Then, it appears, one dons pleasures and pains just as one dons and doffs changes of garments (*Majh var 1, S11 : 7*). This is how *sahaja* epitomises mental equipoise in which all turbulence of emotions is stilled and all existential doubts dispelled. A serene, placid blissful calm pervades. "While the

egocentric abide in doubt, and carry anxieties in their heart which permit them no sleep, the wise wake and sleep in *sahaja*" (*Sorath Vār 4 SI 3 : 2*).

Peace being the hallmark of this state, all running about and all feverish pursuits are stilled. 'Effort hath ceased, peace hath been found, and wandering itself worn out—for now I have found a new Dignity in Life" (*Mārū 5 : 6, 1*).

*Sahaja* has been called a state of freedom. It epitomises freedom from desire (*trishnā*), from conflict (*dūi*) and from illusion (*māyā*). One is liberated from the cramping influence of social compulsions. Yet, one does not become a fugitive from social responsibility. On the contrary, as one is also cured simultaneously of the equally cramping compulsion of egoism, one no longer lives for oneself. One lives more for others.

In *sahaja* one is also liberated from the servility of carnal needs. In this state 'there neither drowsiness nor hunger is; and one ever simultaneously discovers the pervasion of the selfsame harmony and mystical rhythmicity across the whole gamut of the mighty cosmos. The intensity of this experience of limitless Bliss—"a myriad thrills of the unstruck Melody, of whose Relish there in no measure, no end" (*Sārang asht 5 : 1, 2, 3, 7, 11*). It is a creative joy of the highest order—sheer 'joy' in contradistinction to 'enjoyment' of the sense objects. It is, therefore, not ephemeral like the latter, but is an abiding state of undiminishing Bliss.

Although, illumination, spontaneity, freedom, equipoise, and harmony may be described as the chief characteristics of *sahaja*, there were several other subtle characteristics of this state alluded to at several places in the *Ādi Granth* as for instance in the following passage :

*(one who abideth in Sahaja)*  
*Looketh alike on Friend and Foe*  
*What he uttereth is utter wisdom*  
*What he heareth is Essence True;*  
*And in his Seeing is Meditation.*  
*He sleepeth in Calm, he riseth in peace*  
*From 'Being' to 'Becoming' with natural ease.*  
*Sad or glād he abideth in Sahaja;*

*Effortless his silence; spontaneous his utterance.*

*In poise he eateth, in poise he loveth,*

*In Sahaja he findeth distances bridged.*

*In Equipoise doth he rejoice at home,*

*With dispassion can he renounce that joy,*

*He stayeth in Sahaja attached or detached—*

*Unfettered by Illusory Duality.*

*He, whose Heart doth gladden in Sahaja*

*Doth sure experience perfect Bliss* (Gauri, Guar 5. asht : 9)

It is, thus, supreme spiritual state—marriage of the soul to the Absolute Brahma. How can, then, this state be attained?

Guru Ram Das in his famous Epithalamium (*Lāvān*) in Raga Suhi describes this as a four-stage ascent, at every stage the pilgrim rededicating himself to the All-pervading Deity as he experiences fresh vistas of spiritual vision.

During the *first stage*, the Law of Life (*Pravirti karam*) receives affirmation. It is the stage of participation. One is inaugurated into the worldly duties. Activity (*uddam*) is its hallmark. Home is the prime citadel of action. It is from here that everyone is to be served and blessed.

While thus performing his worldly duties, the pilgrim shuns the ways of sin, and contemplates the Guru as the perfect exemplar who, through his grace, brings about a complete transformation of his outlook. The egocentric man gradually turns theocentric by contemplating on the holy *Nam*.

During the *second stage*, this theocentric man lives in that Holy Fear (*nirmal bhau*) that dispels all fears. He practices the presence of God—and beholds the soul of the universe filling every place. His life undergoes a reafference, his meditation deepens, and stains of ecstasy (*anhat sabda*) ring in his ears.

In the *third stage* sprouts a zeal for disattachment (*chāo-bairāgiyā*). It is not a fugitive impulse that can make him run away from objects of enjoyments, but the disattachment of an aesthete (*rasik bairāg*) enabling him to enjoy without being bound to the object. However, he craves no enjoyment. The feelings is not just one of dissatisfaction with the worldly pleasures, it is positively of the nature of pangs of separation (*birha*) from the Beloved. So

strongly is the Beloved missed, and so intensely is union with Him desired that the whole Being resounds with his *Nām*. Yet, this love is as dispassionate as it is intense.

In the *fourth stage*, the dispassionate love culminates into a state of perfect harmony—a complete and conscious and spontaneous union with the Lord. This is *sahaja*. The body and soul are filled with celestial sweetness. The pilgrim's heart rejoices like a Bride's. But he is no longer a pilgrim for the journey is over. And even 'he' is there no more!

This, then, is the Fourth State, also called *sahaja* (state of Equipoise), *amrāpad* (state of immortality), *nirvānapad* (desireless state), *nirbhaipad* (state without fear), *mukti* (state of liberation), and *nijasukh* (innate pleasure). And one who has attained it has been variously styled as *gurmukh* (guru-oriented man), *Brahma jñāni* (a knower of Brahma) or simply *jñāni*, *jeevan mukta* (liberated during life) or simply *mukta*.

Guru Tegh Bahadur in his compositions has, time and again alluded to the various characteristics of such an Emancipated person :

*One to whom pleasure and pain are alike, and so too  
pride and shame,*

*One who transcends happiness and sorrow—and alone  
Knoweth the Reality,*

*One who gives up both praise and slander and craves  
for the Desireless state.*

*That indeed is the rare God-man, who chooses to play  
the tough game—Gauri 9 : 2.1, p. 219*

*He who fears none nor frighteneth.*

*Sayeth Nanak, he alone is the Wise One who knows!*

—Slok 9 : 1.6, p. 1427

*He who hath abandoned māyā and withdrawn into  
Dispassion*

*O my mind ! He alone enshrineth the Lord in his heart.*

—Slok 9 : 18, p. 1427

*He who is affected neither by joy nor sorrow,*

*And looketh alike on friend and foe,*

*Sayeth Nanak, He indeed is the Liberated one!*

—Slok 9 : 15, p. 1427

It is not difficult to see that while *mukti* and *nirvāna* have

negative undertones, and *sahaja* has more positive connotations, these merely reflect differences of conceptualisation and verbalization. The states connoted by these terms are in all likelihood identical. By using these concepts interchangeably, the Gurus seem to have underlined not only the unity of *Parmārtha*, but also the limitation of human intellect in comprehending it and of language in describing it.

#### FOOTNOTES

1. All references in the text pertain to *Ādi Granth*.
2. *Prasharprasna*. Jullundhar : Hind Publishers, 1959. pp. 374-5.
3. Johnson. R. *The Psychology of Nirvana*. London : George Allen & Unwin.
4. Kapur Singh. *loc cit*.
5. *Mukti*.
6. *Sacred Writings of the Sikhs*, London : George Allen & Unwin, 1965.
7. Walker, B. *The Hindu World*, London : George Allen & Unwin, 1968.
8. Bhattacharya, H. *The Cultural Heritage of India*, Calcutta : Ramakrishna Mission Instt. of Culture, 1953.

## THE BHAKTI MARGA IN SIKHISM

G. R. SINGH

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The term *bhakti* or *bhagati* as it is usually spelt in *Gurumukhi*, etymologically belongs to Hindū (Sanskrit) tradition. The Sanskrit root from which the term stems is 'bhaj', meaning to adore, honour or worship and therefore *bhakti* means the attitude of reverence, devotion, homage and adoration. A devotee is called a *bhakta* or *bhagata*. The way or path of devotion is called the *bhakti marga*. It is the religious attitude of devotion, loving faith and feeling of dependence involving the concept of God as a personal and compassionate saviour whose highest attribute is love. Therefore, *bhakti* is a fervent personal religion. God is worshipped as a perfect and merciful divine Being, full of grace and pity, on whom the *bhakta* leans with the feelings of a total surrender or *prapatti*. The idea of personal God or theism is the core of the *bhakti* religion. Loving devotion to a personal God is the crux of the plan for salvation.

*Bhakti* in India had its origin in the history and development of devotional cults in Hinduism. The first noticeable beginning in this kind of "theology" were made in the south of India by Tamil Saints called *Alvars* in the seventh and eighth centuries. These saints mostly belonged to the lower castes. They popularised the idea that the Divine incarnates Himself out of love for His creation and desires loving devotion from the creatures. He reciprocates the human love with divine love called *prasād* or *grace*. After its emergence, this form of religion soon became a formidable counterpart in reacting to religion based on sterile intellectualism, particularly to certain school of *advaitvada* which had no real place for a personal God and which saw God as a mere abstraction. *Bhakti* appealed to men's hearts rather than intellect. It stressed feeling of human inadequacy. It celebrated the experience of the Divine as a mystery through

Divine-human relationship formulated in terms of love rather than in terms of *gyana* (knowledge) or *karma* (action). Subsequently it became more popular than any other form of religion. From the *Alvars*, Ramanuja inherited this theism in the twelfth century and became its great exponent. Eventually as a subsequent development, it was exported to the north of India by Ramananda, who lived in Varanasi around the fourteenth century. Further impetus was given to *bhakti* cults by Vallabhacharya, Madhava and Nimbarka. From this period onward the *bhakti* movement gathered momentum and became a dynamic religious force in north India; and spread to various parts of the sub-continent. It greatly flourished in the Middle Ages. This movement not only whole-heartedly accepted, but capitalized on the Hindu doctrine of *avataras* (divine manifestations or incarnations). For the *bhaktas*, the direct object of devotion and worship were not the deities themselves but their principle human incarnations. There was a tremendous upsurge in the worship of Rama and Krishna, *avataras* of Vishnu. There were *bhakti* cults directed to the worship of *Shiva* and *Shakti* too. Many *bhakti* saints and *bhakti* poets enriched this devotional religion in various parts of India. In north India the notable names connected with this movement are of Ravidas or Ravdas, Tulsi Das, Sur Das; in Rajasthan, Mira Bai; in Gujarat, Narsi Mehta; in Maharashtra, Namdev, Tukaram, Jananeshwar; in Bengal, Chaitanya; in Bihar Vidyapati, Umapati are a few to mention.

There was further flowering and subsequent development in this movement in the form of *Sarguna sampradays* and *nirguna sampradayas* of *bhakti* cults also called *Sant* tradition. In this the name of Kabir stands as a stalwart. For, this *bhakti* movement also assumed a reformist trend and it questioned the traditional religious conventions. However, in general, the cultivation of intensely emotional worship, emphasis on *prema bhava* (love,-) *bhajans* (adoration), *kirtan* (congregational singing), music and dancing and ecstatic trances and viewing the Divine-human relationship corresponding to the erotic relationship between man and women were the basic factors of the movement. In Kashmir, both *Vaishnava* and *Shaiva bhakti* cults were strongly entrenched. They were also a



living force in the Punjab Hills and there are ample evidences available of their presence in the Punjab. Just before the rise of Sikhism several *bhakti* cults centred around the worship of *Vishnu's avataras*, *Shiva* and *Shakti* were prevalent in the Punjab. *Vaishnavasim* was strong and the *Bhagvad Gita*, the *Bhagvat Purana* and the *Vishnu Purana* were known at the popular level. Places such as Kangra and Jammu in the Hills and Batala and Multan in the plains were such strong cultic centres. The Ramananda tradition had also made a stronghold in the Punjab. *Vishnu* was worshipped as *Narain*, *Hari* or *Gobind* and temples were dedicated to his *avataras*. In later period the popularity of Shaivism, particularly in the face of *Vaishnava* influence, increased in the Punjab, which had its cultic centre at Thanesar.<sup>1</sup>

These developments in the religious milieu in the Punjab had significant bearings on the initial formative stages of the Sikh faith as well as on its *bhakti marg*. The *Nirguna Sampradaya* of the North Indian *Sant* tradition was a dominant religious trend during the period of the emergence of Sikh faith. It is an undeniable fact that to some extent Sikhism and its *bhakti marg* are indebted to the *Sant* tradition. The roots of this *Sant* tradition were traceable to the *Vaishnava bhakti* and in this manner this tradition was a link between the new emerging faith and the older devotional cults. The *Sant* tradition itself was a synthesis of the *Vaishnava bhakti* tradition, the *Nath Sampradaya* of *Jogis* or *yogis*, popularly known as the *Kanphatas* and to some extent the Sufism of Islam. Synthesising these diverse traditions, the *Sant* tradition emerged with a new pattern of its own and in its totality had not much in common with any of these antedevant traditions. Some of the *sants*, also revered as *bhagats*, were accepted as great spiritual leaders by the founder and then later *Gurus* of the Sikh faith, and their works were given an esteemed place by inclusion in the *Granth Sahib* : such as those of Namdev, Kabir and Ravidas.

The primary sources of information with regard to the nature of the *bhakti marg* in Sikhism is the *Granth Sahib*, which has recorded the words and teachings of the *Gurus* and the *bhagats* about this significant aspect of the Sikh faith. However, before

undertaking such an investigation two considerations must be borne in mind. Firstly, not only its particular *bhakti marga*, but the very religion is a considerably modified offshoot of the pervasive and wider phenomenon called *bhakti*. As such it is an original faith, though it unmistakably incorporates features of a preceding as well as ongoing movement. Secondly, Sikhism incorporates and preserves this tradition in its own way as a matured and separate world-religion. Of course, to what extent this older tradition has been modified by the new faith, will be seen in the course of this study.

Turning now to the scriptural sources of the *bhakti marga* in Sikhism<sup>2</sup>, we may examine what the founder of the faith has to say about it. Like some other great men of the age, Guru Nanak was critical of a legalistic type of religion and its ritualism. Only in this reformist and iconoclastic vein, he appears to share ideas with the older *bhakti* tradition. He vehemently condemned naive *avataravada* and idolatrous practices of his age, however he gave positively a new dimension to the already existing *bhakti* ideas. Through him the inheritance was transformed and the pattern which was produced by this transformation has endured. The most significant contribution the founder of the Sikh faith has made to the *bhakti marga*, is emphasising the love of the Divine Name. We must not overlook the fact that the basic expression of *bhakti marga* in Sikhism is love directed to God. With this love factor so prime and intense, *bhakti* in Sikhism shares with the *Sants* some features of *Vaishnavaism*. There is emphasis on the absolute necessity of love in the *bhakti* sense. This truth is commonly expressed in the figure of the bride yearning for her beloved, the divine Bridegroom.

The lord is near at hand, foolish bride. Why seek Him without?  
Let fear be the *salai* (the small metal pin for applying antimony to eyes) and let your adornment be that of love. She who loves her Master is known to be the bride united with Him.....

Go and ask brides by what means they found Him. A bride replies, 'Accept whatever He does as good, put no trust in your own cleverness and abandon the exercise of your own will. Fix your mind on His feet through whose love the priceless treasure is obtained. Do whatever He says. Anoint yourself with the perfume of total

surrender. 'O Sister, by this means the Lord is found.'<sup>3</sup>

The intensity of this love can be gauged from the following words :

If a man loves to see God, what cares he for salvation or paradise.<sup>4</sup>

The Sikh *bhakti* marga is primarily the love of the Name or *Nam* which comes after first with *dān* (charity) and *asnān* (purity) as ideal forms of the religious aspiration. This is called *Nām simran* or *Nām japan*. It means discipline in love or meditating in love on the nature and qualities of God who is ; *Ik Oankar satinamu karta purakhu nirbhau nirvairu akalmurti ajuni saibhang gurprasad*<sup>5</sup> i.e., there is but one God, if you want to name Him, call Him *Sati* (*Satya*) i.e., one Who was, Who is, and Who shall be. He is the doer, all-pervading, without fear, without enmity. His existence is unlimited by time. He is unborn and self existant, can be realized through the grace of the Guru.<sup>6</sup>

Reflecting upon the *Nām* and thus recognizing the greatness of God is the prime fundamental of the Sikh *bhakti marga*.

Repeat the Name of God in your heart and so obtain salvation.<sup>7</sup>

The Divine name is the revelation of God's being. *Nām simranā* or *japanā* is not a mere mechanical repetition. Infinite number of recitals of a word or syllable does not mean meditation. *Nam Simran* means remembering the qualities of God and thus surrendering to Him completely. Then God by grace reveals Himself. At the ambrosial hours (of dawn) meditate on the greatness of the true Name.<sup>8</sup>

This onward discipline based on an attitude of reverential love and faith is called *bhagti-bhava* (Sanskrit, *bhakti-bhava*) in Sikhism. The founder of Sikhism lays a great deal of emphasis on this *bhava*.<sup>9</sup> He emphatically points out the efficacy of this *bhava* during all the four 'yugas' (ages).<sup>10</sup> Graphic metaphors are used to denote this love relationship. Man's love for God should be like the love of the fish for water.<sup>11</sup> Man should love God as the *chatrik* (Sanskrit *Chatak*), loves the rain-drops on which it is supposed to live.<sup>12</sup> Man's love towards God should be like that of the *chakvi's* love for the sun. Thus this relationship based on love to God implies complete

dedication of the *bhakta* to the service of God. Body and soul are completely dedicated to Him.

*"Jiu pind sabh terai pas."*<sup>13</sup>

Closely associated with the idea of love exclusively addressed to God, is the idea of God's *bhai* or *bhau* or fear. Along with the loving devotion, there must be fear of God. These simultaneous feelings of love and fear are not incompatible with each other. Their coexistence is *complementary* and essential for the wholesomeness of the *bhakti bhava*.

*Bin bhai bhagati janam biranth* i.e. Life is in vain without *bhai-bhakti*<sup>14</sup>. Without *bhai-bhagati* man's soul wanders within the vicious cycle of *samsara* (transmigration) and remains in the clutches of *Karma* (retributive action).

*Eka bhagat eko hai bhao*

*Bin bhai bhagati avojao.*<sup>15</sup>

*Nanak jin man bhau tina man bhao*, i.e. Nanak says only those persons who have the fear of the Lord, they alone can claim to have the *bhava* of *bhagati*.<sup>16</sup> Nanak says that only those persons who bedeck themselves with the ornaments of *bhai-bhava* (*kaha Nanak bhai bhao ka karai singar*), are the most blessed and fortunate ones and please most the 'husband' (*khasm*).

Even though it is difficult to understand how the feeling of fear (*bhai* or *bhau*) can be harboured with the feeling of love, yet by God's grace a *bhagata* gets the insight of this mystery. By dwelling in God's fear (*bhai*) and love (*bhava*) concomitants of *bhagati*, the soul crosses this worldly and fearsome ocean. However, ironically, those who are not afraid of God, fear of the world gets the best out of them.

*Jo kichh kinas Prabh rezai*

*Bhai manai nirbhau meri mai* i.e. those who have the fear of the Lord in their hearts and those who seek His divine will become fearless.<sup>17</sup>

*Bhai tai bhajjal langhiai gurmati vichar* i.e. this is the wise counsel that the ocean of fear is crossed by lodging God's fear in the heart.<sup>18</sup> Now it must be noted that the essential characteristic of the *bhakti marga* in Sikhism is not merely a conventional stress upon

this element of *bhai* (fear) in the same lines as those of the traditional *bhakti* pattern. The outstanding distinguishing mark of the *bhakti marga* in Sikhism is that the feelings of *bhai* (fear) and *bhakti bhava* (love) are addressed directly to God Himself not to any divine manifestation or *avatara*. This may be an obvious difference, but it is a crucial difference because of its implications for the expression of the *bhakti marga* in Sikhism.<sup>19</sup>

The attitude of loving devotion to God and dwelling in the fear of the Lord lead the *bhakta* to waiting upon His divine will and its discernment. The Sikh *bhakti* tradition uses the term *raza* for the divine will. This term is borrowed from the Arabic. Very often it occurs with another Arabic term, *hukam* in the *Granth Sahib*; literally meaning a commandment, but conveying the idea of the divine order.

*Ta ka kahiya dar parvan*

*Bikh amrit duai sam kar jan. kya kahiya Sarbai  
rahiya samae.*

*Jo kichh vartai sabh teri raze.*<sup>20</sup>

i.e. those who submit to God's *raza* (will), poison and nectar are equally acceptable to them.

Happiness and salvation are found in God's *raza*. A *bhakta* can meet God by seeking and submitting to His *raza*.<sup>21</sup> The nearest translation of the Arabic term *raza* in the *Guru Granth Sahib* is *bhānā* e.g.

*Band khalasi bhanai hoi,*

*Horu akh na sakai koi.*<sup>22</sup>

i.e. "God alone has the power to bestow, and nothing said or done can oblige Him to bestow; to give or to withhold is His *bhana*."<sup>23</sup>

Discerning and accepting God's *raza* demand submission to his order and this leads to yet another significant feature of the *Sikh bhakti marga*, namely the concept of *hukam*.<sup>24</sup> *Bhakti* means submitting to God's *hukam* (order).

*Na pandit na catur siana.*

*Na bhulo na bharam bhulana.*

*Kathio na kathani hukam pachhana.*<sup>25</sup>

"I am not a clever *pandit*, misleading others and myself. I tell no false tales, I recognise His *hukam*".

*Kiv sachiara hoie kiv kurai tutai pal?  
Hukam rajai chalana Nanak likhia nal.*

"To appropriate truth and pierce the veil of falsehood is to act in accordance with God's *hukam*,<sup>26</sup>

*Hikmati hukam na paya jai*, i.e. the *hukam* cannot be grasped with mere intelligence.<sup>27</sup>

*Jo tis bhavai soi karasi hukam na karana jai.  
So patsah suha patsahib Nanak rahan rajai.*<sup>28</sup>

The above lines show that *hukam* implies complete obedience. It is for God to command and it is man's duty to obey His commandments.

Man's love, devotion, fear and obedience are reciprocated by God through his *nadar* or gracious glance upon the *bhakta*. In the context of *bhakti marga* in Sikhism, the concept of divine grace is of crucial significance. *Nadar* or divine grace is a gift from God.

*Nāo Nanak bhakshish nadari karam hoi.*<sup>29</sup>

*Nadar* has several synonyms used in the *Guru Granth Sahib* such as *kirpa* (Sanskrit *krpa*), *karam* (Arabic *Karam*), *prasad*, *daya*, *taras*, *mihar* and *bakhshish*. This is one of the most important attributes of a personal God. Through God's *nadar* comes the recognition of His *hukam* in the lives of men. *Nadari karam payai nisan*.<sup>30</sup> *Jin ko nadar karam tin kar*, i.e. those who are the recipient of God's gracious *nadar* are on the right path of action.<sup>31</sup> By dint of God's *daya* or *nadar* a mere heron is transformed into a swan :

*Bugului tai phun hansalu hovai jai tu karui duyutu.*<sup>32</sup>

The fetters of *karma* may be released by God's *nadar* and through the divine *prasad* (grace) even good *karma* (actions) may be earned :

*Jahan nam milai teh jao.  
Gur-parsadi karam kamao.*<sup>33</sup>

Through divine grace (*Guru's prasad*) ignorance (*agian*) is obliterated and the light of the Truth (*Sach*) is perceived.<sup>34</sup> One receives the Truth through God's *karam*.<sup>35</sup> The concept of divine grace in the *bhakti marga* of Sikhism underlines the transcendence of God :

*Apni kudrat apai janai apai karam karai.  
Sabhna vekhai nadar kar jai bhavai tai dai.*

He alone knows his *qudrat* (creation, might). He alone is the doer. He watches everyone and bestows His grace on whomsoever He wills.<sup>36</sup>

"God's *nadar* is not simply His revelation; no amount of human effort can necessarily enable one to receive His *nadar*. There is a point beyond which, the human understanding cannot proceed and there, it is the bestowing or withholding of God's grace that decides the issue of salvation."<sup>37</sup>

Sikh *bhakti* tradition shares with the wider sub-continental movement the same ground in strongly denouncing hypocrisy, shallow ritualism and all forms of external religious practices leading to formalism. However, it is not so much a bitter rejection of tradition, overwhelmingly negative in tenor than a positive emphasis on the brotherhood of all men and unity among them as children of the same God who is merciful father. Guru Nanak's message, recorded in the famous statement, "There is no Hindu and there is no Musalman" reminds immediately of a similar call of the world's another great religion which says that there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female.

According to the *bhakti marga* in Sikhism, external ceremonies are useless. Blind adherence to religious texts, idol worship of deities and their incarnations (*avtars*), formal religious exercises, pilgrimages (*tirath*) to sacred places, ritual bathing, and caste restrictions are rejected. Sikh *bhakti* does not have much appreciation for *sannyas* or *bairag* (asceticism) or even the cult of the *jogis*, if understood in terms of mere external renunciation. The path of asceticism and celibacy does not find favour with the *Sikh bhakti* tradition.

*Ik tapasi ban main tap karai nit tirath vasa.  
Aap na chinai tamsi kahai bhayai udasa,*<sup>38</sup>

i.e. If the ascetic who does not renounce 'self' cannot be a real renunciant (*udasa*), his austerities (*tapas*) in the forests and his pilgrimage (*tirath*) in the sacred places are in vain.

*Athsath tirath ka mukhkh tikka tit ghat mat viga,  
Aut mati salhana sacheh nam gun tas.  
Baba hor mat, hor hor,*<sup>39</sup>

i.e. even the bathing at the sixty eight sacred places are of no avail. *Tirath nahai kia karai man meh mail guman* i.e. when the heart is not cleansed of pride, of what use are the pilgrimages?<sup>40</sup> *Tirath bharmai rog na chhutas* i.e. all the wanderings to the sacred places cannot wash off the disease of impurity.<sup>41</sup> If one gains anything from visiting places of pilgrimage (*tirath*), from austerities, acts of mercy (with the intention of acquiring merit), and charity, it is of negligible value. He who has heard, believed, and nurtured love in his heart has cleansed himself by bathing at the *tirath* which is within.<sup>42</sup> *Tirath navan jao, tirath nam hai* i.e. the true *tirath* is the Name.<sup>43</sup> *Sant Janan mil sangati Gurmukh tirath hoai*, i.e. the company of the saints in the true *tirath*.<sup>44</sup> *Gur saman tirath nahin koai* i.e. there is no *tirath* like the Guru.<sup>45</sup> The *Sikh bhagata* has not to subscribe to meaninglessly meticulous ritualistic practices such as stone—idol worship in temples, *puja*, traditional observances connected with *jap* (mechanical repetitions) and *tap* (austerities) *japmali* (use of counting beads), *tilak* or *tikka* on one's forehead, performance of *hom* (sacrifice), *mantar* (spells) and *tantar* (secret rituals), *panditai* (astrology), *tagg* or use of the sacred thread, *khat darsan* (dabbling in metaphysics), *mun* (a shorn head), *danda-jholi* (begging bowl and staff of a mendicant), *bhasam-bhabhut* (use of sacred ashes), *singi* (blowing of horn), *riddhi* and *siddhi* (yogic occult powers), *samadhi* (yoga posture), *punn-dan* (ostentatious charity) or any *marga* or panth of *sidha*, *bir*, *natha*, *sadha* or *mumis*.

For example :

*Jagan hom, punn tap puja deh dukhi nit dukh sahia.*

*Ram nam bin mukat na pavas mukat-nam gurmukh lahoi*

i.e. before the True Name the religious observances are useless.

*Tant mant pakhand na jana Ram ridai man mania!*<sup>46</sup>

i.e. clinging to God's name is all, *mantar-tantar* or such pretence will not do.

*Nanak sachchai nam bin kia tika kia tagg.*

i.e. without the True Name the *tilak*-mark and the sacred thread are meaningless.<sup>47</sup>

The inevitable result of the practice of *Nam simran* (the meditation of the True Name) and seeking God's *raza* and *hukam*



lead further to the *bhakti* experience of *vismad* (Sanskrit, *vismaya*), or an awe-inspiring vision of God's greatness. *Vismad* is a feeling of ecstasy. It is an experience which serves as a stimulus to more exalted meditation and leads to a culminative point in the devotional attitude. It is an intuitive sense of the presence of the supernatural, the mysterious, the awesome feeling of reality. It is often spoken of as the encounter with the 'Wholly Other' or the numinous. The fundamental element and primary religious emotion is the *mysterium tremendum* i.e. a non-rational sense of awe more solemn than fear.<sup>48</sup> This emotion of wonder and awe engendered by the overwhelming greatness of God leads to intense meditation.

The longest passage on this *bhakti* experience of *vismad* occurs in Asa ki Var in the *Guru Granth Sahib* followed by passages describing God's creative power and *bhai* (fear)<sup>49</sup>. "God is ineffable and man's proper and inevitable response to any authentic glimpse of the being of God can only be that of awe (*vismad*), of fear and wonder before Him who is beyond comprehending. He is *agam*, *agochar*—inscrutable, beyond the reach of the intellect, *agah*—unfathomable; *achraj*, of surpassing wonder; *adrist*, beyond seeing or perception; *akal*, beyond time; *alabh*, unattainable, *anant*, infinite; *apar*, boundless; *abol*, *akah*, *akath*, *alekh* beyond utterance or describing; *alekh*, ineffable.<sup>50</sup> Paudi 24 of *Japuji* also describes this feeling of *vismad* :

Infinite are His praises, infinite the ways of uttering them. Infinite are His works and infinite His gifts. Infinite is His sight, infinite His hearing, infinite the workings of the divine mind. His creation is boundless, its limits infinite. Many have striven to encompass its infinity; none have succeeded. None there be who knows its extent; whatsoever one may say much more yet remains to be said. Great is God and high His station; higher than high His Name. Only he who is of equal greatness (lit. height) can comprehend its loftiness; therefore God alone comprehends His own greatness. Nanak, all that we receive is the gift of the Gracious One.<sup>51</sup>

*Vismad* is a condition of supreme wonder. Nanak, immersed in the True One we are intoxicated with wonder, and struck with this wonder we sing His praises.<sup>52</sup>

With *vismad* the higher ascent on the path of *bhakti* is facilitated, eventually leading onward in spiritual progress to higher stages or realms (*khands*). These realms are described in *Japuji*, *paudis* 34 to 37.<sup>53</sup> These *khands* are five realms or regions namely *dharam khand* (realm of moral sense), *gian khand* (realm of mortified ego),<sup>54</sup> *saram khand* (realm of either effort or bliss or humility), *karam khand* (realm of grace or action) and *sach khand* (the highest realm of truth.)<sup>55</sup>

The following are some of the exquisite examples of the writings of the *Sikh Gurus* about the path of *bhakti* culled from the *Guru Granth Sahib*.

Guru Amardas, the third *Guru* expresses the sublime *bhakti* feeling in these lines taken from his song of Joy or the *Anand* :

*O my true Master, what is there that cannot be had in Thy house of grace?*

*Thy house has everything; but he alone receives to whom Thou choosest to give.*

*Such a man will always praise Thee and bear Thy Name in his heart.*

*With the name filling his heart he will hear the songs of joy in abundance.*

*O my true Master, what is there not in Thy house of grace?*<sup>56</sup>

The following lines are taken from the *Lavan*,<sup>57</sup> which Guru Ram Das, the fourth *Guru*, composed on the occasion of his marriage, and is now an epithalamium (marriage-hymn) of the Sikhs.

*"At the fourth sacrificial turning, love reaches the stage of perfect Harmony, with the consciousness of complete union with the Lord.*

*Through the meditation of the Guru the union brought about is natural, and tastes sweet to the body and soul.*

*It so pleased my Lord that He should taste sweet to me, and I should remain absorbed in Him.*

*I have obtained my spouse who is after my heart, and I congratulate myself.*

*God Himself arranged this marriage, and the Bride's heart rejoices in His Name.*

*With the fourth round God is obtained as the imperishable Husband.*<sup>58</sup>

From the *Sukhmani* or the *Psalm of Peace* composed by Guru Arjan, the fifth Guru, the following significant lines are taken about the *bhakti marga* in Sikhism. In Canto 9, the Guru speaks about the so-called *bhaktas*, saints or holy men, who are 'touch-nothing' types. Followers of the *Vaishnava bhakti marga* are also spoken of. They have a partial vision of God. The characteristics of a true *bhakta* are expressed in these lines :

*A true followers of the cult of Bhakti is one  
who emphasizes the love of God,  
Who dissociates himself from all evil attachments,  
And freeing his mind of all superstition,  
Salutes the Presence of God in everything.*

To wash away his sins he seeks the company of the good :

*This for him is the sanest course to adopt.  
Day and night he toils in the service of God,  
Dedicating his body and soul to His love,  
In a deep personal attachment,  
Such a man of Bhakti cult shall obtain the  
object of his love, that is God.<sup>59</sup>  
Salvation is secured by Bhakti (devotion)  
All men are saved by the shelter of God's lotus feet.  
The heart grows fearless on hearing God's glory.  
There shall be nothing wanting when the wealth of the Name is  
stored up.  
The society of the saints is obtained by greatly  
meritorious acts.  
Meditate on God during the eight watches  
of the day, and ever hear His praises.<sup>60</sup>*

Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Guru has the following passage on the path of *bhakti* :

*Why dost thou go to the forest in search of God?  
He lives in all, is yet ever distinct; He abides with thee too.  
As fragrance dwells in a flower, or reflection in a mirror,  
So does God dwell inside everything; seek Him therefore in the  
heart.<sup>61</sup>*

In the writings of Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru, deeper 'prophetic' insights of service, sharing and even long-suffering to the point of death were added to enrich the ideal of *bhakti* in Sikhism.

"Those men and women, who, keeping the Name in their hearts, shared their earnings with others; who plied the sword and practiced charity; who saw others' fault, but overlooked them : think of their deeds and call on God" Wahiguru<sup>62</sup> (Wonderful Lord).

"Those who for their religion allowed themselves to be cut up limb by limb, had their scalps scraped off, were broken on the wheel, were sawn, or flayed alive; think of their sweet resignation and call on God, Wahiguru."

The above lines have been taken from the text of *Ardas* which is a supplication or prayer. In the Sikh sacred literature, *Bhagauti* means God.

The prophetic zeal of Guru Gobind Singh, as a new dimension to the *bhakti margā* is clearly evident from the following lines taken from his composition known as the *Bachittar Natak* :

*I am imbued with Thy Name, O God!  
I am not intoxicated with any other honour.  
I will meditate on the Supreme,  
And thus remove endless sins.  
I am enamoured of Thy form;  
No other gift hath charms for me.  
I will repeat Thy name,  
And avoid endless sorrow.  
Sorrow and sin have not approached those  
Who have meditated on Thy name.  
They who meditate on any one else,  
Shall die of arguments and contentions.  
The divine Guru sent me for religions,  
On this account I have come into the world—  
Extend the faith everywhere....<sup>63</sup>*

It is evident from the message of the above lines that Sikhism was meant to transcend all previous dispensations and take its place in the universal history of religion.<sup>64</sup>

The richness of *bhakti* ideal in Sikhism is enhanced by the inclusion of works of various *sants* or *bhagats* in the *Adi Granth*, whose teachings may apparently seem diversified in nature and character, yet they contribute to the main ideals, with a remarkable unity, as laid down in the *Guru Granth Sahib*. *Bhakti* is one aspect

of religion where they have to say more or less the same in broader and general manner. Some of the most noteworthy names in the list of these *sants* or *bhagats*, whose works are incorporated in the *Guru Granth Sahib*, are of Namdev, Kabir and Ravidas. A comprehensive and detailed scrutiny of the writings of these *bhagats* in the context of the *bhakti marga* may be too much, considering the scope of this present paper, however in brief the broad and definitive outlines of their thought can be viewed.

Guru Arjan included the *banis* of several *bhagats* in the *Granth* that he compiled, but the proportion of the compositions of all the *bhagats* taken together remains rather small. The Guru's decision to include these compositions in his compilation was in order to assimilate them into Sikhism. A tradition exists that Guru Nanak held a discourse with "all the *bhagats*," including Namdev, Ravidas and Kabir at Ayodhya,<sup>65</sup> however historically this may be untenable. Sant Namdev, whose several verses have found an esteemed place in the *Adi Granth*, was a Maharashtrian saint-poet and a '*bhagat*' of the fourteenth century<sup>66</sup> subscribing to the *Varkari sampradaya* of Pandharpur. It is also conjectured that he made a prolonged visit to the Punjab. Namdev in his *bhakti* thought put a great emphasis on the *Nam* (the divine Name). The following lines having the lyricism of a psalm, incorporated in the *Guru Granth Sahib*, convey the deep passion and yearning so typical of Namdev's *bhakti* ideal.

*As water is precious to the traveller in Marwad,  
As the hungry camel yearns for the creeper,  
As the wild deer at night hearkens enrapt to the hunter's bell.  
So God is the object of the yearning of my soul.  
Thy name is beauty, Thy Form is beauty,  
Thy Hues are beauty, O My living Lord!  
As the dry earth yearns in thirst for the raindrops,  
As the honey bee yearns for the scent of the flowers.  
As the kokil loves the mango tree, so I long for God,  
As the sheldrake longs for the sunrise,  
As the swan yearns for Mansrowar Lake,  
As the wife pines for her husband,  
So God is the object of the yearning of my soul!  
As the babe yearns for his mother's breast-milk,*

*As the cataka who drinks only the raindrops yearns for the rain.  
 As the stranded fish yearns for water,  
 So God is the object of the yearning of my soul.  
 All seekers, sages, teachers yearn O Lord for Thee.  
 How few of them have seen thee!  
 As thy name is yearned after by the whole vast creation,  
 So for Nama, God is the object of the yearning of his soul!<sup>67</sup>*

Ravdas or Ravidas' thirty-nine *sabads* are incorporated in the *Adi Granth*. The number is generally given as forty, but *Sorathi 4*, *Adi Granth* page 658 and *Maru 2*, *Adi Granth* page 1106 are the same compositions. Ravidas was an outcaste leather-worker (*Chamar*) of Benares. His *bhakti* writings ooze with a strong feeling of humility and confession, which are peculiarly his own emphasis :

*Everyday used to laugh on seeing my poverty—  
 Such was my condition;  
 But I hold the whole eighteen supernatural powers  
 in the palm of my hand through Thy favour,  
 Thou knowest I am nothing, O God, destroyer of fear;  
 All men have sought Thy protection no longer bear  
 the load of sin,  
 High and low have been delivered from the shamless  
 world through Thee.  
 Saith Ravidas, why say more regarding the  
 Ineffable?  
 Thou, O God, art Thine own parallel; to what can I  
 liken Thee?<sup>68</sup>*

The *Adi Granth* includes 226 *sabads* by Kabir. Of these 225 are to be found in the *Bhagat Bani* at the end of the various *rags*, and the remaining one is included amongst the works of Guru Arjan (*Bhairo 3*, *Adi Granth* Page 1136), The total number of Kabir's *slokas* included in the *Adi Granth* is either 237 or 239, mostly at the end of the *Adi Granth*. Considering the *bhagats'* writings incorporated in the *Guru Granth Sahib*, Kabir's *slokas* are the largest in number. This fact has sometimes been interpreted in terms of Kabir's influence on Guru Nanak and even on Sikhism, a debatable point strongly challenged now. A discussion on this is beyond the scope of the present paper and may even be irrelevant in this context, as the question has been raised why Kabir *panth* has degenerated

into a minor Hindu sect and why Sikhism has flowered into a vital and dynamic spiritual force? Be that as it may, Kabir was a fifteenth century *bhagat* belonging to the *julaha* (weaver) caste. His whole life was spent in Benares. It seems that he had a Nath background. There is much that remains obscure in Kabir's attempt to describe his experience of dissolution in the Divine.<sup>69</sup> This experience is ultimately inexpressible. Nevertheless many elements such as *Yoga bhakti* and even *Sufism* mingle in the thought of Kabir, although he himself seems to have belonged to no closed order, whether theological or philosophical, or to any *panth*.

Some scholars have even gone to the extent of suggesting that Kabir's ideas stand in complete contrast to the generally so-called "*bhakti* religion."<sup>70</sup> He turns his attention from the exterior to the interior. However, in the context of *bhakti* he too emphasises the grace of God. His *bhakti* is not directed to Rama or Allah, but to the One True, the Pure, the Ineffable. Other prominent elements of his *bhakti* ideal are *viraha* (separation), torment, sacrifice and even death. He too bitterly denounced the hollow study of scriptures, veneration of *avatars* and idols, purificatory bathings, ritual fasts, pilgrimages, ascetic practices, religious ceremonies and pretention, hypocrisy and orthodoxy. Kabir describes *bhakti* or devotion, in the *Adi Granth* as the water which has quenched his burning thirst for God.

*I have been on fire, and have now found the Name  
of God as water to extinguish it :*

*The Name of God is the water which hath cooled  
my burning body.*

*Men go to the forest to chasten their hearts,  
But without God they cannot find such water as  
will do so.*

*The water of God's name hath saved His burning slave,  
From the fire which hath consumed demigods and men.*

*In the terrible ocean there is an ocean of happiness.*

*I continue to drink, but the water is not  
exhausted, Saith Kabir, worship God.*

*God's name is the water which hath extinguished my thirst.<sup>71</sup>*

After this cursory survey of the ideas about the *bhakti marga*

primarily through the scriptural sources of Sikhism, the following unique characteristics of this path of devotion may be noted.

*Bhakti* in Sikhism is directed to God, the Supreme Being. He alone is the sole object of devotion, unlike the older *bhakti* tradition which capitalized on the veneration of the manifestations (*avataras*) of the Divine. God is conceptualized as the Supreme Person and the Sikh moves in Him like a fish in the water.<sup>72</sup> Even Hindu gods performed *bhakti* of the Supreme Being. Brahma and his sons and *Indra* and the like of him performed God's *bhagati*.<sup>73</sup>

*(God) cannot be installed.*

*The created image cannot be (He).*<sup>74</sup>

*Bhakti marga* in Sikhism strongly rejected the indirect devotion of God through veneration of the *avataras*. The Sikh Gurus are not venerated as *avataras*. The *Sikh bhakti marga* has strongly resisted and curbed the popular tendency to worship the Gurus as *avataras*. *Bhakti marga* in Sikhism does not exalt the guru as a central cultic personality, but accepts him as the inner voice of God in a true prophetic tradition. The guru is an aid to the *bhakta* and helps him launch out on the path of devotion towards God-realization. God-realization is a spiritual experience and not a visual, aural, or some other sense-experience. But a true devotee is daily enjoying God's presence through His reflection in this manifest world.<sup>75</sup> Unlike the older *bhakti* tradition giving important place to the worship of idols and *avataras*, *Sikh bhakti marga* with some later *bhakti* schools such as *nirguna sampradaya* of the *Sants* strongly rejected the prevalent *bhakti* forms.

Another characteristic feature of the *Sikh bhakti marga* is that persons of all castes and even non-Hindus were accepted in the fold. Stratified caste structures were rejected on the basis of the belief that all persons irrespective of caste, social status and sex can obtain salvation through fervent devotion to God. Dependence on ceremonial rituals was discarded. Institutionalized religion, asceticism, orthodoxy, pretence and hypocrisy were attacked. However, there were some positive results also of this movement. For example, the establishment of the custom of *langar* or the free inter-communal hospice attached to every *gurudwara*, where all could share meals



irrespective of caste or creed. The institution of *langar* was a deliberate attempt to combat caste distinctions and to teach equality through practical means. In a *langar*, the *Sikh bhakti* ideal of equality finds a practical expression, where no distinction of status conferred by nationality, religion, sex or position matters. Sacramental eating together of *Karah-prasad* and the initiation ceremony called *Pahul* were developments which came in course of time.

Practical methods of *bhakti* such as *nam simran* of the *Sat Nam* were emphasized, but the use of *mantras* and spells was rejected. Liturgies and hymns from *Japji*, *Sukhmani* and *Asa ki Var* were prescribed for use in morning prayers. The emergence of the Sikh prayer called *ardas* was a significant outcome of the *Sikh bhakti marg*. *Ardas* or supplication is offered at morning, evening, night and all hours, after every religious service in Sikh temples, in homes, and at all places. A point worth noting about the last sentence of *ardas* is the supplication for prosperity and welfare of the people all over the world, without any distinctions. This is probably a unique feature of the Sikh prayer which sets it apart.<sup>76</sup> *Kirtan Sohila* a hymn which breathes the spirit of calmness and resignation is fixed as a prayer before retiring at night. *Ardas* has been handed down from the days of the conflict with the Muslims, in which the Sikhs suffered martyrdoms that are enumerated in it. Yet nowhere is there shown any sign of bitterness or revenge. There is no reproach or curse on the enemy, only the sufferings are enumerated, which are taken as sacrifices made by the community.<sup>77</sup>

Another method of Sikh worship through which the *bhakti* spirit is expressed is that called *Kirtan*. This was adopted for congregational worship. *Kirtan* meant singing the praises of God. Spiritual compositions such as passages from *Japji*, and *Sodar* are used for liturgical purposes in *kirtan*. *Kirtan* is also known as *satsang*. Besides congregation singing, there is ample use of music in Sikh *bhagati* and worship, such as use of suitable melodious *ragas* and musical instruments.

The *Sikh bhakti* movement employed the use of vernacular, *Panjabi*, with its own script called *Gurmukhi*. However, in a sense this was not a new thing, as several of the ramified movements of

the older *bhakti* tradition employed regional languages and common dialects for their evangelical, liturgical and literary activities, but in the case of *Sikh bhakti marga* one thing was exceptional. *Sikh bhakti marga* contributed significantly in the evolution of an entirely new language which originated in the *Sant bhasha*, through its use in the *Adi Granth*, eventually emerged as a living and literary language. It was provided *Sikh bhakti marga* not only with a broader, but also with a distinctive base.

*Sikh bhakti marga* as a path of inner devotion is open to all men and women. It has nothing in common with the foggy mysticism or with the visionary's world of thin air or the other world. *Sikh bhakti marga* is infused with practicalism. It does not negate life. It is positive and realistic in terms of life, a trait now so typical of the Punjabis and particularly Sikhs. The life of devotion is freedom from attachment while yet living in the midst of the temptations to attachment, a proper pattern for a true *bhakti*. *Sikh bhakti marga* does not subscribe to purely metaphysical or idealistic view of life.<sup>78</sup>

*Sikh bhakti marga* accepts man's sinfulness and inadequacy in contrast to traditional prevalent dogma of man's inherent divinity and sinlessness. *Sikh bhakti marga* preaches a gospel of devotion and grace and not merely of *karma* determinism or fatalism. The sovereignty of the *Sat Nam* of the *Sikh bhakti marga* is qualified by grace.

In recent times there has been emphasis on the ideal of service as a component of *bhakti* by Sikh thinkers and theologians. "We have not recognised that the humblest human being is the child of our Great Father and therefore no service that any man can do to him can be too great. What can be the limit of the honour, the kindness done to my own brother, when we are both children of the Lord of all things? How do we feel when we remember Guru Nanak spending his night with a leper as Guru Arjun in Tarn Taran? But it is the Christian who comes to build an asylum for lepers in the city of the Fifth Guru."<sup>79</sup>

*Sikh bhakti marga* is disciplined worldliness, a pilgrimage through this world. A classic example which can be cited in this context is the legend of Sheikh Farid, who having met Guru Nanak

threw away a wooden *chapati*, which he had previously kept in order to have an excuse for refusing food from people who offered him food and so unwittingly threatened to upset his ascetic discipline.<sup>80</sup> *Bhakti marg*a in Sikhism is activistic and quietistic both.

## FOOTNOTES

1. Grewal, J.S.. *Guru Nanak in History*, Panjab University, Chandigarh, 1969, p. 108.
2. McLeod, W.H. *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*, Oxford, 1969, p. 1.
3. *Tilang 4, AG.*, p. 722.
4. *Guru Nanak's Asa of: Teja Singh: Sikhism, its Ideals and Institutions*, Orient Longmans, 1951, p. 1.
5. *The Mul Mantra. AG.*, p. 1.
6. Jodh Singh, *Theological Concepts in Sikhism*, an article in 'Religion and Society', CISRS Bulletin, Vol. XI, No. 1.. p. 33.
7. *Gujari Ast 5(5), AG.*, p. 505
8. *Japji 4, AG.*, p. 2.
9. *Rag Asa, AG.*, p. 413, 418, 420; *Rag Gauri (Astpadian), AG.*, p. 228; *Basant Hindol, AG.* p. 1172; *Rag Parbhati (Astpadian), AG.*, 1342.
10. *Sri Rag, AG.m* p. 57.
11. *Rag Parbhati, AG.*, p. 1331.
12. *Sri Rag, AG.*, p. 60.
13. *Rag 4sa, AG.*, p. 354.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 413.
15. *Rag Basant, AG.*, p. 1188.
16. *Asa di Var, AG.*, p. 465.
17. *Rag Basant (Astpadian), AG.*, 1187.
18. *Var Malar, AG.*, p. 1288.
19. Grewal, J.S.. *Guru Nanak in History*, Panjab University, Chandigarh. 1969. p. 260.
20. *Parbhati. 4. 5.* p. 1328.
21. *Rag Bilaval, Ag.*, p. 832.
22. *Sri Rag, AG.*, p. 25 and *Japji, AG.*, p. 5.
23. Grewal, J.S., *Guru Nanak in History*, Panjab University, Chandigarh. 1969. p. 246.
24. *Japji, AG.*, p. 1.
25. *Rag Gauri (Astpadian). AG.*, p. 221.
26. *Japji, AG.*, p. 1.
27. *Rag Dhanasari, AG.*, p. 661.
28. *Japji, AG.*, p. 6 (*So dar*).
29. *Rag Suhi, AG.*, p. 729.
30. *Japji, AG.*, p. 7.
31. *Ibid.*
32. *Basant Hindol, AG.*, p. 1171.

33. *Rag Asa, AG.*, p. 414-415.
34. *Ibid*, p. 349.
35. *Sri Rag, (Astpadian), AG.*, p. 62.
36. *Sri Rag, AG.*, p. 53.
37. Grewal, J.S., *Guru Nanak in History*, Panjab University, 1969, p. 257 and McLeod, W.H., *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*, Oxford. 1968, p. 205.
38. *Rag Asa (Astpadian). AG.*, p. 62.
39. *Sri Rag, AG.*, p. 17.
40. *Ibid*, p. 61.
41. *Rag Bhairon (Astpadian). AG.*, p. 1153.
42. *Japji 21, AG.*, p. 4.
43. *Rag Dhansari, AG.*, p. 687.
44. *Rag Sorath, AG.*, p. 597.
45. *Rag Parbhati, AG.*, p. 1328-29.
46. *Rag Suhi, AG.*, p. 766.
47. *Asa Ki Var, AG.*, p. 467.
48. Rudolf. Otto. *The Idea of the Holy*, tr. J.W. Harvey, Oxford University Press, London. 1923. pp. 7-10.
49. *Asa ki Var, AG.*, p. 463-64.
50. McLeod, W.H., *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*, Oxford. 1968. p. 173 also *Asa Chhant 3 (1). AG.*, p. 437.
51. *Japji 24. AG.*, p. 5.
52. *Maru Solaha (15) (16). AG.*, p. 1036.
53. *Japji. 34-37. AG.*, p. 7-8.
54. This is more accurately. the Realm of spiritual enlightenment. (Editor).
55. Also. Eternal verities (Editor).
56. Teja Singh. *Sikhism. its Ideals and Istitutions*, Orient Longmans. Bombay. 1951. Appendix I. p. 135.
57. *Lavan* is that part of the marriage ceremony which consists in tying together the upper garments of the bride and bridegroom. and causing them to go four times round the *Guru Granth Sahib*. while this hymn is repeated by the Sikh priest.
58. *Suhi Channt IV*. as translated by Teja Singh, *Sikhism, its Ideals and Institutions*, Orient Longmans Ltd., Bombay. 1951. Appendix I. p. 138.
59. Teja Singh. *The Psalm of Peace*. An English translation of 'Sukhmani'. Canto IX (3). Oxford University Press. 1938, p. 42.
60. *Guru Arjan's Jaitsri Ki Var. Paudi XVII*.
61. *Dhanasri of Guru Tegh Bahadur* also of. Macauliffe. M.A.. *The Sikh Religion*. S. Chand & Co.. Delhi. 1963. Reprint. Vol. IV. p. 402.
62. *Wahiguru* or Wouderful Lord is an exclamation or response made by the audience in worship.
63. Macauliffe. M.A.. *The Sikh Religion*, S. Chand & Co.. Delhi. 1963. Reprint. Vol. IV. p. 300.
64. Grewal. J.S.. *Guru Nanak in History*, Panjab University. Chandigarh 1969.

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p. 289.

65. *Miharban Janom-Sakhi (Janam-sakhi Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji)*, Ed. Kirpal Singh & Shamsheer Singh. Ashok. Amritsar. 1962.
66. His year of birth is believed to be 1271 (*Editor*).
67. *Dhanasari 3, AG.*, 693.
68. Ravidas's sabad, Bilavalu 1. *AG.*, p. 858 (Macauliffe's translation).
69. Vaudeville. Charlotte art. 'Kabir and Interior Religion' in *History of Religions*, Chicago University. Vol. III. No. 2. pp. 197-8.
70. *Ibid.*
71. Macauliffe. M.A.. *The Sikh Religion. Its Gurus, Sacred Writings and Authors*. S. Chand & Co.. 1963. Reprint. Vol VI. p. 143, (Gauri 1)
72. Teja Singh. *Sikhism, its Ideals and Institutions*, Orient Longmans, Bombay. 1951. p. 126.
73. *Rag Sarang (Astpadian), AG.*, p. 1232.
74. *Japji, Paudi V.*
75. Gursaran Singh, *Guru Nanak's Japji, An Interpretation*, Atma Ram & Sons. Delhi. p. 269.
76. Sangat Singh. *Japji*, Orient Paperback. Delhi, 1973, p. 120.
77. Teja Singh. *Sikhism. Its Ideals and Institutions*, Orient Longmans, Bombay. 1951. p. 133.
78. Chaturvedi, Parshuram. *Uttari Bharat ki Sant Parampara*, Bharati Bhandar. Allahabad. 1972. p. 403.
79. Teja Singh. *Guru Nanak and His Mission*. Sri Darbar Sahib, Amritsar. 1954. p. 20.
80. Guru Nanak met a successor of Sheikh Farid, called Sheikh Brahm (Ibrahim). The story of the wooden *chapati* therefore. can be true only in an idealized sense. (*Editor*).

## RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE IN SIKH SCRIPTURAL WRITINGS

W. H. MCLEOD

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"So long as man remains free he strives for nothing so incessantly and so painfully as to find someone to worship. But man seeks to worship what is established beyond dispute, so that all men would agree at once to worship it. For these pitiful creatures are concerned not only to find what one or the other can worship, but to find something that all would believe in and worship; what is essential is that all may be together in it. The craving for community of worship is the chief misery of every man individually and of all humanity from the beginning of time. For the sake of common worship they've slain each other with the sword. They have set up gods and challenged one another, 'put away your gods and come and worship ours, or we will kill you and your gods.' And so it will be to the end of the world, even when gods disappear from the earth; they will fall down before idols just the same."<sup>1</sup>

Set within Dostoevsky's unfinished novel *The Brothers Karamazov* there occurs the parable of the Grand Inquisitor from which this passage is taken. It is a profoundly disturbing narrative because it seems to defend with persuasive eloquence a view which liberal consciences must unhesitatingly reject. All the world knows the meaning of religious or sectarian strife and the suffering which it can inflict. The liberal answer is the message of tolerance, a message which encounters little disagreement whenever it is promulgated as an essential principle of human welfare. Voices which suggest a contrary view are repugnant and it is perhaps because the Grand Inquisitor can sound so convincing that his theory of human psychology receives such scant attention. The kind of person who

reads Dostoevsky is unlikely to be one who welcomes the claim that "nothing has ever been more insupportable for a man and a human society than freedom" or the assertion that "man prefers peace, and even death to freedom of choice in the knowledge of good and evil."<sup>2</sup>

It is, of course, merely a parable which Dostoevsky offers and plainly it is intended to stimulate critical analysis rather than unthinking acceptance. Dostoevsky, a Russian of the mid nineteenth century, lived in the society which gave us the word 'pogrom' and his parable is set against a vivid awareness of the religious conflicts which disfigure so much European history. The issue was for him a very real one and it retains this importance today. Every nation does not have its Ulster, but we all have our histories and must all remain uncomfortably aware that the days of ideological dissension are by no means over. If the grand Inquisitor is to be believed they are days which will never be over. The question is not so much one of how to exterminate the conflicts as of how to tame and contain it.

Guru Nanak was also born into a society of marked religious differences and it would be surprising to learn that he and his successors expressed no clear views on the subject. They did indeed express views on the subject of religious tolerance and it is the purpose of this essay to make a brief examination of those views. As with all such social issues our analysis of recorded pronouncements must be conducted with a clear awareness of the social conditions which provided their context. The principles enunciated by the Gurus may have universal application but we invite misunderstanding if we attempt to examine them in isolation from their context.

The sources to be used in this analysis are the obvious ones, namely the contents of the *Adi Granth* and those compositions included in the *Dasam Granth* which most would agree to accept as the work of Guru Gobind Singh himself.<sup>3</sup> Within this range four figures stand out as significant contributors to the question of religious tolerance. The earliest is Kabir, conspicuous because his comments on this particular issue are so pungently outspoken. One need not linger to consider whether or not he deserves to be included in the discussion. The fact that Guru Arjan chose to incorporate in the

*Adi Granth* works attributed to Kabir means that he himself accepted the ideals which they express and that all subsequent readers of the Sikh scriptures have been exposed to those ideals.

The three remaining figures are the first, fifth and tenth Gurus (Guru Nanak, Guru Arjan and Guru Gobind Singh). The remaining Gurus whose works have been included in the *Adi Granth* plainly signal their acceptance of the views expressed by Guru Nanak on the question of religious tolerance, but do not accord them prominence. One other figure who deserves to be included in the discussion is Bhai Gurdas. As the contemporary, relative, confidant, and loyal disciple of four of the Gurus he was well equipped to express their views. This he does with his customary clarity.<sup>4</sup>

#### THE CONTEXT

Although the social context is of fundamental importance for an understanding of the *Adi Granth* view of religious tolerance it would not be practicable to attempt at this point a survey of Punjabi society during the period covered by our investigation.<sup>5</sup> Fortunately such an attempt would be unnecessary. Our investigation concerns the specific question of religious toleration and it is the background to this particular question which demands our brief attention. In this area four features deserve to be noted.

The first is an obvious point, one which accordingly requires no more than a mere mention. Caste may be a much misunderstood institution, but no one questions its existence or the pattern of social stratification which it involved. This meant claims to privilege on the part of some and disadvantage on the parts of others. In a general sense the condition is well known and requires no further comment. It is, however, an important part of the context within which all contributors to the *Adi Granth* composed their works and because some of them were affected to a marked degree it inevitably exercised a corresponding influence upon their beliefs. If Kabir had not been a Muslim Julaha the essential components of his belief might have been the same but his emphasis and his manner of expression would assuredly have been different.

The second point is also an obvious one. Because they lived in a particular society during a particular period the Gurus speak to the condition of that society at the time they knew it. Although their



principles can be universalized (and it is entirely legitimate to do so) the form in which they are expressed must be related to the situation which they observed around them. This should lead us to expect comments on relations between Hindus and Muslims, and these we do indeed encounter in the *Adi Granth*. With the interesting exception of the Nath Yogis other religious grouping predictably receive either fleeting mention or total silence. They counted for little or nothing in Punjabi society of the Mughal period and they are treated accordingly. Kabir, living in an earlier period and a different area, directs his comments to the same groupings. The time and place may have been different but the character of society was essentially the same.

These first two points are common place and predictable. The third, however, may require closer scrutiny. A generation conditioned by the events of the mid-twentieth century is liable to assume without question the existence of inherent enmity between Hindus and Muslims. Although the necessity of such enmity may be vigorously rejected a discussion of historic relations between Hindus and Muslims is likely to be built upon the implicit assumption that, latent or actual, it has been a permanent feature of the Punjab scene ever since men calling themselves Muslims acquired political authority in the area.

If by enmity we mean something fierce and vindictive we shall have to acknowledge that the *Adi Granth* provides little evidence to support the application of any such assumption to sixteenth-century Punjab. Hostility of this order would assuredly have called forth from the Gurus' candid denunciation of the communalism which provokes it. In reality, however there is little to suggest that communalism of this kind was widespread. Suspicion and a measure of rivalry were certainly present, but not to the degree that entitles us to identify a grave communal problem or serious religious persecution. As we shall see, Hindus and Muslims are indeed criticised in the *Adi Granth*, but for reasons which can be labelled communal in only a restricted sense. The criticisms which concern them normally have a different target, one which groups both in the same condemnation. Muslim rulers may also receive their share of the Guru's censure. It is, however, their cruelty or incompetence as

rulers which provokes the denunciation, not their exercise of power in narrowly communal interests.<sup>6</sup> The *Adi Granth* comments on relations between Hindus and Muslims must therefore be read in a context distinctively different from that of the twentieth century. We shall misunderstand these comments if we assume communal hostility of serious proportions.

The final point carries us on to the time of Guru Gobind Singh, almost a century beyond the compilation of the *Adi Granth*. Because the *Adi Granth* was compiled at the beginning of the seventeenth century the comments made above with regard to the question of communal relations should properly be restricted to the sixteenth century and early years of the seventeenth. During the course of the seventeenth century, and particularly during the life time of Guru Gobind Singh, relations between the Mughal authorities and the Sikh Panth underwent a fitful deterioration. Guru Gobind Singh was a contemporary of the Emperor Aurangzeb, notorious as a strict exponent of Muslim exclusiveness and as the executioner of Guru Tegh Bahadur. It is, however, possible influence over Punjabi society and even over its politics, with the result that here too we may be inclined to read into the period social attitudes which belong to the chaotic conditions of eighteenth-century warfare rather than to the more stable period which preceded it.

There is, of course, plenty of evidence to indicate that the decline into disorder had made significant beginnings within the Punjab prior to the death of Guru Gobind Singh. His struggles with the hill rajas and Vazir Khan of Sirhind provide sufficient indication of this process. It appears, however, that our analysis should terminate with the early pro-war years of the tenth Guru and that this leaves us within a period where the communal attitudes of the sixteenth century still continued essentially unchanged. We must terminate within this period because our sources, the sacred scriptures of the Panth, permit us to go no further. Although firm dates cannot be attached to such works as *Akal Ustat* and *Bachitr Natak*, their contents indicate that they were composed before Guru Gobind Singh became involved in serious warfare. Their comments on the question of relations between Hindus and Muslims certainly accord better with the earlier period of his lifetime than with the

later.\* The conclusion which this suggests is that the evidence provided by the tenth Guru belongs to an era preceding the onset of serious communal bitterness. It is against this background that our analysis of the Guru's theory of tolerance should initially be understood. Only when this requirement is fulfilled can the doctrine be carried forward to a more general application.

#### ONE CONCEPT OR SEVERAL?

Having thus implied a continuity of belief and teaching within the period of the Gurus we must explicitly raise the question of whether or not this is in fact the case. The question must be faced because many will assume the likelihood of variety and distinction. The *Adi Granth* though compiled by Guru Arjan is, after all, the work of several hands. It covers a period which is impossible to determine precisely, but which must obviously extend over more than the century spanning the works of the first five Gurus. In such circumstances consistency cannot be taken as a forgone conclusion. The possibility of consistency seems even more remote when one introduces the works of Guru Gobind Singh, thereby adding an extra century of change and development. No one can deny that a substantial gap separates Kabir and Guru Gobind Singh in terms of time. Does this also mean a gap in terms of belief and doctrine?

A sufficient answer to this question can be secured only by considering in some detail the relevant texts provided by the scriptures, a task to which the greater part of what follows will be devoted. It is possible, however, to state the answer briefly at this point. Regardless of the time and circumstances spanned by the Sikh scriptures, there nevertheless runs through them a single, consistent doctrine of religious toleration. It is true that there is a distinct shift of the emphasis in the subsequent *janam-sakhi* literatures<sup>7</sup> and the issue is further clouded by the turmoils of the eighteenth century. If, moreover, European observers are to be believed there are also reasons for doubting the claims to religious tolerance made on behalf of Ranjit Singh's administration.<sup>8</sup> All this,

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\*Tolerance continued, however, to characterize Guru Gobind Singh's attitude throughout his life. The Sikhs as a matter of fact throughout their history have shown themselves to be markedly tolerant in a scene of prevalent religious strife.—*Editor*

however, lies increasingly beyond our immediate purpose. The issue in hand concerns the message of the scriptures and within these bounds one can identify a simple consistent doctrine. It is this doctrine which we shall endeavour to examine and explain. The task before us is, in other words, strictly hermeneutic.

#### THEORIES OF INDISCRIMINATE RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE

##### REJECTED IN THE SIKH SCRIPTURES

To affirm that there is a single dominant theory of religious tolerance in the Sikh scriptures suggests that we must thereby acknowledge their rejection of other theories. Various approaches can be made to the question of religious tolerance, some more superficial than others and each necessarily implying a measure of disagreement with the remainder. It will help clarify the situation if before dealing with the concept actually promulgated by the Sikh scriptures we briefly discuss those which explicitly or by implication, the scriptures also dismiss.

The first to be rejected is the way of conscious syncretism. It has sometimes been asserted that Guru Nanak's system of belief represents a deliberate blending of elements drawn from Hindu tradition and Islam, and a process of loose thinking builds upon this premise the assumption that this somehow represents a theory of tolerance. Were the premise true it would be necessary to spend some time discussing the subsequent reasoning. The premise, however, is false. Although it receives some limited support from the *janam-sakhis*, this support counts for nothing when set against the evidence provided by the Guru's own works. Nothing in the actual works of Guru Nanak suggests a consciously syncretic approach.<sup>9</sup> The same claim can be denied with equal firmness in the case of each of his successors.

A second concept to be dismissed is what for reasons of convenience we may call the neo-vedantic theory of tolerance. This, in its unsophisticated form, affirms that all religions are true. All are paths to the same summit, each making its approach in a different manner but leading (if pursued with persistence and sincerity) to the same goal and consummation. Dr Radhakrishnan, in his justly famous statement of this view, brings to it a necessary qualification and enunciates thereby a most persuasive theory.

Hinduism does not mistake tolerance for indifference. It affirms that while all revelations refer to reality, they are not equally true to it.<sup>10</sup>

Guru Nanak and his successors affirm significant features of this theory. There is clear agreement, so we shall see, that the various names used for God all refer to the same God, and there is an insistent emphasis in the scriptures on the necessity of being a "true Hindu" or "true Muslim". The meaning imparted to these latter categories is, however, distinctively different from that normally associated with the neo-vedantic theory. On the one hand it involves in the case of the Sikh scriptures absolute rejection of certain beliefs and practices as positively false. They are not merely lower orders of devotion nor misconceived forms of an otherwise acceptable pattern. There exists a widely practised range of religious expression which, if persistently followed, must lead to perdition. On the other hand, there also exists a pattern of belief and practice which alone is valid and effective. Only the person who accepts the discipline of inner devotion can hope to find salvation. He may practise it as a Hindu or as a Muslim, but practise it he must if he is to attain the ultimate. There is no multiplicity of paths preached in the Sikh scriptures. Only one exists and to it men of all faiths are summoned.

This basic affirmation also serves to dismiss a third variety of religious tolerance. Many western societies also affirm the necessity of religious tolerance and with some notorious exceptions endeavour to put it into effect. It is, however, a distinctive from which in practice represents the characteristic western approach to religious toleration, one born out of generations of inconclusive religious strife. The version of tolerance which has emerged from the European experience is an essentially negative variety, one which encourages an acceptance and tolerance of differences on the evident assumption that they are too deep to reconcile. This, assuredly, is not concept present within the Sikh scriptures. The differences which distinguish Hindu and Muslim are essentially superficial. True tolerance involves not their acceptance as unbridgeable but precisely the reverse.

#### THE LIMITS OF TOLERANCE IN THE SIKH SCRIPTURES

In dealing above with the neo-vedantic theory of tolerance we briefly noted the scriptural rejection of certain beliefs as

fatally erroneous. Before turning to the positive aspects of tolerance in the Sikh scriptures we shall examine in a little more detail the reverse side of the tolerance coin. Both are essential, for the unconditional affirming of a particular pattern necessarily implies the rejection of its antitheses. This is an implication from which the Gurus did not shrink and their honest willingness to confront it entitles us to speak of the intolerance as well as the tolerance of the Sikh scriptures.

There are two general concepts consistently and implacably opposed by the Guru. One is essentially a matter of religious belief. The other is primarily a social attitude, but one which leans heavily upon religious sanctions and laid claims to determinative religious influence.

The first concept so vigorously and repeatedly rebutted in the Sikh scriptures is the observance of external religious forms as opposed to interior devotion within the devotee's own heart. Hindu and Muslim are both gathered indiscriminately into this fundamental condemnation, for the vast majority of whatever name and religious affiliation seek fulfilment through external practices. For the Hindu it is the temple *puja*, the sacred thread, holy books, monthly fasts, and pilgrimages to *tirths*. For the Muslim it is the word of the Quran and the Shari'at, ritual ablution, regular *namaz*, prostration within a mosque, observance of Ramadan, and the *haj* to Mecca. All are futile unless accompanied by a true knowledge of the divine Name; and for the person who possesses that knowledge and acts accordingly they are unnecessary.

*If Allah lives in a mosque who occupies the rest of the world?  
And Hindus believe that the divine Name resides in an idol. Neither  
(Muslim nor Hindu) know the truth.*

*O Allah-Ram, I live by Thy Name;*

*Bestow Thy mercy upon me.*

*Hari, (say the Hindus), dwells in the south; whereas (Muslims  
believe that) Allah has his abode in the west.*

*Search within your heart, for therein alone is the dwelling-place  
(of God).*

*The Brahmin fasts on Ikadasi and the Qadi during Ramadan;*

*For a single month only do they draw from the treasure-house,  
ignoring it for the remaining eleven.*

*What value is there in bathing in Grissa, why bow one's head in a mosque?*

*What point in saying the namaz or in going on haj to the Ka'bah if there is quiet in one's heart?*

*All people are cast in Thy image,*

*And Kabir, the son of Ram-Allah, accepts all (true) gurus and pirs.*

*Says Kabir, Hear O people! Seek the sanctuary of the One.*

*Repeat but the Name and you shall find salvation.<sup>11</sup>*

*Some call Thee Ram, other Khuda;*

*Some serve (Thee as) Gosain, others (as) Allah,*

*(Thee) the bountiful Creator, filled with grace and mercy.*

*Some bathe at tiraths, others go on the haj;*

*Some perform puja, other bow (for namaz);*

*Some read the Vedas, others the Kateb;*

*Some wear blue, others white;*

*Some are called Turks, others Hindus;*

*Some seek heaven, others paradise.*

*Nanak declares; they who have perceived the Hukam*

*They know the mystery of the Lord.<sup>12</sup>*

The second concept rejected by the Sikh scriptures as a means of salvation is, of course, caste. This is not to say that caste as such is totally rejected. It can be argued that for the Gurus the institution of caste was acceptable as a means of economic order and social stability.<sup>13</sup> This, however, was a concept of caste shorn of its discriminatory features. Claims to religious privilege based upon caste were firmly rejected.

*Worthless is caste and worthless an exalted name.*

*For all mankind there is but a single refuge.<sup>14</sup>*

*Observe the divine light in man and ask not his caste*

*For there is no caste in the hereafter.<sup>15</sup>*

*There are four castes and four traditional stages in the holy life.*

*But he who meditates on God, he it is who is supreme.<sup>16</sup>*

The message so plainly declared in these pronouncements was reinforced by practical regulations imposed on all who entered the Khalsa or who received food in a *gurdwara*.<sup>17</sup> As far as the Gurus were concerned, the right to tolerance did not extend to any theory of salvation based upon acceptance of caste privilege. External observances are denounced as futile and caste pretensions as a deceit. As far as these two widely-accepted concepts were concerned

the Sikh scriptures were to discountenance the idea of tolerating them.

#### THE TOLERANCE AFFIRMED BY THE SIKH SCRIPTURES

Having endeavoured to explain what religious toleration does *not* mean in Sikh scriptural usage we return again to its positive form. This we shall now seek to explain by means of a series of five propositions.

1. *God is one.*

*Hindus and Muslims have the same God*

*Regardless of what the mullahs and sheikhs may say.<sup>18</sup>*

The message which Kabir enunciates with such characteristic clarity is supported with equal firmness by the Gurus. Men claim there are two distinct ways (the Hindu and the Muslim) implying thereby two irreconcilable concepts of God. Guru Nanak declares it to be otherwise.

The ways are two but the Lord is one.<sup>19</sup>

The doctrine may be stated in direct terms or, more commonly, it may be unmistakable implied by a mingling of names and terminology. Guru Arjan's *Ramkali* 5 provides an excellent example of this approach concluding with the declarations :

*Be gracious and merciful, O Maker of all things;*

*Grant, O Creator, the gift of devotion to*

*Thy servant.*

*Nanak declares : the Guru has dispersed my doubt.*

*Allah and Parabraham are one :<sup>20</sup>*

Allah is the name used by Muslim, whereas Parabraham is a distinctively Hindu term. Other pairings serve the same unifying purpose. God is Allah/Ram, Ram/Rahim, Karta/Karim, and Allah/Abhekh. The message is clear. God is one, though Hindu and Muslim (and others) characteristically fail to acknowledge this identity.

2. *Mankind is one*

Once again the doctrine is (as one would expect) consistent throughout the entire range of Sikh scriptures, but it receives a particular emphasis in Guru Gobind Singh's *Akal Ustat*. One of the most famous all scriptural passage makes this point directly, linking it with a basic insistence on unity of God.

*Somes have their heads and become sanyasis. some become yogis,  
some celibates, some great ascetics.*



*Some are Hindus, other Muslims, (and if the latter) Shi'a or Sunni;  
but know that all men are one kind.*

*The benevolent Creator is bountiful and plenteous is mercy. Spurn  
error and understand that He alone is all.*

*All must serve Him, the only Master, present in all forms, the all-  
pervading light.*

*The temple and the mosque are one, so too are (Hindu) puja and  
(the Muslim) prostration; and all men are one though they  
seem to be many.*

*Gods, demons, yakshas and gandharvas, Muslim and Hindu—all  
are but differences of place and external appearance.*

*All have eyes, ears, bodies, and speech; and all alike are  
compounded of the same four elements.*

*Allah and Abhekh are one; so too the Puran and the Qur'an. All  
have one form; all are a part of the same creation.<sup>21</sup>*

But Gurdas in his most outspoken comment on distinctions separating Hindus and Muslims makes the same connection. There is in fact no essential distinction. Hindus may invoke Ram and Muslims Khuda; Hindus look eastwards and visit Benares whereas Muslims bow to the west and journey thence to Mecca; and each has scriptures which he reveres as exclusive revelations. In practice, however, both are formed of the same elements and though they address him differently both acknowledge the same God.<sup>22</sup>

### *3. Hindu and Muslim are both astray*

"The Hindu", declares Namdev, "is blind and the Muslim has but one eye."<sup>23</sup> Bhai Gurdas, in describing the travels of Guru Nanak, puts the point even more strongly.

*All were ensnared in haumai. Gurus with (their) many disciples  
had sunk (in the Ocean of Existence).*

*During his round of the pilgrimage centres and religious fairs he  
searched but found no true believer.*

*Hindus and Muslims (he saw them) all-pirs, prophets, (men of peace  
and) nations which live by the sword.*

*The blind were thrusting the blind into a well!<sup>24</sup>*

Neither Hindu nor Muslim know the way because both follow false guides. Guru Nanak summarised the situation in a single line.

*Neither the Veda nor the Kateb know the mystery.<sup>25</sup>*

Guru Gobind Singh repeats this same declaration<sup>26</sup> and elsewhere lays insistent emphasis upon the inadequacy of all existing

scriptures.

*Some read the Qur'an, some the Purans.*

*All such beliefs are futile; none can escape Death in the end.*

*Countless people read the Qur'an  
ignorantly scan the Purans.*

*All is ultimately fruitless;*

*None can evade the clutches of Death.<sup>27</sup>*

*God is in neither the Veda nor the Kateb.*

*Know that He dwells in His servant's heart.<sup>28</sup>*

It is an insistence to which he returns again and again.<sup>29</sup> Such scriptures represent man-made external authorities which are at best useless and which may be positively pernicious in their effect because they blind men to the truth. It is in the human *man*<sup>30</sup> that truth is to be found. Authority lies within.

4. The way of salvation is, however, open to all men regardless of their status of religious affiliation.

Kabir is, as we have already observed, particularly forthright in his denunciation of Hindu and Muslim orthodox practices. At no point does this emerge more plainly than in the famous *Bhairau shabad* which appears within a collection of works by Guru Arjan.

*I fast in neither the Hindu manner nor the Muslim;*

*I serve only the eternal Protector.*

*The one Gosain is also my Allah;*

*I have been freed (from the blindness) of both Hindu and Muslim.*

*I make pilgrimages to neither the Ka'bah nor to tiraths;*

*I serve only the one and no other.*

*I perform neither puja nor namaz;*

*(Instead) I greet the Formless One within my heart.*

*I am neither Hindu nor Muslim;*

*(The One) Allah-Ram is the breath of my body.*

*Thus declares Kabir :*

*Through the grace of the Guru-Pir I have found the Lord.<sup>31</sup>*

"I am", he declares, "neither Hindu nor Muslim", and Bhai Gurdas seems to support this indication that neither Hindu nor Muslim is on the right path.<sup>32</sup> \*From other scriptural evidence, however, it is clear that for the Gurus it was only a certain range of Hindu or Muslim belief and practice which placed its exponent

\*The implication being that brings salvation or liberation 'is pure deeds' (*Shubh Karma*) and not mere external observances and ritual.—Editor

beyond hope of redemption. The pretentious brahmin, the bigoted qazi, the hypocrite, the kind of person from whatever rank, religion or fraternity who set his trust upon the performance of external rituals—these are the misguided for whom there can be little hope if they persist in their error. Apart from those who are thus reprobated there exist other Hindus and other Muslims who because they interpret their faith in accordance with truth and inner sincerity, can appropriate that salvation which by divine grace is accessible to all men.

The emphasis here must be firmly laid upon the need for reinterpretation of traditional faith, a reinterpretation which rejects all that is external in favour of a devotion which is exclusively inward. A well-known stanza by Guru Nanak makes it abundantly clear what this means in the case of a Muslim.

*Make mercy your mosque, faith your prayer-mat,  
and righteousness your Qur'an.  
Make humility your circumcision, uprightness  
your fasting, and so you will be a (true) Muslim.  
Make good works your Ka'beh, Truth your pir,  
and compassion your creed and your prayer.  
Make the performance of what pleases (God)  
your rosary and, Nanak, he will sustain your honour.<sup>33</sup>*

Thus can a man become a "true Muslim", one fitted for salvation without necessarily renouncing his traditional title. In the same manner one may become a "true Hindu". Because such persons existed it was both possible and appropriate for Guru Arjan to incorporate within his sacred scripture works by men who remained avowedly Muslim as well as compositions by others who remained explicitly Hindu. Kabir's status may create problems, but there can be no doubt that Farid and Bhikhan were regarded as Muslims, just as Namdev and others were plainly Hindus. The result is a scripture which testifies in its actual composition to its concept of religious toleration. Hindu and Muslim belief interpreted in terms of interior devotion deserved and received a place within a scripture dedicated to the practice of interior devotion.

5. Salvation is attained through the interior discipline of *nam simran*.

*So many sacred scriptures and texts;  
I have read and pondered them all.  
None, O Nanak, can compare with the  
priceless Name.<sup>34</sup>*

The quotation is taken from Guru Arjan's *Sukhmani Sahib*, a work which spells out with simple untranslatable beauty the message of the divine Name. It is, Guru Arjan insists, a message which is intended for all.

*To all is granted that most fundamental of truths  
Anyone, from whatever caste, may repeat  
the divine Name  
And he who does so shall attain salvation.<sup>35</sup>*

Herein is the final answer for Guru Arjan as for all his predecessors and successors.

*The fulfilment of all religions is the  
divine Name alone.  
Dwelling within the heart of the devout.<sup>36</sup>*

The answer lies neither in acceptance of Hindu and Muslim claims nor in their rejection. It lies in a transcending of both. Neither really matters. What does matter is the devout believer's sincere and disciplined remembrance of the divine Name. It is a way open to all, regardless of status, vocation, or religious affiliation. Therein, it seems, we must seek the Gurus' understanding of religious toleration.

#### FOOTNOTES

- 1 Dostoevsky Fyodor. *The Brother Karamazov*, trans. Constance Garnett (London, 1948), p. 261.
- 2 Ibid., pp. 259-261.
- 3 In the citations which follows *AG* designated the standard version of the *Adi Granth*, and *DG* the addition of the *Dasam Granth*, published in S. 2024 (AD 1967) by Bhai Jawahar Singh Kirpal Singh & Co. of Amritsar.
- 4 The abbreviation *BG* designates *Varan Bhai Gurdas*, the standard collection of the *vars* of Bhai Gurdas. See esp. *BG* I : 21, 23, 26, 33, 34 and 37; also 33 : 2.
- 5 For this background see J.S.Grewal *Guru Nanak in History* (Chandigarh, 1969).
- 6 See for example, the lack of interest in communal distinctions which Guru Nanak observed in the invading Mughals. *Asa Ast.* 11 (6) *Asa Ast.* 12 (6). *AG* pp. 417-18. *Tilang* 5. *AG*, p. 722.
- 7 McLeod, W.H., *The Evolution of the Sikh Community* (Oxford, 1975): pp. 28-29.

8. "A Tour to Lahore (in 1808)" by an officer of the Bengal Army, repr. in *The Panjab Past and Present*, Vol. 1, part I, p. 120. Alexander Burnes, *Travels into Bokhara*. Vol. 3 (London. 1839). p. 118. Chas. Masson, *Narrative of Various Journey & C*, Vol. 1 (London. 1842). pp. 409-410, 419-21. G.T. Vigne. *Travels in Kashmir & C* Vol. 1 (London. 1842), p. 184. Leopold von Orlich, *Travels in India & C*, Vol. 1 (London, 1845), p. 164.
9. McLeod. W.H., "*The Impact of Islam upon the Thought of Guru Nanak*" in *Sikhism and Indian Society* (Transactions of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study. Simla. Vol. 4. 1967). pp. 292-308.
10. Radhakrishnan. *The Hindu View of Life* (London. 1960). p. 36.
11. Kabir *Prabhati* 2, AG. p. 1349.
12. Guru Arjan, *Ramkali* 9, AG. p. 885. The term Kateb is used to designate the four 'Semitic texts' namely the Torah. the Zabur (Psalms). the Injil (Gospels). and the Qur'an. Here. however. it refers simply to the Qur'an. 'Turks' means 'Muslims' and in all subsequent quotations will be translated as such. For the Hukam see W.H.McLeod. *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion* (Oxford, 1968). pp. 199-203.
13. McLeod. W.H., *The Evolution of the Sikh Community*, pp. 87-88. 90-91.
14. Guru Nanak. *Var Siri Ragu* 3 : 1. AG p. 83.
15. Guru Nanak, *Asa* 3. AG. p. 349.
16. Guru Ram Das, *Gond* 4. AG. p. 861.
17. McLeod. W.H.. *The Evolution of the Sikh Community*. pp. 86-87.
18. Kabir *Bhairau* 4, AG. p. 1158.
19. *Gauri Ast* 5 (8). AG. p. 223.
20. Loc cit. AG. p. 897.
21. *Akal Ustat*. 85-86. DG. p. 19.
22. BG, 33 : 2.
23. *Gond* 7. AG. p. 875.
24. BG 1 : 26. See also Kabir. *Bhairau* 7 and 11. AG. pp. 1158-60: Guru Nanak's *Var Asa* 6 : and *Var Ramkali* 11 : 2. AG. pp. 465, 951-52: Guru Gobind Singh's *Akal Ustat* 10/30. DG. pp. 14-15.
25. *Maru Solaha* 2 (6). AG. p. 1021.
26. *Jap* 82. DG, p. 5.
27. *Bachitar Natak* 6/47-48. DG, p. 58.
28. Ibid. 6/61. DG. p. 59.
29. See also *Akal Ustat* 4/24 and 8/188 DG. pp. 14/28; *Savaya* 4. 7. 9. 10. 17. 24 and 26. DG, pp. 712-15. (Individual *savaiye* are misnumbered on pp. 714-15 of DG.). The Kabir bani in the *Adi Granth* includes a line which. at first sight. appears to contradict this view.  
Do not declare the Veda nor the Ketab to be false; deceived is he who fails to study them.

—*Prabhati* 4, AG, p. 1350.

The context makes it clear. however. that they are to be studied in a particular way. one which. sustains the normal insistence upon interior authority.

30. McLeod. W.H.. *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*, pp. 178-81.

31. *Bhairau M 5. 3. AG*, p. 1136. The two final couplets are missing from the *Kabirgranthavali* analogue (S.S.Das version, no. 338). This may mean that they were added by Guru Arjan, or that they had been added earlier within a regional oral tradition. Whatever their origin, there can be doubt that Guru Arjan accepted the view which they express with such directness.
32. *BG*, 1 : 33.
33. *Var Majh 7 : 1, AG*, pp. 140-141. Guru Arjan lays the same insistent stress upon the need for reinterpretation of external conventions. See esp. his *Maru Solaha 12 AG*, pp. 1083-84; also the ninth section of *Gauri Sukhmani. AG*, pp. 274-75. Other examples by Guru Nanak are *Siri Rag 28. Var Siri Rag 4 : 1, Var Majh 7 : 3 and 8 : 1, Var Asa 6 : 1, and Dhanasari 7. ( AG*, pp. 24, 84, 141 and 662).
34. *Gauri Sukhmani*, shalok of section 3, *AG*, p. 265. Cf. also *Akal Ustat 20/50 adn 20/140. DG*, pp. 16, 24.
35. *Gauri Sukhmani. 9 : 5. AG*, p. 274.
36. *Ibid. 24 : 7. AG*, p. 296. The term *mat-ant* (Cf. *ved-ant*) here translated 'fulfilment of religions', is impossible to translate adequately. It does, however include this meaning. See also *bird 3 : 8, AG*, p. 266.

# AKAL-PURAKH, THE SUPREME BEING OF GURU NANAK'S REVELATION

AVTAR SINGH

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The Quest into the *raison d'etre* of man and the world has often led seekers of knowledge and vision to the concept and experience of Supreme Reality or Supreme Being. Men and their prophets have, in their mystical intuition, realized the inadequacy of mere matter to explain the phenomenon of spirit and consciousness. While the philosophers have sought to know and analyse the existence of the higher reality and Supreme-Being, God, through the use of reason and other intellectual techniques, the certitude born of personal revelation has been the reward of the mystics and prophets. A spontaneous desire to invite others to witness the supreme real and to live by it has been their call to the faithful. We shall, presently, seek to outline Guru Nanak's revelation to the Supreme-Being, for which he has, among other names, also used the name *Akal-Purakh*.

A study of Guru Nanak's teaching in respect of the Supreme-Being is important for two major reasons. First, Guru Nanak has been the first in the tradition called Sikhism to experience the supreme-real, and his successor Gurus have continued to use his name to denote the continuity of experience, inspiration and message. Therefore, if we want to know the deeper inspiration and ideal involved in the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur as well as the whole of Sikh religious tradition, we ought to refer back to the vision of Guru Nanak which has been the guiding light for all the later Gurus and their followers. Second, Guru Nanak's knowledge and vision of the Supreme-Being has been described through various parables (Sakhis) and Symbols associated with his early life. One may notice some minor variations but the general theme of his realization has persisted through these narratives. The knowledge

of the nature and existence of such a Supreme-Being is, thus, based on the authenticity of his direct experience. An analysis of Guru Nanak's teaching in respect of the Supreme-Being may, therefore, be highly rewarding both as knowledge and experience.

We may begin with the observation that Guru Nanak has emphasised the reality of the *One* Supreme-Being. He has been highly critical of dualistic beliefs. He has again and again pointed out that any belief in the duality of supreme reality is not only false, but also a cause of suffering for the believer. Such a view is based in false knowledge and it also perpetuates a false creed. The doctrine of the One Supreme-Being has great potentialities in terms of the social relations which ought to be inspired by it. Guru Nanak has stressed the fact of the oneness of God as well as the great need to actualize the potential implications of this One-reality belief in social ideals and norms. Guru Nanak appears to teach us that any acceptance of dualistic or pluralistic creeds is not only ignorance in as much as it is false, but is also bad in its social and moral misdirection. Guru Nanak holds that a person who believes in the one Supreme-Being sheds the fear born of duality.

Guru Nanak has described the Supreme-Being as independent of time. The use of the name *Akal-Purakh*<sup>1</sup> for God indicates that He is not subject to time. God is eternal. Similarly, the Guru adds "*ad jugad hai bhi hosi*" to reject any doubt about the eternity of God. We arrive at the same conclusion when we interpret *akal* to mean indestructible or one who does not die. The *akal* nature of God, however, raises an important question : Is God changeless? The question assumes an urgency in view of Guru Nanak's statement at another place that 'my Lord is ever-new' (*nit-navan*).<sup>2</sup> *Nit-navan* is that which is perennially of the same character, that does not decline. In other words, He is not subject to the ravages of Time. Time-beings decay and decline. In the case of created objects it brings also age and death. The Eternal Supreme-Being is not subject to these conditions. But at the same time the implication of His ordering the universe in all its changes and evolutionary process appears to be impeded. Only it must be kept in view that amidst the ever-changing shows of the universe, the eternal Divine principal is unchanging, immutable.



We can further refer to be passage in which the expression *nitnavan* occurs and see whether it is meant to be a metaphysical statement. A reading of the passage shows that God is being portrayed as the compassionate lover of the humanity and a giver of boons. It also suggests ever-new discoveries about God by the seeker. This, however, may only be suggestive of the human limitation being overcome, and not a ceaselessly changing God. It may, of course, be partially admitted that there is no logical contradiction in assuming the compatibility of the eternal operating in a changeful universe. Guru Nanak clearly appears to stress unchanging God who is not subject to the vicissitudes of Time. There is another related question about God's relation with his temporal creation. Guru Nanak views this relation in positive and intimate terms. We may now refer to this aspect of Guru Nanak's teaching.

God is the cause of all creation.<sup>3</sup> But it is important to remember that while God is the cause of all creation, He himself is uncreated. He is neither born nor incarnated.<sup>4</sup> Guru Nanak, thus, disagrees with those Hindu and Semetic traditions which accept the incarnation of God in one form or the other. The Guru, however, also rejects the standpoint of his transcendence and localisation at some remote point in space. The transcendence of God signifies his supremacy and not withdrawal to some remote space. A proper understanding of God's creation as well as His transcendence lies in interpreting the latter in terms of his Being as *Supreme*. Any spatio-temporal interpretation of his transcendence as well as localisation in terms of incarnation seems to limit God and is, therefore, against the concept of God as infinite. Such a view would be contrary to Guru Nanak's revelation which places no kind of limitation on the Supreme-Being.

In one of his slokas Guru Nanak has described Nature (*qudrat*) as His creation. He further adds that God pervades all nature.<sup>5</sup> We know the world of nature to be a temporal phenomenon. Since God is in nature, He have also have a temporal aspect. We have already described God to be eternal and Guru Nanak has again and again emphasized this aspect of God. We have now to attempt an explanation which would do justice to these seemingly contrary views of the Guru whereby God is described both as eternal as well as pervading creation which is subject to Time. Our task may become

easier if we define the temporal nature of God in a manner of its compatibility with its indestructability as well as the denial of its incarnation. And here we do not encounter any conceptual difficulty. There is no contradiction in our statement if we say that God is beyond Time as well as operation in Time. In fact we immediately notice the richness of this concept as well as its great potentiality in terms of possible interpretation commensurate with modern knowledge. One of the objections against such a concept may arise from an association of temporality with anthropomorphic view of time which signifies birth, growth and decay. However, this may be the difficulty of only those who view time as 'death-time'. The seers and prophets may transcend such an association and view time and eternity as compatible contraries associated with God who is the Supreme-Being and is not limited by what appears contradictory to the human mind.

We may now refer to the view of Guru Nanak wherein the Supreme-Being is said to be not far from the man. Guru Nanak reminds us that "the death is of the strife, of ego in the mind, dies not the seer within thee—the undying self. The object you seek at the holy places, that jewel, O man, is within thy heart."<sup>6</sup> God, therefore, is not eternal in the sense of being wholly transcendent. God, the eternal Supreme-Being stands in a definite relation with the self-in-time. This 'in-time' aspect of the self, however, is quite compatible with its distinguishing characteristic of being deathless as different from the body which is subject to death. A realisation of this eternal dimension of the temporal is the key to the understanding of the true characteristic of the Supreme-Being. Guru Nanak displays a remarkable modernity of views in proposing this compatibility of the seemingly contrary eternal temporal character of God.<sup>7</sup> In fact this synthesis points to the perfect nature of the Supreme-Being.

The use of the term *purakh* in *Akal-Purukh* as well as separately<sup>8</sup> indicates Guru Nanak's preference for God as a conscious Being. God is not devoid of consciousness. In fact, *purusha* or *purukh* connotes the highest possible degree of self-awareness. We may refer to the use of this term in the *Samkhya* school of Indian Philosophy where *purusha* is the principle of consciousness which leads to its evolution as soon as it comes into a contact with three

modes of *prakriti*. We do not propose to suggest that there is complete identity of cosmological explanation in the teaching of Guru Nanak and *Samkhya darshan*. We have merely referred to the suggestive similarity of meaning in the concept of *purusha* in the two contexts. The use of the words *tun ape surta*<sup>9</sup> (thou are thyself conscious) by Guru Nanak also suggest the meaning of self-consciousness or self-awareness. Many other words have also been used by him to indicate that God is consciousness. It may perhaps be argued by someone at this point that it is not enough to say that God is consciousness. We should rather say that God is cosmic-consciousness or supra-consciousness. Another possible position, which may be suggested by some, shows God to be beyond consciousness. According to such a view God is a void which lacks consciousness or is beyond consciousness. In reply we may submit that an overwhelming number of statements about God made by Guru Nanak are against the view that God is a mere void, devoid of consciousness: even a casual study of his hymns will convince us about the truth of this statement.

It may also be added that statements such as 'God is beyond ordinary knowledge' do not imply that He Himself is devoid of consciousness. The use of terms such as *agam. agochar* merely emphasises His depth and not total unknowability.\* Similar other expressions only refer to a difficulty and not an impossibility. Second, the ordinary unknowability of God brings to our notice the limitation of the ordinary human knower. It may, therefore, be seen that whatever is in the fact a difficulty of man is not necessarily the definitive characteristic of God. We may now seek to answer the critic who prefers the use of supra-consciousness or cosmic-consciousness in respect of God. It may be admitted that we have nothing substantial against such a preference. However, it may be a somewhat redundant expression because it is understood that when we are speaking of God as the Supreme-Being, the consciousness of God is admittedly of the supreme degree and character. The use of the word 'supra' or 'cosmic', in the context, may merely be eulogistic without adding anything to its meaning.

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\*Here it may be pointed out that according to the teaching of the Gurus. God is knowable not by the senses (*agochar*). He may be apprehended by the inner intuition. (Cf. *anubhav Prakash—Akal Ustuti*)—Editor

After having admitted the conscious nature of God, we may be interested in finding out Guru Nanak's view about God's knowledge of the world. This question is very important because in case God does not know anything about the world then it may be meaningless to say that martyrdom or other acts of surrender to God are known to Him. On the other hand, it may be argued by some person that the nature of the world is contingent and therefore any possibility of the knowledge of such a phenomenon would render the knower to be contingent also. This objection may be inspired by the oft-repeated statement that the world is ephemeral and any knowledge of the transitory is lower in character than the knowledge of the reality. Second, the knowledge of the world is possible only through the sensory apparatus which of course cannot be attributed to God. Such a view of God will be rather anthropocentric. There is some force in the latter part of this objection. We do not think that Guru Nanak ever taught that God is just an enlargement of man. On the contrary, a concept such as *nirankar* (formless), emphasises the supra-human dimension of God. We may, therefore, say that according to Guru Nanak, God knows the world, but His knowledge of the world is emancipated from limitations imposed by time. Hence His knowledge is in its nature something the human kind cannot characterize. It is, in any case, all-comprehensive, which is distinct from the sensory knowledge which is mediate and partial. Guru Nanak's use of the word *antarjami*<sup>10</sup> (*antaryami*—controller of all that is within) for God needs deep pondering. This word is also interpreted as meaning 'all-knower'. In this sense God may be the inner light which seeks to regulate man's awareness of the ideal. The usual interpretation of *antarjami* is in terms of knower. When we say that God is *antarjami* we take it to mean that God knows all. Guru Nanak's use of this term is also to be understood in this sense. We may, at this stage, recall our earlier statement about the temporal nature of God. We are now in a better position to understand this aspect of God. The temporality of God refers to this knowledge of events, human and natural, which continue to occur ceaselessly. It involves the direct knowledge of the creation by the Creator.

We may now proceed to understand God's relation with the world. This discussion is directly related to all that we have said so

far about God. Guru Nanak appears to favour internal relation in this context. The use of expressions, such as *ghat ghat so Prabhu adi jugad*,<sup>11</sup> *teen bhawan ek joti*<sup>12</sup> and, *Prabhu jag jeevan* suggest the world-inclusiveness of God. This is indicative of His unicity. God is thus a world inclusive unity. It may perhaps be useful to remember that Guru Nanak in this manner presents a concrete view of God's unicity. He seems to disregard the importance of abstract unicity involving nothing but unity, uniting nothing but itself. It may be obvious that such an abstract unicity will fail to inspire moral and spiritual volition in man. The concrete unicity of God suggested above also fulfils the requirement of actuality without, at the same time, sacrificing potentiality. God thus, includes the world, but this inclusion is different from any spatial spreading out. He includes the world, but it may not be proper to say that He is the world. All we can say in this regard is that God's relation with the world is internal, intimate and all-comprehensive.

We have been, till now, seeking to outline a philosophical analysis of Guru Nanak's revelation of the Supreme-Being. We may now refer to some of the theistic aspects without which our statement on God will not be complete. Guru Nanak has laid great stress on Divine grace. Broadly speaking, such grace means His power to help man during his life as well as after death. It can be easily seen that such a view of God's power and intervention can be understood in a popular as well as subtle and philosophical sense. A popular picture may portray God as some sort of a ruler with powers of vast patronage. Further, God might be seen to exercise this power in some arbitrary manner on the assumption that arbitrariness indicates the supremacy of His power. Such a popular and simplistic view of Divine grace quite conveniently overlooks the requirement of man's responsibility as well as merit. It might be conceded without doubt that Guru Nanak has laid great emphasis on Divine grace as an instrument of His omnipotence. It may also be granted that it is necessary for human beings to accept a belief in the grace of God without which a religious tradition may only amount to some sort of merely retributive circle and code. But at the same time it is necessary to be conscious acceptance of the divine omnipotence as well as human limitations. An acceptance of this belief, therefore, involves

the first step of surrender. It is a realization of the insufficiency of the human ego. Second, the belief infuses fearlessness and courage to suffer and struggle against unmerited wrongs, in the faith that God ultimately rights all that His devotees suffer. It, thus, sustains man in his fight against evil and inhumanity which may confront his individual and social life. It is this aspect of his awareness which makes him transcend suffering of every kind. Third, it liberates man from any sense of failure and continues to sustain him in his struggle for higher and unrealized ideals. One of the well-known obstructions to human creativity and struggle for ideals lies in the fear of possible failure. This, of course, is possible only when a person feels himself to be alone in his struggle. Guru Nanak reassures man of God's grace in his struggle for the realization of values and ideal. This is meant to provide the required reinforcement to the seeker of good and God in his strenuous mood and efforts. Fourth, the belief in the grace of God provides the moral argument for the existence of complete good which stands for the conjunction of virtue with happiness. God's grace is then seen to be the ground of higher values. We shall not refer to many other implications of the belief under discussion for the reason that it may take us away from a statement on Guru Nanak's revelation of God. We may, however, add that God's grace is an integral aspect of His power and activity. Such a conclusion follows necessarily from the premise of sensitivity and activity of the Supreme-Being.

We may now refer to the social implications of Guru Nanak's belief about God, as outlined above. We notice a great keenness on his part to translate his divine experience very faithfully into a paradigm of social values. The oneness of God is made an existential postulate for social relationship. The artificial and baneful divisions into castes and allied social privileges are not only rejected, but are also sought to be replaced by the functional value of congregation. Similarly, all acts militating against the spirit of brotherhood whether socio-economic, political, or religious are shown to be the evils which a man of God must resist. Self-surrender or martyrdom on this path is seen to be an act of God-realisation. Further, when torture and persecution is launched by some powerful person or group in the name of religion itself, an active resistance against this false

religiosity becomes a special and prime responsibility of the men of God.

We may now sum up very briefly the gains of our discussion. We have pointed out the importance of Guru Nanak's revelation of God as a continuous experience and inspiration for the holy Gurus who came after him and for their followers. Second, Guru Nanak has revealed God to be the one Supreme-Being who does not exclude the world and man from His being. Thus, the transcendence of God is held to be coeval with His pervasiveness. Guru Nanak does not subscribe to the principal of Divine incarnation of God. The relation of God with man and the world is also conceived in terms of His knowledge of the world. God is eternal, but his relation with the temporal and creative world of phenomena is also accepted. The perfection of the eternal does not lie in being completely aloof of the temporal, but is indicated in including the temporal in its eternalness. Guru Nanak has emphasised the indestructibility and eternity of God in being *akal*. His vision therefore shows a remarkable modernity in communicating the compatibility of the eternal with the creative-temporal. We have also noticed Guru Nanak's use of the term *Purakh* in *Akal-Purukh* as one of the attributive names for God. The use of *Purakh* indicates God's cosmic consciousness or all-inclusive awareness. This also indicates His omniscience.

We have, at the end, referred to grace as an integral aspect of God's omnipotence. Here we have mostly concentrated on outlining the implication of this view for man. One of the most prominent features noticed in this connection refers to the need for man to surrender himself to the grace of God. It marks the victory of man over his own ego-all contradictions solved in the grace of God. The Gurus have, by their life and teaching, established examples of surrender and martyrdom in the certainty of faith in Divine grace. Man may begin his journey by the surrender of his ego for the realisation of social good. This may be the fruit of understanding Guru Nanak's fusion of realism with mysticism in his revelation of the Supreme-Being, *Akal-Purukh*.

#### FOOTNOTES

1. Ibid. *Maru M.* 1 (3-1-18). p. 1038.
2. Ibid. *Dhanasri M.* 1 (1-1). p. 660.

3. Ibid, p. 223, "*ekus te sabh upat hoi*".
4. Ibid, *Sorath M. 1*, (1 & 2-6), p. 597. Cf. also "*ayi na jai prabhu kirpala*." Ibid., *Maru M. 1* (1-1-98). 1038.
5. Ibid, *Var of Sri Rag. Sloka M. 1* p. 84. '*qudrat kar ke vasia soi, vakhat vichare so banda hoi...*'
6. Ibid, *Gauri M. 1* (2 & 3-4), p. 152.
7. Guru Nanak's statement "*kal bikal kiye ek grasa*", is his description of God. is very interesting and requires to be discussed exhaustively. Ibid., *Maru M. 1* (4-1-14). p. 1038.
8. Ibid. *Maru M. 1* (3-1-18). p. 1038.
9. Ibid. *Basant M. 1* (4-2). p. 1188.
10. Ibid, *Asa M. 1* (8-8). p. 415.
11. Ibid. *Dakhni Onkar M. 1* (2). p. 930.
12. Ibid. *Dakhni Onkar M. 1* (9). p. 931.



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