

**CONCEPT OF HUMAN RIGHTS  
IN  
GURU NANAK BANI**

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## *Certificate*

The work included in the thesis entitled 'Concept of Human Rights in Guru Nanak Bani' submitted to faculty of Humanities and Religious Studies in the subject of Philosophy Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, was carried out by Mrs. Nirmaljit Kaur at the Department of Guru Nanak Studies, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar under my supervision. This is an original work and has not been submitted for any other degree/diploma at this or any other university/institution. This thesis is fit to be considered for award of degree of Ph.D.

Signature of Supervisor

## *Declaration*

The work embodied in the thesis entitled 'Concept of Human Rights in Guru Nanak Bani' has been done by me and not submitted elsewhere for the award of any other degree. All the ideas and references have been duly acknowledged.

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Signature of Student

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## *Introduction*

Human Rights occupy an important place in the world history because they are very fundamental in a civilized society and provide the vital protection to individuals so that they may continue their life and contribute to the society in a dignified manner. Human Rights recognize the inherent dignity and fundamental freedom of all members of human family and are the foundations for all basic freedom, justice and peace in the world. When protected by the rule of law they ensure peace in society by preventing man from turning violent.

Various philosophers have expressed their views on why and how the exercise of rights is essential for the proper functioning and development of society. The most challenging problem of our time is how to utilize the vast knowledge and resources available today for the welfare and development of mankind.

This research work is an attempt to bring before the world, Guru Nanak's contribution in securing the basic Human Rights of the people. It is one of the important aspects of Guru Nanak's philosophy which was ignored earlier by the scholars. No doubt that Guru Nanak was not only a spiritual leader but also a social reformer and a political thinker who gave importance to all aspects of human life. Human Rights are one of them. He was a great philosopher who applied his mind to a large number of problems of human concern. His struggle for securing basic Human Rights of the masses is very significant.

People at the time of Guru Nanak were devoid of basic Human Rights. They were being exploited politically, socially and religiously. Guru Nanak fought boldly for the preservation of Human Rights and raised his voice against social injustice, inequality, and religious repression, exploitation of women and degradation of human values. Guru Nanak realized the preciousness of human life and wished to create an ideal society free from every kind of exploitation and sufferings. Guru Nanak expected such a social

life for his followers where they must be aware of their rights and duties. Guru Nanak not only brought about a change in the thinking of slavery-ridden people of India but also asked them to give away hypocrisy and self centeredness and infused in them spirit of sacrifice and selfless services.

The present work has been divided into eight chapters. In the first chapter 'Human Rights: History, Nature, Western and Indian Perspectives' an attempt has been made to go through the meaning of Human Rights and entire development of Human Rights in different ages. From Western perspectives, the landmarks in the development of Human Rights like Magna Carta (1215) in England, American Declaration of Independence (1776), the French Revolution of 1789 etc. have contributed greatly in advancing the concept of Human Rights. Ultimately, in December 1948, Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted consisting 30 Articles including civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

Similarly from Indian Perspectives Human Rights occupy an important place since Vedic time but the concept of Human Rights flourished in India during British rule. Several National Movement Organizations came forward to secure the basic Human Rights. Finally the Constitution was adopted by the people of India which came into force on 26<sup>th</sup> January 1950 including Fundamental Rights and Directive Principle of State Policy.

Second chapter 'Contemporary Milieu and State of Human Rights' explains that the need of Human Rights has been realized since the very beginning of the human civilization. But at the same time they have been violated from time to time by various dominating individuals or groups. Presently these rights are cherished at international level, but much is to be done at root level. In the above mentioned chapter, Human Rights are presented in different contexts such as Caste system and Human Rights, Religious violence and Human Rights, Role of Police and Human Rights, Woman and Human Rights, Child-Labour and Human Rights, Education and Human Rights, Environment and Human Rights, and Workers and Human

Rights. Several NGOs have been also referred in this chapter which are trying to protect and restore human dignity in all over the world.

Third chapter 'Guru Nanak: Life and Works' discusses about the life history of Guru Nanak and his works. Guru traveled widely in India and abroad during his course of Udasis in all the four directions to convey the message of God to the human beings. During his journeys, Guru Nanak went to the main religious centres of his time like Kurkshetra, Hardware, Gurakhmata, Achalbatala, Ayodya, Gaya Multana, Mecca Madina etc. He visited these places particularly on the occasion of religious fairs. He met with large congregations of scholars, Yogis, Jains, Faquirs, Brahmins and other people and exchanges his view with them. Guru Nanak taught them the true way of life by eradicating their false practices to attain salvation.

The works of Guru Nanak which have been mentioned in this chapter are Japji, Siddh Gosti, Asa di Var, Majh di Var, Malar di Var and Baramah Tukhari. Japji is the most wonderful creation of Guru Nanak. Almost all the basic problems on the way to spiritual realization have been touched upon in these hymns. Siddh Gosti contains the conversion in poetry of Siddas or Yogis with Guru Nanak. Asa di Var is next important composition. Except the praise of God, social order is the main topic which has been discussed in it. Similarly Majh di Var and Malar di Var contain several important philosophical points besides the description of different aspect of contemporary life. Baramah Tukhari deals with the beauty of nature. This poem contains one stanza for each month of the year. It can be said that *Bani* of Guru Nanak touches all aspects of human life which brought a new life among the dying spirit of humanity.

In the Fourth chapter 'Guru Nanak's ideas of Society in relation of Human Rights' the condition of society at Guru Nanak's time has been described. The social setup was divided into four classes in Hindu as well as in Muslim religion. The religious leaders assumed themselves superior to the masses and indulged in superfluous ceremonies and befooled people. Guru Nanak observed keenly these malpractices and made them realize their duties.

He spoke against the caste system cherished by Brahmins. He supported the family living instead of being ascetic. He introduced the concept of Sangat and Pangat to eradicate the caste discrimination in the real sense. This chapter also reveals how Guru Nanak deified the common woman who was otherwise suffering from pitiable condition. He condemned the concept of impurity of women during the menstrual period and of sutak during the delivery of child, which was the strong but useless belief of the contemporary society. Such thinking kept women aloof and inferior in the society.

Fifth chapter 'Guru Nanak's Concept of Polity and Human Rights' opens with the contribution of other Sikh Gurus in the field of politics. Further it highlights the political conditions prevalent at the time of Guru Nanak and his response towards it. The sufferings of the people during Babar's invasion have been described by Guru Nanak with deep emotion. Guru Nanak made many indirect references to the contemporary political situation. Guru Nanak encouraged people to be aware about their political rights and to resist those kings who are unable to provide them security.

Later, this chapter also reveals the concept of Guru Nanak about the ideal state, place of Panches in ideal state and duties of a ruler. Similarly the polity of the Sikhs during 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century has been described in detail which shows that how Sikh Gurus and other Sikhs followed the master plan in every aspect of life prepared by Guru Nanak. This period served as the chief source of inspiration and guidance for the Sikh community. With the establishment of Khalsa, the social revolution started by Guru Nanak achieved its goal of serving the society without any distinction of caste, colour and faith.

The readers will also come to know about the origin and development of Misl organization, role of Banda Singh in Sikh polity, Sikh empire under Ranjit Singh and the role of Sikhs during the invasion of Ahmad Shaw Abdali in this chapter.

Sixth chapter 'Guru Nanak's Religion vis a vis Freedom of Faith' is systematic overview of Guru Nanak's idea of religion and freedom of faith.

For the proper understanding of Guru Nanak's view about religion a brief survey has been made of the religions that were prevalent in India before the advent of Guru because the philosophies of the earlier religions cannot be ignored. So it was necessary to compare the thought of Guru Nanak with the other six systems of the Hindu philosophy and other religions.

Further I have tried to highlight time of Guru Nanak where Muslim rulers tried to eliminate Hindu religion by converting them to Islam by demolishing their temples, prohibiting them from performing religious rites, by burning their sacred books and by hundred other acts of oppression and suppression. The religious rights of the Hindus were not safe. In such a critical time, Guru Nanak stood boldly against the rulers who took away the religious freedom of the people. At the same time hypocrisy of the religious leaders at the time of Guru Nanak has been exposed.

The reader will also notice how by following the principles of Guru Nanak other Sikh Gurus like Guru Arjan Dev ji, Guru Teg Bahadar ji and several other Sikhs sacrificed their life for freedom of conscience and worship.

In this chapter I have tried to show Guru Nanak's idea about the origin of the creation, time of creation, features of God, importance of Guru and Nam, goal of human life, how to achieve this goal and correct direction to achieve the goal of life.

Seventh chapter 'Guru Nanak's ideas of Human Rights and its relevance to the Modern Movements of Human Rights' ideals with the Human Rights advocated by Guru Nanak. Human Rights were being crushed by despotic Muslim rulers at the time of Guru Nanak. The people were being demoralized and forced to embrace Islam. Guru Nanak condemned the brutalities of the rulers and administrative officials who exploited their citizens and violated Human Rights. There are number of Human Rights formulated by Guru Nanak such as Right to resist oppression, Right to work and fulfillment of essential needs, Right to freedom, Freedom of choice of occupation, Right to equality, Right to family, Right to education, Right to justice and Right to

women. Similarly the views of other political thinkers regarding Human Rights have been also mentioned in this chapter.

The remaining portion of the chapter deals with the relevance of Guru Nanak's concept of Human Rights in the modern movements of Human Rights. If we are able to breathe the air of freedom today, it was only because of the great sacrifices of Sikh Gurus and the Sikhs who gave their blood and experienced extreme torture, sufferings and hardships for the sake of dharma and freedom.

Despite the great contributions of the Sikhs in protection and promotion of Human Rights, we are sliding down from the principles of Sikhism as the number of such true (ideal) Sikhs is very less. Many Sikhs have no faith in spirit of humanity which leads them to the distortion of values, escapism and collapse of man in despair and frustration and helplessness which nurtured the social conflict, exploitation, hatred and violence. The need of the hour is to propagate and practice the message of Guru Nanak in order to create a democratic way of thinking in human lives.

The concluding part of the research includes the findings of the study. Observance of Human Rights means human security and dignity. These rights have been talked about by various philosophers and organizations from time to time in the world history. Guru Nanak after having traveled a lot found the common people ignorant, superstitious and divided into many castes and religions. Hence, he started enlightening the society about supremacy of God and futility of empty religiousness. At the same time, he strongly propagated religious freedom and emphasized the unity of God. He spoke against barbarities of Muslim invaders. Following his teachings, 'Khalsa Panth' was established, a nation raising voice for betterment of masses and ultimately Sikh Raj was founded by Banda Singh and later fortified by Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Guru Nanak started Sangat and Pangat system condemning discriminations. He deified women. He recognized importance to human life and advocated the right of speech, religion, culture and assembly by organizing 'Sangat' where people could express their feelings and thoughts.

He supported having family and spiritual growth along with worldly living. He preached honest means of livelihood.

But I opine that unfortunately, the same vices which Guru Nanak denounced are practiced even in the present time. Bribery, crime, drugs etc. are the vices which can be seen in the present society.

Regarding the research methodology, the present study is not empirical one and is purely theoretical one. Guru Nanak's concept of Human Rights discussed in the present work is based on his writings included in the Guru Granth. While quoting from Guru Granth I have depended mainly on the English renderings of the verses by Prof. Gurbachan Singh Talib and Dr. Gopal Singh. At a few places I have used the English translation from the works of other writer like Surinder Singh Kohli, M.A. Maculliffe, J.S. Grewal, Jodh Singh, Taran Singh, A.C. Banerjee etc. I express my sincere thanks to all these learned scholars and other writers whom I have quoted in my work without their concern. The collected data has been thoroughly examined, interpreted, objectively analyzed and finally presented in the form of this work.

## **CHAPTER-1**

### **HUMAN RIGHTS: HISTORY, NATURE, WESTERN AND INDIAN PERSPECTIVES**

#### **Historical Development of Human Rights**

Before the existence of state the head of the family enjoyed absolute rights over his family. He fully exercised his authority over his family and members of the family also accepted it without any resistance because of economic and social security. They felt secured in his shelter and did not ask for any individual rights. Thus the scale of authority of one person over other individuals expanded. The authoritative persons began to enslave the physically and mentally weaker section. Gradually it leads to the slavery system. He became the master of his subjects and kept the sources of income and power in his own hands and masses were his mere tenants having no rights. Many philosophers and spiritual leaders all over the world made people conscious about their rights from time to time. Many of them struggled for the rights and also bear the consequence of their offence.

The concept of Human Rights is relatively new. Traditionally, it was known by the name of natural rights of man. At that time natural rights mainly included rights of life, liberty and pursuit of happiness. Darwin's assumptions 'Might is Right' and 'Survival of the Fittest' have universal connotations in the sense that might are likely to belittle and exploit weak. While the fittest will survive at the cost of rights of other human beings in all times and ages. Human Rights came into being since the advent of civilization. Man without society is unthinkable and rights are meaningless out of society. With the development of civilization, Human Rights became an integral part of society. There are number of factors and causes which are responsible for the development of Human Rights like: the nature of society, the needs of the people, the values or norms of the society, the social, political and economic

conditions etc, and above all, the inventions and discoveries of science which have revolutionized the very life style of human beings.

### **Meaning and Nature of Human Rights**

Like many concepts such as Freedom, Equality and Democracy, it is very difficult to define Human Rights also because there is no single and simple conception of its real meaning. It has infact varied from time to time, place to place, people to people. Even with in the same society the perception vary from one level to another. The real meaning keeps on evolving with the changing times and under constantly shifting social and economic conditions.

Now before understanding the Human Rights the words Human and Right are need to be understood. The word 'Human' means belonging or pertaining to or of the nature of man or mankind.<sup>1</sup> The word 'Right' denotes the freedom and advantages that everyone should be allowed to have.<sup>2</sup>

The foundational norm governing the concept of Human Rights is that of the respect for human personality and its absolute worth, regardless of colour, race, sex, religion or other considerations. These rights are essential for the adequate development of human personality and for human happiness, without getting involved in definitional controversies. At the very outset it is pertinent to mention that rights are those essential conditions of life without which man cannot be at his best. Precisely rights lead to the development and fulfillment to human beings.<sup>3</sup> So, Human Rights are those rights, which are inherent in human existence and belong to all human beings irrespective of gender, race, caste and religion etc. In an another definition David Selby says, Human Rights pertain to all persons and are posed by everybody in the world because they are human beings they are not earned, bought or inherited, nor are they created by any contractual undertaking.<sup>4</sup> Therefore Human Rights are those minimal rights that every individual must have by virtue of being a member of human family, irrespective of any other considerations.

According to the propounders of natural law theory, man derives rights from nature. These natural rights are inherent and integral to human nature. In fact, every individual by nature is given certain rights, which cannot be taken away by any authority.<sup>5</sup>

Thus we can say Human Rights are those claims and demands which are essential for the protection of Human life and the enhancement of human dignity, which should therefore enjoy full social and political sanctions. Human Rights recognize the inherent dignity and fundamental freedom of all members of human family and are the foundations of all-basic freedoms, justice and peace in the world. Human Rights, when protected by the rule of law, ensure peace in the society by preventing man from turning violent and rising in rebellion against tyranny and oppression.

In the words of Laski, Rights are those conditions of social life without which no man can seek in general to be himself at his best.<sup>6</sup> Man as a member of human society has some rights in order to survive as well as to make his life better therefore, Human Rights concerned with dignity of individual and the level of self-esteem that secure personal identity and promotes human community.

In brief we can say that Human Rights are universally accepted principles and rules that support morality and make it possible for each member of the human family to realize his or her full potential and to live life in an atmosphere of freedom, justice and peace.

### **Human Rights from Western Perspectives**

Now we will discuss Human Rights during different periods:

1. Human Rights during Greek and Roman period

2. Human Rights during 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Century
3. Human Rights during 19<sup>th</sup> Century
4. Human Rights during 20<sup>th</sup> Century

### **Human Rights during Greek and Roman period**

The philosophy of the natural law is based on the principle that human being is a part of nature, part of this cosmos and is born with some rights, which are the inherent rights and these rights cannot be separated from human beings.

According to the Greek and Roman philosophers, there is one common law of nature, based on reason, which is valid universally throughout the world. They developed a cosmopolitan philosophy, founded on the principle of equality of all men and the universality of natural law. Their ultimate ideal was a world-state in which all men would live together harmoniously under the guidance of divine reason. An important element in the concept of natural law philosophy was the principle of equality. The natural law philosophers were convinced that all men were essentially equal and the discrimination between them on account of sex, race, class or nationality was unjust and contrary to the laws of nature.

In the western political thought credit of first talking of 'Man as the measures of all things' goes to Protagoras, a sophist thinker, while that of the 'Equality of all men' to Hippias. Socrates discarded the examined life as not worth living.<sup>7</sup> So it is clear that man is not only a measure of all things but also a creator of things as he endowed with reason and infinite capacity to solve his problems and determine his destiny.

Plato took justice as a right. It is a state who has to provide the citizens with justice. The justice is the bond which holds a society together. For him the justice is that each of individuals has found his life-work in accordance with his natural fitness and his training-the Republic. So it is the right of every

individual. More than it he gives importance to education. In his opinion law does not and cannot give everybody his due. Law has no meaning other than to give the least bungling rule that will fit an average case; but a philosopher's (a philosopher king who is properly educated) wisdom gives to everybody what he deserves.<sup>8</sup> So justice which is the most important right should be given to every citizen in the ideal state, because justice is the bond which holds a society together. Each person should do his appointed work in contentment. Plato also gives importance to education in his ideal state. According to him ruler should be a philosopher or an intellectual person who can provide everybody what he deserves. Plato made systematic attempt to protect the citizens and non-citizens in his grand scheme of justice.

Aristotle advocates private property as an essential instrument of good life it is a means to the development of human personality.<sup>9</sup> Aristotle defended holding of a private property as natural right because property is essential to fulfill the human desires.

One of the basic tenets of stoicism founded by Zeno and later on developed by Cicero Marcus, Seneca and Stoics. They uphold equality of all human beings. Cicero a great Roman thinker spoke of cosmopolitanism, universal brotherhood of man and world citizenship. He talked of equality of men.<sup>10</sup> He thinks that man is the only living creature endowed with the faculty of reason. In his views all men are equal despite the difference in language, nationalities and races. According to him natural rights were universal and everlasting and it is sin to try and alter this law. Seneca another Roman thinker talked in favour of Human Rights and said that slave or free man all must be treated equally.

Stoic philosophers developed the natural theory of right and by virtue of it they explained the nature of Human Rights that is rights which every human being possesses by virtue of being human.<sup>11</sup> Similarly like Cicero, Stoic also believed that the principle of natural rights were universal in their nature. They were applicable to all irrespective of caste, colour, creed, sex etc. In this

way Stoic philosophers were able to preach idea of universal brotherhood of mankind and laid stress upon the equality and freedom for all.<sup>12</sup>

All these eminent philosophers emphasized the quality of all human beings. People should treat equally without any discrimination. They should live equally under one law of nature. In this way they preach idea of brotherhood of mankind and laid stress upon the equality and freedom of all.

### **Human Rights during 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century**

The Theory of natural rights was very popular in 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century. The social contract theory was closely linked with the theory of natural law. According to the theory of natural rights, the state does not grant these rights to human being. But they come from the very nature of man, his own intrinsic beings. Before the formation of civil society certain rights were enjoyed by man in the state of nature so these natural rights must be respected and protected by the state. The social contract theory became popular during this period through the contribution of Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau etc.

According to Hobbes, the state of nature was thus, a condition of perpetual war, “Where every man is enemy to every man” and where the rule of life was “only that to be every man’s that he can get and for so long as he keep it.” When men in the state of nature were like hungry wolves, each ready to devour the other, their lives were solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short.<sup>13</sup> Thus people in order to secure their life and property and to escape from the miseries and horrors of their natural conditions, they entered into a contract with each other. Hobbes wanted the safety of individuals from the anarchical state of nature through a contract.

According to Hobbes, I authorize, and give up my right of governing myself to this man or to this assembly of men, on this condition, that thou give up thy in this like manner.<sup>14</sup> In this way state has been created and individual has resigned his natural rights and state assumed them.

The origin of the modern concept of fundamental rights lies in Locke's concept of natural rights. Locke gave a new turn to the social contract theory which was introduced by Hobbes. Locke (1632-1704) gave law of nature, which means set of rules for human behaviour and how they ought to behave. John Locke was one of the greatest individualistic thinkers in the history of political thought. For him the earth and all its institutions therefore were made for the individuals and not the individuals for them. According to him if state fails in its duty to provide security to its subjects then they can resist or dissolve it. So he treats individual as the end and state as the means.

Locke agreed that a social contract existed in which the ruled had to give up some rights in return for protection. Unlike Hobbes, however, he argued that individual rights, including property ownership, were best protected when parliament limited the monarch's capacity to interfere with individual lives. Moreover he believed that people's liberty and innate rights stemmed from nature, not from the sovereign's grant.<sup>15</sup> Thus According to John Locke natural right such as life, liberty and property are inalienable rights of every individual and attainment of these rights is made possible through the agency of the government.

Rousseau was of the opinion that the state is an artificial creation of individual or result of social contract. He opined that man is born free but in society he is everywhere in chains.<sup>16</sup> Rousseau argued in the social contract that man surrendered his natural rights to the 'general will' in order to find security and order.<sup>17</sup>

Bentham rejected the both natural rights and social contract theory of government. According to Bentham, therefore, there are no natural rights but legal rights; a man has no right by virtue of his humanity but only by virtue of the law.<sup>18</sup>

Thus supporters of social contract theory considered Human Rights as natural rights because they are based upon a contract between the people and state. They were of the view that when people entered into contract with the state, the people shed some of their rights like right to freedom and equality preserved by them. These rights were called natural and inalienable rights. Rousseau wanted people to enjoy their liberty, equality and fraternity within a political set up.

The concept of Human Rights originally evolved in England. The struggle for Human Rights continued for centuries but the first victory was won through the charter of liberty, i.e. Magna Carta of 1215 A.D, exacting some Human Rights from the English King John. The royal whim of imprisoning and punishing the people was checked. The supremacy of law was put into operation. The supremacy of law was established. It was said to be the first milestone on the roads of liberty of the people of the England. Thus Magna Carta starts new trends with its implications. Nobody was to be denied the right to justice.

The American Declaration of Independence was adopted on 4<sup>th</sup> July, 1776 by the Constitutional Congress and it was declared that we hold those truths to be itself evident that all men are created equal that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and pursuit of happiness, that to secure these rights government are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute a new government laying its foundation on such principles and organizing it's likely affect their safety and happiness.

The American Declaration of Independence was the first civil document that met modern definition of Human Rights. It asserted Universal Rights that applied to the general population include legal as well as moral

obligations and established standards for judging the legitimacy of the state's action.<sup>19</sup> So in this way, the American Revolution ultimately culminated into America's Independence in 1776, giving birth to a new nation, known as the United State America with enforceable bill of rights in its Constitution. This was an upheaval in the sphere of Human Rights and had a profound influence on the world history.

The French Revolution was based upon those principles which were set in motion by the English and American Revolution and took place in 1789. It was the result of economic and social inequalities and injustices of the ancient French regime. These inequalities were conspicuous not only among the third estate, i.e. clergy but also among the second estate i.e. noble.<sup>20</sup> Thus the American Declaration of Independence and French Revolution both inspired the concept of Human Rights.

### **Human Rights during 19<sup>th</sup> century**

An international treaty to abolish the slave trade was concluded in 1890 and a treaty to abolish slavery was drafted in 1920. By the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, in Europe and North America, the concept of natural rights was secularized, rationalized and demoralized and was reinvented as what came to be known as the 'Right of Man'. By the beginning of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the demand for economic security and social justice, in addition to civil and political rights appeared in the forefront of the socialist movements. Thus the Bolshevic Revolution of Russia emphasized that economic and social rights were as important as civil and political rights.<sup>21</sup>

The capitalist society protects the rights and interests of capitalists at the expense of the working class. Workers will have to over throw capitalists and socialize the major means of production in order to create a new order that would protect the rights and interests of the working class. By the time 19<sup>th</sup> century started many far-reaching changes took place which further helped in

the development of Human Rights. The discoveries and inventions of science were marked by industrial revolution in Europe and particularly in England. The most important consequence of industrial revolution was the emergence of two classes in the society, dominant and dependent, oppressor and oppressed, exploiter and exploited classes. The development, which took place after the industrial revolution had brought with it, lots of miseries and misfortunes for the labour. They were being exploited by their rich masters and the gulf between the rich and the poor class kept on widening. The plight of the labour class became worse as there were no laws to regulate the working conditions of this class.

Karl Marx, the great 19<sup>th</sup> century philosopher was critical of natural rights of individuals. He thought that in a society where the means of production and distribution are monopolized by the capitalist, ideas like individual rights are illusory. These rights are meant to cater to the interest of the ruling bourgeois class only. Marxist interpretation of rights is still considered to be one of the most theoretical tools to analyze the Human Rights abuses in the developing societies. At the same time a new concept of welfare state emerged as an aftermath of the America Revolution of Independence of 1776 and the French Revolution of 1789. The old concept of laissez-faire was rejected. New laws like social security, social welfare and compensation for the working class were framed and enacted all over the world. Thus more and more rights for the individual were given recognition by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Human rights during 20<sup>th</sup> century:**

It was an evolutionary period in the spare of Human Rights. This century, being the century of turmoil, has witnessed two world wars in 1914 and 1939 respectively. Steps were also taken to establish international Human Rights after the First World War.

After First World War, League of Nations was established in 1919, development of Human Rights started at fast pace. League made contribution in two areas, these are rights of minorities and the rights of the working classes were put into practice through the International Labour Organization.<sup>22</sup>

The International Labour Organizations emphasized a new international concern in labour about wages, working hours, working conditions and social security. The activities of League of Nations reflect the growing acceptance of the concept that the affairs of labour were matter of international as well as national concern".<sup>23</sup> While these beginning of international concern for Human Rights were historically significant .The harsh fact is that the League failed to protect Human Rights and international peace and perished in the gunfire and smoke of the World War.

The Second World War marked a turning point in the development of international concern for Human Rights. The introduction of Human Rights into international law was an important feature of the post-war years. The American President, Franklin Roosevelt's 'four freedom' speech in his state of the union address in 1941, is often credited with laying the foundation for the incorporation in Human Rights in the post-war international order. In fact, the second half of the last century saw a universal acceptance of Human Rights in principle and general agreement on its contents. International Charters and National Constitutions framed after World War-II have shown an increasing realization of the truth that peace within and among nations can be lasting, only if it is based on basic Human Rights socio-economic justice.<sup>24</sup>

Thus the horrors of Second World War led to the birth and recognition of the modern Human Rights movement.

When in 1945, the charter of the United Nations was formed, proposals were made that an international bill of Human Rights should be drafted, but the task was only undertaken after the United Nations had come into existence. A commission of Human Rights was setup in 1946, and the draft

declaration on Human Rights was prepared, which was adopted only by the General Assembly on 10<sup>th</sup> December, 1948.

On 10<sup>th</sup> December 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This declaration was one of the greatest achievements of United Nations which became source of Human Rights. Thus Human Rights first became a significant part of international law under the charter of the United Nations, 1945 and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948. The Declaration consisted of 30 Articles, covering both civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights.

**Among the Rights recognized in the covenant are.**

**Article 1**

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.<sup>25</sup>

**Article 2**

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.<sup>26</sup>

**Article 3**

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.<sup>27</sup>

#### **Article 4**

No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.<sup>28</sup>

#### **Article 5**

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.<sup>29</sup>

#### **Article 6**

Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before any incitement to such discrimination.<sup>30</sup>

#### **Article 7**

All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.<sup>31</sup>

#### **Article 8**

Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law.<sup>32</sup>

#### **Article 9**

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.<sup>33</sup>

#### **Article 10**

Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.<sup>34</sup>

#### **Article 11**

1. Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defense.

2. No one shall be held guilty of any penal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a penal offence, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed. Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time the penal offence was committed.<sup>35</sup>

#### **Article 12**

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.<sup>36</sup>

#### **Article 13**

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.  
2. Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.<sup>37</sup>

#### **Article 14**

1. Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other country asylum from persecution.  
2. This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purpose and principles of the United Nations.<sup>38</sup>

#### **Article 15**

1. Everyone has the right to a nationality.  
2. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.<sup>39</sup>

#### **Article 16**

1. Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.

2. Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.
3. The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.<sup>40</sup>

#### **Article 17**

1. Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others.
2. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.<sup>41</sup>

#### **Article 18**

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.<sup>42</sup>

#### **Article 19**

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.<sup>43</sup>

#### **Article 20**

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.
2. No one may be compelled to belong to an association.<sup>44</sup>

#### **Article 21**

1. Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.
2. Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.
3. The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by

universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.<sup>45</sup>

#### **Article 22**

Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.<sup>46</sup>

#### **Article 23**

1. Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favorable condition of work and to protection against unemployment.
2. Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.
3. Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.
4. Everyone has the right to form and join trade unions for the protection of his interests.<sup>47</sup>

#### **Article 24**

Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.<sup>48</sup>

#### **Article 25**

1. Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, and housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.
2. Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.<sup>49</sup>

### **Article 26**

1. Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.
2. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.
3. Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.<sup>50</sup>

### **Article 27**

1. Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.
2. Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.<sup>51</sup>

### **Article 28**

Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.<sup>52</sup>

### **Article 29**

1. Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible.
2. In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing the recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.

3. These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.<sup>53</sup>

### **Article 30**

Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as imply for any state, group or person. Any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.<sup>54</sup>

The Declaration of Human Rights was the first constitution in the history of international organization. The declaration was a sort of statement of rights considered essential for human development all over the world. It is useful instrument in providing a ready made statement of Human Rights, acceptable by the majority of the states.

The concept of Human Rights assumes immense significance in the developing societies where large number of men and women are living a life of want and destitution, misery and suffering. The task before these countries is to ensure Human Rights to large mass of people for whom survival itself is a problem and can not live as ordinary human beings with basic human dignity. This has led to the demand of social, economic and cultural rights and to the ideas that economic development should have priority over the guarantee of civil and political development.

### **Human Rights from Indian Perspectives**

Human Rights jurisprudence has always occupied a place of prime importance in India's rich legacy of historical traditions and culture. Development of Human Rights in India has come a long way yet the progress through the historical path has always remained gradual, and never lost its link with past. It may not be wrong to mention that what the west has discovered about Human Rights now, India had embedded the same in its deep rooted traditions since time immemorial.

## **Human Rights in Ancient India**

The quest for equilibrium, harmony, knowledge and truth inspired the ancient Indian minds more than their counterparts the Greeks and Roman. About 5000 years ago ancient Indian philosophers and thinkers expounded a theory of higher moral law over and above positive law embodying certain values of universal validity such as Dharma (righteousness), Artha (wealth), Kama (desires) and Moksha (salvation), with a view to establish a harmonious social order, by striking a balance between inner and outer, spiritual and material aspects of life.<sup>55</sup> Thus ancient Indian legal philosophers were universalists, humanists, rationalists and above all moralist who evolved a system of legal theory which was based on higher values and ideals.

The philosophers of Vedic age endeavored to define Human Rights as those rights which were inherent in our nature and without which we cannot live as human beings. They had strong conviction that Human Rights are universal and apply to all persons without discrimination. They supported vehemently the view point that Human Rights and fundamental freedoms, allow us to fully develop and use our human qualities, our intelligence, our talents and our conscience and to satisfy our spiritual and other needs.

There are numerous references in Vedas, which throw light on the existence of Human Rights. The most significant declaration on Human Rights comes from the famous Vedic rhymes “Let everyone be happy, let everyone free from all ills.” Under this Vedic framework, the king was expected not only to protect the life of subjects, but to promote their well being and prosperity.<sup>56</sup>

There are number of references in Vedas which throw light on the existence of Human Rights. The Vedas proclaimed liberty of *Tan* (body) *Skridhi* (dwelling place) and *Jibhasi* (life). The Indian scriptures tell us about the importance of the freedom of the individual in state. The early *Smrities* inculcate upon the king, the principles and policies of government involving

conception of a welfare state and that of ruler's complete identification with his subjects.

Kautilya, the author of celebrated political treatise, Arthashastra, not only affirmed and elaborated the civil and legal rights first formulated by Manu but also added a number of economic rights". Kautilya had pleaded for the king to protect the rights and dignities of the subjects.

Similarly in the words of Sukracarya ,The king is the root of the tree of state, the ministry is its trunk, the military chiefs are branches, the army is the leaves of the tree and subjects are its flowers, prosperity of the country its fruits and the whole country the final seed.<sup>57</sup>

In the post- Vedic period the rise of Buddhism and Jainism was certainly a reaction against the deterioration of the moral order as against the rights of privileged class. A close study of Buddhist period reveals that people were equal in all fields of their life. After Buddha, Ashoka protected and secured the most precious of "Human Rights particularly right to equality, fraternity, liberty and happiness". Ashoka worked for elevation of his subjects and for recognition of the sanctity of life. His policy of non violence led him to enforce law for the sanctity and security of all living creatures. In short, people enjoyed many rights in the Hindu empire.<sup>58</sup> He was a champion of civil liberties. He successfully established a welfare state and made provisions for securing freedom like freedom from hunger, disease and deprivation. Torture and inhuman treatment of prisoners were prohibited under Ashoka's administration.

### **Human Rights in Middle Age**

The concept of Human Rights got lost on its way in the dark and narrow alleys of the middle ages. The invasion of Mughals over India created new situation wherein the Muslim rulers or sultans followed a policy of discrimination against the Hindus. The concept like harmony, justice and

equality suffered major blow. There was one law for the Muslims and another for Hindus, and the principle of equality was not given much importance.

Mohmud Gaznavi, Sikandar, Babur and other conquerors made frontal attacks on ancient way of life and religion. The destruction of temples, idols and large scale conversion to Islam alienated masses.

Even the social rights of the Hindus were withdrawn. They were forced to lead the lives of slaves forcible conversions of Hindus into Islam were exercised. A tax known as *Jazia* was imposed on the people belonging to the Hindu religion.

With the rule of Akbar a new era began in history of Indian in the field of Human Rights, owing to his policy of universal reconciliation and tolerance. He made finest contribution to restore Human Rights. Akbar was far from religious bigotry and made sure everyone is treated equally.

Bhakti movement emerged in India. It revived and regenerated the old Indian values of truth, righteousness, justice and morality. Great personalities like Shankara, Ramanuja, Madhava, Tulsidas, Kabir, Guru Nanak etc. reestablished the supremacy of Indian values over alien ideals and philosophy. The cult of Avatara as expounded by Lord Krishana in Bhagvad Gita was revived by those saints and seers who saw God in the form of Rama and Krishana to protect the righteous persons and punish the evil doer.

### **Human Rights in British India**

The modern versions of Human Rights jurisprudence may be said to have taken birth in India under the British rule. The harsh repressive measures of the British rulers encouraged freedom movement to fight for their liberties and demand for constitutional guarantees and some fundamental rights. The national movement led by Gandhi ji not only emphasized in freeing the country from foreign rule and regarding political freedom. It took upon

various social causes, such as abolition of untouchability and Harijan's rights to enter the temple. Indeed the steps were important milestones in the annals of Human Rights movement in modern India. When the British ruled India, resistance to foreign rule was manifested in the form of demand for fundamental freedom and civil and political rights for the people. There was no fundamental law guaranteeing the subject's rights and liberties and they were humiliated and discriminated against in many ways, in their own country. The very objective of several national organizations including that of the Indian National Congress in the beginning was to secure liberties and Human Rights of non discrimination on ground of race, colour act.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the most modern Indian social reformer made a poignant critique of the religious rituals that created major divisions in Hindu society and denied majorities of people their basic Human Rights. He criticized all forms of discriminations particularly with regard to woman. He raised his voice against satipratha, child marriage and violence against women. Like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwra Chadra Vidyasagar stood against all odds and obstruction including hostile social resistance and dedicated himself to the cause of women emancipation. It was due to his efforts that legal obstacles to the marriage of widow were removed through legislation in 1856. He also played a leading role in promoting education of girls. Similarly Bal Gangadhar declared, Swaraj (self-rule) is my birth right and I will have it.

Gandhi also condemned British rule over Indians as unjust and violent. He expounded the theory of peaceful resistance to fight British Law. He launched non-violent struggle to advocate self government and fundamental laws for themselves.

Likewise, Jyotiba Phule was another great crusader of civil liberties in the modern India. Jyotiba Phule founded the '*Satyasodhak Samaj*' to mobilize the oppressed castes in a movement for equality and played a key role in promoting education of girls, particularly of the oppressed castes. Similarly

the socio-religious movements led by Swami Daynand Saraswati through Arya Samaj and Ramkrishna mission founded by Swami Vivekananda in 1899, made far reaching contribution in spreading education to all sections, including women, awakening of Hindus against social evil associated with superstitions and religious practices.<sup>59</sup>

The case of Human Rights or fundamental rights of the Indian people becomes an essential part of the struggle for freedom from British rule.

The very objective of several national movement organizations was to secure some civil liberties and Human Rights of non discrimination on grounds of race, colour etc., in matters of access to public places and services. The 1857 revolt which is known as “First war of India’s Independence”<sup>60</sup> was struggle for Human Rights, though it was crushed by Britishers but immediately proclamation was made by Queen. The proclamation of Queen Victoria on the 1<sup>st</sup> Nov 1858 declared the secular nature of the state and the principles of non interference with the religious faith, worship of any of the subject”<sup>61</sup>.

In 1885, the Indian National Congress was formed to stress that the British rulers should take steps to ameliorate the social, economic and political conditions of the masses.<sup>62</sup>

To revive the philosophy of Human Rights in modern sense, the concerned efforts were made by the Indian National Congress, which demanded basic Human Rights in the Constitution of Indian Bill 1895. This Bill asked for Indian Constitution guaranteeing to everyone for her citizen, freedom of expression, right to equality before law and right to free education, etc. The demand for recognition of civil rights were reviewed by the Indian National Congress in the first quarter of twentieth century and it adopted several resolutions to this effect from 1917 to 1919. Another major development in this direction was the drafting of Mrs. Annie Besant’s common wealth of Indian

Bill of 1925. In 1927, Indian National Congress setup a committee to draft a 'Swaraj' Constitution of the basis of declaration of rights.<sup>63</sup>

In May 1927, a committee setup, under the chairmanship of Pt. Moti Lal Nehru, suggested that fundamental rights should be incorporated in the further Constitution of Indian. The Moti Lal Nehru's report included nineteen rights for people such as personal liberty, freedom of conscience profession, practice of religion, freedom of expression of opinion to accessible peacefully, to form associations and unions, equality for all citizens before law and most of similar freedoms. Incidentally, the constitution of India in 1950 incorporated ten of nineteen rights from the Moti Lal Nehru's report. Most important pronouncement on Human Rights came in the pages of objective resolution moved by J.L. Nehru in 1946. In objective resolution, it was pledged to draw up a Constitution for the country where in shall be guaranteed and secured to all the country where in adequate safeguards would be provided for the minorities, backward and tribal areas and depressed and other classes.<sup>64</sup>

The Sapru committee in 1945, stressed on the need for written code of Fundamental Rights. Finally the Constituent Assembly after serious debates incorporated natural rights names fundamental rights and directive principle in most comprehensive manner.

Indians get independence on August 15, 1947 but it was incomplete. The struggle for freedom was not merely for political independence, but it was for freedom from conflicts miseries, hunger, poverty, exploitation and discrimination. Further on 10<sup>th</sup> December, 1948 when the Constitution of India was in making, Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted. The constituent assembly pledged to draw up a Constitution for India wherein shall be guaranteed and secured to all the people of India, social justice, economic and political, equality of status, of opportunity and before the law, freedom of thought, expression, belief, faith, worship, vocation, association and action, subject to law and public morality.

## **Human Rights and Constitution of India**

The maker of the Indian Constitution paid special attention towards Human Rights and to achieve this purpose they included Fundamental Rights in Indian Constitution. Apart from these many other rights were included in the Constitution and provisions were also made for their protection.

Constitution of India is the supreme law of the land. It was drafted by the constituent assembly, which had its first meeting on December 9<sup>th</sup>, 1946 and finally the Constitution, was adopted by the people of Indian on 26<sup>th</sup> November 1949 and it came into force on 26<sup>th</sup> January 1950. A unique feature of Indian Constitution is that article 14-31 is named Fundamental Rights which are basic, natural, inalienable rights. These rights have been declared essential rights in order that human liberty may be preserved. The Constitution also provides Directive Principles as part IV to ensure the implementation of Human Rights

### **Right to Equality: Article 14 to 18**

#### **Article 14.** Equality before Law:

The state shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India.<sup>65</sup>

**Article 15.** Prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.

1. The state shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, and place of birth or any of them.
2. No citizen shall, on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex place of birth or any of them, be subject to any disability, liability restriction or condition with regard to :
  - (a) Access to shops, public restaurants, hotels and places of public entertainment,

- (b) The use of wells, tanks, bathing ghats, roads and places of public resort maintained wholly or partly out of state funds or dedicated to the use of general public.
3. Nothing in this article shall prevent the state from making any special provision for women and children.<sup>66</sup>

**Article 16.** Equality of opportunity in matters of public employment:

1. There shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the state.
2. No citizen shall, on ground of religion, race, caste, sex, descent place of birth, residence or any of them, be ineligible for, or discriminated against in respect of any employment or office under the state.
3. Nothing in this article shall prevent parliament from making any law prescribing, in regard to a class of employment or appointment to an office prior to such employment or appointment.
4. Nothing in this article shall prevent the state from making any provision for the reservation of appointments or posts in favour of any backward class of citizens which in the opinion of the state is not adequately represented in the services under the state.
5. Nothing in this article shall affect the operation of any law which provides that the incumbent of an office in connection with the affairs of any religious or denominational institution or any member of governing body there of shall be a person professing a particular religion or belonging to a particular denomination.<sup>67</sup>

**Article 17.** Abolition of untouchability :

‘Untouchability’ is abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden. The enforcement of any disability arising out of untouchability, shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law.<sup>68</sup>

Untouchability is not only abolished but its practice is also forbidden under Article 17, and parliament has power to enact a law prescribing punishment for such offences consequently, parliament passed the untouchability (offence)

Act, 1955-1976. If a person belonging to a higher class, insults a person belonging to a lower class, or refuses service to him or refuses to admit him to a temple, then such a person is guilty of violating Article 17, and can be punished under the untouchability (offences) Act 1955.<sup>69</sup>

**Article 18.** Abolition of Titles:

1. No title, not being a military or academic distinction shall be conferred by the state.
2. No citizen of India shall accept any title from any foreign state.
3. No person who is not a citizen of India shall, while he holds any office of profit or trust under the state, accept without the consent of the President any title from any foreign state.
4. No person holding any office of profit or trust under the state shall, without the consent of the President, accept any present, emolument, or office of any kind from or under any foreign state.<sup>70</sup>

**Right to Freedom:**

**Article 19.** It contains rights regarding freedom of speech etc.

All citizens shall have the right

- i) To freedom of speech and expression.
  - ii) To assemble peacefully without arms.
  - iii) To form associations or unions.
  - iv) To move freely through out the territory of India.
  - v) To reside and settle in any part of the territory of India.
  - vi) To practice any profession, or to carry on any occupation, trade or business.<sup>71</sup>
- Thus Article 19 guarantees six fundamental freedoms like freedom of speech and expression, freedom of peaceful assembly, freedom of association, freedom of movement, and freedom of residence and practices any profession.

**Article 20.** Protection in respect of conviction for offence.

1. No person shall be convicted of any offence except for violation of law in force at the time of the commission of the act as an offence.
2. No person shall be prosecuted and punished for the same offence more than once.
3. No person accused of any offence shall be compelled to be a witness against himself.<sup>72</sup>

**Article 21.** Protection of life and personal liberty:

No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law.<sup>73</sup>

**Article 22.** Protection against arrest and detention in certain cases.<sup>74</sup>

**Article 23 to 24.** Right against exploitation:

**Article 23.** Prohibition of traffic in human beings and forced labour:

1. Traffic in human beings and bagger and other similar forms of forced labour are prohibited and any contravention of this provision shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law.
2. Nothing in this article shall prevent the state from imposing compulsory service for public purpose and imposing such service the state shall not make any discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste or class or any of them.<sup>75</sup>

**Article 24.** It prohibits the employment of children in factories. No child below the age of fourteen years shall be employed to work in any factory or mine or engaged in any other hazardous employment.<sup>76</sup>

**Right to freedom of Religion: Articles 25 to 28**

India is a secular nation. Articles 25 to 28 of the Indian Constitution specifically provide freedom of religion etc. The Indian Constitution guarantees to all persons the freedom of conscience and the right to profess

practice and propagate any religion of their own choice. The freedom of religion as enshrined in the constitution means freedom for all religions but it does not enable any religious group to work against the same rights of another religious group or persons.

**Article 25.** It indicates freedom of conscience and free of profession, practice and propagation of religion. Subject to public order morality health and to other provisions of this part, all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess practice and propagate religion.<sup>77</sup>

**Article 26.** Freedom to manage religious affairs: Subject to public order, morality and health, every religious denomination nor any section thereof shall have the right-

- (a) To establish and maintain institutions for religious and charitable purposes.
- (b) To manage its own affairs in matters of religion.
- (c) To own and acquire movable and immovable property
- (d) To administer such property in accordance with law.<sup>78</sup>

**Article 27.** Freedom as to payment of taxes for promotion of any particular religion.

No person shall be compelled to pay any taxes in which are especially appropriated in payments of expenses for the promotion or maintenance of any particular religion or religious denomination.<sup>79</sup>

**Article 28.** Freedom as to attendance at religious instruction or religious worship in certain educational institutions.<sup>80</sup>

### **Cultural and Educational Rights:**

Cultural and educational Rights are indispensable for the dignity of a person and for the free development of his personality Article 29 and 30 of the Indian Constitution deal with cultural and educational rights. These articles provide:

**Article 29.** Protection of Interests of minorities:

1. Any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India or any part there of having a distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same.
2. No citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institution maintained by the state or receiving aid out of state funds on grounds of religion, race, caste, language, or any of them.<sup>81</sup>

**Article 30.** Rights of minorities to establish and administer educational institutions.<sup>82</sup>

**Article 31.** Saving of laws providing for acquisition of estates etc.<sup>83</sup>

**Article 32.** Remedies for enforcement of rights conferred by this part.<sup>84</sup>

**Article 33.** Power of Parliament to modify the rights conferred by this part in their application to forces etc.<sup>85</sup>

**Article 34.** Restriction on rights conferred by this part while martial law is in force in any area.<sup>86</sup>

**Article 35.** It deals with Legislation to give effect to the provisions of this part.

**36. Definition:** In this part unless the context otherwise requires, “the state” has the same meaning as in part III.<sup>87</sup>

### **Directive Principles of State Policy:**

The Directive Principles embodied in Article 37-51 are a ‘complex of values’ which aim at the establishment of a ‘welfare state’ as distinguished from a police state. Directive Principles of state policy are enshrined in part IV of the Constitution. The Directive Principles aim at the betterment of the individuals as an integrated component of the society.

**Article 37.** It deals with the application of the principles contained in this part. The provision contained in this part shall not be enforceable by any court; it shall be the duty of the state to apply these principles in making laws.

**Article 38.** State to secure a social order for the promotion of welfare of the people.

**Article 39.**

Certain principles policy to be followed by the state- The state shall in particular, direct its policy towards securing, the right to an adequate means to livelihood, equal pay for equal work for both men and women, health and strength of workers, men and women and tender age of children are not abused and that citizens are not forced by economic necessity to enter avocation unsuited to their age or strength and children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity and that childhood and youth are protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment.<sup>88</sup>

**Article 39-A.** It provides equal justice and free legal aid.

**Article 40.** Provides to organize village Panchayats .

**Article 41 to 43** of the constitution provide as under:

1. **Article 41.** Right to work, to education and to public assistance in certain cases.<sup>89</sup>
2. **Article 42.** Provision for just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief.<sup>90</sup>
3. **Article 43.** Living wage etc. for workers.<sup>91</sup>

The aim of the state is also social security in cases of old age, sickness and disablement and ensuring decent standards of life, which is the basic Human Rights of all.

**Article 43-A** It deals with participation of workers in management of industries

**Article 44.** Uniform civil code for the citizens.<sup>92</sup>

**Article 45.** Provision for free and compulsory education for children.<sup>93</sup>

**Article 46.** Promotion of educational and economic interests of Schedule Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other weaker sections.<sup>94</sup>

**Article 47.** Duty of the state to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living and to improve public health.<sup>95</sup>

In 1976, a new article 48A was added by the Constitution (42<sup>nd</sup> Amendment) which says that the state shall endeavor to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forest and the wild life of the country.

**Article 48.** Organisation of agriculture and animal husbandry.<sup>96</sup>

**Article 48-A** Protection and improvement of environment and safe guarding of forests and wild life.<sup>97</sup>

**Article 49.** Protection of monuments and places and objects of national importance.<sup>98</sup>

**Article 50.** Separation of Judiciary from executive.<sup>99</sup>

**Article 51:**

1. To improve international peace and security.
2. To maintain just and honourable relations between nations.
3. To foster respect for international law and treaty obligations.
4. To encourage settlement of international disputes by arbitration.<sup>100</sup>

Similarly various provisions made by the government for the protection of Human Rights.

Thus the idea of Human Rights is as old as the history of Human civilization. It may be concluded that from western perspectives the Magna Carta (1215) in England, the American Declaration of Independence (1776), the French Revolution of (1789) and the Bolshevic Revolution of Russia (1917) could be cited as important landmarks in the development of consent of Human Rights. Each of these declaration has made important contribution in the advancing the concept of Human Rights.

Whereas from Indian perspectives, ancient Indian's philosophers and thinkers expounded a theory of higher moral law of Dharam, with a view to establish harmonious social order free from the traces of conflicts, exploitations and miseries.

Various great reformers like Kautilya, Ashoka, Vivekanands, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Jawahar Lal Nehru, and M.K. Gandhi advocated Human Right. Moreover the concerned efforts were made by Indian National Congress to secure basic Human Rights for Indians and ultimately these were enshrined in the constitution of India in the form of Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of the state policy to attain social and economic democracy for all in order to lead a dignified life.

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## **CHAPTER-2**

### **CONTEMPORARY MILIEU AND STATE OF HUMAN RIGHTS**

Historical theory of rights holds that rights are the product of long historical process. They differ from state to state, from time to time because of the different levels of development of society. Rights grow out of custom which is stabilized through usage by several generations.

The concept of right or Human Rights, therefore originates from the voice of protest against oppression perpetrated by the dominant groups in society. Rights are means to safe-guard the individual from the irresponsible and arbitrary use of power by the ruling class.

Human life and human dignity have been disregarded throughout history and continue to be disregarded today. Human Rights provide the necessary and vital protection to an individual so that he may continue his life and contribution to the society in a dignified manner. The concept of Human Rights is a worldwide phenomenon. It has always remained the centre of human consciousness. It was introduced and developed by thinkers belonging to different cultures and religions.

Human Rights were identified during Second World War which brought about massive abuse of human life and dignity and attempts to eliminate entire groups of people because of their race, religion and nationality. Thus it became clear that international instruments were needed to codify and protect Human Rights. Human Rights were taken as means of achieving postwar reconstruction and prevention of violence. It disrupted the social and political order of the world over along with the efforts to eliminate war and setup new peaceful world. It was contemplated that a body may be established to identify and draw up a set of basic rights for mankind to be known as Human Rights.

The creation of Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 marked the foundation of the modern Human Rights movement. There are many national and international organizations working for the promotion of Human Rights. Human Rights promotion does not merely involve the creation of legal provisions on a national and international level. The laws should become part of cultures and societies generally

The state is required to protect Human Rights and to work to evolve necessary mechanism for human beings in order to lead a honorable and dignified life. The state that is expected to protect Human Rights has itself somehow turned a violator of Human Rights. Such a situation is due to irresponsible behavior of Government agencies and also because of opposition between politico-religious groups. Terrorist are brutally killing the innocent persons. They are not only violating the rights of human existence but also posing danger to humanity even in their own home land and even outside as well.

It is the responsibility of every human to spread Human Rights culture all across the world. People should be educated about it. Human Rights are meaningful only for those people who can legally enforce it, but truth is that the majority of people are not even aware of the legal rights and are exposed to exploitation, oppression, etc.

The principle of equality in rights recognized in natural laws was long accepted in many societies. Yet the discrimination continues to exist due to ignorance, prejudice. Still we can see discrimination on ground of sex, race, caste, class, colour, nationality and religious belief throughout the history and unfortunately till modern times.

The protection of Human Rights 1993, defined 'Human Rights' the rights relating to life, liberty, equality and dignity of individual guaranteed by the Constitution embodied in the international covenants enforceable by court of India.

The rights of man had a place in almost all the ancient civilizations of the world. The concept of Human Rights is an important concern in present scenario. In India Human Rights has been in existence since the Vedic period, with the passage of time our country has been playing significant role in promotion of these rights.

The makers of the Indian Constitution paid special attention towards Fundamental Human Rights and to achieve this purpose they included Fundamental rights in Indian Constitution. Apart from these many other rights were included in the Constitution and provisions were also made for their protection.

But in spite of this provision big section of people are still living in inhuman conditions. There are many problems like poverty, unemployment, inequality, sanitation, safe drinking water, health, shelter, literacy etc. In this context effective role of state is required. So every Human being should be protected against unjust and degrading treatment. In such circumstances where human beings are not getting the basic necessities how can they think about their rights?

Corruption plays a major role in violation of Human Rights. In India it is widespread. It has taken the role of pervasive aspect of Indian politics and bureaucracy. In cities and villages throughout India, Mafia Raj consisting of Municipal and other government officials, elected politicians, judicial officers, real estate developers, law enforcement official acquire, develop and sell land in illegal way. Many state-funded construction activities in India, such as road building are dominated by construction mafias.

The fundamental task of the state is to create conditions of life affording adequate protection of the individual and permitting reasonable opportunity for full development of human personality and for human happiness. Human Rights allow individual to fully develop and use his human qualities,

intelligence, talents, conscience and to satisfy his spiritual and other needs. So the realization of Human Rights has now become a fundamental issue almost all over the world.

In 1993, the Vienna Declaration and programme of action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights, stated that the promotion and protection of all Human Rights is a legitimate concern of the international community. The purpose of United Nations and task of all members of states is to promote and to encourage respect for Human Rights and fundamental freedoms and to remain vigilant with regard to violation of Human Rights wherever they occur. It is also confirmed that the promotion, protection and full realization of all Human Rights and fundamental freedoms as legitimate concerns of the world community should be guided by the principle of non-selectivity, impartiality and objectivity.<sup>1</sup>

Since the adoption of Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, NGOs have consistently continued their efforts to strengthen the United Nation Human Rights system and have succeeded in influencing the formulation of different United Nation Systems of Human Rights. The most important goal of Human Rights NGO is monitoring and reporting of government behaviour of Human Rights particularly violations, building pressure and creating international machinery to end the violations and hold government accountable. The protection of Human Rights is a constant struggle, which cannot succeed unless every man and woman participates in it. So it is duty of all people and Government to create the conditions needed to exercise our right to be human.

Now we will discuss state of Human Rights from different angles

### **Caste system and Human Rights:**

The people who belong to the Scheduled Caste, Backward Class, Scheduled Tribe or Adivasis, continue to face discrimination, exclusion and act of

communal violence. Laws and policies adopted by Indian Government provide a strong basis for protection but are not being faithfully implemented by authorities. It is the responsibility of Indian Government to fully enact and apply its legal provisions against discrimination on the basis of caste and descent.

A very positive development is the awakening and assertion of the marginalized sections of the society in recent years. The Scheduled Caste, the Scheduled Tribe and other Backward Classes are today more aware of their rights than they used to be earlier. In the hierarchical caste- ridden Indian society, the marginalized section such as women, tribals and the people belonging to the lower castes were denied equal rights. They are on the path of self respect movement today.<sup>2</sup>

Among people related to S.C, B.C, and S.T etc., majority of them are below poverty line. Our legal political system provides reservation of seats in legislation, reservation of jobs, reservation of seats in educational institution, special scholarship etc. to remove the discrimination. But still they are subjected to indignities, humiliation and harassment by some of the members of more advanced classes in society. Despite the legislative measures, people are suffering from custodial violence, bonded labour, violation against women or other Human Rights violations.

Thus it can be said that they have succeeded in creating for themselves public space which was denied to them earlier. But much is to be done yet.

### **Religious violence and Human Rights:**

Many people have died in different forms of political and social violence in India, for which the degree of official responsibility varies and is disputable. Such violence generally takes a form of communal riots in which members of different religions, ethics or caste groups attack each other. Sometimes government attempts to stop the fighting. In other cases officials seems to

refrain from acting thereby implicitly supporting the more powerful group, while in some cases police and politicians belonging to the dominant community may actually participate in or even lead the killing.<sup>3</sup>

It is found that during communal riots life and property of common people are destroyed. Communal political groups play a role in organizing communal riots. Communal Organizations are able to exploit major religious places for communal mobilization even though it is an offence to use any religious site for political purpose as per the religious institutions Act, brought by the Government.

From 1984 to 1994 the state of Punjab in northern India was engaged in a power struggle between the militant Khalistan movement and Indian Security Force. Indian government responded to escalating Punjab insurgency by launching Operation Blue Star in 1984, storming the Harmandir Sahib in Amritsar, the centre of Sikh religions and spiritual life where some militant groups retreated. The operation was controversial and resulted in death of several civilians, militants and soldiers. After this attack Sikh bodyguards assassinated Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

In November 1984 following assassination Indira Gandhi, mobs led by Congress leaders committed murder, loot, arson and rape across India for over a week. However the worst affected area was the capital of India Delhi.

In Assam where perhaps 4000 people died in political violence over religious ethnic issues and in Gujarat, where hundreds were killed over caste issues, political leaders may have exploited the conflicts, but do not seem to be directly responsible.<sup>4</sup>

Other incident includes the 1992 Bombay riots and Islamist attack on a train full of Hindu Pilgrims in Godhra train burning where 58 Hindus were killed.

Communal conflicts between religious groups have been prevalent in India since around the time of its independence from British rule. Communal riots took place during the partition of India between Hindu, Sikhs and Muslims when large numbers of people were killed in large scale violence.

It is true that large majority of our people are extremely poor, illiterate and easily prone to superstition, religious and ethnic prejudices. Because of these reasons they are often exploited by ruling elites and other vested interests. A manifestation of these contradictions often occurs in frequent violence, riots and their equally brutal suppression. Political and national adversaries across the borders exploit these contradictions for their own ends without realizing that such interference often leads to border conflict and territorial disputes.

#### **Role of Police and Human Rights:**

There is no doubt that our government has given unlimited power to the Indian police. Police arrest the people on mere suspicion and use several methods of torture, fake encounters, custodial death etc. which is the glaring examples of violation of Human Rights in the law. Under the existing laws the police have adequate power to prevent or suppress terrorist offences and also a source of large scale corruption. Custodial violence, custodial death and custodial rape of women are another such in human, cruel and degrading treatment posing a serious threat to Human Rights. The alleged methods of torture include hanging people upside down, severe beating, pursuing and applying heavy rollers to the victim's legs. In some cases the use of electric shocks during the investigation of ordinary criminal offence.

Corruption is rampant and the interrogation officers have been extorting money for the release of innocent persons. The persons are killed due to torture and their bodies are thrown in the water ways or fields. In Punjab police has been following a policy of systematic elimination of youths after they are picked up from their own houses. The police often torture innocent people until a confession is obtained to save influential and wealthy offenders. Similarly the poor illiterate the under privileged and the member of minority

group who becomes the victim of death gets penalty or punishment But in case of rich and affluent persons even after committing heinous crime hardly get this penalty. Ironically death penalty remains a privilege of the poor. It is discrimination .Everyone has a chance to face a fair trial before getting punished. The Judicial system is unable to provide speedy justice amply showing, justice delayed, justice denied. It is dire need of the time to stand against such type of attemptations.

No doubt that higher court in this country has played a crucial role not only in protecting these inalienable rights but also has played significant role in broadening and strengthening the demands for these rights in several judgments.

### **Women and Human Rights:**

In our society, women are doubly exploited first for being women and second for belonging to a particular section of society. Though women are doing multiple jobs as producers, consumers, home managers, mothers etc. but still are unprotected. Their work is considered easier or less important than their male counter parts. Even the Fundamental Rights of women like voting, marriage, property, employment, and etc. are not safe Universal Declaration of Human Rights of U.N. is to improve the conditions of women economically, socially and politically. Therefore many national and international organizations have been established to look into matters related to welfare and development of women.

In ancient India the girl child was welcomed in the families. Vedas also regards the women. But the position of women started declining in the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century because of foreign invasion in India. They lost their original status. The purdah system, the sati system, polygamy and dowry system reduced women's position and made them slave. United Nations initiatives and the national women's movement jointly accelerated the advancement of women around the world.

The four world conferences Mexico city 1975, Copenhagen 1980, Nairobi, 1985 and Beijing 1995 were deliberately held to outline the challenges together equality and actions needed to remove these barriers. The representatives of 189 governments adopted the Beijing Declaration and platform for action reaffirmed commitments to international Human Rights standards calling for full implementation of the Human Rights of women and the girl child as an inalienable, integral and invisible part of all Human Rights and human freedoms. It also aimed to remove obstacles to women's participation in all spheres of public and private life. These conferences significantly mobilized public opinion and enhanced international awareness of concern of women.<sup>5</sup>

Similarly according to Subhash H. C. Kashyap, in Beijing conference, the government declared that 'Violation against women constitutes a violation of basic Human Rights which is an obstacle to the achievement of the objective of peace, equality and development.'<sup>6</sup> Thus the issue of development of women's rights has been a primary concern.

Crimes against women such as rape, kidnapping, abduction, dowry death, domestic violence, sexual harassment etc. are assault on Human Rights of women.

Related to crime against women, it is necessary to mention an important finding of a study based on the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data of the year 1995-97 i.e. as per one crore population, the rate of crime against women in Rajasthan was 2106, Madhya Pradesh 2089, Delhi 2000, Maharashtra 1752 and other states have less than 1400. The NCRB again reported in 1998 that the growth rate of crime against women would be higher than the population growth rate by 2010.<sup>7</sup>

In India the National Commission for Women (NCW) was framed to take up women's issues at the national level which is autonomous body not under the control of government it has been playing a significant role concerning women's issues. It looks into complaints of violation of the rights of women. The Supreme Court has also provided clear guidelines in protecting women in their work places against sexual harassment. India's position in human developments index remains very low due to the low status of women in the Indian society.

There are other various NGOs in different states like WWF (Working Women's Forum) in Madras, Manushi in Delhi, Nari Kendra in Mumbai which have agitated against domestic violence, dowry death, wife beating and rape. All these NGOs encourage women to be aware about their rights.

For the development of women and children, government of India has set up separate department in the ministry of Human Resource Development in several states. Similarly MAVM (Mahila Arthik Vikas Mahamandal), STEP (Support for Training and Employment Programme) and other several awareness generating camps for rural and poor women, short stay homes for women etc. have been established.

According to the judgment of Supreme Court women are equally entitled to property. They have equal share in the property of the house hold and husband cannot misappropriate her share. The right to equality in the context of equal pays for equal work, equality of opportunity, equality before law, political equality, equality of status etc. There are number of laws in the Indian Constitution but implementation of these laws has left much to be dried. Parliament is currently considering a law to reserve 33% of the seats in Lok Sabha and the State Legislative Assemblies. However the male dominated political parties are creating many obstacles for the implementation of women's rights.

Despite numerous provisions in the Constitution to protect the rights of women, a large majority of them are made to suffer indignity and gross injustice.

Domestic violence affects women in every country in the world. No doubt that woman is nominally equal under the law but still there are various restrictions in economic independence, health care, education, etc. Poverty, deprivation, scarcity of water, lack of proper sanitation all these problems affect women more than men. In many villages of India, people do not have safe drinking water and women spend maximum time to arrange it to their household. Women of the Lalgarh block in west Bengal have taken to violence. They are demanding the basic necessities of life- potable water and education for their children.<sup>8</sup>The reason behind the violence against women is the inferior status in a male dominated society.

Rights of women are indivisible part of universal Human Rights. There is need of equal and active participation of women in every sphere like political, civil, economic, national etc. To achieve justice and to remove all the discrimination, the attitude of the people is needed to be changed through awareness, education and skill.

### **Child Labour and Human Rights:**

The Indian Constitution provides protection to the children below 14 year of age in Article 24. But unfortunately the reality is that children have not been well protected in India. More than 50% of children are suffering from hunger, malnutrition and disease. Poverty is the major cause which compels parents to send their children to work in whatever jobs available. Children are engaged in a variety of industries or vocations e.g. making of matches and fireworks, carpet making, glass bangle making, brass wares, plastic and rope weaving, salt extraction, incense stick production, diamond cutting and polishing, biscuit making, steel rolling and chips recycling, domestic work, prostitution,

construction of industry etc. This painful reality exists despite the Child Labour Act 1986.

In India every child is working child and every fourth child in the age group of 5-15, is employed. An estimate by International Labour Institute puts the number of child workers in India at 44 million. But an official estimate discloses that the number of working children could go well beyond 100 million.<sup>9</sup>

### **Education and Human Rights:**

Education enables a man to understand the meaning to Human Rights. It develops human personality understanding and comradeship. So the right to education is essential. Article 26, of Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone has right to education. Similarly Article 26 of UDHR, Indian Constitution also recommended it in Article 41, 45 and 46. Thus it is necessary for the state to provide free and compulsory education for all children below of age 14, while most of the states have introduced free primary education. It has not been possible to make it compulsory, perhaps due to the financial compulsions. Even states have not succeeded in making education free up to 14 years. Financial stringency and rising population have been the main factors for this short coming. Although some states like Punjab provided free mid-day meals to attract students in primary schools. There are various other schemes which have also introduced free and scholarships for deserving students. Students related to SC, BC, ST categories are getting many benefits in payment of fees, reservation policies in professional courses and jobs. But despite of various schemes millions of the children are denied basic Human Rights like education. It is the responsibility of the government to provide the basic necessities of life to the children.

### **Environment and Human Rights:**

Right to life becomes life of dignity if it to be lived in a proper environment, free from the danger of disease and infection, because the quality of life of the

people depends on the environmental health of their country. But the modern civilization with its technological advancement, industrialization and urbanization has led to increase in degradation of human environment. There is no direct provision in the Indian Constitution regarding environmental protection. It is the fundamental duty of every citizen of Indian to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wildlife.

In this context, judiciary can play positive role in making life of the people pollution free. One of the latest and prominent examples in this regard is the role played by the highest court of the land in making CNG fuel compulsory in public transport buses in Delhi. No doubt today Delhi's air has become much cleaner due to this decision.

### **Workers and Human Rights:**

It is mentioned in the Indian Constitution that everyone has right to work. It is the most important of all economic rights of today. But still we can see the problem of unemployment in India is becoming complex one. It needs a dynamic approach for its satisfactory solution because right to work is essential to earn livelihood. Men and women are to be given equal pay for equal work. There are millions of Indian who are living below poverty line. There is no significance of right to life if they have no right to work. Art 43 of Indian constitution directs the state to endeavor to secure work by suitable legislation or economic organization or in any other way to all workers including agricultural, industrial or otherwise. Workers have right to work a living wage, condition of work, ensuring a decent standard of life. This article directs the state to provide to all workers the right to rest and leisure and social and cultural opportunities. There are various acts containing provisions in respect of hours of work, rest and leisure, health, safety and welfare, still the workers in India do not get sufficient food or clothing and suitable housing conditions.

### **Role of NGOs in protection of Human Rights:**

During last 25 years, NGOs have contributed to international and national discourse on issue of global scope, such as eradication of poverty, promotion of gender equality, peace, sustainable development and Human Rights. NGOs have grown remarkably in variety and number in last 25 years.

Thus the aim of NGOs is to protect and restore human dignity in all over the world, where political and economic oppression exist and to relieve human misery, to enrich and refine human life everywhere the state should create such social conditions in which every individual relies his freedom. Human Rights were identified during Second World War as a means of achieving post war reconstruction and prevention of violence.

### **National Human Rights Commission:**

In India NHRC was formed in October, 1993. It has been formed on the basis of the formulations of the protection of Human Rights Act, 1993, which came into force on 28<sup>th</sup> September, 1993, under the chairmanship of Justice Rangnath Misra. Upto November, 1995 this commission had received 10000 complaints of Human Rights violation out of which 2/3 have been disposed of. The chair person of the commission Mr. Misra made a fervent plea to the University Grants Commission and State Government to make Human Right education an integral part of the curriculum in university/colleges and school.<sup>10</sup>

The NHRC is an important institution to enforce Human Rights in the country. It has done a tremendous progress despite inherent limitations and constraints. One of the main objection of NHRC is to act as an agency of inquire into the incidence of Human Rights violations. In performing this key role, the NHRC has excelled on issues ranging from custodial death, encounter killings, police atrocities, rape and reports of starvation deaths in the country. The numbers of complaints the commission has received in last ten years is more than 300000

which is telling example of its relevance as a top investigation agency of Human Rights.<sup>11</sup>

Thus NHRC enquire about civil liberties, custodial death, state violence against civilians, torture and other cruel in human or degrading treatment, custodial rape, disappearance from custody, atrocities against vulnerable sections of the society such as women, children and disabled and promotion Human Rights education and training. One of the most important roles of commission is to promote Human Rights education and awareness to the people who have little knowledge about such rights. The commission has prepared source book of Human Rights material to provide guidance to the teachers. Most of the universities have introduced Human Rights courses at their P.G level. Similarly NHRC is encouraging various institutions to organize to seminars, workshop and sensitization programmes on various aspects of Human Rights for the awareness of Human Rights.

No doubt with consistent efforts of NHRC, there is now greater awareness among the people regarding Human Rights .But due to its own limitations of financially dependence still powerful elements, political interest groups and wealthy sections exploit the people. Besides poverty and ignorance on the part of large majority of the victims prevent them from getting justice. Unless literacy, poverty reduction are achieved Human Rights would be a dream for large number of people.

#### **State Human Rights Commission:**

The protection of Human Rights Act 1993 also provides for the establishment of State Human Rights Commission (SHRC). Almost similar pattern in case of NHRC is followed at state level, in terms of selection of chair person, terms and conditions.<sup>12</sup>

### **National Commission for Minorities (NCM):**

The National Commission for Minorities was created in 1992 under the national commission for minorities act:<sup>13</sup>

The main functions of NCM are:

1. To evaluate the progress of development of minorities issues in India.
2. Legal safeguards for minorities.
3. Effective implementation of safeguards for the protection of minority interests by Central Government or State Government.
4. Focusing on specific complaints regarding the deprivation of rights.

There are number of organizations in India concerned with Human Rights. Another two organizations are related to civil liberties like, PUCL (People's Union for Civil Liberties) and PUDR (People's Union for Democratic Rights). PUCL was first founded by Jayprakash Narayan, the most prominent Gandhian leader of independent India, after he was released from prison in 1976 under the emergency.<sup>14</sup>

This organization is playing an important and crucial role in the promotion and protection of Human Rights since its inception. This organization has highlighted many problems like the exploitation of children, the problems of workers employed by Municipal Corporation and its contractors etc.

The PUCL and PUDR have brought suits in the Supreme Court against the practice of encounter killings and sent study teams to troubled areas in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and elsewhere. They have organized camps and workshops bringing together political activists and lawyers to instruct the activists in how to defend their rights.<sup>15</sup>

PUCL and PUDR together documented the participation of police and politicians in the killing of Sikhs in Delhi after Prime Minister Gandhi's assassination.

The Constitution of Association for the Protection of Democratic Rightst (APDR) based in West Bengal provides that any person believing in Human Rights can be a member of APDR irrespective of any political ideology one may possess.

At international level Amnesty International originally founded in 1961 and Human Rights Watch established in 1978, these two NGOs have played important role in recent push to ensure the full integration of women's Human Rights concerns into the international Human Rights frame.

### **Nature of Human Rights Violation:**

Despite the highly ambitious provisions in the Indian constitution, the rights of the children, women, workers, prisoners, minorities etc. are in very poor condition. The situation of Human Rights in our country is still not satisfactory. Even after more than 63 years of independent existence, we have not been able to provide even basic amenities of life to many of our people. About one-third of our people are still illiterates and nearly 40 percent children of school going age are out of school. The universalization of elementary education, thus still remains a distant dream. The condition of women in our society is still very critical. Violence and crime against them have become the order of the day and majority of Indian householder women continue to suffer from traditional inequalities and injustice compare to men. The percentage of women receiving education is still very low and their representation in legislature bureaucracy and judiciary is dismal. Many organizations have however also so far not been able to control Human Rights abuses, nor it has suggested any remedial measure against violation of Human Rights.

Mere assertions of the principles of Human Rights in the Constitution and various laws cannot ensure the protection of these rights, unless massive awareness campaign is launched in the field. The bureaucracy, the police force, the judiciary all need to be educated about the proper ways of carrying out their functions, keeping in view the requirement of Human Rights. Task of

'Human Development' should be given top priority to the Government because Human Development is a process of enhancing human capabilities and is essential for realizing Human Rights.

### **Reasons behind Violations of Human Rights :**

India, despite having a democratic structure of governance, the government has failed to evolve the kind of norms, values, attitude and styles of conduct to the functioning of a healthy democratic system. Political bureaucratic, corruption has become an endemic feature of our political life so much, that today we are considered among one of the most corrupt countries of the world. Lack of accountability and transparency has been key factors responsible for the poor functioning of our democratic system and our poor record on Human Rights front. Criminalization of politics is yet another factor affecting the functioning of our political system. Lack of awareness among vulnerable sections has been one of the main reasons behind all kinds of violations in our country. Human Rights movement becomes global than local. The instances of global protest against American intervention in Iraq, Gujarat violence are best examples of it have global implication. There has been building bridges across world. Now we can find a common voice in protesting against injustice towards women's rights, environment rights etc.

Thus, inspite of provision of laws in our society even today the problems of poverty, unemployment, inequalities, sanitation, safe drinking water, ill health, nutrition, shelter, literacy etc. have got aggravated and alarming. The people below to poverty line are still devoid of the opportunities to live with honour and dignity. Therefore the issue of Human Rights and its violation is more specifically concerned to address the problems of unprivileged, oppressed and tortured sections of society instead of elite sections. The concept of Human Rights could not become all embracing but still remains exclusionary in nature.

## References:

- <sup>1</sup> Yasin, Adil-ul and Archana Upadhyay, Human Rights, pp. 53-54.
- <sup>2</sup> Tapan Biswal, Human Rights and Gender and Environment, p.115.
- <sup>3</sup> Jagannath Mohanty, Teaching of Human Rights: New Trends and Innovations, p.301.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*,p.302.
- <sup>5</sup> Tapan Biswal, *op.cit.*, p.307.
- <sup>6</sup> Our Constitution: An Introduction to Indian Constitution and Constitutional Law, p.125.
- <sup>7</sup> M.H. Syed, Human Rights: The New Era, p.169.
- <sup>8</sup> The Tribune on Sunday Jan 24, 2010, Spectrum.
- <sup>9</sup> Tapan Biswal, *op.cit.*, p.198.
- <sup>10</sup> Suresh Kumar (ed.), Human Rights: Concepts, Issues, Emerging Problems, p.43.
- <sup>11</sup> Tapan Biswal, *op.cit.*, p.139.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p.136.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p.137.
- <sup>14</sup> Jagannath Mohanty, *op.cit.*, p.314.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p.315.

## CHAPTER-3

### GURU NANAK: LIFE AND WORKS

There has been a general belief among all people since the earliest times that great leaders, teachers and founders of new systems are born in times of great social and political depression and religious confusion. Indeed, all great religions of the world had their birth in the darkest of such ugly times.

At the birth time of Guru Nanak, Behlol Lodhi was the Sultan of Delhi (1450 to 1488 A.D). By the time Guru grew to manhood, Sikandar Lodhi (A.D. 1488 to 1517) had ascended the throne. He was one of the few bigots who sat on the throne of India. He destroyed temples in the towns and forts that he took from Hindus, and he forbade the people to perform pilgrimages, and bathing on certain festivals at places on the sacred streams within his own dominions. The Muslim of the time exhibited a spirit of intolerance towards the Hindu subjects. The rulers and their agents and officials, big and small, were licentious and haughty despots who rode roughshod on the subjects. Guru Nanak depicts their character and conduct in some expressive words, which may be translated as under:

In Kali-Yuga has occurred, famine of truth, false hood spread.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly,

Greed and evil are king and counselor, falsehood their officer. Lust the officer who is called for advice-all three hold conclave to chalk out plane. The subjects, bereft of understanding are carcasses full of straw.<sup>2</sup>

In the words of S.M Latif, Great jealousy and hatred existed in those days between the Hindus and Muhammadans and the whole non-Musalman population subject to persecution by the Muhammadh rulers.<sup>3</sup>

It was during this time Guru Nanak begin his crusade against the tyranny of irresponsible bigots and autocrats, and the corrupt practices of Islam, and

declared that all human beings were the sons of the same father and, hence, equal in all respects, in race as in creed, in political rights as in religious hopes. It has been seen that it was religious fanaticism as well as a desire for plunder and sensual satisfaction that had prompted the Muslims to invade India. Thus the Muslim invaders were ruthless beyond description, massacring men without mercy, plundering their homes, lifting women, desecrating and demolishing their temples and robbing the wealth of offerings of centuries that accumulated there.<sup>4</sup> All the ways like persecution, oppression, bribery, economic and political disabilities, and all other conceivable means were employed to force the Hindus to forsake their religion. It gave free reins to the lust, greed and passions of all who had any power over the people. As a result crime, corruption and sin ruled all-around. Both the rulers and ruled, the oppressors and the oppressed, were deep down in moral degradation.

Human Rights and democratic values, of which we hear so much during the present times, were practically unknown during those times and did not exist at all for the Hindus Rule of Law meant the rule of might. In fact, as mentioned earlier, the Hindus did not have even the right to live. The agenda of the Muslim rulers included, apart from plunder and rapine, converting India into Dar-ul-Islam (house of Islam) from Dar-ul-Harb, (house of Kafirs) so that only Asl-i-Islam or Ahl-i-Kitab (people of Islam/Book) were eligible to live in their territories.<sup>5</sup> Thus the fundamental right of life of Hindus was not safe at time of Guru Nanak.

Similarly, Hindu religion was at its lowest ebb. Its spirit was almost dead. It became a religion of forms and ceremonies, devoid of any sense or meaning. People were forcibly converted into Islam. Hindu religious places were brought down and mosques were built in their place. Hindus were not allowed to perform religious observances and pilgrimages. The common people were living in darkness, superstitions and oppression of all kinds.

Both Brahmins and Kashtriyas who were supposed to be custodians and dispensers of religion and religious knowledge had become corrupt and had reduced religion to a mockery, lacking real life and spirit. So there was a deep degradation all around.

### **Birth and childhood of Guru Nanak**

Guru Nanak was born in central Punjab at Rai Bho di Talwandi (known as Nankana Sahib, now in West Pakistan) in 1469 A.D. Some biographers have mentioned *Kartik Purnima* as the day of his birth, but others fix it on Baisakh Shudi III.<sup>6</sup> Talwandi was then a small village situated in the midst of a dense forest and waste-land, away from seats of power and tyranny, away from centers of learning and dry philosophy, far off from the arena of political strife and struggle, and away from the horrid , sickening scenes, enacted by the religious bigotry allied with political power. It was in the seclusion of such a village that the great World-Teacher was born. Rai Bho, the ruler of Delhi, had been its founder and proprietor. He had owned about a dozen villages around Talwandi. After his death, his son, Rai Bular, had succeeded him. Both Rai Bular and his father were new converts to Islam. They had accepted the religion of the rulers under the effects of force or the influence of some other powerful persuasion.<sup>7</sup>

Guru Nanak's father's name has come down in history as Mehta (Land agent or accountant) Kalu, by reason of his being the village land-surveyor (patwari) revenue officer and general factor to the lord of the demesne. He was also a small farmer, a man of moderate means and evidently generally respected for his honesty in dealings. By caste he was a Hindu Khatri of the Bedi Tribe, which would put him in the very best section of Hindu society. The Guru's mother's name was Tripta, who bore a daughter, besides her famous son Nanak. The name of Guru Nanak's sister has come down in history as Nanaki. The panjabi derivation of the names is indicative of the fact of both children being born to their mother in the home of her parents. For the daughter of the

family it was quite usual in the Punjab to go to her parents to be delivered of her first child, as also one or two even after. Little else is known of the family in which the Guru was born.<sup>8</sup>

Like all Hindus, the happy father sent for the family astrologer, Hardial, to draw up the baby's horoscope. On hearing what the nurse to say, Hardial is said to have been filled with a mysterious awe and wonder. Before consulting his books and determining the star under which the baby had been born, he wanted to have a look at it. It was an unusual request, but Hardial's importunities prevailed. The astrologer, who had seen hundreds of babies in his life discerned in this one a light that was to fill all lands and to guide all people to the Eternal Abode of the Supreme Lord. He congratulated Mehta Kalu, saying, Fortunate, indeed, art thou, O Mehta, to have such a one as thy son. He will be a unique king, holding sway over vast dominions and adored by the all sections of humanity. His fame and name will spread far beyond the frontiers of India. Though I shall not live long enough to witness his conquest of the world yet I am happy to have seen him. I am blessed.<sup>9</sup> Mehta Kalu was very happy to listen that his only son would acquire fame, wealth and rule.

When Guru Nanak was just five year old, he began to talk of divine things. Sometime he sit for hours with half shut eyes but his father did not like this type of attitude of his only son because he wanted to see him a great man of the world.

### **Teachers and Teachings**

To stop wasteful conduct his father decided to send his child to school and Guru Nanak agreed to go. Mehta Kalu took his son, destined to be a world-teacher, to a Pandha, a Brahmin school master. But within short time Pandha discovered that this new pupil was no ordinary child. He had often watched his close eyes and sit for hours as it in ecstasy. He talked very little, but whenever he had an opportunity to speak, his sweet words emphasized the ideal of the realization of ultimate reality.

Pandha surprised to see the *Patti* because the writing on the *Patti* was not what he had expected, or what his pupils generally wrote at that stage of their educational career. It was acrostic on the alphabet. But what an acrostic it was to be written by a child. As in similar compositions in other languages, the letters were taken consecutively, and words whose initials they formed were employed to give metrical expression to the Guru's divine aspirations, his tenets, and his admiration of the attributes of the creator.<sup>10</sup>

A few lines of the acrostic are given below:

The one Lord who created the world is the Lord of all  
fortunate is their advent into the world, whose hearts remain  
attached to God's service.

O foolish man, why hast thou forgotten Him?

When thou adjustest thine account, my friend, thou shalt be  
deemed educated.

The primal being is the giver; He alone is true.

No account shall be due by the pious man who  
understandeth by means of these letters.<sup>11</sup>

In 1478 he was put under the tutorship of Pandit Brij Nath Sharma for learning Sanskrit, but within a very short time the Pandit realized the awakened potent faculties of the young child.<sup>12</sup> At the age of eleven i.e. in 1480 the young Guru was sent to Maulana Qutb-ud-Din to learn Persian. There, too, he astonished his teacher by the quickness with which he learnt all that the Mulla taught him. But the Mulla, too, soon found that his pupil was greater than he himself. There are numerous Persian words and some Persian verses of the Guru found in the Granth Sahib, and it may be accepted as a fact that he became a fair Persian scholar.<sup>13</sup>

His scholarly attainments were considerable, as shown by his erudite composition like the Japuji, Asa-di-Var, Siddh Gosti, and Onkar. He often referred to ancient writers and made apt use of classical stories, and had philosophical discussions with, learned Yogis, Pandits, and Sufis, whom he

was always able to convince by the deep learning and hard common sense.<sup>14</sup> Guru Nanak attended school for few days. One day school master asked Guru Nanak why he was not reading. Guru Nanak replied that he preferred the study of divine knowledge to secular studies then he composed the following hymns:

**Burn worldly love, grind its ashes and make it into ink; turn**

superior intellect into paper.

Make divine love thy pen, and thy heart the writer, ask thy,  
Guru and write his instruction.

Write God's name, write his praises, write that He hath neither,  
end nor limit.<sup>15</sup>

In 1478, the parents of the Guru called in their Purohit (Priest) to perform the sacrament of the sacred thread, but the young Guru refused to wear the breakable thread and asked for the permanent thread, which the Purohit could not supply. Guru Nanak suggested to Purohit which is included in Asa di Var as:

Make compassion the cotton, contentment the yarn,  
Contenance the knot and purity the twist;  
Such is the true sacred thread of the self.

Thou Brahmin-Priest ! put this on me shouldst thou have it.

This thread neither snaps nor is soiled; neither burnt nor lost.

Saith Nanak: Blessed are the beings that around their neck put this.

For four cowries is the thread bought and  
inside the cooking space put on.

With it some teaching into the wearer's ear is whispered,  
By the Brahmin turned preceptor.

When the wearer dies, the thread falls off—

To the next world without the Thread he departs.

Man is guilty of immeasurable acts of thieving and lechery,  
Falsehood and abusive language.

Guilty is he of immeasurable acts of deceit, of evils done in secret.

That night and day to the self cling.

The scared thread of cotton is spun, that the Brahmin twists.

A goat they slaughter to celebrate the event,

And then all exhort him to put it on the neophyte.

When worn out it thrown away.

Said Nanak: Had the thread any power in it, snap it would not.<sup>16</sup>

In this way it was the first time and first incident when Guru Nanak stood against false customs and traditions of the society. Nanak was then sent to Madrasa to learn Persian and Arabic. His teacher was Rukhuddin. The understanding was that after he acquired proficiency in Persian.<sup>17</sup>

### **Before Unique Secular Occupation**

Mehta Kalu often saw his young son deeply absorbed in meditation. Everyone who saw Nanak during those days felt that there was something wrong with him. So he was examined by Hari Das, a leading physician but Guru Nanak expressed:

I suffer pangs of separation; I hunger for him and suffer.

I suffer the fear of dreadful death, I suffer from the ills that must have me as  
their kill and no remedy of the void would help.<sup>18</sup>

Thus Nanak suffered from a malady whose cure was beyond his remedy.

Kalu Bedi pursued the usual routine with a view to equipping his son for the normal worldly life, but there were clear indications that the boy intended to proceed along a different track. He associated continually with religious men and spent much time in 'communing with nature, with his own soul, and with his Creator'. Anxious to divert his attention to secular interests, Kalu Bedi tried to keep him engaged in useful occupations such as the herding of buffalos, cultivation of land, shop keeping and dealing in horses. But Guru Nanak's heart was elsewhere, and due to his unusual behavior he was popularly credited with madness.<sup>19</sup>

To his mother's admonitions replied:

**They who love mammon are painfully ignorant.**

Without money goods cannot be had from a shop;

Without a boat man cannot cross the sea;

So, without serving the Guru, there is complete loss.<sup>20</sup>

In reply to his father's advice to be cultivator he said:

Make thy body the field, good works the seed, irrigate with

God's name.

Make thy heart the cultivator; God will germinate in thy heart,

and thou shalt thus obtain the dignity of nirvan.<sup>21</sup>

He would not be shopkeeper of the usual type:

Make the knowledge that life is frail thy shop, the true Name

Thy stock in trade, make meditation and contemplation

Thy piles of vessels put the true Name into them.<sup>22</sup>

Thus Mehta Kalu did his best to involve his son in business of different type. But Guru Nanak's attention was towards God only. Mehta Kalu asked his son to go to Sultanpur where his brother-in-law, Jai Ram, the husband of Nanki, was a Modi or steward under the local governor, Dualat Khan. It was hoped that Jai Ram would be able to secure for him employment in Government service. Perhaps it was also hoped that regular engagement in official work and the attractions of a big town would divert his attention to worldly pursuits. In Sultanpur he employed as a storekeeper. There, too, while his body was engaged in performing his work, his heart and soul were with his Maker. It is recorded that when, in weighing out rations, he reached the number thirteen, which in the official Persian language was call *tera*, which, in turn, meant 'Thine' in Panjabi, he would pause, his face would assume a look of strange intoxication, and he would several times repeat, in his sweet, melodious voice, '*tera han tera, tera, I am Thine, O Thine, O Lord, Thine*'. If the persons to whom the grain had to be dealt out happened to be poor customers, he would

go on weighing it out to them and count each weight as tera or thirteen. Blessed, indeed, were they on whom thus bestowed, unasked, divine food for soul as they came to have food for the body. His open-handed charity won him the love of the poor and the needy, but his sister and brother-in-law felt uneasy; for he was not saving much out of his earnings. They knew that his father would be distressed to learn that his son was throwing away on beggars and Faqirs all that he earned. Then, his parents decided to marry Guru Nanak. They feared lest the religious zeal which by then was quite clearly visible in his nature, should become too strong and lead him to renounce the world altogether and become a recluse. So they decided to yoke him to family life.<sup>23</sup> In 1487, he was married to Sulakhni, the daughter of Mool Chand of village Pakkho in Gurdaspur district. His elder son, Baba Sri Chand, was born in 1494 and the younger son, Baba Lakhmi Das, in 1496.<sup>24</sup>

Guru Nanak's parents were to hope that, he would give up his infatuation for Sadhus and Faqirs and divert that love to his wife and family, but the marriage was powerless to divert his heart and soul from the path that he had come to lay down for humanity. When Guru Nanak came from Sultanpur on the thirteenth day of the birth of his first son, he came home from the Modikhana, he was surprised to find elaborate arrangements for 'purifying' the house supposed to have been polluted by the birth of the child. Guru Nanak did not believe in this Hindu superstition called *sutak*. He ridiculed the superstitious Hindu belief, ascribed to the *Shastras*, that the birth of a child or the death of any member of the family polluted the house, and special purification rites had to be performed to remove the pollution.

On this occasion he composed the following slokas found in Asa-di-Var:

If we admit the idea of impurity of the birth or death, impurity will be found in  
everything.

There are worms in cow-dung and in wood;

There are no grains of corn without life.

In the first place, there is life in water by which everything is made green.

How can we keep away this impurity? It enters into our kitchens.

Nanak, impurity cannot be removed in this way; it can be washed away by  
divine knowledge.

The heart gets impure with greed, and the tongue, with lying.

The eyes get impure by staring at another's wealth, his wife, and her beauty:

Nanak these impurities lead the soul of man bound to hell.

All other impurity is superstitious.

Birth and death are ordained; we come and go by His will.

Eating and drinking which God gave as sustenance is pure.

Nanak, the pious persons who know God have no impurity.<sup>25</sup>

In this way Guru Nanak reject the idea of impurity at death and birth time.

Mehta Kalu again thought that he will make his son engage in some trade or business. So, Guru Nanak was given sum of twenty rupees and told to make a good bargain with it. Bala, a trusted servant of the Mehta, accompanied him. Both went on the way they found a company of Sadhus. These men of religion had no covering for their bodies except the loin-cloths. Guru Nanak approached one of them and learnt that the Sadhus had no food for the last several days. Guru Nanak spent the money given to him by his father to buy food for starving Sadhus. The place where the hungry mouths were fed by the Guru Nanak is the site of a Gurdwara called the *Sachcha (Khara) Sauda* or the Good Bargain. It is now in Pakistan.<sup>26</sup> When they came back to Talwandi, Bala told Mehta Kalu the whole story. Mehta Kalu slapped Guru Nanak. Babe Nanki rescued her brother from the beating.

In 1497, one day the Guru disappeared while taking a bath in a nearby stream. He was considered to have been drowned but to the surprise of every body he appeared again after three days from the same spot, where he had entered the water. This incident brought a great change in the life of the Guru. He had been summoned into the presence of the Lord, where he received the instructions for this future career. It was necessary for him to move into the

world with his message; therefore he had to resign from his service. His first announcement was: "There is neither a Hindu nor a Muslim." He thought that the condition of India could be reformed if Hindus became true Hindus and Muslims true Muslims.<sup>27</sup> Thus Guru Nanak received instructions regarding his aim.

### **TOUR TO THE EAST**

A little time after, the Guru Nanak planned to go on his extensive tours, called *Udasis*. He finally took leave of his family, devotees, and friends, and took Mardana along with him as his companion. In the beginning, the Guru propagated his mission in the neighboring areas, but soon he finalized his programme and set out for distant countries and lands. He traveled in all the four directions covering thousands of miles and remaining out of his own province for several years at a stretch.<sup>28</sup> At all places which they visited, the Guru Nanak found the people irreligious, and try to put them on the right path. According to all most all *Janam Sakhis*, Guru Nanak in his first *Udasi*, entered the village Saidpur, now called Eminabad, in the district of Gujranwala, Pakistan. He went to the house of a low caste artisan, Lalo by name. On his request, Guru Nanak stayed with him for a few days which were uncommon for a person of high caste. News soon spread through the Hindu families that a highborn Kashatriya was staying with the low caste, Lalo, and went about with a Muslim as his companion.<sup>29</sup>

The news that a saint was staying at the house of low caste carpenter reached Malik Bhago, the chief of the town and a fellow caste man. He was corrupt and wicked. He imposed many hardships on the poor and extracted money from them by unfair and foul means. Once, he was holding a sacrificial feast and had invited all holy men to partake of his repast. He also sent a servant to invite Guru Nanak. The Guru, however, refused to accept the invitation and this sorely pained Malik Bhago.<sup>30</sup> Then Malik sent special representative and place before Guru Nanak variety of foods but Guru Nanak refused because his

bread was ill-begotten and made from blood sucked from the poor. This made the chief very angry and he asked the Guru to prove his point. At this the Guru sent for a loaf from Lalo's house. In one hand he held Bhago's bread and in the other that of Lalo's. When he squeezed both, from one oozed blood of the exploited poor and from the other the sweet milk of honest labour and human kindness. At this Bhago was touched by a consciousness of his guilt and repented his past mis-deeds and prayed for mercy. The Guru asked him to distribute to the poor his ill-gotton wealth and hence forth to live an honest life of love and service. Bhago was thus regenerated.<sup>31</sup>

Thus Malik Bhago realised that he had been leading a sinful life. After this incident he associates himself with low caste people and ignores the rules of conduct for high caste. According to Guru Nanak:

‘Truly low caste men are they who forget the Lord;  
Without meditation on the supreme Lord, O Nanak,  
Man becomes low and despicable a mean outcaste.’

‘Recognize the Divine Spark which illumines every  
human form. Raise no question of caste or tribe;  
for, in the Holy court of the Father above.

There exist no distinctions of caste or creed.’<sup>32</sup>

In this way Guru Nanak tries to prove that all castes and garbs are irrelevant.

Malik Bhago fell at the Guru Nanak's feet. Now there was a new light in his eyes, a joy unknown ever before filled his heart and thrilled his soul. The Guru blessed him with the priceless gift of the Name and a life of love and service.

According to Guru Nanak one should earn his or her livelihood by hard labour and should share it with other needy persons. Man should not collect wealth through exploitation of the poor masses. Only the earning from one's own hard labour should be shared with other needy persons and not wealth accumulated through exploitation of the poor masses. This explains Guru Nanak's proper emphasis on sharing. So exploitation in any form is condemned by Guru as worst sin. According to Guru Nanak, the real cause of the difference and strife between the rich and the poor, low and high is socio-

economic and religious exploitation. According to Guru Nanak the lowest is equal with the highest in race as in creed, in political rights as in religious hope.

After leaving Saidpur, Guru Nanak and Mardana visited the house of a *thag* (robber) known as Shaikh Sajjan. He builds a temple for Hindu guests and a mosque for Muslim guests. He provided them everything necessary for their comfort and at night he robbed them. Similarly like other guests Guru Nanak and Mardana were also happily received. When night came, Guru Nanak and his companion uttered the following hymn:

My body is like the simmal tree;  
men beholding me mistake me.  
Its fruit is useless: such qualities my body posses seth.  
I am a blind man carrying a burden while the mountainous  
way is long<sup>33</sup>.

On hearing these hymns, Shaikh Sajjan had an instant transformation. He admitted a long catalogue of the most heinous crime he done. He returned all the property of his victims that he had retained in his possession and became the disciple of Guru Nanak, and converted his residence into a Dharmshala. Shaikh Sajjan is said to have made the first Sikh Dharmshala and thus laid the foundation of a forerunner of the Sikh Gurdwaras.

Traveling by short stages and preaching his message to the people in all places, he reached Pakpattan, then called Ajodhan, in the southern part of the Panjab, now in Pakistan. From there he proceeded to visit the shrine of Shaikh Farid, a renowned Muslim Faqir. A saint named Shaikh Brahm (Ibrahim) was then the incumbent of the shrine. On reaching there, the Guru learnt that Sheikh Brahm, or Shaikh Farid II, was out in the woods, doing severe penance in order to acquire religious merit and obtain a glimpse of the Lord. Guru was

against those people who were either engrossed too deeply in vicious pleasures of the world, in utter forgetfulness of the higher needs of their souls, or were too much absorbed in painful, misguided attempts at emancipation of their souls, torturing and starving their bodies in hopes of winning salvation, and neglecting altogether their duties as men towards their fellow beings. He would meet them, discuss things with them, throw light on their inner selves, and give such an impression of life, of love, of divine beauty and goodness, of moral endeavor and excellence. The tale of severe, voluntary suffering undergone by the Sheikh induced the Guru to find him out and show him the right and glorious way to attain his goal.<sup>34</sup> According to Shaikh Brahm one should not combined both secular and religious life. It was impossible for a householder to find God.

But Guru Nanak was against those people who leave the world for spiritual enlightenment, one should not be a escapist, if one want to have a divine glimpse. Guru Nanak opposed people like Shaikh Brahm who practiced austeries to realize the Divine. Guru Nanak persuaded Shaikh Brahm to give up painful efforts of torturing his body for salvation.

According to Guru Nanak, there is no need to run away from home and turn a mendicant. The human personality cannot become complete unless the mundane and the mystic, the worldly and the religious, aspects of life are advanced equally and simultaneously. The Guru answered Shaikh Brahm's all questions, removed all his doubts, and resolved all his problems. He was convinced and converted. He broke his several day's fast at the bidding of the Guru.

During his this journey toward east, he went to religious centres and holy places of Hindus in the east, along his companion Mardana. He visited the holy places on festive occasions. His methods of approach were dramatic rather than discussion. The first important place where Guru Nanak made a halt was probably Kurukshatra.<sup>35</sup>

Guru Nanak and Mardana reached there on the occasion of a solar eclipse with the object of preaching to assemble pilgrims. There was a traditional prayer to save the Sun God from Rahu and Ketu, an old belief of Brahmins. People were busy in bathing and giving alms to Brahmins hoping that their sins would be cleaned. Guru Nanak observed them and smiled. Needing refreshment, he began to cook a deer which a disciple had presented to him.<sup>36</sup> Brahmins had a superstition that to light a fire and cook anything during the solar eclipse were acts of sacrilege. They hurried to the spot and abused and threaten Guru Nanak for this act. But Guru Nanak invited them to sit and discuss the matter calmly. Guru Nanak pacified the Brahman leader Pandit Nanu Chander with the following hymns:

Man is first conceived in flesh, he dwelleth in flesh.

When he quickeneth, he obtaineth a mouth of flesh;

his bone, skin, and body are made of fresh.

When he taken out of the womb, he seizeth teats of flesh.

His mouth is of flesh, his tongue is of flesh, his breath is in flesh.

When he groweth up he marrieth, and bringeth flesh home with him.

Flesh is produced from flesh; all man's relations are made from flesh.

By meeting the true Guru and obeying God's order, everybody shall go right.

If thou suppose that man shall be saved by himself,

he shall not; Nanak, it is idle to say so.<sup>37</sup>

So Guru Nanak wanted to convey the message to the people that by bathing, giving alms and charity to Brahmin, they cannot wash their sins away and rescue the sun God from the clutches of some imaginary demons. The eclipse is a natural phenomena but Brahmins created imaginary stories regarding it just for their own benefits. So it is need to eradicate the evils which defile the mind and heart also. Just remember the God who is the source of all life and power, of all peace and happiness and cultivate noble qualities in yourself.

Guru Nanak's taking meat was by no means an attempt to inspire his followers to eat meat rather his dialogue with the Pandits was an attempt to shake the pride of the Brahmins, who were the only exponent of the Vedas.

From Kurkshetra the Guru moved on to Karnal and thence proceeded toward Panipat. From Panipat the Guru moved on to Delhi. Sikandar Lodi was then the Emperor. He was oppressing the Hindus and forcing them to choose between Islam and death. All men of religion who preached peace and toleration were picked out by him and put to great tortures. When Guru Nanak visited to Delhi, Guru Nanak and Mardana were, likewise, arrested and put in prison. Like others they, too, were set to work at the handmills and given corn to grind. The Guru did the labour for a time. One day when Guru Nanak sang one of his beautiful, soul-stirring songs all prisoners forgot their mills and ills. The wardeners forgot their duty of enforcing labour. Emperor Sikander also heard of this. Sikander bowed to the Guru and begged forgiveness for his past sins. Sikandar understood what the Guru wanted him to do. He opened the prison-gates and set free all the prisoners.<sup>38</sup> The Guru then advised him to remember and serve God.

After visiting Kurkshetra Guru Nanak reached Hardwar, one of the most important ancient places of Hindu pilgrimage on the bank of the sacred river Ganga, on the Baisakhi festival, falling on 27<sup>th</sup> March, 1504. A great crowd was assembled from the four cardinal points for the purpose of washing away their sins. The Guru saw that, while they were cleaning their bodies, their hearts remained filthy; and none of them restrained the wanderings of his mind, or performed his ablutions with love devotion.<sup>39</sup> The people at Hardwar were then throwing water of the Ganges towards the rising sun in the east for the benefit of their ancestors in heaven. Nanak created a sensation by beginning to throw water in the opposite direction. When asked why he was throwing water towards the west Guru Nanak replied that he was watering his fields near Lahore. The people felt amused and asked Nanak how the water

being thrown by him at Hardwar could reach such a distant place in the neighborhood of Lahore. Nanak gave an impressive reply. He said that if Brahman's handful of water could reach heavens, why his earnest effort would not make the water reach his field in the Punjab<sup>40</sup>. In this way Guru Nanak tried to expose the vanity of the Brahmins and unfolded the mysterious superstitions woven around by them. Guru Nanak preached to the Brahmins the greatness of the Supreme one and the futility of empty religiosity. It was here at Hardwar that Guru Nanak satirized those who had sought to keep their cooking place pure by drawing a circle around their cooking area from being polluted by the shadow of the fourth Varna. Guru Nanak discarded rotten traditions, fought against ignorance and superstitions and showed them new paths.

From Hardwar the Guru and his companion preceded towards Ayudhia, the birth-place of Sri Ram Chandar. Bairagis, a sect of Vaishnava Sadhus, lived there in large numbers. The Guru met them and had religious discussions with them in order to wean them from the worship of plants and idols and to bring them on the right path of worshipping and meditation of God and serving mankind.<sup>41</sup> Guru Nanak and Mardana traveled from village to village, giving new life and light to the people in every place. After leaving Ayudhia, Guru Nanak reached at Banaras where he had many dialogues with a Pandit, Chatur Das. These dialogues are of great importance. Chatur Das after observing the Guru Nanak's dress twitted him with possessing no salagram though he called himself a Faqir, with wearing no necklace of sacred basil and no rosary. Guru Nanak replied:

‘O Brahmin, make God thy salgram,  
and right conduct thy rosary of Tulsi.  
And build the Boat of the Lord's Name and  
Pray: O God, be merciful to me.<sup>42</sup>

In this way Guru Nanak advised Pandit that do not waste your lives in such vain performances. Some of the Janam Sakhis state that the loving discourses

ended with a long recitation called Dakhni Oankar, later incorporated in the Sikh scripture.<sup>43</sup> On hearing the whole fifty four stanza of the Oankar, the Pandit fell at the Guru's feet and became a Sikh and possessor of God's name.<sup>44</sup>

From Banaras, Guru Nanak reached Gaya, the famous place of Hindu pilgrimage, where Lord Budha had made his great renunciation and performed his memorable penance. The Guru was impressed with the atmosphere of peace and tranquility of the place. He also appreciated the eight-fold path of Buddhism as a basis for ethical life. According to the Guru, however, this alone could not end human suffering, which was Buddha's main concern. Belief in and loving devotion to God and meditation on His Nam (which Buddhism denies) are essential for eternal peace and bliss.<sup>45</sup> Guru Nanak stopped at Chandruli. Here he remained silent and people began to call him Muni. Guru Nanak preached to them the value of Nam, Dan, Sila and Sahaj before proceeding further on his travels.<sup>46</sup> The Guru traveled on, moving from village to village, enlightening people, bringing comfort to the sick and hope to the hopeless.

After a time, the Guru and Mardana reached Patna. They sat a few miles from the city on the banks of the Ganges, a big fair was being held there. People were bathing in the holy waters. To them, too, the Guru showed the right path of winning the pleasure of the Lord. Numerous hearts were won there. Several scholars and philosophers acknowledged him the visible embodiment of the best that was contained in the *Shastras*. They saw in him the personification of all divine and human virtues. They adored him as their spiritual guide.<sup>47</sup> On his way back to Punjab, Guru Nanak visited Jagan Nath Puri. In the temple, the Hindus were performing 'Arti' before the image, going round and round it, carrying baskets in which burnt the earthen lamps and showering flowers on the idol. The Guru stood silent and when asked why he was not participating in the service he, answered:

“This your homage is too small for a God as high as the master of the universe”. And saying this he sang a hymn in praise of the Supreme Being which, for the sweep of its imagination, is unrivalled in the whole gamut of Indian mystic poetry. Said he: The sky is salver; the sun and the moon are the lamps, the spheres of stars are studded in it as jewels; the chandan scented win from the Malai mountain wave and scatter across the fragrance of myriads of flowers. (Thus) is thy worship performed,.....<sup>48</sup> In this way Guru Nanak condemned the superfluous rituals of Brahmins and cleaned their mind and awoke their souls. Then they began to live life of love, service and devotion to Lord.

Except these places, Guru visited many other places like Chunian, Pehowa, Aligarh, Mathura, Kanpur, Lucknow, Buxar, Chhapra, Rajgir, Bhagalpur, Manipur, Dacca, Calcutta, Jabalpur, Jhansi, Gwalior, Bharatpur, Rewari, Gurgaon, Jagraon etc.<sup>49</sup>

### **TOUR TO THE SOUTH**

Guru Nanak practiced what he preached. After returning from his first *Udasi* or tour he founded Kartarpur and lived a householder life with his family. He was also doing farming there. After a short period he again decided to resume his travels in order to relieve humanity from suffering and to enlighten them. So he left his home, family once again to undertake another long tour to South. During his South journey, Guru's dress was extra ordinary like:

He wore wooden sandals, took a stick in his hand, twisted a rope round his head as a turban, and on his forehead put a patch and a streak.<sup>50</sup>

Passing through Bhatner, Bhatinda, etc, he reached Sarsa in the modern district of Hissar. There he met group of Muhammadan Faqirs who were generally believed to possess great occult powers. They misled the ignorant people. They resolved to meet Guru Nanak and try to defeat him in penance, argument, and occult powers, because Guru's teachings were already

becoming an obstacle in the free spread of Islam. So desiring to lower him in the eyes of the people, the Faqirs asked the Guru if he had performed penances and fasts worthy of a man of religion. The Guru replied that he had no need for them. 'Penance and fasts', said he, 'are useful when over-indulgence in sensual pleasures has spoiled the body or soiled the heart, they can be of help in the task of purifying the mind and heart and cleaning the body of unhealthy, disease-producing element. But they are ever to be regarded as mere means to an end. It is wrong to make penances and it is torture and deform the body and to cripple and crush the human heart. How can the soul be strong when its vehicle is made unfit for its work? It is equally bad to starve the soul and pamper the body.'<sup>51</sup>

In this way Guru Nanak criticized all types of penance and fast as useless to attain salvation. Because performance like these can deform the body equally crush the human heart. Guru Nanak preached love of the Supreme one and the futility of empty religiosity. So he exposed the hollowness of all fasts and penances observed by the Faquirs of those times. The Yogis and Faquirs ultimately confessed that Guru's techniques and practices were right. They sought Guru's blessing for enlightenment.

From Sarsa the Guru proceeded towards Bikaner and visited some of its important places. Bikaner was then a stronghold of Jains. Many of those people met the Guru and had discussions with them. Jains believe in ahimsa or non-killing. They consider it an act of religious merit to avoid taking the life of even the meanest or the foulest creature. This creed of non-killing has become a sort of superstition with them. They would not bathe, would not kill even lice, and would scatter their own excreta so that worms may not be produced in it; for they are sure to die later. They filtered water before drinking it. To quote Guru Nanak:

They spread out their ordure,  
they inhale its smell,

they are shy to look at water.  
They have their heads plucked like sheep;  
they plucked hands are smeared with ashes.  
They spoil the occupations of their parent;  
their families weep and wail for them.<sup>52</sup>

Thus Guru Nanak told them that true religion did not consist in remaining unwashed and dirty. They cannot be godly or religious if they are dirty. They cannot please God unless they free their body and mind from every form of filth and dirt. A pure mind in a pure, clean body is the quintessence of all religious practices.

From Bikaner the Guru moved on to Ajmer. That place was a stronghold of Yogis and Muslim Sufi Faqirs. He held religious discourses with the leading men of both. He told them the right way to win God's pleasure. He told the Yogis how one could practice true Yoga, and to the Sufis he taught how to lead a life truly in keeping with the basic tenets of Islam. After a circuitous tour through the chief cities and holy places of the Deccan, the Guru reached Cape Comorin. From there he crossed over to Ceylon.<sup>53</sup> Thereafter the Guru retraced his steps. Taking ship at Japapatan, he crossed over to the mainland, passing through Rameshwaram, Nagapatam, Tanjaur, Begumpura, etc., he made a tour of the locality. He visited all important places. Everywhere people came flocking to him. They saw the divine glory of his countenances, heard his songs of the Lord, and became transfigured in heart, mind and soul. They found glowing in their own hearts the divine spark in search of which they had vainly run so long after yogis, pirs, and pandits.<sup>54</sup>

During his journey, the following numerous other important places were visited by the Guru: Kasur, Jaisalmer, Pushkar, Nasirabad, Lodhipur, Abu, Ahmednagar, Ujjain, Hoshangabad, Narsinghpur, Nagpur, Fatehbad, Golconda, Hyderabad, Bider, Pandharpur, Trichanapalli, Sangladip, Coimbatore, Calicut, Goa, Ratnagiri, Nasik, Panchvati, Baroda, Ahmedabad,

Bhavnagar, Junagarh, Porbander, Dwarka, Umarmkot, Tanda, Shujabad, Uch, Tulamba, Ferozepore etc.<sup>55</sup> He had made extensive tour and had conveyed his message to numberless persons. In due course the Guru returned to his birth-place in 1515 A.D. After a short stay there, he visited his sister at Sultanpur. Thence he returned to Kartarpur, where he had left his family.

### **TOUR TO THE NORTH**

After a short stay of Kartarpur, Guru again started on his third *Udasi* or tour with a view to reforming the world. During his journey to the north:

He wore leather on his feet and on his head, twisted a rope round his body, and on his forehead stamped a saffron tilak.<sup>56</sup>

As usual, he took a circuitous route, visiting villages and important places where people needed his message of work, service, love, prayer, and adoration. On the one hand, he met learned Brahmins, Ascetics, Yogis, Pirs and Faqirs, who, by virtue of their real or feigned learning and supernatural powers, lived lives of slothful ease and sometimes, even of vicious luxury. In his own sweet way he convinced them of the sinfulness of their baneful parasitic lives, and taught them the right way to attain piety and honor. On the other hand, he met men in secular authority, chiefs and kings, who forgetful of their duties towards God and man and their own higher selves, were entangled in superstition and sensual pleasures, and misused their powers in oppressing and tyrannizing over their subjects.<sup>57</sup> In this way he convinced Brahmins, Yogis, Pirs, Faquirs, and ascetics etc. to discard their false way of life. He also instructed the authoritative people for ignoring their duties to words God, man and their own self. They were indulges in sensuous pleasures and oppressed the poor people and convinced them to adopt a life of action, devotion love and service.

His next target of journey was Gorakhmata. His object in going to Gorakhmata was that he wanted to wean the yogis there from a life of retirement and inactivity, and to lead them to a life of work and devotion, of love and service. He told them to come out of their retirement, because

humanity needs their services. When he went to the Mount Sumer or Kailash and the Mansarowar Lake he met several renowned Siddhas.

A Sidh called Carpat inquired from Guru Nanak about the world like:

‘The world is an ocean,  
and is said to be difficult to be cross;  
How shall man traverse it?

Guru Nanak replied:

As a lotus in the water remaineth dry,  
As also a waterfowl in the stream,

So by meditating on the world and repeating God’s name,  
shalt thou be unaffected by the world Nanak is a slave to those,  
who remain apart from the world, in whose hearts the one God abideth,  
Who live without desire in the midst of desires?<sup>58</sup>

Guru found that Yogis and Siddhas have reduced religion to a mockery. They go about begging and extracting food, filling their bellies, and gathering provision for their large families. The condition of the people wretched, indeed. All distinctions of right and wrong, and of good and evil, have disappeared from among them. They have become brutalized and behave like wild beasts, snatching others rights. Social ties have all become loose. Conjugal relations are now an affair of lust and lucre. Sanctity of marriage is no longer respected. Men and women meet and part at will. Sin prevails and round in the land. Kings, whose duty it is to make and enforce good laws, to keep peace in the land, and safeguard their subjects life, honour, and property, have themselves become the greatest criminals. The fence, so to say, is eating up the crop; the shepherds are destroying the sheep. The rulers are oppressing and misusing the people in countless ways. The Qazis and other officials are corrupt. They take bribes and deprive people of their rights. Trodden under this manifold tyranny and slavery, devoid of true education and training, and bereft of leaders and teachers like you, who could have enlightened and organized them, the people have become debased and demoralized. They have

lost their souls. They have become weak in body, mind, and spirit. They have no faith in themselves and no self-respect.<sup>59</sup>

People were devoid of true education. Leaders of the society like Kings, Qazi, Yogis, all lost their religious duties and moral values. They totally forget their responsibility towards humanity. So the situation was very much dangerous.

At Mount Sumer he had dialogues with Siddhas of Mount Sumer. Here Guru Nanak composed Siddh-Gosti.<sup>60</sup> Guru advised Siddhas that they can make a far better use of life and help the world better by living in it, and by entering into social relationships, instead of wearing empty forms and doing hard penances. They should exert themselves in the service of mankind. Their love of miracles leads them astray; it has no connection with religion. Give it up. Meditate on God, serve mankind by engaging in useful, humanitarian activities, and led the people to a better, cleaner, and nobler life. Guru Nanak insisted on the Siddhas not to indulge in sensuous pleasures. He observed that if they were true Siddhas they should work for the suffering humanity. He insisted that they should live among the common masses and know the fate of the poor and oppressed people.

In this way Guru Nanak inspired them to live household life and work for humanity. Guru Nanak taught the Siddhas and Nathas the true way of life, asked them to pray Almighty to save the illumined persons, and persuaded them to work for the alleviation of the sufferings of humanity.

The main topics of discussion between Guru Nanak and Siddhas were existence of God, nature of God and way to attain God.

Except Mansarovar, Gorakhmatta, Guru Nanak visited many other important places like: Nurpur, Kangra, Jwalamukhi, Dalhousie, Dharamsala, Manikaran, Rawalsar, Nadaun, Suket, Mandi, Kulu, Chamba, Bilaspur, Kahlur, Kiratpur, Spatu, Garhwal, Mussoorie, Chakrota, Sri Nagar, Badri Narayan, Bhim Kot, Ranikhet, Almora, Nainital, Pilibhit, Gorakhpur, Dholgarh, Pashupati

Mahavdev (in Nepal), Tamlung, Lachen (Sikkim), Darjeeling, Trashy Shu Dzon (Bhutan), Lakhim, Brahmkund, Shivpur, Raniganj, Janakpur, Sitamarhi, Kashipur, Sitapur, Jullundur etc.<sup>61</sup>

### **TOUR TO THE WEST**

In his fourth *Udasi* to west, he traveled across a number of Muslim countries. According to the Macauliffe, "Guru Nanak decided to visit Mecca, the pole star of Muhammandan devotion. He disguised himself in the blue dress of a Muhammandan pilgrim, took a faqir's staff in his hand and a collection of his hymns under his arm. He also carried with him in the style of Musalman devotee a cup for his ablutions and a carpet whereon to pray."<sup>62</sup> In Mecca Guru Nanak lay down to rest with his feet towards the Kaaba. As expected and desired by him, a loud uproar rose at once among the pilgrims and the custodians of the sacred place. They swore at him, they threatened and kicked him and said, 'why are you sleeping with your feet towards the house of God'? The Guru responded coolly and asked the Muslim to put his feet in a direction away from the house of God. They dragged the Guru's feet in the opposite direction. The Kaaba was seen to be standing in the direction in which the Guru's feet had been turned. They took up the feet again and pulled them to another direction. The Kaaba was seen to follow. The Guru wanted to tell them that God dwells in all directions. Indeed, he is the life of all life and the light of all light. The Hajjis (Pilgrims) saw this strange sight and heard these words with wide, open mouths. They realized the truth of what the Guru had said, Guru Nanak convinced the Hajjis that God dwell in no particular direction or place but pervades everywhere.

From Mecca the Guru moved on the Madina .There too, the learned men of the place held a discussion with him. The Quzis and Mullas crowded round the Guru Nanank and interrogated him on the subject of his religion. Further they inquired which was superior, the Hindu or Muslims. The Guru replied, without good acts the professors of both religions shall suffer, neither Hindus nor the

Musalms shall obtain entrance into God's court.<sup>63</sup> So after listening the ideas of Guru Nanak they had to bow to him. They learned that it is only the acts of man that makes him superior or inferior not religion to which they belong. All who heard the Guru's divine songs and soul inspiring discourses became his disciples.

Pirs, Faqirs, Mullas, Pandits, Yogis, and scholars had met him and tried to defeat him in argument. The Guru had touched some inner chords in their hearts and made them see the divine spark which glow and burns in the depths of every human heart, but which get clouded and shrouded in deep thick layers of worldly delusion. In all places he had enjoined upon his disciples to carry to others the message of life, love, light, and joy which he had imparted to them. In this way, the purifying, uplifting and unifying movement which he had started was carried on after him in all places that he visited. He wanted to make people spiritually alive. His presence was needed everywhere. Like a blessing cloud in the rainy season, he went about irrigating with life-giving waters of truth, faith, knowledge, and loves the barren tracts of humanity which came within his way.<sup>64</sup> So where ever he went he spread message of God among human beings.

It is a generally accepted view that Guru Nanak was present at Saidpur when the town was sacked by the Babur. Babur had invaded the Punjab for third time.<sup>65</sup> The year 1520 is assigned to this incident on the basis of Babur's account. The primary source of information regarding the Saidpur incident is the group of Guru Nanak's hymns in the Guru Granth, collectively known as *Babar-vani*. There are clear and direct references to the Mughal-Pathan contest. The Guru says:

Millions of priests tried by the their miraculous power to restrain  
the emperor when they heard of his approach.

He burned houses, mansions, and palaces; he cut princes to  
pieces, and had them rolled in the dust.

No Mughal hath become blind; no priest hath wrought a miracle.

There was a contest between the Mughals and Pathans; the  
sword was wielded in the battle.

One side aimed and discharged their guns, the other also  
handled their weapons.<sup>66</sup>

When Babar reached Saidpur then started the plunder of and massacre in the city. All men that were found there were murdered in cold blood. Women, whether of high or low families and castes, whether Hindu or Muhammadan, were dragged by the hair in the dusty streets, beaten, outraged, and forced amid tortures to disclose their hidden jewellery and valuable property. The soldiers, intoxicated with victory and wine spared neither child, woman, nor old man. Women and children were led into captivity. All men who somehow escaped the sword were made prisoners and forced to carry their plundered property to the camp of the victorious army. Such was the 'Holy War' of Babar for success in which he failed not to invoke the aid of God. The neighbouring villages were also treated in the same manner. Sword, fire, rape and rapine spread desolation all round. The Guru and Mardana were at Saidpur when Babar's armies fell upon that city. Both of them were taken up prisoners, Guru Nanak was given a load to carry and Mardana was required to act as a groom for the horse of one of the commanders named Mir Khan.<sup>67</sup>

A miracle followed when the Guru was carrying loads on his head under orders of a Mughal officer. The matter was reported to Babar who went to see the Guru in prison and fell at his feet on hearing one of his hymns:

No one can kill him, O Kind One, whom  
Thou preservest.

How can the praises be numbered? Thou savest countless beings.....<sup>68</sup>

At the Guru's request Babar released the captives of Saidpur and restored their property, and recalled the military posts which had been stationed round the city.

The tour to Achal Batala and Multan was the last of his tours. Guru Nanak went to Achal Batala in the Punjab, to see the Shivrati fair.<sup>69</sup> Achal Batala was an important centre of Siddha tradition. In Batala the Guru vanquished in argument with all priests who attended the fair, and obliged the followers of the six schools of Indian philosophy to bow before him. The Jogis finally complimented him on his success and said: Hail, O Nanak, great are thy deeds.<sup>70</sup> In Achal Batala and in Multan Guru instructed Siddhas and Muslim Faqirs the principle of his faith and made them spiritually alive. He taught them that how their false renunciation was hampering the progress of their souls. He convinced them that true renunciation consists in remaining unaffected and pure amid all allurements and impurities of the world. They and all their followers, thereupon, fell at his feet and joined the holy fellowship which he had founded.

During his last journey he went to the other important places like: Eminabad, Wazirabad, Gujrat, Rohtas, Pind Dadan Khan, Dera Ismail Khan, Dera Ghazi Khan, Shikarpur, Hyderabad (Sind), Karachi, Teheran, Jalalabad, Peshawar, Hasan Abdal, Poonch, Sialkot etc.<sup>71</sup> Guru Nanak spent the last part of his life at Kartarpur. During his stay at Kartarpur, Guru Nanak held daily congregations and converted his headquarters into a Dharamsala or Gurdwara in the true sense of the term.<sup>72</sup> The people of all the four Varnas and from the four corners of the country came there and chanted the hymns of the true Guru. A large number of followers settled at Kartarpur to make it the centre of Nanak's followers. One of the devotees of Guru Nanak was Lahina, a Khatri from Khadur. Lahina subsequently was to succeed Guru Nanak as the second Sikh Guru. "Lahina must have impressed the Guru by his devotion and ability, for prior to his death Guru Nanak renamed him Angand and appointed him as his successor in preference to either of his sons."<sup>73</sup> His elder son Baba Sri Chand was the founder of Udasi sect. The Younger son Baba Lakhmi Das was a householder. Guru Nanak's choice of the disciple in preference to either of his two sons as his successor proves the importance he attached to the

continuance of the message he had for the country He took him to his seat and calling him Angad, the flesh of his flesh and born of his bone saluted him as his successor. He was died soon after, on September 22, 1539.<sup>74</sup>

When Guru Nanak died, a quarrel ensued between Hindus and Muslims. Each party claiming that Guru belonged to it and so his last rites should be performed according to the tenents of its faiths. But, says the *Janam Sakhi*, the wise of both the communities settled the dispute, that both should place their flowers on the body of Baba Nanak and which ever party's flowers would wither away last would be entitled to claim his body. Next morning, the flowers of either party were as fresh as the night before and so both decided to divide the sheet covering his body, the Hindu burning it and the Muslims burying it, for, says the *Janam Sakhi*, his body in the meantime had disappeared into the realm of God carried by angels from the high heavens.<sup>75</sup>

Guru Nanak was thus not merely a Bhakta, or a detached of God, but a man deeply involved with the affairs of the world. Not only great poet, musician and philosopher, but also a city builder, a social and political rebel, an integrator of warring creeds and the creator of the new man in the new world supported by a new morality and a God that not only punishes and rewards, but also reclaims and redeems both man and his society.<sup>76</sup>

### **Works of Guru Nanak**

Friend Lalo! As descends to me the Lord's word, I express it.<sup>77</sup>

Similarly:

I have uttered only that thou hast inspired.<sup>78</sup>

Thus Guru Nanak uttered what God revealed to him. *Bani* of Guru Nanak recorded in the Guru Granth Sahib compiled by his fourth successor, Guru Arjan Dev. His *Bani* is full of praise of God it touches every aspect of human life and provides him guidance in all situations.

The *Bani* used the language of the common men, largely Punjabi with liberal use of vocabulary from Persian, Arabic, Sanskrit and regional language of India, or the Sant Bhasha understood practically all over the Indian subcontinent. The *Bani* infuses the spirit of self respect, dignity of labour, and highest ethical and spiritual values. It is revelatory in nature, and expresses a profound spiritual experience.<sup>79</sup>

The total number of hymns of Guru Nanak recorded in Guru Granth Sahib are 974, written in nineteen musical measures (rags). The major works of the Guru Nanak are Japuji Siddh Gosti, Asa di var, Majh di Var, Malar di Var and Dakhni Oamkar.

Japuji starts with 'Jap'. 'Jap' is the process of meditation through the repetition of God's Nam. The whole of Sri Guru Granth Sahib revolves around the process and technique to attain God through 'Jap'. 'Jap' does not go alone. It always keeps company with 'tup' i.e. austere living and 'sanjam' i.e. control of passions through self mortification.<sup>80</sup>

Japuji is his outstanding composition, which is composed by Guru Nanak in the later year of his life at Kartarpur after his long journeys. This longer poem composed for recitation, guidance and spiritual advancement. Japuji which is the most wonderful creation of Guru Nanak contains the Mul-Mantra in thirty-eight stanzas of varying lengths. Almost all the basic problems on the way to spiritual realization have been touched upon in these hymns. Japuji meant to be recited by the disciples in the early hours of the morning. Guru Nanak wanted his disciples to comprehend the basic tenets through regular study and practice for spiritual progress. According to Guru Nanak we live in the world of names and forms, but our ideal is attainment of the formless and attributeless Lord, for the realization of this ideal several hints have been given in Japuji. Japuji lays emphasis on accepting the Divine will and need for inculcating virtue is stressed. In the end various stages on the path leading to Sach Khand have been discussed.

Japuji is rich in content, for its stanzas not only sing the glories of the Wondrous Lord, but also expose spiritual hypocrisy, religious cant and false beliefs, which are hurdles on the way to the realm of bliss. Japuji clearly denoted how one can move in harmony with *Hukum*, and how one can demolish the wall of falsehood. The seeker is required to have firm faith in one Guru, God, and to abide by His laws and not by the vested interests of the so-called and self appointed representative of the Lord, who are running their shops in the name of religion.<sup>81</sup> No idolatry is allowed, because according to Japuji God can neither be created nor embodied in a stone.<sup>82</sup> Further, the seeker is exhorted to hold fast to the optimistic faith in the possibility of the realization of the Divine. The main topics which are discussed in Japuji are as following:

1. **Truth:** The main subject which has been discussed in the Japuji is truth. Guru Nanak has given the name of the God as truth. Truth is immutable and beyond time and space, life and death. It never gets old or worn out. In the very beginning Guru Nanak raised the question that “how can man become true, and how can be wall of falsehood be demolished”? Guru Nanak himself answered, truth can only be realized in concurrence with the Divine Will and Jiva has been instructed to listen and follow inner voice in the form of *Hukum* which has been perennially an integral part of Jiva.

In the Mul Mantra, the poet has given the name of the God as truth, the ever-existent one. Truth is indivisible and imperishable. The finite soul falls into the cycle of birth and death due to the non-realization of truth and it can be achieved only through the grace of Lord, which puts us on the right track and brings equilibrium of action, devotion and knowledge.<sup>83</sup>

Truth is the basic to the creation, morality, and spirituality. Guru Nanak expects the Jiva to become *sachiar*, i.e., truth oriented. *Sachiar*, is defined by Guru Nanak as the being free from superstitious beliefs that are cherished by the general populace misled by bat-eyed priests. The

sixteenth stanza of Japuji states that the *sachiar* understands the mystery that it is not the mythic bull but Dharam (begotten of compassion and content), which supports and sustains the whole humanity on earth. However, the essence of sach or reality in all its aspects is the life-pulse throbbing in the objects of the universe, though the thrust of this life-force in the so-called “less evolved” ones is not clearly perceptible. Those contemplating the self to the Supreme of Self are attuned.<sup>84</sup> Thus Guru Nanak emphasized on truth and truthful living.

2. **Jiva:** Instead of considering man as Hindu, Sikh, Muslim, Brahmin, Khatri, Vaish or Sudra, in Sikhism man is visualized as Jiva, having come on this planet to earn goodness through complete surrender to God and service to His creation.

In this field of action the Jiva undergoes a very hard test, because material forces as keep him away from the Lord. Worldly pleasures attract him, but he gets no satisfaction out of them. At times he is subjected to lust, anger, greed, worldly affection and ego. All time he is hungry, thirsty and jealous of others. He is subjected to several ills and finds his release very difficult.<sup>85</sup>

According to Guru Nanak Jiva is a part of God; it has not the fullness of God and, therefore, cannot be as omniscient as He is.

**Karma and Grace:** The law for birth of man, the Guru says, is the law of Karma. In the court of the Lord man is judged by his actions only. The plane on which we live is the plane of action. Therefore we have to be very conscious about our actions. By our actions we become lowly, by our actions we raise in esteem. We rise and fall because of our actions. There are certain actions which we are enjoined by *Shastras* to perform for our spiritual advancement, but Guru Nanak has strongly rejected such actions.<sup>86</sup> The birth of man is due to his own actions and final liberation depends upon the grace of work. Both Karma and Grace are necessary for the spiritual development because Karma put us on right track through the grace of the Lord.

3. **Hukam:** The original meaning of *Hukum* in Arabic is (order) but with the passage of time and with the advancement of Islamic theology, it began to give various meanings. Guru Nanak gives a new meaning to this word. Here it does not mean order pertaining to any decision or command of God, but here it is the universal order. That means the whole universe or the smallest particle of that is in a well-knit order or in perfect arrangement. It moves and works within the fold of that order it is obviously clear that, according to Guru Nanak, *Hukum* is not only the order of God, but it is what created by Him.<sup>87</sup>

Guru Nanak mention in Jupuji, By His will the universe comes to be-though it is difficult to say how it is so. By His will the living beings come to be and by His will they receive their excellences. High and low come to be by His will they come to obtain their portion of happiness and misery .Some receives gifts by His will, while others toil vainly. Whatever is by His will, nothing is outside its sway. He who understands His will-he alone can free himself from egoism.<sup>88</sup>

Thus the whole universe moves and works according to Law of God. Similarly:

All beings by Divine ordinance arise  
by the ordinance in actions engage  
Some by the ordinance to death submit  
Some by the ordinance in truth are absorbed.  
Saith Nanak: this happens as the Lord wills  
Nothing in the hands of mere creatures lies.<sup>89</sup>

Thus, only God is responsible for creation and sustenance. According to Guru Nanak all the worldly powers, wisdom, divinity and austerity are just empty if a man do not understand the Divine order. Therefore man should be humble and should follow the Nam Marg to attain salvation.

4. **Five Plane or Five Khands:** Khand is a part, realm, region or a section of an area. In Khands we pass through different spiritual experience. Without fulfilling certain conditions we cannot reach these Khands. It is a journey of mind also. It is the sort of moral situation in which everyone normally finds himself before he makes an attempt to progress beyond the mere performance of his socially assigned duties.<sup>90</sup> Each region is independent world. The mind learns and absorbs knowledge systematically. It is process of purification of mind. The five mystic regions described by Guru in Japuji are Dharam Khand, Gian Khand, Saram Khand, Karam Khand and Sach Khand. These five Khands are a symbolic representation of the process leading to Sach Khand. These are the five spiritual stages. We will have to scale and ascend step by step to achieve oneness with the God. These five realms or regions will have to be enkindled within through the ascending force of 'Naam'. The Guru has explained these realms one by one to make us aware of the spiritual and mystic characteristic of each of these realms.<sup>91</sup>

**Dharma Khand:** This world where we are born and act, is a world of piety (Dharma Khand). In the words of Guru Nanak:

God has created nights and days seasons and occasions  
air, water, fire and nether regions. He has established the  
earth, amidst these as the place to practice righteous action.<sup>92</sup>

God is supposed to be creator of this universe. In this world of time and space, of days and nights, of lunar dates and seasons, of air, water and fire, there are Jivas of diverse types, colours and names. All are performing their duties in this grand scheme of the universe and all are to be judged by their deeds and actions. There is a special emphasis on actions in the region of dharam. These Jivas bears the fruits of their actions, only liberated ones are received with respect in the court of the Lord because of their actions. In the very first step we come to know about the role of righteousness to help as ascend to the abode of God. The moral agent not

only cultivates moral virtues and performs his social obligations but appears also to be moving towards wider horizons.<sup>93</sup> Thus this world of piety told us how to adopt the real virtues in life by discrimination between good and bad actions. By adopting virtues qualities in practical life and moving on the right path, we enter the next stage i.e. the plane of knowledge (Gian Khand).

**Gian Khand:** Gian does not mean the bookish knowledge here. It is not the outward material knowledge gained through the five senses of the body. In the second progressive stage the person is required to seek tri-dimensional realization. These three Khands are the Gian Khand, the Saram Khand and the Karam Khand which are respectively the dimensions of knowledge, aesthetics and action. All these three are to be carried to their ideal ends in an integrated manner.<sup>94</sup> As it is said by Guru Nanak:

In the sphere of enlightenment,  
spiritual illumination blazes forth.  
In that sphere reign mystic melody,  
sublime visions, wonder and joy.<sup>95</sup>

It is the knowledge one gains by ascending the stairs of Jap. In this stage, the seeker observes the vastness of the universe. The wind, water and fire are there. Countless Krishnas and Shivas are there. Number of Brahmas are there creating many types of forms and colours. Countless lands of action, countless precious mountains of Sumer and countless Dhravas are there, giving sermons. Countless indras, moons, suns, and a number of spheres and countless countries are there. Countless Sidhas, Budhas, Nathas and numerous images of Goddesses are there. Numerous gods, demons ascetics and oceans of jewels are there. Countless sources of life forms of speech number of kings and sovereigns are there. The knowledge leads to revelation as our soul encounters myriads of truths unfolded by the Guru ending in the still endless scheme of the God.<sup>96</sup> This plane gives an idea to the seeker of his position in this huge set-up. It gives him an

impetus to recognize his own potentialities and try to rise on higher planes. He feels elated.<sup>97</sup>

So in this stage the seeker observes the vastness of the universe and realizes his own limitations. There seems to be no end of knowledge.

**Saram Khand:** Guru Nanak also stressed the need for aesthetic realization. Beauty is an attribute of this plane. It is beautiful realm in our upward journey. Here we grab a unique opportunity to have an encounter with the greatest, incomparable aesthetic i.e. the God himself. The seeker has realized not only knowledge but also the discernment of beauty, in the socio-physical environment with which he is in perfect harmony.<sup>98</sup> In the words of Guru Nanak:

The keynote of the realm of spiritual endeavor  
is beauty. The most exquisite forms are fashioned there.<sup>99</sup>

There is infinite beauty all around. Beauty is the major characteristic of Saram Khand and we find the beauty formed here. This region serves as an ideal to form beautiful ideas, things and shapes.

After leaving the plane of aesthetic efforts the seekers enters the next plane i.e. the plane of Grace (Karam Khand).

**Karam Khand:** Karam Khand is integrated with dimension of the aesthetics as well as that of knowledge.<sup>100</sup> Here man acquires the real power and strength. The Lord's grace is the chief characteristic here. The souls that reach here do so with grace of the Lord. They are the souls that have won the happiness of the Lord through their Jap. Thus Guru Nanak expressed his feelings for Karam Khand as:

In the realm of grace spiritual power reigns supreme  
There dwell none except the brave and mighty heroes,  
Endowed with the spirit of the all pervading God.<sup>101</sup>

Karam Khand is region where the soul has crossed the barriers of life and death. They are the souls that rejoice the 'anand' of the Lord's grace. The Lord is all-powerful. His powers manifest themselves in a seeker through his grace thus the state of full bloom is attained in this plane. The state

achieved in the fourth plane leads the seeker to his goal i.e. the plane of truth (Sach Khand).

**Sach Khand:** Sach Khand is the realm of truth. It is the abode of the formless God. It is the full of Lord's ecstatic grace. After reaching here, the soul gets the glance of innumerable endless and in explicable khands and other mystic region that are visible from here. Reaching here the soul has become a perfect. *Sachiara* and gets the reward of being a *sachiara* by getting God's grace. This plane is the abode of the formless, who is infinite, and creator and master of the infinite creation. For Sach Khand Guru Nanak said:

In the realm of truth dwells the formless one, God himself  
Who creates ceaselessly, and watches and blesses all  
With his gracious glance.<sup>102</sup>

In Sach Khand man becomes one with God. Here the seeker washes away all the dirt of passions, vices and ego. He is purified and beautified. The intellect also becomes pure.

5. **Triple Interpretation of the Five Planes:** The physical interpretation of five planes takes the whole of the creation in its purview. To start-with, we find ourselves on this earth which is the sphere of action. Through action we begin to understand this world and that understanding leads us to the plane of knowledge. Knowledge leads to the purgation in the Saram Khand where Jivas is purged off all the baser emotions and passions. With his mind purified he is able to see the beauty of the creation. But he comes to the real virtue when he enter into the plane of grace which is the swelling place of saints and which is a way to the final stage to Sach Khand.

In order to realize God, the spirit has to travel incessantly through the spiritual planes, inwardly. The planes are the spiritual planes through which the spirit rises during its ascent. As the soul ascends, the body becomes subtle gradually

and vanishes when it reaches the plane of truth, where the formless soul merges in formless God.<sup>103</sup>

### **Siddh Gosti**

In Siddh Gosti, the Guru has recorded the substance of the discussion in the form of questions and answers. Apart from comments on the practices followed by the Yogis or Naths, the Guru explains his own concept of the Divine, which constitutes the epitome of Sikh metaphysics.<sup>104</sup>

The 'Gosti' simply means mutual discussion or debate. A hymn of seventy three stanzas the Siddh Gosti contains the conversation in poetry of Siddhas or Yogis with Guru Nanak. Only two names Charpat and Loharipa, figure in the entire poem and these two Siddhas were the main leaders of their respective sects of Yogis. The Yogis assembled on one side, while Guru Nanak and his companions or disciples were on the other side.

In all his hymns including 'Siddh Gosti', we find a demand for the cultivation of a belief which should evolve and present a way of life consistent with truth. For this very fact, Guru Nanak's hymns have an intrinsic value not only for their wisdom of practical life but also for the high flights of imagination into spirituality. His keen insight witnessed a common bond among the different temperaments of the people and that is why he insisted that truth is for all and that is a unifying force, never a divisive one. He stressed the fundamental truth of all religions and asked Hindus to become better Hindus and Muslims to be better Muslims. Guru Nanak did not write any epic like many great poets, but his hymns are proof enough of his poetic gifts, where we find that it is not the poetry but its subject is more important. His hymns transport us into a spiritual world of awe, where face to face with the vastness of eternal truth we stand wonderstruck.<sup>105</sup>

Realization of truth and practice of truthful life is the main object of Siddh Gosti. During his journey Guru Nanak meet the Yogis at different places. All the yogis had become superstitious. He had many discussions with them

regarding the tenets of yoga and its implementation in day to day life. Guru Nanak meets with Siddhas and Nathas at four places like, Gorakh Mata, Sumeer Mountain, Nanak Mata and Achal Batala. Most of the scholars are of views that perhaps Siddh Gosti was composed in the last six or seven months of his life. Guru stresses on the following points in Siddh Gosti:

1. Wandering does not lead to purity and serve no purpose.
2. Emancipation is not possible without True Sabad (The Divine Word) realizing the Sabad in the world around and repudiating haumain (the sense of I-am-ness) are essential for this purpose.
3. Sabad is the real Guru, and not the human body or corporal form. Similarly, the real disciple is consciousness concentrated on the Divine word.<sup>106</sup>

The Siddhas wanted that the Guru should join their way of life but Guru Nanak rejected their way of life. Guru Nanak rejected their forced feeding of yoga to the body and explains to them that, they undertake long exercises and penances; force their body to abandon sleep, diet and normal life but the required balance is easily and automatically attained by grasping and making the Name a part and parcel of one's life.<sup>107</sup>

Guru Nanak considered that the liberated man is more responsible for helping in the struggle for the downtrodden, more responsible and sensitive towards the destitute, more alert and lively in regard to his surroundings and more full of pain and active sympathy in the troubles of his fellowmen. Such men are called Gurmukh by the Guru in Siddh Gosti and the Guru had put on the garb of an *Udasi* (hermit) in search of Gurmukhs.<sup>108</sup>

So it shows from the *Bani* of Guru Nanak that Gurmukh has more vibrant and engages himself in the task of upliftment of the downtrodden people. He is more sensible towards his duties, alert regarding his surroundings and full of compassion for all sentient creatures. Siddh Gosti stresses the fact that to equipose and emancipation, only true Sabad can be helpful and Gurmukh can understand it clearly. He delinks himself from self conceit and remains

detached even in the midst of attachments. The main problem in the Siddh Gosti is emancipation and only Sabad can be helpful in this matter. Man should eradicate his egoistic attitude and false pride. There is no need of tough exercise, penances, dieting etc. The Gurmukh is linked with Sat Guru who helps the disciple in the stilling of the mind and burning of ego. In the conclusion we can say that in the eye of Guru Nanak only Gurmukh is a true yogi.

### **Asa di Var**

Asa di Var is another prominent longer poem of Guru Nanak, after Japuji. Asa di Var is more analytical and explanatory. It is sung daily in the congregation by the musician to the accompaniment of musical instruments, whereas Japuji is recited by every Sikh in the early hours of the morning. It is congregational prayer, meant for collective singing in Gurdwaras. It has 24 pauris, each preceded by a varying number of slokas, some of which are composed by Guru Angad Dev. The Var deals with the beliefs and praxis of the major religious orders of the day: exposes the hypocrisy of priestly class exploiting the ignorant masses, criticizes meaningless rituals and superstitions beliefs and condemns social injustice and discrimination based on caste, creed gender etc.<sup>109</sup>

Guru Nanak wrote three Vars: Majh di Var, Asa di Var and Malar di Var, which have been included in the Guru Granth. The successors of Guru Nanak followed this practice of writing Vars. Guru Amar Das, the third Guru, wrote four Vars, Guru Ram Dass, the fourth Guru, composed eight, and Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Guru, wrote six. In all, there are twenty-two Vars in the Guru Granth including the one by Satta and Balwand, the bards in the court of Guru Arjan. All the Vars are set to music and put under Ragas and Raginis in the Guru Granth, like other hymns. Guru Nanak wrote his three Vars in ragas. Asa di Var has twenty-four pauris and each pauri is preceded by two or more slokas. It has eighty-three stanzas in all, including pauris and slokas. While

editing the Var, Guru Angad, the second Sikh Guru, added a few slokas of his own. The number of these slokas is fifteen.<sup>110</sup>

Except praise of God, social order is the main topic which has been discussed in Asa di Var. Aghoris, Jains, Jogis and their sub-sects as well as their ways to God have been defined. The hybrid society of Hindus, who had been serving the erstwhile Muslim rulers and were suffering from the guilt of being half-Muslim and half-Hindu, has been graphically brought out. However, a major part of this hymn is devoted to the hypocrisies of the decadent Indian social order where the individual psyche was ever in the grip of the fear of endless concatenation of births and deaths.<sup>111</sup> Similarly through Asa di Var, Guru Nanak has conveyed the message of God to erring human beings practicing sin and avarice. Asa di Var inspires people to get rid of dogmatism, ritualism, casteism, and gender discrimination, which were the evils of Indian society. Metaphysical, ethical, mystical aspects also have been discussed by Guru Nanak in Asa di Var which are as following:

1. **Metaphysics:** According to Guru Nanak there is a only one ultimate reality known as God. He is the creator, sustainer and destroyer of this universe. He is immortal. He is the giver, the owner of all. He gives life and withdraws it. He and his creation both are real. He is all powerful, who creates nature, Jivas and the wonderful world of form and colour. He is present everywhere. He is in skies, in earth, in water, in fire, in eating, in drinking, in wearing and in loving. All work under His fear. He is gracious and merciful. The Jivas are powerless. His Grace saves them. He is great and inexpressible. He takes care of every created thing and keeps it in His view. He is the cause of the actions of a Jiva.<sup>112</sup> These are certain qualities of that the powerful creator. He is supreme responsible for his vast creation. His wills reigns supreme.
2. **Ethics:** Truth is the highest virtue according to Guru Nanak and truthful living has been emphasized by him. For truthful living the mind has to be

made truthful by casting off the dirt of falsehood by loving truth, by following the truth.

The virtuous are rewarded and sinners are punished in the court of Lord, therefore a code of conduct is essential for an individual. Truth is the remedy for all ills; it washes away all sins. Only humility and modesty bring sweetness. They are the essence of virtues. If one wants to rise higher, he should do good actions and be humble. Further Guru Nanak is against all rituals and formalism. He is against the ritual of wearing a sacred thread and criticized it. Guru Nanak is also against the ritual of alms-giving for the pitris. He makes it clear that one has to be rewarded according to his own actions. He is equally critical of the supposition of impurity caused by child-birth (or miscarriage) in a family.

Guru Nanak also criticizes those people who are devoid of justice. He was also against those people who exploit the right of others. Guru Nanak has denounced exploitation of any kind. He lays special stress on altruism, justice, compassion, love and service. Here the usurpation of what belongs to others is not only vice, but it is rather a sin. Contentment, truthful conduct, right effort fearlessness, compassion, humility, non attachment and temperance should be the constituents of ethical life.

Guru Nanak gives equal rights to women. According to him woman should be honored in the social setup. Guru Nanak was also against the caste system. He preferred to stay at the house of Lalo and declined the invitation of the high official, who was known to be rich and a highborn. Guru Nanak established the institution of Langar, abolishing all barriers of castes system.

3. **Mysticism:** Mysticism is an indescribable experience. It attempts at grasping the ultimate reality and enjoying divine ecstasy arising from constant inter-communion between an individual and the deity he worships.<sup>113</sup> God is powerful and Jiva is powerless. Jiva, being the part of Lord, can rise to spiritual heights by adopting virtuous qualities, by remembering his name, and by following the instruction of the religious

preceptor. We must be aware of the false Gurus in the world because they mislead their disciples. The final emancipation is obtained through the true Guru, in whose company the worldly attachments end. There can be no knowledge without Guru. The Guru gives the knowledge and name. Those who remember the Nam are gainers. All others are losers.

According to Guru Nanak the path of mysticism begins with a Guru and ends with him. The Guru is the source, the way, the guide and the ultimate the destiny.

The God's Mysticism is a revolt against the perpetuated religious mechanism which begins with a distinctive type of practical behaviors and leads to practical satisfaction. It is a gradual process of development and real achievement is possible through efforts. Mysticism of Guru Nanak strives to gain the direct realization of the oneness of all the things and ultimately to merge into the one supreme reality. It is an act of purification and a way of identifying oneself with that reality.<sup>114</sup> Man is suggested to adopt the process of hearing, reflecting and developing the feeling of love. The most important thing in the mysticism is Sabda or Word. The real bliss is only in being lost in his Nam through Sabda. Another means of achieving the unity is services of others. It is the first and last duty of the devotee to serve God and mankind. He has to work for the well being of humanity. In the mysticism of Guru Nanak service is the most significant means of achieving oneness with God.

According to Guru Nanak this universe is created by God and we cannot fully understand its nature, vastness and depth because our vision is limited but nature is unlimited. We can simply know part of it. Guru Nanak believed that the universe is not only His creation but He Himself is abiding in it. So the whole universe is a manifestation of God. We can conclude that Guru Nanak fought against stagnation in life and by his mysticism he exerted a deep influence on the awakening of popular piety.

## **Majh di Var**

This Var is divided into 27 Pauries and 63 Saloks. Each Pauri has 8 lines. It is the first Var of Guru Nanak among the three. There are many aspects touched in Majh di Var like God, Man, Guru, Nam, Virtue etc. but it is difficult to decide that to whom much importance is given. But it is clear that truth have been emphasized more than the others. Majh di Var is also a description about spiritualism. Var is the form of poetry in which before Guru Nanak the people have sung about brave warriors, kings and folk heroes especially about their marvelous victories.

### **1. Material World:**

**The creation:** This whole creation is the handy work of God, in fact God himself is identified by his creation:

He himself created the universe and himself gives it thought.<sup>115</sup>

He creates this universe and he himself is the caretaker of this creation. This creation is of many colours and kinds and it has been created and being run by the Divine will. This will is a Law in itself and it is in force since the very beginning of this world. In the Majh di Var, Guru Nanak has observed that this world is a temple of smoke and so not stable, this world is an illusion because only the persons in illusion get involved in the process of birth and death.

As Guru Nanak said:

One comes and another goes; without the Lord's name, all is death.<sup>116</sup>

Although it is true that this world is short lived yet it is important. There are many creatures in this world. Some take birth and some meet death. God knows everything about all creatures. He gives birth to all creatures and put them into the illusion. Every living creature is burning in the fire of desires and this makes his hunger insatiable. There are the illusions, which can be overcome with the help of Almighty only, because nothing happens without His will.

## 1. Man

**Physical Body:** According to Majh di Var man's whole life has been divided into nine parts. Up to ten years man enjoys childhood. In twenty years he approaches youth. Thirty is the period of beauty. Forty is the age of full youth. At the age of fifty he begins to become unstable and at sixty he comes to old age. At the age of seventy his wits starts giving way. At eighty he is unable to do any work. At ninety he becomes bed ridden and thus, his physical self heads towards its end. God has beautified man's body by giving it attractive structure and has blessed it with a soul. Body has sense organs and motor organs. Human body sees with eyes, listens with ears, and walks with feet, works with hands. He eats and wears whatever is gifted to him by God but once destroyed, this body cannot be restructured.<sup>117</sup> We cannot get Moksha only by cleaning our body but by the removing ego yet, it is necessary to keep the body clean. According to Guru Nanak:

They the bald-heads that bathe not, O, dust be on their heads.<sup>118</sup>

God gives everything to man with Nam, everything is in vain and it is through the Guru's Grace one receives Lord's Nam. One puts food in one's mouth, when bark one's thirst and hunger. All that one eats becomes dust, yet are we attached to the eats.<sup>119</sup>

So both physical and mental purity is needed in order to become one with God.

**2. Emotions:** Violence, attachment, greed and anger are four rivulets of fire.<sup>120</sup> The wise one is a fool if he indulges in ego, greed and lust.<sup>121</sup> He, who is in their grip, burns himself and is saved only through Lord's Grace.<sup>122</sup> Without true Guru one's attachment breaks not.<sup>123</sup> He saves all his kins, blessed is his mother who brought him forth.<sup>124</sup> They who fear not the Lord are ever in fear and their ego destroys them all.<sup>125</sup> Ego is cause of all attachment and ignorance. There is pain in ego says Nanak: if his ego goes through the Guru, he dwells on the Lord's name.<sup>126</sup> He, who loses himself will be approved at the Lord's court.<sup>127</sup> He, who loses himself, knows the truth.

**3. Economical Values:** In Majh di Var, the economy achievements are given less importance than spiritual values. It is said that without Nam nothing is true. Without the Lord's Name, there is no other wealth, all else is poison and dust.<sup>128</sup> Guru Nanak says, if the mountains were of gold and silver, studded with jewels and rubies, even then I would worship you, O Lord, and my desire to utter thy praise will go not.<sup>129</sup> Without the Nam of God there is no use of beautiful clothes, sexual pleasure and to sleep on soft beds. Without the Lord's Nam all that we wear and eat is poison.<sup>130</sup> If I abide in a cave in the mountain of gold or down in the deep of water, whether on the earth, or over the skies even then ego can't be removed. Treasures full of wealth are emptied in a moment.<sup>131</sup> According to Guru Nanak man thinks that all things will remain his but all these will pass away one day. Guru Nanak says:

He, who imbued with the love of dominion and  
riches, dances to their tune unashamedly.<sup>132</sup>

Thus all the worldly things are momentary and short living. Man should not attach himself with these things. Only God's Nam is last living.

**4. Intellectuals Values:** For mind, the word 'Mat' is used. It is said that mind is just like a bird and its nature is determined by the actions done by him in the previous life. Sometime it becomes good and sometime bad. Sometime it is involved in the world and then again is attuned to the highest truth. There is a dark night of falsehood all around and truth can't be seen in such situation. The wise one is a fool if he indulges in ego, greed and lust.<sup>133</sup> So man should remember the Lord, with the instruction of Guru, to earn the treasureful wealth of devotion.

**5. Aesthetical Values:** Human body is beautiful. The fool thinks the solid and beautiful mansions will remain his.<sup>134</sup> And mated I with the houris of the heavens.<sup>135</sup> Nanak, all these will pass away. According to Guru Nanak only those people are beautiful who attuned with God, blessed in his understanding and magnificent his glory, who has fixed his mind on the Lord.

**6. Ethics Values:** In Majh di Var, special emphasis has been laid on ethical values. It tells us about those ideals, which are universally true. In Majh di Var exploitation of the rights of others has been criticized. According to Guru Nanak false is his speech and usurps what is not his and yet he goes out to preach to the others.<sup>136</sup> By mere talks none goes to the heaven. The evil doer, the foolish, knows not the master, call him a mad cap who knows not himself.<sup>137</sup> In this world bad actions have bad fruits. Nanak: the fool has this trait in him and what he speaks is all vain.<sup>138</sup> In Majh di Var good qualities of a Muslims have been discussed. Ideal qualities of man reflected by Guru Nanak are the ideal qualities of an ideal human being.

**7. Social Ethics:** Discrimination is not done on the basis of caste system in the house of God. What merits is in caste? Know thou the truth within.<sup>139</sup> In the house of God there is no lower no higher, all are equal. Only actions of man made them lower and higher not the caste.

**8. Political Ethics:** At the time of birth of Guru Nanak, the political and social conditions were not good. Guru Nanak did not only criticize political condition but also explained the quality of an ideal state and ideal king. Guru Nanak says that the whole world, the pirs, the sheikhs, the kings and the chief will be buried under the earth. The monarchs will also pass away. God alone is eternal.

**9. Religious Ethics:** In Majh di Var the Guru has repeated many times that there is no use of any other deeds without the Nam Simran of God. Some persons live in the woods and feed themselves on the roots. Some wear the ochre robes and acclaimed as Yogis and Sanyasies. But, within them burns the desire for delicacies and fine raiment. These types of people can never be householders nor have they renounced the world. They are egged on by desires and work within the three modes. So the cycle of birth and death always hangs over their heads.<sup>140</sup> Some people believe that by singing, dancing and by bathing in holy places, they can get God.<sup>141</sup> But according to the Guru Nanak all the formalities and rituals are useless only God's Nam is useful.

**10. Spiritual Values:** Soul comes in this universe according to the wish of God and it works according to Him. The attachment of the bride to her spouse is seasoned by love. She worships her Lord night and days and is held not back.<sup>142</sup> The words make her beautiful and she abides in the castle of the Lord.<sup>143</sup> She prays for truth and walks in his will. God himself unites body and soul and Himself separates them. When Jiva gets separated from God, it indulges in worldly pleasure and suffers pain.

**11. Means of Moksha:** Guru is the primary source for the attainment of moksha. Majh di Var starts from the appreciation of God. The Guru is beneficent, the sanctuary of peace and the light of the three worlds. Without the help of Guru the creature is lost in the darkness. Guru Nanak says that the Guru is the tree of the contentment, which flowers in faith and fruitions in wisdom.<sup>144</sup> So according to Guru Nanak only Guru can quench the fire of desires through Word. Man should follow the instructions of Guru to reach the ultimate reality that is 'Moksha'.

**12. Meditation:** In the true mind abides the word is needed to reach at Guru's home. Without Nam everything is in vain. Only by meditation or Nam we can meet God. Morning time is the perfect time for 'Nam Simran' because at that time mind can be attuned with God. When we reach the true gate, we speak nothing but truth.<sup>145</sup>

**13. God:** God is creator, universal and beyond this physical world.<sup>146</sup> He creates the whole universe.<sup>147</sup> He is eternal and away from Maya.<sup>148</sup> He knows everything about everyone. He is creator and great. Human being cannot approach him. Vedas also try to identify the God but cannot succeed. God is above human experiences.

### **Malar di Var**

It is said that Guru Nanak writes Malar di Var in 1521 after the invasion of Babar. Guru Nanak was the eye witness of all the devastation. In Malar di Var, he expresses his feelings about the invasion quite clearly.<sup>149</sup>

## **1. Material World**

The Lord creates Himself and knows Himself. He creates the sun and the moon illumined by His own light. He also creates night and day: O wondrous are his wonders.<sup>150</sup> About creation Guru Nanak says: Through the thirty-six yugas, He abided in utter chaos, for, such was His will, and He, surrounded all sides by black and wild waters, created by Himself.<sup>151</sup> Further Guru Nanak says: God Himself creates this universe and Himself takes care of it. Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh are different names of the power of God. The God, of Himself, creates the earth and then takes care of it.<sup>152</sup> So this world is created and supported and destroyed by Him. He created this world and living in the every part of the universe. All the things are made by Him. Only God is eternal nothing else. All other things are involved in the process of birth and death. The whole creation is working under the Hukam of God.

**2. Man:** In His will, the God writes the destinies of all, without the ink or the pen.<sup>153</sup> All happen as He wills. He is the supreme bestower. God, himself, has created the eighty-four lakhs of species on the earth. Human life is very precious man should avail this opportunity to meet God through Nam Simran.

**3. Body:** Life is made of air, water and fire and it is affected now by pain, and pleasure. The time passes by day and by night and the body wears off and becomes a mere waste. But still the whole world is involved in involvement. When a man dies, the survivors wail and wish him back alive. Without realization no insight comes. Otherwise they, who weep for dead, would know that they themselves have to die. For, such is the will of God. Those neglectful of Lord are truly dead.<sup>154</sup> Thus body of Human being is impermanent, while soul is permanent. Who so ever came to this world, one he has to leave it. Everything is momentary, nothing is stable.

**4. Feelings:** Man is surrounded by the raging fires (of desire) night and day. According to Guru Nanak seeker's thirst cannot be quenched but it goes on increasing day by day. Lust loves beauty; hunger is tied to the taste.<sup>155</sup> Greed

loves nothing but riches. Dominions, riches, colour, beauty, caste, all the five are great deceivers and because of these deceivers, man falls in ego. If one is getting rid of one's ego, then one calculates not.<sup>156</sup> The egocentric is enveloped by darkness as is one strayed in the wilderness of the woods.<sup>157</sup> All the attachment is due to the ego. The egocentrics practice falsehood and they, verily, are defeated and humbled at the Lord's Court.<sup>158</sup> It is only through Guru's words, ego, desire, attachment can be ended.

**5. Economical Values:** There are some people who called themselves kings, chiefs. They just love money. Such types of people are poor in the eye of Guru Nanak. According to Guru Nanak without the true Nam one's honour is torn from head to foot.<sup>159</sup> Those who gather riches attached to others, they lose honour in the house of God.

**6. Intellectual Values:** Only through knowledge doubt can be eradicate. Through perfect wisdom and concentration, I have rid myself of the soil.<sup>160</sup> Without his fear, one is rid not of one's doubt and one loves not the name.<sup>161</sup> According to Guru Nanak, praise the Lord's Name all other knowledge is an illusion.

**7. Ethical Values:** At the Lord's court when men are to be judged, their noses will be chopped off.<sup>162</sup> The Slanderers and back-biters are fettered and chained he, who by the Guru's Grace, merges in truth, I am acclaimed at the Lord's court.<sup>163</sup> So man is inspired to do good deeds, to get grace of Lord.

**8. Political Ethics:** In the Court of Lord there is a complete justice. According to Guru Nanak he alone is learned and wise who practices the Lord's name. The king should follow the way of justice. The kings who are cruel and do injustice, suck the blood of subjects are shameful.

**9. Religious Ethics:** Marg of 'Nam' is a true Marg. Without 'Nam' all other rituals are useless. In the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> pauris of Malar di Var Guru Nanak have discussed different rituals like:

Some there are who repair to the woods, composed in their silence.  
Others suffer the pangs of wintry frosts and freeze themselves like ice.  
Others besmear their bodies with ashes and cleanse themselves not.  
Others keep their hair matted, to look wild, and so lose caste with their  
fellowmen.

Others wander about naked, and doze no, nor sleep.  
Others burn themselves in fire, limb, and thus waste themselves away.  
Without the(Lord's) Name, their bodies and reduced to the dust: so why, and  
for what, shall one grieve for them?  
Yea, they alone look Beauteous at the Lord's at the Lord's Court who erve the  
True Guru.<sup>164</sup>

So, in the world only the 'Nam' of God is useful. Other formalities are useless.

**10. Spiritual Section:** It is difficult to be virtuous. Haumai and Kama always disturb man. But one who utters his 'Nam' becomes stable. The process of birth and death comes to an end for him. God, himself creates the world and gives thought of virtue and sin, which so ever love not the Nam, is involved in the world of three modes. Guru Nanak says:

The egocentrics run wild, bereft of the Lord's Name.  
Though wrapped in a human skin, they have imbibed the animal nature,  
And are black from with in. But other through the true word, see the true Lord  
pervade all.<sup>165</sup>

So egocentrics types of people are animal in the form of human beings.

**11. Means of Moksha:** Without God's fear, one is rid not of one's doubt and one loves not the Nam. It is through the true Guru that God's fear wells up in one, and one is emancipated it is through, the Lord's fear that one attains equipoise, and one is illumined by God's infinite light, it is through God's

fear, does one cross the sea of fear and we attain unto the fear-free Lord of whom there is no end, no finitude. The egocentric knows not God's fear and he wails, cast in the fire of craving. According to Guru Nanak one finds peace only thorough Lord's Name, and enshrines the Guru's wisdom in the heart.<sup>166</sup> Like the other *Banis* of Guru Nanak in Malar di Var he emphasized that Guru is needed for the attainment of the Moksha. It is through true Guru that one gets emancipated.

As it is said by Guru Nanak, "I am a sacrifice unto my Guru who has brought me true wisdom". Similarly: By serving the perfect Guru, I have attained unto my perfect Lord.<sup>167</sup> The world lies mad without the Guru and without the Guru one realizes not the Nam. It is through the Guru's word that one realizes true God. The Guru's word ferries everyone across the sea of existence only if one realizes it. Those Gurus are mad who pass their spiritual crown on to the undeserving ones, and shamefaced are those who accept their thrones. They are like the mice that can contain themselves not in their holes, but to drag a winnowing basket along with their tails.<sup>168</sup> He, who attached to God, receives his quintessence. Moksha can be attained through a truthful mind.<sup>169</sup> In Malar di Var Guru Nanak emphasised on 'Nam Bhakti' because it is a means of Moksha. The Name is the treasure of Bliss and it is through the perfect Guru that one sees it.<sup>170</sup> Without the Lord's Nam, the body is reduced to dust. The only profit is in the Lord's Nam, and whosoever in-drinks this nectar, is in peace. When the Lord's pleasure is upon him, then who can ask him to render the account of his deeds.<sup>171</sup> It is through the Guru's Word that one praised God with utter devotion, without devotion there is no worship. Those who gathers the Lord's riches, earns honour and righteousness.

**12. Liberation and Liberated Persons:** In Malar di Var there is a clear description of liberated person. Those who serve the true Guru, are approved of by God, their soul is merged in God. He alone is the servant of God, who submits to his will.

**13. God:** God is Nirgun as well as Sarguna. No other is equivalent to Him. The Lord Himself creates and knows Himself. He creates the sun and the moon illumined by His own light.<sup>172</sup> Only God is eternal but others come and go. God has neither a father, nor mother, who may have brought Him forth. He neither has form, nor sign, nor any caste.<sup>173</sup> Nothing can be said about the God. The ascetics, the celibates, the Siddhas, the Pirs, the religious guides, of these no one knows God's end.<sup>174</sup> God is unfathomable, unperceivable, unknowable and infinite. He is the only giver; others are beggars at His door. He is beyond sign, beyond colour, unfathomable, which is accountable to no one. He is the treasure of merit, the meritorious master of the universe. It is through the Guru's wisdom that one can see Him. Within us is the darkness but God is beyond all. He, who is attached to God, receives His quintessence. He, who hears the Gospel of his indescribable God, he is ever in bliss and blest eternally with all the treasures and all miraculous powers.<sup>175</sup>

**Baramah Tukhari:** According to Puratan Janam Sakhi Baramah is the last creation of Guru Nanak. It has three aspects like:

1. Aesthetical Aspect.
2. Social Aspect.
3. Spiritual Aspect.

**Aesthetical Aspect:** This aspect of Baraman Tukhari deals with the beauty of nature. The most astonishing fact is that Guru Nanak examines the changing seasons in such a way that the nature itself becomes alive in his description.

According to Guru Nanak in the month of 'Chet' the spring season is beautiful. There are black worms on flowers. Vegetation flourishes in the open fields. Koel sings sweetly on the mango trees. Black worms hover on flowers. All this beauty arouses the pleasure of the God in the heart of 'Jeev- Istri'.

In the month of 'Vaisakh' the branches don new leaves. In the renovating climate of this month, the Jev-Istri, whose soul is connected with 'Shabad' attains God.

During 'Jeth' the earth burns like a furnace. In 'Haar' the sun burns in the sky. The earth suffers, and loses strength as if it is burning in the fire of separation. The fire of the sun dries water. The chariot of the sun moves in the sky. 'Jeev-Istri' seeks shelter to avoid heat. But the suffering of the sun is for that Jeev-Istri who walks with the weight of vices. The one who is truthful she does not have to suffer.

In 'Saavan' thunder and lightning announces rain. But the Jeev Istri who is away from God husband is sorrowful, *suhagan* is one with God.

'Bhadron' features land filled with water, rain pours in the black night. Peacocks and frogs sing; snakes and mosquitoes bite. Ponds are brimming with water. But the soul separated from God is miserable. It cannot find peace without Him even in such a fine weather.<sup>176</sup> Summer passes when 'Assu' comes and winter follows. Greenery is in abundance. In 'Kattak' Jeev Istri' burns the lamp of life with the light of knowledge putting the oil of love to become with God. In the month of 'Magghar' Jeev Istri lives in the constant remembrance of God and thus is relieved of all her miseries.<sup>177</sup>

'Poh' has dense fogs which dries sap in the grass and plants. But the Jive Istri who is coloured in the love of God, sees divine light in every direction. Drenched in the 'Rasa' of Almighty, she enjoys His love.

In the month of 'Magh' people have holy dips, pray and worship and distribute alms at holy places. But Guru Nanak is of view that the one who has drunk the Maharasa of Nam in 'Magh' he is equal to the one who has taken holy dips at 68 places of pilgrimages.

In 'Faggon' God makes 'Jeev Istri' one with Himself through Guru. All the month, season, dates and days become sacred for the humans who attain God through Guru. All the times and moments become true for such human beings.<sup>178</sup>

**Social Aspect:** This aspect of 'Baramah Tukhari' views a glimpse of status of women and discussion on male-female relationship in that age. In the feudal society woman is ornament of the four walls of the house. If her husband goes abroad, she has to live and suffer alone at home. That is why she says that without her husband she is of no worth.

**Spiritual Aspect:** At the initial stage the soul suffers in the separation of God. Even the pleasant weather can not please it. As the separation is death-like for it. It remembers God and feels one with Him. It prays to Him to assimilate it with Himself and attains Him with His grace. A sinful soul is away from salvation even after death. While a virtuous reaches God only by following the teachings of Guru and through the meditation the word of Guru only. The spirit enjoys the bliss through the teachings of Guru only. Knowledge and love come naturally to that soul which is blessed by God.

**Mukti and Mukh Jiva:** To identify yourself is a Moksh. When man gets knowledge he became curious to meet God. Like:

The vices of man then merge in his virtues:

For such is the wisdom one gathers from the Guru.

Cease one's coming and going and one's doubt is dispelled.

And one's soul merges in the over soul and one knows the self through the  
self.<sup>179</sup>

When man gets Moksha with the grace of God he becomes one with Him forever.

**Oamkar and Patti:** These two *Banis* are based on two current alphabets. The letters are represented by different stanzas which encase the Guru's ideas and ideals. The alphabet used in the latter poem is Gurmukhi.<sup>180</sup>

In this way we have seen that *Bani* of Guru Nanak touches all aspects of human life. He brought a new life among the dying spirit of humanity, rolling in hatred, disbelief, despair. He enlightened the people to see divine origin. He

spread the message of fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man. He inculcated the spirit of love, service and devotion taking them out of life of sin and error. He provided the peace to the burning soul. He taught humanity the eternal bliss. Guru Nanak mixed religious devotion with worldly duties.

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- <sup>5</sup> Kharak Singh, Guru Nanak: A Prophet with a Difference, p.24.
- <sup>6</sup> Surinder Singh Kohli, Philosophy of Guru Nanak, p. 1.
- <sup>7</sup> Kartar Singh , *op. cit.*, p.17
- <sup>8</sup> Gurubachan Singh Talib, Guru Nanank: His Personality and Vision, p.4.
- <sup>9</sup> Kartar Singh, *op.cit.*, p.19.
- <sup>10</sup> Macauliffe, The Sikh Religion, Vol. I, p.3.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*
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- <sup>13</sup> Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, p.15.
- <sup>14</sup> Teja Singh, Ganda Singh, A Short History of the Sikhs, p.2-3.
- <sup>15</sup> Macauliffe, *op.cit.*, p.8.
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- <sup>18</sup> Guru Granth, p.1256.
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- <sup>20</sup> Macauliffe, *op.cit.*, p. 20.
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- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p.23.
- <sup>23</sup> Kartar Singh , *op.cit.*, p.58-59.
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- <sup>33</sup> Macauliffe, *op.cit.*, p.46.
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- <sup>35</sup> A.C. Banerjee, *op,cit.*, p.12.
- <sup>36</sup> Macauliffe, *op.cit.*, p.47.
- <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*,pp.47-48.
- <sup>38</sup> Kartar Singh, *op.cit.*, p.108-109.
- <sup>39</sup> Macauliffe, *op.cit.*, p.50.

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- <sup>47</sup> Kartar Singh, *op.cit.*, p.123.
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- <sup>51</sup> Kartar Singh, *op.cit.*, p.180.
- <sup>52</sup> Macauliffe, *op.cit.*, p.151.
- <sup>53</sup> Kartar Singh, *op.cit.*, p.190.
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- <sup>56</sup> Macauliffe, *op.cit.*, p.163.
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- <sup>60</sup> Macauliffe, *op.cit.*, p.171.
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- <sup>62</sup> Macauliffe, p.174.
- <sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p.176.
- <sup>64</sup> Kartar Singh, *op.cit.*, pp.217-18.
- <sup>65</sup> Gopal Singh, *op.cit.*, p. XXXIX.
- <sup>66</sup> Macauliffe, *op.cit.*, p.115.
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- <sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p.157.
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<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, p.147.  
<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, p.145.  
<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, p.140.  
<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, p.138.  
<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, p.150.  
<sup>149</sup> Jaswinder Kaur Dhillon, Guru Nanak Dev Ji Dian Banian Da Darshnik Adhiain,  
p.87.  
<sup>150</sup> Guru Granth, p.1279.  
<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1282.  
<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1285.  
<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1280.  
<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1287.  
<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1288.  
<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1283.  
<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1280.  
<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1287.  
<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1286.  
<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1288.  
<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1285.  
<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1284.  
<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1288.  
<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1286.  
<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1279.  
<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1284.  
<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1286.  
<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1279.  
<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1282.  
<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1289.  
<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1108.  
<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, 1108-1109.  
<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1109.  
<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1111.  
<sup>180</sup> Surinder Singh Kohli, *op.cit.*, p.12.

## **CHAPTER-4**

### **GURU NANAK'S IDEA OF SOCIETY IN RELATION TO HUMAN RIGHTS**

Human beings do not live by instinct alone, understanding has significant part of their growth and development. In accordance with their needs they organized the social order. Before knowing about the ideas of Guru Nanak about society, it may be worth while to define society. Originally men lived in isolated groups, the exigency of time; circumstances, the economic and social needs drew them closer. Society did not come into being by virtue of contract; it emerged spontaneously following its own line of development. It has passed through several stages of evolution.

According to Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Society means an enduring and co-operating social group whose members have developed organized patterns of relationships through interaction with one another.<sup>1</sup> Similarly in International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, Society is defined as any group of people who collectively make up an interdependent community. A fairly large number of people, who live in some territory, are relatively independent of people outside it and participate in a common culture.<sup>2</sup> Thus man cannot fulfill all his needs by himself. He is dependent upon others for his physical and mental growth. In fact men and society are inseparable components of phenomena because man by nature is a social animal. Man learns to behave as a normal human being only when he is in the company of other human beings. For their very existence and survival, they depend on one another. Individual is a part of society that is why he is endowed with interests, aspirations and goals. It is only in society that human nature can thrive.

For Plato society is an organism, the different parts of which are interrelated and interdependent. But there is also differentiation, or division of

labour. One man is no man, so, men form society to get their needs fulfilled. They are assigned different functions according to their abilities or capabilities. But for the society as a whole they are all important. Society progresses when all of them work harmoniously and efficiently.<sup>3</sup>

Thus Plato believed that in a society men are born with different capacities to learn. The assignment should be given to them according to their capabilities because all men are not equal. They are different on the physical, mental and spiritual basis.

In the opinion of Maciver “Society is a system of usages of procedures, authority and mutual aids, of many groups of divisions, of control of human behaviour and of liberties. This ever changing, complex system we call society.”<sup>4</sup>In this way it can be said that society is a web of social relation which controls the behaviour and liberty of the individual.

The important aspect of society is the system of relationship, the pattern of norms of interaction by which the members of the society maintain themselves.<sup>5</sup>

In the words of Herbert Spencer, “We consistently regard a society, as an entity, because, though formed of discrete units, a certain concreteness in the aggregate of them is implied by the general persistence of the arrangements among them throughout the area occupied. And it is this trait which yields our idea of a society. For with holding the name from an ever changing cluster such as primitive men form, we apply it only where some constancy in the distribution of parts has resulted from settled life”.<sup>6</sup> Thus for Spencer society is not merely a collection of individuals. It is more than that, just as an organism is more than a mere collection of cells. So he compares society with an organism in its structure and functions.

Thus we can conclude that society is a web of social relationship in which persons of different races, religions, castes, classes liking and disliking interact. Simple aggregate of human beings or animals can be treated as

society. So, we can say that society is a very large group of men and women, in which there are relatively smaller groups.

### **Guru Nanak's idea of Society in relation to Human Rights**

At the birth time of Guru Nanak in 1469, Lodis were ruling over northern India. Behlol Lodi was on the throne, who succeeded by Sikandar Lodi and Ibrahim Lodi. It was the period of disintegration, and disunity. There was a great confusion and chaos in Punjab. Corruption, robberies, murders, materialism, superficial and duality of character were the order of the day. Honour and justice were bought and sold. Three main influences were working in the erstwhile society of India. The ruling class was Muslim, with their long train of followers and consequently Muslim influence was easily visible. Hinduism had shrunk to the narrowness of becoming a very formal way of life. Thirdly, the yogis had also organized themselves having their own centers at various places in India.<sup>7</sup> The caste system had become stiffer. Untouchability prevailed and the lower classes were kept away from the common wells and temples by the so-called upper classes. Ramanand and Kabir denounced this situation in their verses. Namdev also protested against this second-rate treatment for the poor and the so-called untouchables by the upper strata of society. These saints had themselves suffered at the bigoted hands of the Hindus and Muslims. Kabir was defamed by so many stories regarding his birth and parentage and Namdev was also expelled from a temple.<sup>8</sup> Similarly in the words of Dalbir Singh Dhillon, in the medieval period of Indian history Hindu society which constituted the largest part of Indian society was passing through a process of rapid disintegration. The social fabric of the society was decaying. The decaying society under the influence of their ruling master shadowed down the priceless inheritance of their ancestors.<sup>9</sup>

So it was generally felt that day by day deteriorating condition of Indian people and the increase of inhumanity in the society were in need of a holy

man, saint or prophet- who could save the down trodden society. As Bhai Gurdas said:

Guru Nanak hath appeared;

Lo, Mist had vanished and light had shone in the world even as,  
when the sun shines the stars disappears, and darkness gets  
resplendent with light.<sup>10</sup>

Guru Nanak does not believe in the distinction between the Hindus and the Mussalmans. He goes beyond these distinctions and fosters a religion of the spirit, which is universal in character. So, Guru Nanak stood for the well-being of all human beings and not of any person belonging to a particular caste or creed. At the time of Guru Nanak's birth society was going through an era of corruption and spiritual decay. Guru Nanak's task was to restore the reign of truth, justice and Human Rights and rekindle the light of love and goodwill among members of all communities through his message of equality of all mankind.

Suppressed by ruling class, the Hindus, at the time of Guru Nanak, were not only depressed in spirit but had lost all sense of honour and self-respect. But instead of unitedly resisting this maltreatment due to their faiths in multiple deities, they were quarrelling among themselves and spreading hatred among different castes and classes damning and condemning, those who did not belong to their own self-created higher castes, as Sudras, untouchables and *Melechhas* or *Yavanas*. Guru Nanak therefore visualized that there could be no social revolution in India without a frontal attack on the caste system which was destroying human dignity. Therefore, he strongly and unequivocally denounced the caste system. It was a canker which had eaten into the vital of the Hindu society and had sapped the vitality of its institutions.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, Guru Nanak actively worked for the formation of social group, based on common social and moral code of conduct.

The people had lost their mornings. They were poor, ignorant and illiterate and fed on superstition. They were ill treated by their rulers and had completely lost their sense of self respect. While giving the description of both society of Hindus and Muslims Bhai Gurdas says, The Hindus have four castes and the Muslims were divided into four sects with jealousy, arrogance and vanity. They fought with each other uselessly. Muslim regarded the Mecca-Kaaba as sacred while Hindus worshipped the Ganga and Benaras. Islam was reduced to simple circumcision where as Hindu only wore the sacred thread and frontal marks. Ram and Rahim denoted only one God but their followers had split along different paths in ignorance. The people had forgotten the teachings and sayings of their holy books, the Quran and the Vedas. The world was lost in avarice. Truth had vanished and Mullas and the Brahmins were struggling against each other to destroy themselves.<sup>12</sup>

The Hindus and Muslims of those times were completely forgotten the teachings and meaning of their religions. Value of religion had touched their lowest ebb. They went astray on every road and they were failed to discover the truth. Due to their ignorance both had turned to be the worst. So no spiritual progress should be attained in such chaotic circumstances. In such a period of darkness, to bring equality Guru Nanak established Sangat and Pangat and gave right of equality to all people and by this exercise lower castes came closer to higher castes and he inspired feeling of brotherhood amongst the members of society.

Similarly in the words of M.A. Macauliffe, there was no Guru or religious guide, and without one the people were pushing one another to their destruction. Sin prevailed throughout creation. Pure religion was weeping day and night, and finally began to disappear from men's gaze beneath the earth.<sup>13</sup> So there was disintegration at all its levels especially at administrative level. Knowledge, virtue and spirit have shrunk to nothingness.

The Medieval Hindu society, in which Guru Nanak lived, was divided into four Varnas that was Brahmins, Kashatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras which were arranged in a descending scale of social status. Each member of the society was occupied duties and privileges according to his or her status in the Varna.

Varna is associated with groups of people having a skin of dark or fair colour. The Varna system presents a structure of values and functions which provided both the social and personal justice. It is based upon the moral principle of Karma. It is believed that everyone is born with peculiar leanings, temperament and abilities due to his past Karmas. The future birth may be changed by practicing the duties attached to the Varna of the present life. Therefore, each one was asked to follow the social duties and functions characteristic to his Varna.<sup>14</sup>

The Brahmin is assigned the role of teaching and studying Veda giving of alms etc. The Kashatriya is the protector of all creatures. Vaish is to conduct agriculture, trade, cattle rearing and other connected works. These three Varnas are called *Dvija*, the twice born, implying that these have gone through the ceremony of the upanayana and are educated apart from their specified functions, their common functions included study of Vedas, to sacrifice, and to give charity. The fourth Varnas is the Sudra, the *ekaja*. He had not the advantage of upanayana meaning that he was not educated. His duty is the practice of truthfulness, humility and purity. He was to render service of the three Varnas for the wages paid to him. He was a service man. He was free to practice his craft as of washerman, painter, black smith or any other. He may marry in his caste and remain a house holder.<sup>15</sup> So we can say the Varna system is the specification of the functions and rewards according to the qualitative character of the classes. It was scientific idea of division of labour.

According to the Laws of Manu, Let the three twice-born castes Varna discharge their prescribed duties, study the Veda, but among them the Brahmin alone shall teach it, not the other two, that is an established rule.<sup>16</sup> Similarly teaching, studying, sacrificing for himself, sacrificing for others, making gifts and receiving them are the six acts prescribed for Brahmins.<sup>17</sup>

The caste-system is not a new phenomenon in Indian society. The division of society existed in the early Vedic period but then it was flexible. Later on caste system became rigid. By the beginning of early medieval period the Hindu community had divided itself not only into four Varna or castes but also further sub-divided into sub-castes or jatis. Every section of this society was working in accordance with their own Varna. Nobody was allowed to perform the duties of other caste. Like the philosopher king of *The Republic* of Plato, the Brahmin had to study and achieve scholarship and guide to other Varnas in the society. Therefore, the entire task of preserving Dharma was mainly the responsibility of the Brahmin. The next social status in Varna hierarchy was given to the Kashatriya. It was he who had the responsibility of defending the nation in times of war and administering law and order in the society. He provided social justice with the help of the scholar Brahmin. Thus, the power of the mind and the soul united with the power of arms to maintain Dharma in society. This responsibility of the Brahmin and the Kashatriya was sacrosanct. It has been prescribed as the absolute unconditional responsibility of the Varnas.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, both Kashatriya and Brahmin were entrusted with heavy responsibilities in the fourfold division of society.

In the words of P.V. Kane, “The theory of Varnas, as conceived by Manu and other Smritikaras, was based upon the idea of division of labour, on the idea of balancing the rival claims of various sections of the community, it laid greatest emphasis upon the duties of the Varnas rather than upon their rights and privileges”.<sup>19</sup> Thus division of labour was done for smooth working of the society. Indian religious thinkers divided men in four Varnas and prescribed different Dharmas for them.

Guru Nanak wanted to restore the dignity of the people of every section of society. He gave primary importance to treating all as equals. He presents a radical, self generating, self-protective and a totally new system of society which finds expression in the medieval terminology, no doubt, making a break from the past. Guru Nanak was conscious of the defects of conventions of contemporary society and he made use of those conventions to convey his own idea to society.<sup>20</sup>

Brahmins considered themselves superior to others and they were considered the only ones having the right to read Vedas and other holy scriptures. Idol worship was most common. The people, having committed several sins in their daily life went every year on pilgrimage. They thought that all their sins could be washed away by a simple dip in the holy Ganga. The sacred thread worn round the body gave them the artificial hallmark of high character.<sup>21</sup> So it can be said that Brahmins were indulging in superfluous ceremonies and were performing useless rituals. They considered themselves supreme over all other classes. The Brahmin's study of holy books is superficial and consequently useless, says Guru Nanak:

The Pandits go through the holy books,  
but do not understand their substance.  
They give advice to others; this is the  
trade of mammon.<sup>22</sup>

Similarly in another version Guru Nanak says:

Pandit reads Vedas, Performs prayers,  
worship idols, takes rosary, puts saffron,  
mark on his forehead and wears dhoti,  
takes rosary, puts saffron-mark on his  
forehead and wears dhoti but performs  
all false practice in his daily life.

If he is aware of the presence of God,  
He must have realized the futility  
of these deeds.<sup>23</sup>

The Pandits were ignorant about the real meaning of the holy books. They pretended to be knowledgeable persons and gave advices to others. The 'trade of mammon' seems to have provided the Brahmins not only with tolerable means of livelihood but also with considerable influence on the general masses of the people. But they could not stimulate Hindu society either intellectually or spiritually. They succeeded in converting religion into a lifeless string of formalities and in promoting social arthritis.<sup>24</sup>

The Hindus who preferred to adopt Islam to save their lives proved to be the bitterest enemies of their former community. Those who got into government jobs due to their conversion or some other reason never hesitated in cutting the throats of their brothers. So Hindu could not resist the temptation of adopting Islam. The Brahmins were forgetting their duties, and lost in ostentations. They ignored their language, culture and religion. Holding the nose by fingers, they claimed to have got the knowledge of the entire universe. But in fact, they did not know what was happening even behind them. They studied voluminous books and acquired knowledge of scriptures, but at the same time, they grew egoists. They indulged in idol-worship. They told lies and had forgotten the creator. They were whiling away their lives in worthless rituals. Thus Brahmins did not believe in Shastras and Vedas but in the pursuit of self-interest.

Even the Kashatriyas, the fighting caste had lost their virility. They were not performing their duties. They were adopting the language of the conquerors. They did not have any regard either for their language or for their culture. The Guru says:

The Kshatriyas have forsaken their religion  
and adopted the language of *Malechhas*.<sup>25</sup>

All the four classes of the Hindus, ignoring their duties, were damaging the society. The graphic picture of this society as painted by Guru Nanak is very painful and deeply touching. Such a society was badly in need of reform and perhaps this was the reason why Guru Nanak, along with his spiritual leadership, became a social reformer also. Guru Nanak found that the contemporary Hindu society was declining. The Hindus, in order to get the official ranks, sacrificed their self respect and completely submitted themselves to the Turks. The Turkish impact on the dress and the conduct was clearly visible. Thus Guru Nanak observed no moral justification of Brahmins and Kashatriyas towards their rituals.

Guru Nanak was in search of society in which equality, freedom and fraternity could be established in the real sense. He established the equality by breaking up the caste system, achieved liberty from the age-old customs and traditions and brought about fraternity by striking at the root of the sense of the high and the low.<sup>26</sup>

Guru Nanak succeeded in the task of a religious construction of society. It was not easy task. Religious thought is something very different from a system of fictions; still realities to which it corresponds express themselves religiously only when religion transfigures them. Between society as it is objectively and sacred things which it express symbolically. The distance is considerable. The difficulty of the task consists in expressing the real with aid of appropriate symbols.<sup>27</sup> So Guru Nanak wanted the religious construction of society through new modes of religious thinking.

Guru never saw a man as higher or lower. According to him man is a fundamental unit of society and he wanted the development of everybody in every possible way. Guru Nanak wished to create a society where *Surati*, *Mati*, *Mana* and *Buddh* co-ordinate to make man a beautiful piece of work. He wanted to procure a balance among the emotions, desire and thoughts of man.

He never conceived of a society, in which on the one side there were only the elite and on the other, the superstitious, the mentally backward and the down-trodden people.<sup>28</sup> So *Surat, Mati, Man* and *Buddh* are such four faculties if works jointly in an individual, automatically it influence the structure of society.

Guru Nanak reacted strongly against the hypocrisy of the priestly class who beguiled the innocent people by their formal ways of worship and by their outward appearance. He has minutely noticed the deceit and hypocrisy in the character of the contemporary Brahmins and Kashatriyas who were leading a dual life. Whatever may be the inherent cause, either to please the Muslim rulers or to gain economic benefits, they accepted the subjugation of Muslim invader. Guru Nanak rejected their outward symbols and stressed on the inner purity of thoughts. Only through purity of mind and purity of conduct, one can find the true reality. Similarly in the words of Surjit Hans, Guru Nanak makes an extensive criticism of rituals and formalism. He rejected all the *Karm Kand*. According to Guru Nanak, ritual acts belong to the realm of *maya* and drag the participant still deeper into the unreal, transient world. Rituals and ceremonial acts chain one to desires. Man enters the cycle of birth and death because of his acts of merit and demerit and remains caught in it because of his turning away from the Name.<sup>29</sup>

Similarly like Brahmins and Kashatriyas, Muslims were also leading an unclean life. Guru Nanak instructed all the religious communities to be loyal towards their duties like:

The real Brahmins is only he who practices  
austerity, contemplation, self control, righteous  
deeds and is contented and cultured, a real  
Khatri is he who performs heroic deeds, who is  
compassionate, charitable and beneficent.<sup>30</sup>

Similarly:

A true Muslim is he who makes mercy as his

Mosque, faith as prayer mat, honest living as Quran,  
Humility as circumcision and good conduct as fast.<sup>31</sup>

In this way Guru Nanak advised all the torch bearer of the society to realize the real man in them and be virtuous towards their profession which is their fundamental duty.

Guru Nanak during his *Udasis* observed the false practices performed by the yogis and he condemned their false way of life, austere practices and life of renunciation. Guru Nanak instructed them that the true yogi, the true praxis understand and by the master's grace the sole Lord is realized.<sup>32</sup>

Therefore the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Yogis and Muslims betrayed a grave gulf between their conduct and profession. They failed to perform their function in accordance with the positions assumed by them. Guru Nanak advises all men to discard falsehood and deception and to serve none other than God. So every individual have their own function to perform in the society but the highest duty is to remember God.

Guru Nanak gave no importance to the ceremonial ritual, purificatory bath, pilgrimage, charity in the name of dead ancestors, fasting, meticulousness about diet or outward appearance or kirya etc. The idea of impurity during baby's birth is a mere superstition. Similarly, the ceremony of the sacred thread should inculcate mercy and contentment. But in spite of the sacred thread, men committed theft, adultery, falsehood, robbery and villainy against others. The true thread was obtained only by adoring and praising the Lord.<sup>33</sup> Further Guru Nanak said that those who held their noses against the smell of meat during the day enjoyed human flesh at night. Those who wrangled about diet were ignorant of divine knowledge and failed to distinguish real good from real evil.<sup>34</sup> In this way Guru Nanak comments on customs and ceremonies of Brahmins.

Guru Nanak ordained not to discriminate against the downtrodden and oppressed ones rather they should be helped and given equal treatment. He denounced the caste system saying in another verses:

Caste and dynastic pride are condemnable notions,  
the one master shelters all existence.

Anyone arrogating superiority to himself halt be disillusioned.

Saith Nanak: superiority shall be determined by God.<sup>35</sup>

He refers to the difficulties that he had encountered while delivering his message. As a minstrel of God, he intermingled freely with the people irrespective of their caste. Similarly his message was of radical nature. Consequently, people of higher castes not only disliked it but also considered him as an outcaste. Like:

Some brand me as a ghost, some goblin  
some call me man: Nanak is a simple, humble man.

Nanak is mad after the Divine king, after Him crazy.<sup>36</sup>

He alludes to a critical situation when people instead of believing in his message thought him of the person possessed by an evil spirit.<sup>37</sup>

Guru Nanak defines man as a living being an organism capable of doing action, not only as a living being, but as a being in the world who does not just happen to live in this world but reaches his full personhood only in and through this world and in interaction with other persons. Each man has certain infinity, so the relation should be face to face encounter on the basis of equality.<sup>38</sup> The same consciousness dwells within all being and none is without consciousness but as is the consciousness in man so is their way of life.<sup>39</sup> Guru Nanak recommends the true way to life which consists in constant remembrance of God with firm devotion. True worship means sublimation of ego, life of detachment, practice of truth, meditating on Divine name through Bhakti or devotion, with the help of Guru and Divine grace.

In the opinion of Surinder Singh Kohli even the saint should never remain passive. If he has build up an institution, he should have no personal interest in

it, it should be wholly and solely meant for the upliftment of the society. The income of the shrine should be utilized in constructive pursuits. Training institutes and factories can be run successfully with this income. It is the duty of the management of such shrines to see that no Sikh remains without work. These managements can also take care of infirm and old, blind and crippled orphan. The needy people can be taken under protection by such managements. A community of workers can never be enslaved and exploited by idle overlords and Mahants.<sup>40</sup> So it is clear from the above passage that saints or sadus think that sanyas can help them in achieving Moksha, but Guru Nanak advised them to involve themselves in social activities and do not run away from the responsibilities rather they should join the society by providing their services because society needs their help and support.

Guru Nanak was a great social reformer. Guru Nanak's advocacy of 'the brotherhood of man and his protest against 'the principle of caste' are seen as a reflection of the influence of the Islamic principles of universal brotherhood and human equality.<sup>41</sup> According to Guru Nanak all the earthly pursuits to which man makes his aim of life is ultimately false. From birth to death man remains attached to the world. The father, the mother, the son, the daughter and the wife of are 'ties' that binds everyone to this false world as:

Wail your females come to wail-false is his world,  
the true spouses have you deserted and deluded,  
in false concerns run about.<sup>42</sup>

Ultimately all earthly pleasure leads to inevitably to misery. Indeed misery is the beginning as well as the end of human existence on earth. In the lines of Guru Nanak:

There are millions of fools fallen in the depths of utter  
darkness; there are millions of thieves subsisting on the  
earnings of others; there are millions of murderers,

sinners and slanderers; and there are millions of the false and the wicked.<sup>43</sup>

Similarly in another verses Guru Nanak said:

Lust is the wine, misery the cup-bearer and man the drinker; worldly love and anger are the contents and pride serves this concoction; the false and the covetous are the boon-companions; and man drinks it to the less, and to destruction.<sup>44</sup>

So men must discard lust, anger and self centeredness. They must discard slander, greed and hardness of heart. A man should to do positive good as to avoid evil. For instance, one must earn one's livelihood honestly. One should cultivate true humility and must service to others. Everybody must work for the economic betterment of society.

It is clearly stated that wealth, honour and wisdom are obtained only by lodging God in one's heart. Such alone have wisdom; honour and true wealth as in heart have Him lodged.<sup>45</sup> Guru Nanak lays a great deal of stress upon the individual's sections. He exhorts man to adopt good speech. Good speech does not necessarily refer to ordinary conversation. Similarly, he emphasizes the need of helping one self. All low passions lead to evil and must be curbed. So Guru Nanak concentrates on the individual and his acts. He also prefers the company of good individuals. As he said:

Without good for tune is not attained holy company.<sup>46</sup>

Guru Nanak's concern with the individual's salvation does not remain confined to the individual in isolation from others around him. Guru Nanak's denunciation of contemporary society is closely related to his idea of salvation and partly reflects its moral fervor. He condemns every earthly pursuits treated as an end in itself and he does not entertain any regard or respect for the possession of riches and social position or power. This attitude is qualified, however, by the idea that there is no necessary opposition on between the

pursuit of salvation and an earthly pursuit. As a result, he gives primacy to honesty and integrity in the pursuit of a profession.<sup>47</sup>

In the opinion of Guru Nanak for the formation of sound society, certain ethical qualities are required. The foremost duty of an individual is to love and respect everybody and not to think or speak ill of others. Guru Nanak believes that an individual can attain salvation only if he serves the society. Another quality about which Guru Nanank speaks is truth. An individual who speaks the truth in all circumstances and lead truthful life become a useful in the development of society. There are five enemies of man like lust, anger, greed, attachment and ego. Guru Nanak advises every individual to overcome these five deceivers. According to Guru Nanak other qualities of man which he should adopt are charity, equality, forbearance, brotherhood, non stealing, hardworking etc. promotes the social standard. The real aim of an individual's life is that he must play active role in lifting the humanity at every step. He should try to elevate the standard of society.

Guru Nanak has raised a voice against the inequalities of the caste system. The attitude of almost all the Bhaktas towards caste system was very revolutionary but their onslaughts remained weak as many of them had come from the so-called lower castes. These revered Bhaktas inspired many to shatter the dogmas of worship and practical life yet they almost failed to bring about any fruitful change in the caste system. Unmindful of the fact that he himself belonged to a higher caste (Khatri), he chose from the very beginning of his life, his life-long companion Mardana who not only belonged to a lower caste (Mirasi) but was also a Muslim. Mardana remained day and night with Guru Nanak for forty-seven years upto the end of his life.<sup>48</sup> Guru Nanak also interacted with persons of bad character belonging to lower castes like Sajan, Kaudda, Bhumia and reformed them to be good human beings. The Guru concretized the ideal of equality by sitting up in the system of 'Sangat' in which all individual sit, pray together without any caste or class distinctions.

In the verses of Guru Nanak:

Holy company and congregation is  
where the Lord's praises are the theme of discourse.

Saith Nanak: by the holy word and Divine  
laudation is truth realized.<sup>49</sup>

The Sangat is the congregation company, body, association or society in which persons belonging to any religion, faith, caste, color, creed or sex are free to participate. No discriminate on grounds of birth or status etc. is exercised. In the Sangat everybody sits together to meditate on the Name of God by shedding their ego and class. Man gets enlightened in company of good people. Sangat is a place where the energies of body and mind are used for the well being of the needy by working in Langer or rendering other services to society.<sup>50</sup> Similarly, Guru Nanak believed that wherever holy people assembled i.e. there is Sadh-Sang. The Nam of the Lord is motiveless and constantly remembered and wherever holy people go, that place is like a paradise.<sup>51</sup>

The only expectation made of a participant is that he or she must participate in the Sangat whole heartedly dedicating himself/herself to the service of his/her fellow-beings. Guru Nanak emphasizes the desirability and essentiality of an act of service for a human being in the following words;

All created beings are thine own,  
without service no one's life is fruitful.<sup>52</sup>

The members of this society are supposed not to cling to the man-made prejudices regarding the high and the low and should serve other without any distinction.

The Sikh Gurdwaras impart practical lesson in equality where entry and seating is allowed and prasad and Langar is served irrespective of religion, race, caste, colour, or gender. Guru Nanak's mission was carried forward by the succeeding Gurus who reinforced the doctrines of equality, selfless

service, justice and opposition of oppression. Thus, welfare of weaken and oppressed sections of society became the aim of Sikhism.

According to Guru Nanak, equality needed in the social life: both in the spiritual context as well as in day to day actions. He denounced the spirituality which could not produce respect in the hearts of people for their fellow beings at all levels. He himself boldly came forward to achieve this ideal.

Service of community is essential part of Sikh worship like 'Sangat'. Guru Nanak also established the institution of Langar abolishing all differences. Further Guru Angad extended it. Langar (free Kitchen) is a place, where everybody sits together on the same floor and partake food which shows equality between man and man, because the difference of rich and poor or low and high is over thrown there. Guru Nanak himself freely served food to all castes and used to eat with them on the same floor.

Such an upliftment of the lower castes was a novel experiment upon the Indian masses which culminated in that time. Guru Nanak not only raised his voice against social injustices, he successfully demonstrated how his principle of equality could be implemented. He tried his utmost to make the society a healthy gathering of Gurmukhs who are expected to be full of love for fellow-beings and without ego.<sup>53</sup>

Langar on one hand removed all caste distinctions because all people had to sit at one place like equals and on the other hand it provided a field for charity and service. Guru Nanak was of the view that by introducing the institution of Langar social and caste prejudices could be removed and all could be together as brothers. In this way Guru Nanak contributed most to provide right of equality to all humanity.

Similarly, like the four Varnas of Hindu, Muslim society was also divided into three sections. Indian Muslims have adopted caste system due to the influence of Hindu social organization because most of the Indian Muslims are converts

from Hindu religion. By the beginning of the Sixteenth century, the politically dominant Muslim society was also divided into sections. Broadly, they were split into three sections. The three sections of this society were based on the basis of economic status. The nobles like *amir*, *khan*, *iqtadar*, *mansabdar* constituted the upper class. It was the richest class having maximum privilege in the society. The religious dignitaries, who possessed also political power, such as *ulema*, *sayyida*, *shaikh* etc. too enjoyed a very high social status. They justified every action of the ruler with the help of quotations from Quran. The ancestor of Sayyad and Sheikh are considered to have come from Macca and Madina, these castes are considered as highest among Muslims. Between them, the nobles and the religious dignitaries, constituted the upper class of the Muslim society. The Muslim middle class comprised the soldiers, traders, peasants, tax collector, etc., It was larger in number as compared to the upper class of the community and was economically less prosperous. Having a lesser position than the upper class, it enjoyed a better social status than the corresponding class of Hindus. The lowest social class of the Muslims society was then of the craftsmen, servants and slaves, but their position was better than that of the Hindu Shudras. These people may enter a Mosque for Namaz and not for any other purpose. This proves that untouchability in Muslims is not religious but social. It seems that some sort of class distinction on the pattern of caste distinction prevalent among the Hindus had also crept into the Muslim society.<sup>54</sup> Like the different castes of the Hindus, the different classes in the Muslim society lived and resided in distinctive fashions from that of upper class Muslims and also lived in the separate locality or quarters in the same city.

In the words of K.M Ashraf, The various classes of which the Muslim community was composed began to live aloof from one another even in separate quarters in the same city.<sup>55</sup> The Muslim social set up, like that of the Hindus underwent a change on the establishment of the Mughal rule in India. The change took place in the structure of the upper class of the Muslims.

Muslims were exceedingly intolerant and fanatic. The masses were ignorant of the essence of their religion and the real teachings of Islam were unknown to them. Mullas and Qazis who were supposed to possess the knowledge of tenets of Islam in depth were in reality ignorant of the Shariat. They had degenerated fast. The idea to worship one God was preached by the prophet but in actual practice, most of the Muslims worshipped Pirs, Fakirs and Graves. The teachings of holy Quran were totally forgotten. Their ways of living were not identical. They dressed differently and differ in temperament. Their behaviour was quite different. Great jealousy and hatred existed those days between the Hindus and Mohammadans and the entire non-Muslim population was subject to persecution by the Mohammmadan rulers.<sup>56</sup> The value pattern which Guru Nanak wove round the '*salat*' (namaz or the five prayes) of the Muslims, is that of truth, honesty, charity, right intentions and praise of God. Interpreting the unbounded dynamism of Islam for life in terms of its ideals, institutions, codes and symbols, he said '*mihar masit, sidadq musala, haqu halalu Quran.*' viz. mercy, faith, honest living, humility, nobly deeds, truth and submission his will be practiced.<sup>57</sup> Guru Nanak was thus a prophet of reconciliation, reconciliation between creed and creed, class and class and was in the true sense of the word, a remarkable bridge builder.

When Guru Nanak proceeded on his long missionary tour spread over a period of two decades from Sultanpur in Punjab, he had in his mind, the welfare of all human beings. He went to enunciate a universal creed and to save people from evil to apprise them of shortcomings that had crept into their moral, social and religious life. In the words of Swami Vivekanand, "Here it was, that the gentle Nanak preached his marvelous love for the world. Here it was that his broad heart was opened and his arms outstretched to embrace the whole world, not only of Hindus but of Mohammedans too."<sup>58</sup> Thus Guru Nanak was Guru of all humanity.

There were different social classes within the fold of Islam itself. Three classes are mentioned in Khavand Mir's Humayun Nama: (1) the Ahi-I-daulat, or the ruling class, comprising the royal family, the nobility and the army; (2) the Ahi-I-sa'adat, or the intelligentsia, comprising the ulam, the Quzis, the Sayyids, men of learning, and men of letters; (3) the Ahi-I-murad, or the class catering for pleasures, comprising musicians, minstrels and dancing girls. The classification is obviously incomplete and unsatisfactory; for example, it does not take any of producing classes, the peasantry and the artisans, who formed the backbone of state and society. Apart from social distinctions which were more meaningful in medieval times than they are today, there were striking economic disparities. Under Ibrahim Lodi the pay of a common soldier ranged from 20 to 30 *tankas*. The economic position of the nobility is reflected in Abbas Khan Sherwani's statement that one particular Afghan nobleman possessed 300 *maunds* of gold. Socio-economic equality was more or less effective only within the limited range of a class, and not within the Muslim society as a whole. Islam, says a Muslim writer, "succumbed to the spirit of class division, and forgot all about the message of the Quran. This might have been one of the factors which affected the attractiveness of Islam's appeal to the Hindu masses."<sup>59</sup>

In Guru Nanak's verses we have several references to a class of Muslim faqirs called *Jangam*. According to Macauliffe, *Jangam* was the name of the class of *faqirs* with matted hair and then chains to their feet who generally went about ringing bells. Apparently they had similarities with Hindu sanyasis who believed in salvation through mortification of the flesh. The literal meaning of the word implies that they were always moving about, i.e., they did not live in any one place for long. There was another class of Muslim faqirs known as Qalandar. On one occasion Guru Nanak is said to have carried on his head the hat of a Qalandar. According to Macauliffe, a Qalandar is a Muslim anchorite who abandons all worldly ties and possessions and corresponds to the Hindu Sannyasi.<sup>60</sup> It shows his liking for sect. Qalandar were generally wandering

dervishes, wearing blue cloaks. Engrossed in a state of Sukr (mystic intoxication) they confined their religious activities to the obligatory part of religions observance only and did not pay any heed to the formalities of social life and material need.<sup>61</sup>

The most interesting feature of Islam in Guru Nanak days was Sufism. The Sufis were mystics, deriving their name from garments of coarse wool (suf) which they wore as a badge of poverty (faqr). They did not form an organized sect, nor did they have any uniform code of religious doctrines. The variety of their ideas and practices was due to the intermixture of Quranic, Christian, neo-Platonic, Zoroastrian, Buddhist and Hindu elements. Vedanta also contributed to their ideas and some yogic practices such as pranayama were an integral part of their spiritual discipline. Sufism has been rightly compared to 'a stream which gathers volume by the joining of tributaries from many lands.' The early Sufis traced their ideas to some Quranic verses and traditions of the prophet, to which they gave a mystic or esoteric rather than a literal interpretation. They claimed that their ideas represented the true spirit of Islam although these transcended all outward forms of religion. They lived ascetic lives.<sup>62</sup> Sufism contributes to the spread of Islam in India. According to Khushwant Singh:

The most significant aspect of Sufism, and one which had the greatest impact on the people, was the way of life adopted by the Sufi leaders and their immediate disciples. Where as the Muslim conquerors had tried to destroy non-believers and their places of worship, the Sufis welcomed them into their homes and embraced them as brothers... the Sufis did not need to do very much more to win over large number of converts. Most of the proselytes were from the lower classes who had been denied equal rights by the upper-caste Hindus. Hindu untouchables accepting Islam no longer remained pariahs. They were given titles of honour like *Saikh*, *Malik*, *Khalifa* or *Mu'min*, and , at least in the earlier stage, enjoyed equal social privileges and intermarried with the most aristocratic of Muslim families.<sup>63</sup>

In this way Sufis attacked Hindus to embrace Islam.

In a society honeycombed with racial arrogance, social exclusiveness and superstitions of diverse kinds, religion could hardly be anything but a formal, shapeless system of arid beliefs and lifeless rituals. This was the general characteristic of the age, a common vice infecting both Hinduism and Islam. The 'age of darkness' was dark for both communities. This is what Guru Nanak says about the Hindus:

Though men commit countless thefts, countless adulteries, utter  
countless falsehoods and countless words of abuse;  
Though they commit countless robberies and villainies night  
and day against their fellow creatures;  
Yet the cotton thread is spun, and the Brahman cometh to twist it.  
For the ceremony they kill a goat and cook and eat it, and everybody  
Then saith, 'put on the janeu'.<sup>64</sup>

The Hindu was an idol-worshipper, whereas the Muslim was an idol-breaker. The peeling of the bells in Hindu temples became infrequent on account of the despotic Muslim rule in India. Thousands of temples were desecrated and were turned into mosques. Bhai Gurdas has portrayed this helpless state of Hindus in the following manner:

Temples were pulled down and  
Mosques were constructed at their sites.  
The poor were massacred like cows:  
sin spread over the earth.<sup>65</sup>

Hindus and Muslims in general, had lost all the virtues and had got demoralized. Guru Nanak says:

The subjects are blind without knowledge; they are like corpses full of fire.  
The wise ones dance and play on musical instrument, they decorate their  
bodies.

They make loud conversation and sing their thoughts about the heroes.  
The foolish Pandits have the wisdom of arguments and love the accumulation  
(of wealth)

The virtuous ones practise virtues but get no reward; they ask for the gate of  
salvation.

They are called ascetics, but do not know the method; they leave their hearths  
and homes. Every one is perfect by himself, none calls himself deficient.

The weight of honour is put in the balance saith Nanak, and then they by  
weighing in it, It is known what man is worth.<sup>66</sup>

So in the absence of virtuous and wise people Guru Nanak expresses who will  
bring love and compassion in the society. Guru Nanak preached that people  
should have brotherly love for one another and they should live a virtuous and  
harmonious life.

### **Ashram System**

Ashrams are the stages of life which provide training and environment for  
realizing the ideal of our life.<sup>67</sup> According to Hindu ethics, the final aim of life  
is liberation and every ashram is a step in the long journey that aim. In this  
way, in each ashram the person prepares himself for every succeeding ashram  
state. Literally, an ashram is a halting place. The ashram system is a means of  
systematic development for the better life. For the fulfillment of one's life one  
has to make effort, at every stage of the life. The Dharmasastras maintained  
clearly that each individual should normally pass through the four stages of  
life known as Ashramas. In the ashram-system there were four stages like  
Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vaanaprastha, Sanyas. The Brahmcharya is the first  
ashram which means the leading of the life according to Brahman. In this  
ashram, the student or Bramachari spent 25 years with his teacher studying the  
Vedas and leading a life of self-control. The education and control of the  
Brahmacharya prepared a person for future. Certain rules and observances are  
prescribed for all Brahmacharins.

In the ancient past, schools were boarding schools, where a child was admitted at the age of 8-12 year. After following certain ceremonies and imparted knowledge, skills and crafts, general and physical education and training in logic.<sup>68</sup>

Grahasthya Ashram is the second ashram. This is house holder's life, a married life. The ideal marriage was considered one which was performed for moksha or final liberation and intellectual companionship through the performance of house hold duties, including upbringing of children and offering reverence (Shradha) to ancestors.<sup>69</sup> Thus it was period of fulfillment of the social responsibility.

The Vanaprastha is the next ashram. It is the stage of progressive retirement. After children had got settled and needed no more parental care and attention, one left every thing to the care of his sons and entered upon the Vanaprastha stage. He retired, probably with his wife to a quiet place in the country to lead a life of inquiry and meditation and work out within himself the truth of his being, in an atmosphere of freedom from social responsibility. He lived a simple life on fruits and vegetables only. Vanaprastha stage does not expect husband and wife to break up their relationship. It is left to the option of the couple. But they are expected to lead an austere and ascetic life.<sup>70</sup> Sanyas is the last ashram. The goal of this stage of life is liberation therefore; it has been prescribed that the recluse should always wander alone without a companion. He should be free of all desires, whether to live or to die, and must wait for his appointed time 'as a servant waits for payment of his wages.' The entire purpose of the prescription by Dharmasastras about this stage of life was to help in the achievement of the liberation, to make an individual fit for immortality.

The ideal life commended by the holy Gurus is that of the house holder engaged in beneficent activity keeping his mind absorbed in contemplation and devotion. This synthesis between the spiritual and the secular is meant to

reject the monastic or ascetic kind of life. The various brands of mendicancy in India, such as Yogi, Bairagi, Sannyasi etc. are disapproved as their way of life is barren, cut off from the stream of humanity to which their spiritual experience expected to bring benefit. Guru Nanak demonstrated the Yogis and the Siddhs who lived in lonely and deserted places. The mind does not get peace in physical solitude. Yogis and householders smear their matted locks with ashes, while their children are wailing all round them for lack of support. By neglecting the true way of life is not yoga attained.<sup>71</sup>

Escapism from realities of life is not solution rather to face it. If there is any thing to be renounced, it is evil. Man should accept happiness and sorrow with the same spirit. Ascetic is that whose ego has turned away from the world in dispassion. Guru Nanak did not give importance to outer symbols of ascetic. All the Sikh Gurus and Saints performed their daily round of duties and at the same time realized the presence of God. The strength of the devotee lies in overcoming obstacles and not in running away from them. The man of God has courage and patience to face worldly trials with equanimity and balance.

Guru Nanak has accepted the institution of marriage and gave right of family to everyone in the social setup. As the union of man and woman is quite natural, marriage is inevitable entry in the 'Grihastha Ashram.' However, he does not have any faith in the rituals attached to marriage. The marriage ceremony in Sikhism is not the marriage of two bodies only; it is also a spiritual bond. Two souls come in tune with each other. Physically there are two bodies, but in spirit they become one.

As Guru Amar Das ji said:

Truly wedded are those that in two frames are as one light.<sup>72</sup>

The Yogis, as known to Guru Nanak, were not householders and were positively opposed to the life of laity and society. Guru Nanak, addressing them, puts emphasis firstly, on social consciousness, fraternity, humanity, cosmic order and divine laws; secondly, on such values as contentment, continence and compassion, and thirdly, on concentration, self-conquest, God-

consciousness and spirituality. This value-pattern has love of life as the base on which virtuous living grows. The Guru compared the ideal worldly life to a lotus in the pond which lives pure in the impurities of life.

### **The position of Woman at the time of Guru Nanak**

At the time of Guru Nanak the condition of woman in society was at its lowest ebb. The condition of woman was not much better than that of the unhappy Sudra. The very fact that God has created them as woman, deprived them of entering into heaven or attaining any salvation. They must be born as men to get release from the transmigration of souls. In the Punjab during the medieval period women suffered the most. Guru Nanak condemned all the social evil like caste system, sati pratha, dowry system, widow remarriage, prostitution, female child marriage, female foeticide and slavery of women and launches a positive programme of social reform and fight boldly for the rights of women. Hindu society did not accord to women the respect which was due to them. Female child marriage became a well established institution in the country. Young girls were carried off by the members of the ruling class. Thus parents married their daughters too young. The approximate marriageable age was round about ten. Often the girls were married even before they had attained puberty.

The pair should only marry at that time when they are able to understand the spiritual significance of marriage and when the male member becomes an earning worker and female member fully understands the domestic responsibilities. The marriage ceremony is quite simple. On the appointed day, the near relatives of both sides meet at the house of the bride and in the presence of the whole assembly, the bride and bridegroom circumambulate around.<sup>73</sup> So the child marriage is traditionally prohibited in Sikhism.

According to Guru Nanak's teachings a healthy and progressive society is one, where there is no discrimination on the basis of caste, creed and sex. Both men

and women have to cultivate qualities like patience, love and the spirit of self sacrifice.

Dowry system was rigorously observed in medieval India. It had become a matter of great hardship to the poor. Sikh Gurus condemned the dowry system as mere show of one's ego and riches. The condition of widow was very miserable in the society and the conditions were very hard to bear. Widow remarriage was permitted amongst the Muslims but the widows were given the status of second rate wife. Amongst the Hindus, widow remarriage was generally not allowed during the medieval period except in the lower classes. Though there is no direct reference of widow remarriage or remarriage of separated women in Guru Nanak's *Bani*. He did favour the idea of widow remarriage and resettlement in an honourable family life like:

The widow offer her body to another for the sake of lust or money,  
her mind is swayed thus (but) without spouse, she is satiated not.<sup>74</sup>

So the above line shows that Guru Nanak was in favour of widow remarriage. Guru Nanank permits the unfortunate women to marry again, so that they may not be left at the mercy of the relatives of deceased husband and bear their inhuman treatment.

The prostitution was also considered to be necessary social evil. It was though discouraged by some of the rulers, yet it became a social entertainment. There are various references of the prostitutes in contemporary society. Due to bad predicament of the widows, this practice too was in vogue, because widow remarriage was not allowed, she had to adopt sometime prostitution because of bad conduct of the society towards her. Those who were in the habit of visiting the prostitutes did not care the feelings of their wedded companions. Guru Nanak has portrayed the feeling of the young lady whose husband visits prostitutes in the following hymn:

Women, smash bangles against thy couch,

thy armlets and thy arms.

With all thy make-up to thy Lord to others attached.<sup>75</sup>

So according to Guru Nanak man should treat his wife in a rightful manner. He must satisfy himself with his wife only and should not think even in dreams about women in a lustful manner. One should not defile his sight and mind by having vicious thoughts about the beauty of other women. In this way Guru Nanak presented his views against the prostitution.

Guru Nanak protested against those who consider women as inferior. This consideration was unethical in the eyes of the Gurus and it also created a danger in the growth of society. The Guru Nanak considered all women as equal to men. Guru Nanak wanted everyone to respect women who gave birth to the great people on this earth. Guru Nanak broke every myth to consider women as inferior. The Guru Nanak wanted dignified status for women in the society. Guru Nanak is prepared to defend woman against those who insist on relegating to inferior position merely on the basis of her sex. There is no reason to believe that Guru Nanak's path of salvation was not open to women. In this sense, she was certainly placed at par with man, just as the sudra was placed as par with the Brahman.<sup>76</sup>

Guru Nanak encouraged women to cultivate the qualities of respect and self esteem. It is the contrary to Sikh religion to wear purdah, because it suppressed the personality of women and reflects their inferior status.

Sati Prtha was also practiced in those days. The women were compelled to burn alive along with the pyre of their husbands. It is generally believed that Guru Nanak denounced the custom of becoming sati but there are no verses in his composition to justify such an inference. But Guru Amar Das Ji, third Sikh Guru spoke against such a heinous crime and said:

A 'Sati' is not she, who burns herself on the pyre of her spouse.

Nanak, a 'Sati' is she, who dies with the sneer shock of separation.

A Sati is one who lives contented and embellishes

herself with good conduct.

And service her Lord (Husband) with all her heart and cherishes him ever.<sup>77</sup>

So according to the Sikh Gurus the burning of a woman with the dead body of husband is unnecessary and sinful.

A true Sati is the one who obeys her husband and surrenders to his will and thinks her husband only as her master. A respectable Hindu wife was expected to be completely devoted and dedicated to her husband. The custom of becoming Sati was regarded as extremely honorable. Becoming Sati was considered the preferable because otherwise the widow was ill treated as long as she lives. In fact the custom of Sati and prohibition on the remarriage of widow had been sanctified by a background of several centuries.

Guru Granth Sahib is the first scripture in the world that has out rightly condemned all discriminations amongst humans which particularly include the gender discrimination. Gurbani emphatically states that man and woman are equal to each other before God.<sup>78</sup>

Guru Nanak differentiates between two types of women as good and bad. Good woman is humble and modest before her Lord. She is completely devoted to him and obeys his commands with pleasure.<sup>79</sup> She pines for him in separation.<sup>80</sup> She adorns herself with ornaments only to please her Lord.<sup>81</sup> She is faithful to him. But on the other hand the bad does not know how to please her Lord.<sup>82</sup> She is generally, heedless and slothful.<sup>83</sup> She can even be faithless. She does not know that all adornments are vain if they fail to please the Lord.<sup>84</sup> She is of course a very unfortunate woman.<sup>85</sup> Only the good wife is commendable in Guru Nanak's eyes. Further Guru Nanak denounces sexual indulgence, particularly when it is illicit; but this denunciation is intimately connected with his general conception of piety. There is no doubt that his conception of piety has many social implications, but it is nonetheless significant that the range of his explicit 'social criticism' is very much

limited<sup>86</sup>. Guru Nanak appreciates inner beauty of mind of a woman rather than appearance such as:

Attractive in talks are we, yet of unworthy deeds,  
Our hearts impure and black, yet white our aspects.<sup>87</sup>

Guru Nanak was the first to declare that women are equal to men and deserve respect and regard as life partner of man. Guru Nanak restores to women the fullest right belonging to her in society. All women as well as men acknowledge the same God as their own. Each person is responsible for his actions and shall have to settle his account himself. This generous tribute to the role of women in the preservation and proper functioning of society is in complete accord with the position assigned to the householder in the Sikh religion. Those who seek salvation need not keep themselves aloof from women and treat their company as a sinful barrier to spiritual efforts. Both Kabir and Guru Nanak lived a householder's life. In nominating his successor Guru Nanak preferred a disciple who had a wife and children. The concept of woman as man's helpmate became one of the distinctive feature of Sikh society.<sup>88</sup>

Thus According to Guru Nanak, in the society, there is no place for any considerations of caste, colour, sex, faith, birth or status etc. All individuals male as well as female are considered to be the repository of the Lord light and are treated alike. The structure of society rests on the principles of fraternity and equality put forth by Guru Nanak in the following verses which are self-explanatory:

All creatures are noble, none low,  
One sole maker has all vessels fashioned;  
In all three worlds is manifest the same light.<sup>89</sup>

In another verses he said:

Himself is He male and female.<sup>90</sup>

In the Guru Nanak's view all individuals are originated from the same source, the light of God and therefore, there are no high and low by birth. In the eyes

of God all are equal. Honour and caste are determined by the deeds of the individual. He who forgets the God is of low caste. Without God's name one remains an out caste. So in the Guru Nanak's view the social fact of one's belonging to a high or low caste is totally irrelevant to one's salvation.

So Guru Nanak pleaded for women's rights in 15<sup>th</sup> century whereas women's emancipation movement in Europe started much later in 18<sup>th</sup> century. In this way Guru Nanak advocated and allowed much more equality for women in 15<sup>th</sup> century than the freedom and equality which has existed in 21<sup>th</sup> century. He wanted to build a nation of all self respecting, men and women with equal respect. He considered that without the active participation of women in all spheres of life the social structure was not only weak but incomplete.

Thus it can be said that Guru Nanak expected from his followers such a social life wherein they must be aware of their rights and duties. He has visualized such a casteless society in which they should lead life of self discipline, simplicity and good conduct. Guru Nanak saw corruption in his contemporary social, political and religious life. He got very much disappointed and wanted to re-establish the social and ethical values by virtuous conduct. Guru Nanak's social message based on spirituality, proved to be very helpful in eradicating social evils and establishing the new values. Guru Nanak believes in the equality of the whole humanity and discards any sort of division, distinction and discrimination created by Varna Dhrama and caste system. Guru Nanak teaches brotherhood, harmony, love and selfless services to the humankind.

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- <sup>40</sup> Sikh Ethics, p.57.
- <sup>41</sup> Yusuf Husain, Glimpses of Medieval Indian Culture, 1, p.28. quoted in J.S. Grewal, Guru Nanak in History, p.169.
- <sup>42</sup> Guru Granth, p.581.
- <sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 466.
- <sup>44</sup> Macauliffe, *op.cit.*, p.182.
- <sup>45</sup> Guru Granth, p.15.
- <sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1172.

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- <sup>47</sup> J.S.Grewal, *op.cit.*, p.195.
- <sup>48</sup> Jodh Singh, *op.cit.*, p.247.
- <sup>49</sup> Guru Granth, p.1280.
- <sup>50</sup> Kirpal Singh and Kharak Singh (eds.), History of the Sikhs and their Religion, Vol.I, p.55.
- <sup>51</sup> Darshan Singh, The Religion of Guru Nanak, p.8.
- <sup>52</sup> Guru Granth, p.354.
- <sup>53</sup> Jodh Singh, *op.cit.*, p.249.
- <sup>54</sup> Dalbir Singh Dhillon, Sikhism: Origin and Development, p.25.
- <sup>55</sup> K.M. Ashraf, Life and Condition of the People of Hindustan. p.107.
- <sup>56</sup> Ajit Singh, Rajinder Singh, *op.cit.*, pp.139-40.
- <sup>57</sup> Taran Singh, *op.cit.*, p.15.
- <sup>58</sup> Ajit Singh, Rajinder Singh, *op.cit.*, pp.145-46.
- <sup>59</sup> A.C. Banerjee, *op.cit.*, p.72.
- <sup>60</sup> Macauliffe, quoted in A.C. Banerjee, *op.cit.*, p.80.
- <sup>61</sup> A.C. Banerjee, *op.cit.*, p.81.
- <sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>63</sup> Khuswant Singh, History of the Sikhs. 1, pp..26-27.
- <sup>64</sup> Macauliffe, *op.cit.*, p.238.
- <sup>65</sup> Bhai Gurdas, Var 1-Pauri 20,
- <sup>66</sup> Guru Granth, p.469.
- <sup>67</sup> Ram Ahuja, Socity in India: Concept, Theories are Recent Trends, p.10.
- <sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p.11.
- <sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*,
- <sup>71</sup> Gurbachan Singh Talib, (Tr) Sri Guru Granth Sahib, Vol.I,p.IXXI.
- <sup>72</sup> Guru Granth, p.788.
- <sup>73</sup> Surinder Singh Kohli, Sikh Ethics, p.55.
- <sup>74</sup> Guru Granth, p.226.
- <sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p.557.
- <sup>76</sup> J.S.Grewal, *op.cit.*, p.192.
- <sup>77</sup> Guru Granth, p.787.
- <sup>78</sup> Jaswinder Kaur Dhillon, Gender Equality in Guru Granth Sahib: Theory and Practice, p.44, Seminar Proceedings, Guru Granth Sahib: Different Perspective, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, 2005.
- <sup>79</sup> Guru Granth, p.722.
- <sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1107.
- <sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1274
- <sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1171.
- <sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1111.
- <sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p.18.
- <sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1170.
- <sup>86</sup> J.S.Grewal, *op.cit.*, p.195.
- <sup>87</sup> Guru Granth, p.85.
- <sup>88</sup> A.C. Banerjee, *op.cit.*, p.77.
- <sup>89</sup> Guru Granth, p.62.
- <sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1020.

## CHAPTER-5

### GURU NANAK'S CONCEPT OF POLITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Polity is a political organization or a body of people organized under system of Government.<sup>1</sup> It can also be said that politics is an organization having its own laws or rights for the betterment of the society. From ancient Indian point of view 'Polity' was known as 'Rajyasastra' the science of the state. For the proper function of the society some system or rules are necessary to follow. Thus political system is essential for human society with the aim of maintenance of law and order.

**The Heritage and Gift of illustrious Gurus:** If we look back across five centuries of our glorious heritage, each one of us is filled with a sense of wonder and pride at the rare achievements and rich tradition of Sikhism. Guru Nanak was renowned for his humanist mission, won people's hearts with his message of grace, love and harmony. With his persuasive reason he attracted thousands of adherents and disciples who prided themselves to be Sikhs of Guru Nanak. Guru Nanak introduced the institution of Sangat. The fundamental object behind the organization of the Sangat was to guide the followers of the Guru to mould their lives according to the teachings of their Master. Guru Nanak considered the assembly or the organized fellowship to be the proper medium for the communication of his message. Wherever Guru Nanak went during his missionary travels he established Sangat.<sup>2</sup> Guru Nanak's motive behind Sangat was establishing the equality and brotherhood of mankind. In this way tradition of giving privileged treatment to the ruling class and humiliation and dishonor to the lower class could be stopped.

Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh religion, criticized the political condition and administration of his times and made many indirect references to the contemporary political situation, where the kings were unrighteous and

harassed their subjects. Guru Nanak described this time period as Kaliyuga and says:

Such is the way of the Kali-age that everyone says that,  
He himself knows everything.<sup>3</sup>

Guru Nanak was witness of the conditions of the people under the Lodis and of the behavior of the ruling class towards the people. He expressed political degradation in the following hymn like:

In Kali-Yuga is this chariot of the fire of  
passion with falsehood as the charioteer.<sup>4</sup>

Similarly like Guru Nanak, Guru Angand Dev also observed the entire world was in agony:

The Mendicant is given the title patishah;  
a fool called Pandit.  
A blind man is called evaluator,  
such is nature of the usual parlance.  
A mischief-monger becomes chief, and  
a bad women is seated at the head.  
Saith Nanak: By the wisdom granted by the Master.  
Know such to be the way of Kali-Yuga.<sup>5</sup>

Guru Amar Das ji promoted the institutions of Sangat and Pangat. He also forbade the practice of Sati. He divided his spiritual domain into twenty two circles called Manjis. Each Manji was headed by devoted Sikhs whose duty was to preach the mission of the Sikh Gurus. The system of Manji started with a view to keep the local body in touch with the centre. Like Guru Nanak and Guru Angad Dev, Guru Amar Das also describe the agony of the contemporary world in the following lines:

The world is on fire O God, save it Thou in Thy mercy.<sup>6</sup>  
Guru Ram Das laid special stress on voluntary service.

Similarly Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Guru and compiler of Guru Granth, propagated the religion of Guru Nanak. Guru Arjan started 'Masand system' in order to collect money from Sangat in different parts of the country. He was also very much supported by Sikh Sangat. Emperor Jahangir felt annoyed at the popularity of Sikhism among the people. He ordered to close his shop and wanted to bring him into the fold of Islam or to put an end to his life. He was tortured to death. He sacrificed himself in defending the religious Human Rights. So the martyrdom of fifth Guru Guru Arjan Dev brought the Sikh people in open defiance of the unjust ways of the contemporary rulers. He also expressed his views regarding the rulers who indulged in lustful pleasures as:

He (the king) rules in ten directions. And with numerous  
female indulged in pleasures and merry-making.....<sup>7</sup>

After Guru Arjan Dev, Guru Hargobind prepared the Sikhs for self preservation against bigoted and powerful enemy by introducing a dual role of a Miri (an army leader) a Piri (Guru). Guru Hargobind maintained an army, created a fort at Amritsar and the institution of Akal Takht, the symbol of Miri-Piri system of Guru Nanak. The Guru had openly declared his policy to punish the tyrant and protect the weak. He kept 800 horses, 300 trained horsemen and 60 artillery men. He fought three major battles which were forced on him by Mughals. This was turning point in Sikh history. He carried two swords one of spiritual power Piri and other for military power Miri.<sup>8</sup> Thus the Sikh polity has been regarded as the outcome of the sixth Guru's Polity put forth by him by putting on two swords of Piri and Miri, which indicates the combination of religion and politics. He acted as chief justice for the Sikhs. He used to hold courts at Akal Takht. He was 'Sacha Patshah' the true king for his followers. The symbol of Miri and Piri was a signal to the rulers that the Guru would defend the religious and Human Rights, if needed even with Sword.

Guru Har Rai preached humility and disavored a clash with anybody. Eighth Guru Harkrishan assumed Gurgaddi at the age of seven. He was also troubled to no end.

Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Sikh Guru, registered his peaceful resistance against the policy of forcible conversion by offering himself for the sacrifice to Mughals. This shows the willingness of Sikhs to defend the religious rights of others. Guru Tegh Bahadur gave his head deliberately in confrontation with the ruler for the cause of truth. Guru Tegh Bahadur called 'Hind Di Chadar' (the protector of Hind) and savior of Hinduism.

Guru Tegh Bahadur's compositions reveal his commitment to the values of his predecessors. He decided to uphold the freedom of conscience when Aurangzeb began to pursue a policy of coercion. This was the basic reason for his martyrdom.<sup>9</sup>

Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru did not show his divine power but firmly led the people against the might of the Mughal empire. Guru Gobind Singh felt to start organization of Sikhs to fight against tyranny and injustice. He wanted to strengthen the Sikh community by introducing the establishment of Khalsa. Guru by initiation by Amrit has brought the equality that was being lost due to the prevalent practice of caste system. He inspired the Sikhs to follow the teachings of the Gurus and became sant sipahi, a saint soldier to uphold the righteousness fearlessly. Guru Nanak approved the use of force for the people's right of rebellion against an oppressive ruler. Similarly Guru Gobind Singh considered the sword should be used for the protection of the oppressed or for the righteous cause. But if it used for oppression it loses all its significance. Guru Gobind Singh used physical force to ensure the protection and promotion of Sikh religion. He established Khasla for this purpose.

### **Guru Nanak's response towards Polity:**

Guru Nanak stands unique in the field of spirituality, for his teachings of a new religious sect which excelled all others prevalent during his time. He

was concerned more about man's spiritual enlightenment than the political affairs which attract every human being. He was a 'Masiha' for suffering and oppressed humanity rather than seeker of worldly powers. He wanted to revolutionise the religious attitude of the people not only of his time but all the times to come. It is true that he never expressed his ideas like a statesman nor as a politician regarding politics. He kept himself away from active participation of politics and even never coveted any political authority for himself.

Seek I neither kingship no liberation;

My heart love of your lotus feet seeks solely.<sup>10</sup>

It does not mean that he had no political thought. Guru Nanak had made certain observations about the politics, of his time which became a strong basis of the Sikh polity. Although Guru Nanak did not propound any, systematic theory of state as Plato, Hobbes and Rousseau did in the west, yet it is not less vital to bear in mind the fact he had both implicitly and explicitly, and in an empirical manner, stated his views about the rulers and their duties.<sup>11</sup> So he could not keep his eyes closed to see polluted moral and social atmosphere around him or even he permitted the use of force to fight out evil when it could not otherwise be ended.

He did not turn a deaf ear to the happenings of his time. He boldly pointed out the weakness of political setup. We came to know from the biographies of the great Greek political thinkers like Plato, Aristotle that they never became statesman or politician yet we can infer their political ideology from their references to the prevalent political system and metaphorical usage of the contemporary political phraseology. Guru Nanak was primarily a social and religious thinker, but it is also suggested that even if he did not systematically probe into the affairs of the state it is possible to form an idea of his reactions to political authority.<sup>12</sup> Thus it is unfair to say that Guru Nanak did not give any systematic political thought. He was a great enlightened thinker who gave importance to all positive aspects of human life.

Guru Nanak was primarily a religious preacher and up lifter of society. Active politics was not his field. He observed with keen interest the functioning of the Government in the country. Guru Nanak did think of the social and the political disabilities of his people.<sup>13</sup>

Guru Nanak's political concern was closely related to his idea of society which must be organized on the healthy basis of justice, fraternity, liberty and equality and it should be free from every type of oppression. Guru Nanak had depicted the contemporary political conditions of India very vividly. The sufferings of the people during the Babar's invasion had been described by Guru Nanak with deep emotion. The Guru resented the Lodi's inability to discharge their duty of providing protection for their subjects.

Similarly in the words of Bhagat Singh, Guru Nanak felt disgusted with the ethical standards and moral life of the administrator, as also of the general public and upbraided them for their lapses. Thus we see that Sikh religious leader's condemnation of the moral degradation of the people and Government officials and the rulers was with a view to recommending sounder moral foundations for the operation of political authority.<sup>14</sup> In the opinions of Surinder Singh Kohli, "He accuses Lodi rulers of showing criminal indifference towards their duties, as a consequence of which corruption prevailed. The Kings had given up truth and justice and leaving aside their duty towards their subjects, they were busy with wine and women. By the gross acts of injustice, they had accumulated a good deal of wealth, which in turn became the cause of their destruction."<sup>15</sup> The reigning dynasty at the time, the Lodis according to Nanak had "squandered away the priceless heritage" That was Hindustan and allowed it be ravaged by Babar's Mughal hordes.<sup>16</sup>

Guru Nanak does not show any regard for temporal power and he does not show any respect for political authority. This aspect of his attitude to politics, in which man's moral commitment is given a clear primacy over his political obligations, is extremely important for its implications if the distinction between moral allegiance to God and political allegiance to the

state was to be carried to its logical conclusions. In the absence of such a choice being forced on one, politics could more or less be ignored as a contemptible affair.<sup>17</sup> For the proper understanding of the Guru Nanak's Philosophy of politics, it is necessary to study the milieu in which he lived, what influenced his thinking and how he react to the milieu.

Before the birth of Guru Nanak in 1469 A.D., India had been ruled by several Muslim dynasties. The armed might of the Hindus had been broken by Qutb-ud-Din Aibak, the first king of the slave dynasty in 1193 in the battle of Narain. Several efforts were made to exterminate Hinduism. Thousand of temples were destroyed and millions of Hindus butchered.<sup>18</sup>

Muslim historians have talked of this butchery with great gusto. There was great religious intoleration on the part of conqurers and the vanquished people suffered heavily. There were forcible conversions. Those Hindus, who did not accept Islam, had to live under the pressure of severe taxes and were subjected to Muslim laws. The cruelties of Muslim kings before the birth of Guru Nanak were recorded in several chronicles, for example, in *Tarikh-i-Daudi* (transtated by Elliott), *Twarikh-i-Ilahi* by Akmir Khusro, *Kamilut-Twarikh* by Ibn Asir, *Taj-ul-Ma'asir* by Hasan Nizami Naishapuri, etc.<sup>19</sup>

Guru Nanak spent 57 years of his life under the reign of Lodis. Guru Nanak was 20, when Sikendar Lodi came to the throne of Delhi and he was 34 when he set out on his first tour, therefore obviously Nanak spent the first 34 years of his life in Punjab. The first twenty years he spent at his birth place Talwandi and thereafter he took to service under Daulat Khan Lodi at Sulatanpur as store keeper (Modi).<sup>20</sup>

Guru Nanak, the founder, was a contemporary of five monarchs Bahlul Lodi (1469-89), Sikandar Lodi (1489-1517), Ibrahim Lodi (1517-1526), Mughal rulers-Babar (1526-1530) and Humayun (1530-1539). But Guru

Nanak does not mention the name of any of these rulers except Babar while attacking their unrighteous politics.<sup>21</sup>

Ibrahim Lodi was a weak Sultan. Babar met him in the field of Panipat and gained a decisive victory. He established the Mughal rule in India.

### **Condition of Hindus at the time of Guru Nanak:**

There was extreme discrimination against Hindus in all administrative matters. Hindus had no rights. They were treated like slaves. Their life, honour and property were not safe. They were not appointed to senior posts in the Government system. So politically they were non entities in their own homeland.

Hindus were degraded morally and culturally. Hindus had to adopt their culture to save themselves. They lost all sense of honour and self respect. They took Muslim way of life and thought in order to please their masters. Most of the Muslim rulers had tried to eliminate Hindu society and Hindu religion by converting the Hindus to Islam, by demolishing their temples, by prohibiting them from performing pilgrimages and religious rites by burning their sacred books and insulting their gods by some other means of oppression and suppression. In this way we can say that even basic Human Rights of Hindus like life, property, equality were not safe during Muslim reign. It was Guru Nanak who felt deeply the suffering, oppression, humiliation and demoralization of Hindus and boldly revolt against it.

Guru Nanak was deeply moved by the oppression and suffering caused by Babar's invasion. Babar's invading army in the eyes of Guru Nanak was a marriage party of sin. An account of the invasion of Babar appears in the following version of Guru Nanak in Rag Asa in Guru Granth Sahib known as Babar Bani:

Bringing a bridal procession of sin (Babar), hath hasted  
From Kabul and demandeth wealth as his bride, O Lalo.

Modesty and religion have vanished; false hood was strutting about in glory O  
Lalo.

The occupation of the Qazis and the Brahmans is gone, the  
Devil readeth the marriage service, O Lalo.

Musalman women read the Quran, and in suffering call  
upon God, O Lalo.

Hindu woman whether of high or low caste, meet the same  
fate as they, O Lalo.

They sing the paean O murder, O Nanak, and smear  
themselves with the saffron of blood.

Nanak singeth the praises the Lord in the city of  
corpses, and uttereth this commonplace.<sup>22</sup>

Guru Nanak reacted against such atrocities committed by the Babar's army. He condemned excesses committed by his soldiers. Guru Nanak's sharp response to Babar's invasions underlines the most important political development during his life, the transition from Afghan to Mughal rule in the Punjab and in northern India.<sup>23</sup>

In the Babar Bani Guru Nanak gives a vivid description of the havoc brought by the armies of invaders led by Babar. Guru Nanak also clearly indicates the type of rulers and administrative machinery of his time in the following hymn:

Rulers are turned beast of prey , their officers hounds.

None do they allow in peace to rest.

The Subordinates wound the people with their claws

You dogs! lick on the blood and marrow of the poor.<sup>24</sup>

Guru Nanak also describes the state of affairs as under:

Greed and evil are king and counselor; falsehood their officers.

Lust the officer who is called for advice,

all three hold conclave to chalk out plans.<sup>25</sup>

So it is clear from the above passage that the kings were unrighteous and did not look after their subjects rather harassed them. Guru Nanak openly

criticized the king as unjust and accused his judicial officers as corrupt who were denying justice to the people after accepting bribes.

The age of Guru Nanak was an age of political chaos, oppression, tyranny and corruption. Guru Nanak gives expression to his anguish over the age in these words:

Kings are butchers, cruelty their knife,  
sense of duty has taken wings and vanished.  
Falsity prevails like the darkness of darkest night,  
The moon of truth is visible nowhere.  
I have tired myself in search, but,  
in the darkness of the age,  
no path of righteousness is visible.<sup>26</sup>

In this way Guru Nanak makes many indirect references to the contemporary political situation. Corruption and bribery were rampant in the contemporary judicial system due to the weak regime and low ebb of morality of the administrative machinery. Guru Nanak exposes them in the following verses:

In this age none at sight of suffering takes pity.  
No one from receiving graft restrains himself.  
Rulers administer justice as is their palm greased.  
None by invoking the name of God is persuaded.<sup>27</sup>

Morality of the administration shows from the above passage. Administrative officials were at its lowest ebb. They were receiving bribe openly without any hesitation.

There was virtually no justice during that age. The Kazis who were the very custodians of justice and responsible for administering justice and expounding the law, had become corrupt. It indicates that there was the height of political degeneration. Guru Nanak expresses his indignation in the following words:

The Kazi sits in the seat of justice.  
Tells the rosary and matters God's name.  
Yet he taking bribes and fouls justice.

Should any question him, he trots out  
some citation.<sup>28</sup>

So the dispensers of justice were themselves doing injustice to the subjects. According to Guru Nanak kings were unrighteous and did not look after their subjects. All the kings, Kazis and learned men of his time were neglecting the welfare of the masses and were busy in creating bitterness and vanity. They not only neglected their duties but also oppressed and harassed their subjects. It was just like the fence, which meant to protect the fields, eating the crop. Guru Nanak deprecated corruption, bribery and blood sucking practiced by public functionaries in administration, the luxurious life lived by the rulers, oppression of the people and their failure to give security of life to their subjects and the tyranny, cruelty, and butchery indulged in by the invaders.

Guru Nanak's sharp response to Babar's invasion underlines the most important political development during his life. The Guru himself suffered a few days imprisonment during the invasion of Babar. He himself had seen devastation caused by the first Mughal's attack. In the hymns of Guru Nanak, the Guru expressed a lot of pity for his fellow sufferers. His heart was deeply moved by the suffering atrocities and tyranny inflicted on the people by foreign invaders. Guru Nanak moved by the pathetic condition of the country and its people. He draws a heart rending scene in Asa di Var and describes how the soldiers dishonored the innocent women:

The heads on which the hair-plaits are beautifully arranged with vermillion on the parting line,

These heads are smeared by scissors; the dust rises to the necks.

The dwellers of places now do not find the company of their husbands.

When they were married, their husbands looked graceful by their sides.

They were brought in palanquins studded with ivory

Their youth and wealth both become their enemies, they had enamored them.

The messengers were ordered to rape them.....

why should one get punishment, if one thinks before hand?

The kings had lost sense in merriment, entertainment and pleasure.  
The word of Babar went round and young prince could get no food.  
Some had lost the time of prayer and some could not worship;  
without the sacred floor, how could the Hindu women bathe and install tilaks?  
Previously they did not remember Ram, now they cannot utter his  
Name.....<sup>29</sup>

Similarly Guru Nanak makes another general statement about the political  
situation of his time:

The houses, the palaces and pacca mansions were burnt,  
the young men were cut into pieces and thrown about.  
No Moghul became blind, none performed the miracle.  
A battle took place between Mughals and Pathans,  
the Sword was swung in the fight;  
The for mere discharged the matchlocks and the  
latter provoked the elephants.  
They certainly die, O brother! whose scrip is torn in  
the court of the Lord.  
Some were Hindu women, others were Turk women,  
The women of Bhats (bards) and Thakurs (Lords);  
The robes of some were torn from head to foot, the  
dwelling of some was the cremation ground;  
Those whose beautiful husbands did not come home  
how did they pass the night..<sup>30</sup>

So it is unfair to say that Guru Nanak did not give any systematic political  
thought simply on the pretext that the term 'Politics' have not been used as  
such.

In the above passage Guru Nanak describes the agony and destruction caused  
by Babar's invasion and also describes how a vivid and graphic picture of the  
cruel drama enacted before his very eyes. Guru Nanak in his Bani showed that  
rape was committed indiscriminately. Women of all castes find themselves in  
similar plight. Guru Nanak observed that wealth and beauty which served as

the source of pleasures have now become their enemy and they have been dishonored. Ordinary buildings were burnt and even the young men were cut to pieces and rolled in the dust.

Guru Nanak was deeply disturbed to see the revelries and merry making on the one side, and starved population reduced to the status of beggars on the other. Tears flowed out of his eyes when he thought of the misery of the Indian masses plundered by the hordes of bigots coming from distant land. In the eyes of Guru Nanak, the Indians were a herd of cows and the invaders were lions, so the combat between the two very unequal.<sup>31</sup>

So Guru Nanak speaks frankly in his compositions about the attitude towards the corrupt, oppressive and unjust regimes of Muslim rulers and their ruling class. We may conclude that although response of Guru Nanak to his political milieu does not form an orderly pattern and the verses which reflect his response to contemporary politics form only a very small portion of his compositions, yet in qualitative terms, these verses are significant and need an analytical comprehensive study.

In Babar Bani he complained to God for allowing the weak to be trampled upon the strong. He called invaders yama (the angels of death) disguised at the great Babar. Sitting in the city of corpses Guru Nanak said to the Lord:

The Lord from Babar's invasion protected Khorasan,  
And on Hindustan, let loose the terror.  
The Lord Himself Punishes not:  
So the Mughal Babar He sent down,  
dealing death as yama.  
As in their agony of suffering the people wailed,  
Didst Thou feel no comparison for them?  
Listen, Thou who art creator of all.  
Should a powerful foe molest one equally powerful?  
Little would the mind be grieved?  
But when a ferocious tiger falls upon a herd kills it,  
Then must the Master be called to account.

These dogs that despoiled the Jewels and wasted them,  
Now in their death none shall remember them.<sup>32</sup>

So Guru Nanak pained to see the suffering of weak and ordinary people who had little to do with politics and war.

Guru Nanak was very impartial in his sense of judgment. He found fault not only with the invader but also with the ruler. Had the ruler Lodi not been weak how could Babar invade have crushed him and their subjects. It was God's will to teach a lesson to the Lodi rulers who were immoral and living a luxurious life ignoring their responsibility. According to Guru Nanak what ever happens to anybody is according to the will of God. When any ruler ignores his duties, God teaches him a lesson in his own way. The general belief is that Guru Nanak in Tilang Rag condemns Babar's tyranny. According to this view, Guru Nanak sang this song of protest and lamentation and poignantly blamed God for the sufferings of 'lambs' at the hands of 'wolves' But a critical examination of Tilang M.I. would show that Guru Nanak looked upon Babar's invasion as an act of God's wrath mean to punish the sinful Sultan and sinful people who had forgotten God in their luxuries and corrupt life.<sup>33</sup> Thus God had wrought destruction due to the moral degradation of the rulers as well as the people. It can be judged that he had no sympathy for cruel and unjust Lodies who had taken to evil ways and indulged indiscriminately in the pleasures of the flesh. Guru Nanak was not a silent spectator of the misdeeds of the rulers. He fearlessly criticized the tyranny of the rulers and condemned the corruption rampant among the officials of his time. In the time of political instability it were the poor, powerless, innocent common man who suffered the most at the hands of undisciplined military hordes. Guru Nanak's sympathy was with the common people and sorrow for both Hindu and the Muslim sufferers.

Guru Nanak says:

The Lord, should it please Him, exalts;  
Should it please Him, chastizement sends.  
Should man contemplate God before hand,

Chastizement then may he escaped.  
Rulers in levity and frivolity lost their senses.  
Babar's command has gone abroad, that even  
Princes now without a crust go about.<sup>34</sup>

The rulers (Lodies) were very much irresponsible to the situation. The Guru Nanak cannot help upbraiding them (Lodies rulers) vigorously in the following composition:

The dogs that despoiled the jewels and wasted them.  
Now in their death none shall remember them.<sup>35</sup>

In the flow of blood and tears the Guru saw the worthlessness of the rulers, the cruelty of the invaders, and the helplessness of the people. A part from this, exploitation of poor and down trodden by the rich, ritualism, pitiable plight of women, child marriage, practice of sati, purdah system, hypocrisy, avarice and bribery etc were common ills of the society at the time of Guru Nanak.

Guru Nanak wanted to infuse a new spirit of life among demoralized and dispirited people and awakened political consciousness among them so that they could be prepared to resist oppressive rule. Guru Nanak encourages people to be aware about their political rights and to resist those kings who are unable to provide them security. The Government should guarantee the people their personal liberty and other Human Rights. Guru Nanak after a careful analysis of the given situation comes to the conclusion that the prevailing conditions were not satisfactory and that the contemporary life was in dire need of change. Thus Guru Nanak presented before us a novel philosophy of politics based on ethics.

Guru Nanak's philosophy of politics teaches man to develop transpersonal outlook and to transcend the boundaries of races and nations. Guru Nanak perceives the whole universe as a single unit created by God. Guru Nanak wants to create the sense of universal brotherhood among the human beings. He advises to establish and maintain such a political order in the world wherein all people can live in peaceful co-existence. It also indicates the war

free world and prevalence of mutual understanding and toleration among the inhabitants of the different parts of the world.

### **Ideal state of Guru Nanak:**

Here we will try to discuss Guru Nanak's concept of ideal state, ideal ruler his duties and responsibilities of the people towards state.

According to Guru Nanak ideal state is that in which the people live in prosperity and happiness. Guru Nanak conceiving God as the Sovereign king of the state as:

Thou art the creator and the cause: The self-dependent king, whose subjects  
are ever in bliss.<sup>36</sup>

In Guru Nanak's philosophy, the ultimate sovereignty rests with God himself. Since God, the true sovereign, pervades all beings, an individual is a Sovereign as well.

God is the supreme king who rules over the state. It is His will which maintain his Hukam in the whole universe. Guru Nanak, while expressing the nobility of human body says:

Human body is a state which is the sublime  
dwelling place of the unique immaculate Lord.  
There dwell the five preeminent ones viz. The five  
senses and above them the unique immaculate  
Lord has established his seat.<sup>37</sup>

Thus the state should create such conditions which may help the individual to further his personality.

### **Place of Panches in the Ideal state of Guru Nanak**

Guru Nanak introduced the concept of Panches in his *Bani* as Panch Parvan (the five accepted ones): In Sikh thought the Panches are the sons of Guru.<sup>38</sup>

Panches are selected persons attuned to God and accepted by Him. They are the representative of the Sangat. The Panches have been shown as occupying the prominent position in the Divine Kingdom. The concept of Panches is

indeed, the concept of collective leadership. According to Guru Nanak Panches are middle rung leaders. Panches are to be selected by the people on the ground of their merit only. When they selected, their unanimous advice or council will be acceptable to and binding on all. According to the Guru Nanak the role of the Panches, in the political system is that of a link between the Sangat and the ruler. They are to act as a cabinet of counselors or advisers as well as guides. They are to advise the ruler on all the issues so that there may be a proper coordination between the ruler and the people and so that government can run smoothly. Panches are to act as the chief consultants and helpers of the ruler with regard to proper implementation of the policies of the state. Panches will act as the chief decision makers while the head will simply be the signing authority.<sup>39</sup> The king should be assisted by sagacious Panches, who could be trusted with delegated authority. The Panches should be a man of great wisdom. King also should consider them as his substitute and king should also consult them before taking any action. The learned advisory counselors should constantly remind the ruler of his duties towards his subjects.

The ruler must have a fixed daily programme for the discharge of the various duties and must set before him a schedule for taking meals, listening to the Holy Scriptures, meeting his close courtiers enjoying the company of his queen etc.<sup>40</sup>

So the Panches will play the role of mediator between ruler and the people. Once they got selection in administration their duty is to help the ruler in making decision and to solve the problems of Sangat. They can lead Sangat to their destination by providing justice to them. So the Panches becomes the pre-requisite of the ideal state. The Panches can effectively restrain the ruler from the use of high handedness of any sort in governing state as Guru Nanak says:

The ruler by his good qualities on the throne can last  
As through fear of God in the five good  
qualities is he absorbed.<sup>41</sup>

In the ideal state of Guru Nanak, no individual is given absolute power in any matter. It is the Sangat or collective leadership who reigns supreme. So the Panches are to guide to the Sangat. They are to give proper guidance and true leadership to the Sangat on the issues of the state. It is duty of the Panches to express their love of God through love of mankind and out of their love of human kind they render self abnegating service to humankind. But if they will not be able to perform their duty well then Guru Nanak says:

Being ignorant if one shows the path, he misleads the  
whole company, says Nanak,  
He will be the fate of this Lord's court  
such will be the fate of this Guide.<sup>42</sup>

It can be said that Panches are to guide and keep a constant vigilance on the functioning of every institution i.e. religious, social, political and economic etc. Panches are to serve mankind if they failed to do so God will punish them for not performing their duty towards humanity. Thus we can conclude that the Panches can play a very important role in the proper functioning of state. They have to guide the king in every official matter. If they are serving Sangat it means they are serving God because God dwells in each individual being so therefore they should be helpful in creating a good and peaceful atmosphere in the kingdom. Even in ancient India, also the king consulted his counselors and assemblies of people regarding matters of state, so there were no chances of error in judgment.

### **The Ruler:**

The ruler plays an important role in the ideal state. He is to act as the representative and servant of the people. The ruler must be full of virtues. He should be free from greed, illusion and sin. He should practice chastity, charity and self control. But according to Guru Nanak Lord himself is the King of the Kings without any helper. He is the true King needing not any body's counsel. Guru Nanak indicates all these qualities when he takes his body as fortress and mind as a king. He says:

In the citadel town of the body rules the self as king,

Served by the officers of sources of action and  
His personal servants, the sources of enlightenment;  
Elegant is its portal:  
With falsehood and attachment is not attained,  
Lodgment in the true home, the Divine Essence  
Man by his greed and Sin into regrets falls.  
Truth and content in this city are the officials performing duties,  
As engaged in continence, truth and restraint  
Under the Lord's shelter comes.<sup>43</sup>

The selection of the ruler should be on the basis of the merit. It should not be on the basis of his birth rights, dynasty rights or divine rights etc. But he should have qualities of intelligence, rationality, maturity of thought so that he may be capable of doing his duties and responsibilities properly. He must have enough knowledge to distinguish between right and wrong. But doing all his duties he must not forget the Name of the Lord. As Guru Nanak says:

If my palace were raised of jewels and inlaid with rubies,  
and pleasantly plastered with musk and saffron, and sandal paste,  
Would then I lose myself and forget the Lord's Nam  
Even if I were a king, a gatherer of armies, and my seat were on a throne.  
And I commanded people about and about  
And that would be Vain.  
If I forget thee, O my Loved Lord!<sup>44</sup>

According to Guru Nanak only a Gurmukh is blessed with the qualities which are required to be the ruler of the state. Only a Gurumukh qualifies to be a ruler. Only he can recognize the value of truth, contentment, comparison and righteousness. Only a Gurumukh ruler can dedicate himself to the service and welfare of the people for he, being unattached, is not self centered, but is transpersonal in his outlook.

### **Duties of a Ruler:**

Justice is the bond which holds a society together harmoniously. Deliverance of justice is the foremost duty of a ruler. It is mentioned in Japuji that the king

is a one who is responsible for the maintenance of 'Dharma'. Thus, the function of a king is to maintain conditions in society which are favorable for the continuing 'Mriyada' in society. So the ruler must do justice under all circumstances. Guru Nanak Says:

By his might has he, the dispenser of justice,  
established his throne.<sup>45</sup>

Only that ruler's government can be stable, who delivers full justice to his subjects? Monarch has no divine rights. He exercises his power as a mandate from God. The ruler must be responsible to the ruled. It is the right of the subject to criticize the ruler and if need be, to oppose him. He is respected everywhere and lives in history. So dispensing justice becomes the foremost duty of a ruler. If he doesn't do so he loses his right to be a ruler. Says Guru Nanak:

Know that in all eternity the holy Lord is the righteous ruler.

In the court Divine he is reckoned the true Lord,  
Who to His ordinance is obedient?<sup>46</sup>

But if the ruler fails to deliver justice and takes bribe for delivering justice, it is the fault more of the subjects than that of the ruler. Guru Nanak condemned corruption in the judicial system of his time. The ruler must ensure that there is no corruption in the judiciary. In the vision of Guru Nanak Government authorities, judges and other officials should rise above corrupt practices and should ensure deliverance of justice to all people. The special responsibility of the king is the upliftment of the poorer section of society. According to Guru Nanak when the king forgets his duties and indulges in self gratification, his subjects should revolt against him. Only those king's kingdom will be durable who will follow democratic ideals and who keeps in mind the welfare of the people while enacting legislation. According to the Laws of Manu:

The king has been created the protector of the castes (Varna) and orders, who  
all according to their rank discharge their several duties.<sup>47</sup>

### **Protection of the subjects from exploitation:**

It is the duty of the ruler to protect his people from exploitation. The rulers of Guru Nanak's time exploited their subjects so he called them the blood sucking kings and ferocious tigers and their courtiers the dogs who tyrannized and tortured the poor subjects.

Everlasting be Thy rule

Everlasting Thy rule- May it ever abide

Such alone serve Thee as in God-given enlightenment are absorbed

Such from foes and sufferings are totally immune

Sin approaches them not

Even to Thy sole Name am I a sacrifice.<sup>48</sup>

According to Guru Nanak they would be dishonoured and insulted for their deeds of exploitation. Guru Nanak says it is the duty of ruler to protect the people against exploitation of any sort.

### **To fulfill the basic needs of the subjects:**

It is important function of ruler to fulfill the basic needs such as livelihood of his people. Just like the king, God provides sustenance to all his beings. Similarly it is the duty of ruler to provide the basic necessities to the people:

Eternally He doles out gifts;

Those receiving them at last can receive no more.

Infinitely the creation receives from Him sustenance.<sup>49</sup>

So the king should make proper arrangement for fulfilling the people's essential needs.

The people will also give respect to that ruler who looks after the well being of the people. The Government should create such atmosphere where every individual is free to work, gets employment and fulfils his essential needs out of his earnings through productive work.

To quote Guru Nanak:

Only His is the true Government who

Nourishes the people day and night.<sup>50</sup>

Only such a Ruler is free from any stain whose subjects are happy. Guru Nanak commends such as ruler:

O king thou art free from flaw  
For your people are blissful.<sup>51</sup>

It is the duty of the ruler to arrange for the fulfillment of the essential needs of its people. Only such ruler can be a true ruler.

### **To uphold fundamental Rights of the citizens:**

This is also one of the major duties of the ruler to guarantee the people personal liberty and other fundamental rights. Because honorable and dignified life is respected by Guru Nanak as:

If one lives and loses honour,  
all that eats is unrightfully.<sup>52</sup>

The Government should not impose its own religion, culture and thought upon the people. During the time of Guru Nanak, rulers tried to impose their own religion, culture and thought upon the subjects but Guru Nanak vociferously condemned such people who adopted the culture and faith of the ruling class under pressure. He simply raised his voice against the forcible suppressing of anyone's feelings.

Guru Nanak also criticized Hindus for adopting the Islamic language and culture. He speaks against who forcibly suppress the feeling of anyone. Guru Nanak is not against learning of any language. But condemns the adoption of the language of the other people under pressure like: In every house all the persons say 'Mian' (Islamic Language) your language has become different, O men (Hindus).<sup>53</sup>

So the ruler should not violate the fundamental rights of the people rather should be the safeguard of the people's Human Rights. The king should ensure of non violation of Human Rights of common people.

### **Proper distribution of wealth:**

It is duty of the Government to eliminate the gap between rich and poor and bring both closer to each other. This gap can be filled only by the proper

distribution of wealth. Unequal distribution will lead to economic disparities in society. Guru Nanak condemns such rulers who do not maintain proper circulation of wealth. He says:

Kings that are arrogant, garner wealth.<sup>54</sup>

God is the real owner and he distributes the wealth as He pleases. Other people like rulers, Panches are only the custodians of the wealth. They have no right to consume it for their personal use. The ruler should be pure at heart and mind so that the hoarding and exploitation can be put to an end.

He should check the economic stability in the state. He should charge only reasonable revenues, which may be sufficient for an efficient working of the state. So the king should take care of basic needs like food, shelter and clothing of his subjects.

### **Public service:**

The Government should provide all the facilities like means of communication, water supply, hospitals, dispensaries, educational institutions etc. The Government should help the public not for any gain or profit but for the sake of service aiming at the happiness of the people.

These are some important duties of the ruler. Apart from the duties of the ruler there are also duties and responsibilities of the people. In the vision of Guru Nanak, the political power must be based on the collective will of the Sangat i.e. the people. The ruler must give due regard to the public opinion. The people are also supposed to be politically conscious and fearless. If the ruler stops caring for the public opinion or violates the principles of justice, the people are required to raise voice against ruler. Guru Nanak condemned the unenlightened people steeped in obscurantism who live in fear of the despotic rulers. Guru Nanak called them mere corpses stuffed with chaff. Guru Nanak further says if the people obey the orders of a corrupt and oppressive rule, it is the fault more of the people than that of the ruler. Such people have been compared to a dog, who obeys the just and unjust of his masters only for a piece of bread about them. Guru Nanak says:

Rulers administer justice as is their palm greased.  
None by invoking the name of the God is persuaded.

Saith Nanak: Men are human in shape and name

Their doings dog like: at the door waiting to carry out commands.<sup>55</sup>

The above compositions of Guru Nanak make it clear that the people are supposed to be fully conscious of their obligations and rights and they are to be justice-loving. They are expected to resist tyranny and raise a strong voice against unjust rule. It is the people who are to give mandate for or against the Government.<sup>56</sup>

According to Guru Nanak, the people should be careful in the selection of the Panches as well as the ruler as Guru Nanak says:

Without anchor shall be disciples of the preceptor without vision

Without the holy Preceptor's guidance is not  
attained devotion to the Name.<sup>57</sup>

As for the state affairs are concerned, Guru Nanak sets rules for the collection of revenue by the ruler and at the same time he also explains the way to spend the public money for the welfare of the people. It should never be misused by the authority.

According to Guru Nanak, a great responsibility falls on the shoulders of the people to ensure proper, efficient and effective functioning of the Government in the interest of the people. They should take direct and vital interest in politics. They have to be intelligent, educated, enlightened, well informed, public spirited, sober and level headed. They must be aware of their obligations and rights. They should have the will and ability to exercise power. Thus we can conclude that Guru Nanak instructed everyone including the ruler, Panches and the subjects to discharge their duties and responsibility with sincerity. In this way the political system as envisaged by Guru Nanak will automatically evolve itself into a righteous rule. Besides the ruler common people were also made aware of their rights and duties. People are advised to discharges their duties with sincerity.

### **Rights of the Ruler:**

The foremost right of a ruler is that he must have sovereignty. He must be treated as the supreme power of the state. He must have the right to order and get the things done, otherwise he will not be able to function effectively. The people should pay full respect to ruler. He must get some status which he deserves.

Further the ruler must have the right to levy the right full taxes and it becomes the duty of the subject to pay such right full taxes so as to maintain the state. The ruler puts forth the requirement of the state exchequer. The people contribute to it with pleasure. Thus is ensured their solidarity with the state.<sup>58</sup>

The ruler must remember his duties while enjoying his rights.

A thorough and careful study of Guru Nanak's *Bani* shows that he had a clear understanding of the political social milieu in which he lived and he consciously and boldly reacted to the politics of oppression and tyranny by what so ever quarter it was exercised. He not only exhibited awareness of problem faced by his contemporary society at the hands of the misrules, but also propounded a novel philosophy of politics based on ethics. Instead of simply criticizing and condemning, the then prevalent corrupt political setup. He adopted a positive and constructive approach by envisaging a new type of political system. In which there would be no scope of oppression and tyranny and no chance of encroachment of Human Rights of people.

Guru Nanak forcibly condemned the Lodies rulers for missing their duty of defending their subjects against Babar's invasion. But at the same time he showed no hesitation to condemn Babar and his hordes who observed no ethics during war fare and did not lose any opportunity to dishonor the victimized innocent armless civilian people of India.

The warriors of the state should be loyal which may be able to defend the country in an emergency. Only that person is a real warrior who fights for the Dharma and who will not leave the battlefield even if he is cut into bits. He should never turn his face in the battlefield. So the warriors should be faithful toward the Kings.

Guru Nanak did not spare even the people of India for their moral and political degeneration which dissuaded them from raising their voice against tyranny. Guru Nanak suggested that both the ruler and the people must observe some sort of ethics of politics and codes of conduct. Guru Nanak envisaged a scheme in which all people were to be treated as equal and get equal opportunities in the state affairs.

**The Polity of Sikhs during 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries:**

The polity of Sikhs during 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries traces the evolution of the independent kingdom of the Punjab and its administrative institutions under the Sikh sardars like Banda Singh Bahadur and Maharaja Ranjit Singh. During this period Sikhs struggled against local oppression and foreign aggressions. The Sikh Gurus condemned the moral degradation of the people, Government officials and rulers. The combination of religious piety and disciplined worldliness that was evolved by Guru Nanak and elaborated by his successors was extended to the realm of politics by Guru Gobind Singh.<sup>59</sup> During these years of struggle against the Mughals and Afghans the Sikhs evolved a constitution peculiarly their own. Since every Sikh looked upon himself as a sardar (chief), the only organization he was willing to accept was one in which his dependence and equality was guaranteed.<sup>60</sup> The purpose of Guru Gobind Singh behind the establishment of Khalsa was to make Sikhs the rulers of the land and Sikh rule established by Khalsa within two years of Guru Gobind Singh's death. This was the spirit of Khalsa who liberated the suppressed class from the clutches of Mughal emperor. The aim and objective of Khalsa was to serve humanity.

This period served as the chief source of inspiration and guidance for the Sikh community. With the establishment of Khalsa, the social revolution started by Guru Nanak reached at its goal of serving the society without any distinction of caste, colour and faith. According to Guru Nanak:

Service of the holy preceptor  
brings fulfillment of desire.<sup>61</sup>

The Guru himself set high example of sewa. Similarly Guru Angad Dev, Guru Amar Das ji served their Masters. So the examples of Gurus were to guide lives for their followers. The Khalsa ideals served as beacon light for the Sikh chiefs. The Khalsa was considered a very sacred creation of the Guru to fight Mughal oppression and everybody respect it. No single individual or a group of individuals could be considered as superior or equal to the entire body of the community. The Sikh chiefs time and again, declared that they were the humble servants of the Panth. The Sikh chief ruled in the name of the Guru. An important aspect of their victory over their enemies was not any particular individual or leader but the Khalsa. Every Sikh ruler performed his duties according to the Sikh code of conduct, the laws of the land and the customs of the society. Because of the teachings of their Guru the Sikhs had disregarded the caste distinctions, difference of high and low, untouchability etc.

#### **The origin and development of Misl organizations:**

The purpose of foundation of Khalsa was to spread righteousness and to uproot the state repression and injustice. To end the evil of hatred for persons of low castes or other faiths and replace it with love for the whole of humanity a family created by God to inculcate self-confidence, to encourage people, to live a humble life of self-respect and to serve society as its honorable Sant Sipahi.<sup>62</sup> This was the spirit of Khalsa who liberated the suppressed class from the clutches of Mughal emperor. The aim and objective of Khalsa was to serve humanity and self protection. Similarly, the motto of Sikh sardars and Misls was welfare or service of humanity and dispensation of justice. Misl is an Arabic word used to denote alike or equal. It derived its name from the Misl (file) kept to enter the holding of various Jathas.<sup>63</sup>

According to Chamber's English Dictionary, Missal is a book containing the complete service for mass throughout the year.<sup>64</sup> The Sikh in order to meet the danger of the Mughal persecutions and Afgan invasions, were forced to organize themselves into small military bands and into the powerful Dal Khalsa. These small bands fought under a common leader against common

enemies, the Mughals or Afghans. The collective strength of those bands constituted the Dal Khalsa which was thoroughly organized in 1748. But in the course of the next two decades, those sixty five bands were leagued together in eleven or twelve main divisions each with a distinguishing title and banner, but varying in strength. Those divisions, in course of time began to be called 'Misls', and from 1767 to 1799, the whole of the Punjab was held by those Misls.<sup>65</sup> All the members of a particular Misl claimed complete equality with everyone.

When the Sikh sardars assembled at Akal Takht they made a detailed report of the territories occupied by them to their chief leader. The president of the assembly, who prepared the separate Misls (files) of the individual sardars, it was sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, who seems to have started for the first time, the maintenance of the missal or files for the individual sardar. Probably he was then the only person with knowledge of Persian and Urdu, among the Sikh sardars to do this job. Later the term Misl acquired the meaning of the army of a sardar or the territory under him.

The system of Misls gave strength to the organization of the Sikhs. It was due to the collective efforts of leading sardars and their contingents. They had made to the acquisition and such land tenures were known as Misaldari, Pattadari, Jagirdari and Tabedari etc. These Misals established their independent states in different parts of Punjab. These Misls were 12 in number as:

1. Bhangi Misal took its name from its leader's nick name Bhangi or an addict to bhang- an intoxicating preparation of hemp.
2. Nishanwalas were the standard bearers- nishan means a standard of the Dal Khalsa.
3. The Shahids were headed by the decendants of honoured martyrs and Nihangs.

4. The Ramgarhias took their name from the fortress of Ramgarh at Amritsar, earlier known as Ram Rauni, held and enlarged by Jassa Singh, the carpenter.
5. Ahluwalias derived their title from the village Ahlu to which Jassa Singh originally belonged.
6. The Nakkais were named after the territory of Nakka.
7. Kanhayas
8. Fazulpurias or Singhpurias
9. Sukharchakias
10. Dalewalias took their names from the villages of their chiefs.
11. Karorsinghias took the name from Karor Singh, the third and the most important leader of the Misal. They were sometimes called Punjgarhias from the village of their first chief.
12. The Phulkians went back to Phul, the common ancestor, of Ala Singh of Patiala House, of Gajpat Singh of Jind and of Hamir Singh of Nabha. Ala Singh was the son of Rama, the second son of Phul; Gajpat Singh was the grandson of Tiloka, son of Phul; Hamir Singh was son of Tiloka, son of Phul.<sup>66</sup> So the Sikhs were not governed by any one prince but divided into twelve fraternities called Misl and each one act according to its own way. No doubt that they were divided into many groups but their plan to lead in incursion in one direction was same and it was because of this unity, they emerged victorious wherever they go. In this way Misl proved as the chief source of inspiration and guidance for Sikh community.

**Gurmata:**

Gurmata was the central institution of the Misls. Gurmata is a combination of two Punjabi words Guru and Mata. Guru means ‘spiritual teacher’ and Mata means ‘the advice of the Guru’<sup>67</sup> means decision of the Guru. In other words the decisions arrived at with the common consent of the Sarbat Khalsa in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib were called Gurmata. Sarbat Khalsa was

considered the supreme court of the Sikh. The Gurmata was a strong expression of this ideal of democratizing the Panthic decisions. The practice of electing a leader of the misal in the earlier stages and electing the leader of the Dal Khalsa were in pursuance and fulfillment of the same ideal of republican and democratic spirit of the Khalsa.

The Gurus had enjoyed upon the Sikhs to take their decisions through Panchayats or councils, and all important decisions relating to common interests of the community must have the approval of those for whom they were meant. The Sikh chiefs were alive to the democratic ideals inculcated by the Gurus and they followed them to the best of their power.

Under the Misls, the Sikh polity with its various aspects like the Gurmata, the Rakhi System, the republican pattern of their Government, ruling in the name of the Khalsa, with coins in the name of the Guru, non sectarian nature of the Government, with the chiefs declaring themselves to be not infallible, came to be adopted.<sup>68</sup>

#### **Role of Banda Singh Bahadur in Sikh Polity:**

The Muslim rulers declared war against the Sikhs because Sikhs were continuously making efforts to resist the state policy of forcible conversion and repression of Human Rights. Baba Banda Singh Bahadur was one of the Sikhs who helped suffering people under the tyranny of the Mughal rule. After the death of Guru Gobind Singh, the Sikhs soon developed into a political power under the leadership of Banda Singh who came to the Punjab, not as Guru but as commander of the forces of the Khalsa.<sup>69</sup>

He proved himself as a best disciple and followed the instructions of his master. He took himself the duty of serving the people through deg and tegh, which means feeding the hungry and protecting the weak and helpless. Banda Singh Bahadur had received baptism of the Khalsa from the hands of Guru Gobind Singh and throughout his life remained a staunch believer of the Guru's mission. He followed with perfect strictness the Sikhs rules of conduct.

During his Khalsa Raj he followed the code of conduct prescribed by Guru Gobind Singh. Gobind Singh by his persuasive eloquence and religious zeal made such a deep impression on the mind of Banda that he was initiated into the 'Pahul' (Amrit Ceremony) and became disciple of the Guru. Banda Singh, as he heard from the Sikhs, the events in the Punjab which had preceded the Master's journey to the South, especially the episode of Martyrdom of the princes at Chamkaur and those of younger ones, bricked alive in the wall at Sirhind, his blood boiled with rage. Anger lit his heart and aroused in him righteous indignation. He therefore, yearned with his heart to wage war against the tyrants and vindicate himself of and punish the evil doers and subdue the cruel rulers.<sup>70</sup> Therefore Banda Singh determined to turn out the Mughals and establish a Sikh rule in Punjab. During his time large number of Hindus and Muslims converted to Sikhism but Banda did not use any force to propagate his religion rather they would join full religious liberty. In this way we can say that the polity of religious toleration preached by the Sikh Gurus was strictly followed by Banda Bahadur. Mughal empire only fought over territory, women etc. whereas Sikh battles were fought over principle and self defense alone.

From first Guru, Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh, the Gurus had organized the Sikh to defend their rights and secure freedom of worship, freedom of expression and freedom of missionary activities. They hold the sword with the object of self defense. Banda was the first Sikh who organized the Sikhs and built a political power. He fought many battles with Mughals. He had, therefore, no alternative but to oust the Mughal Government officials, appointed his own men, introduced changes in the Government setup and adopted a policy that aimed at fulfilling the aspirations of the Sikhs.<sup>71</sup>

In this way he tried to create awareness among ordinary masses to resist tyranny and sacrificed his life for the national cause. Banda Singh and his companion set example in this respect. He never ever tried to entitle himself as a Guru rather he took pride in being called the Banda or the master's slave.

Banda Singh along with his companions killed Wazir Khan the faujdar of Sirhind, the killer of Guru Gobind Singh's young sons and the Khalsa flag was hoisted on the fort of Sirhind and this victory added to the enthusiasm of the Sikhs. Banda Singh appointed many Sikhs in administrative job at Sirhind. He fought valiantly for the protection of their life and liberty as well as of others, as per the teachings of Sikhism never submitted to injustice.

Banda Singh assumed royal authority, issued coins, introduced an official seal and a new calendar dating from the capture of Sirhind. His coins, however, bore the names of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh. He also introduced an official seal for state documents and letters patent.<sup>72</sup> After Sirhind the Sikhs made easy control over Jalandhar and Hoshiarpur. To see the flash of victory a large number of Hindus also joined the force of Banda Bahadar to enjoy the fruits of the success over their Mughal masters. Then Banda and other Sikhs turned their attention to Batala, Kalanaur, Pathankot, Jammu, Raipur, Bahrapur etc. and was victorious everywhere and ultimately Banda Singh and his companions captured and executed on June 9, 1716.

After Banda's death his supporters were divided into two camps, the Bandais who regarded Banda as the Guru and Tat Khalsa who refuse to believe in any personal Guru after the death of Guru Gobind Singh. At this time there were several other divisions among the Sikhs and a few individual had attempted to assume Guruship.<sup>73</sup> So it was under the command of Banda Singh that the foundation of Mughal empire was uprooted. He implemented the Guru Nanak's mission of self defense. After the execution of Banda Singh Bahadur, the Sikhs started meeting at Amritsar twice a year, Baisakhi and Diwali. This gathering was called Sarbat Khalsa. They made their decisions jointly after discussion and goodwill. Their decisions were accepted by every Sikh and respected as orders of the Guru no member of the Khalsa, no matter how highly placed he might be, ever thought of ignoring them.<sup>74</sup>

### **The Sikh Empire under Ranjit Singh:**

Banda Singh was the first great Sikh leader who routed the Mughal armies at Sirhind. Nawab Jassa Singh was the second great Sikh leader who defeated Mughal armies and conquered Lahore and Delhi. In both cases Khalsa victories were of outstanding nature. Mughal rule was ended and Sikh rule was established. However the duration of Khalsa Raj was short in both cases. Clannish rivalries amongst Sikhs contributed to the early terminate of their Raj. Maharaja Ranjit Singh learned a lesson from these events. He therefore took action to check the tribal forces and divisive tendencies from the Sikh society to make his rule last longer.<sup>75</sup>

After the death of his father Mahan Singh in 1791, Ranjit Singh was recognized his successor. Ranjit Singh occupied Lahore in 1799 and marked a watershed in his career. Within ten years Ranjit Singh unified the Punjab under his rule. In the popular idiom, Ranjit Singh the Misaldar became Ranjit Singh the Maharaja. In the history of Sikh rule in Punjab Ranjit Singh adopted Lahore as his capital. His political achievement as the ruler of Lahore has so completely over shadowed his late eighteenth century predecessors that the year 1799 appears to many historian to mark the beginning of sovereign Sikh rule in the Punjab.<sup>76</sup> In the words of Khushwant Singh, Ranjit Singh ruled in the name of Khalsa, using the term ‘Sarkar Khalsa for his Government, neither his name nor effigy appears on the coins current in his dominions’.<sup>77</sup>

During the period of Misls there was no definite code of law or proper judicial system. The Sikh soldiers were also without training and discipline. They were not known about offensive or defensive plans. The weapons like swords, spears, daggers etc. were used by them. So it can be said that during Misls period administration was not highly developed .It was irregular and imperfect.

In 1799 a process of unification was started by Ranjit Singh virtually to establish an empire during the first quarter of the nineteenth century. He made

use of an efficient army raised and trained more or less like the army of the East India Company. Maharaja annexed Punjab northwest frontier province and Kashmir and Afghanistan in Sikh empire. His rule become a shining example and unique in a short time. He did not establish his law and order only in India but beyond Indian sub continent like Afghanistan and made it last for a period.

The monarch Maharaja Ranjit Singh ruled for forty years and brought peace and prosperity to kingdom. Human Rights of the people were respected in his Kingdom and there was complete freedom of religion and its practice.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh was sympathetic and independent director of the state affairs. He regularly looked after the social, religious, cultural and economic welfare also. He tried his best to maintain the laws, practices and customs of the people and punish those who violate them. Ranjit Singh had a strong and well organized army which was always ready to effectively execute his order. It was the duty of army to defense the Kingdom and the protection of its borders. He was a monarch absolutely independent and possessing the greatest power in Asia after the British. He never acted in opposition to the wishes of his people who could express themselves in favour of or against his conduct. He always represented himself as a member of the Sikh community. The Maharaja always felt that it was the extreme kindness of the Guru that he was made to serve the Panth. He considered himself to be the Kukar (dog) at the door of the Guru and the Panth. The Maharaja would often proclaim himself to be nothing more than the mere drum of Guru Gobind Singh, adding that his purpose was only to assert the superman of the Khalsa. He never arrogated to himself any high sounding titles but on the contrary adopted the impersonal title of sarkar denoting the Government responsible for law and order.<sup>78</sup> So he declared himself as a soldier of the Khalsa. He had earned the trust of the people. He protected them against aggression from where so ever it came. They always gave him fullest co-operation and support in the conduct of state affairs. He always worked for the glorification of the Sikh Panth.

An efficient army played a positive role in Ranjit Singh's political success. He had a number of infantry men, units of army and guns. In terms of its striking power, the state of Ranjit Singh was stronger than many larger states in Asia.

All the Sikh chiefs of Patiala, Nabha, Jind, Faridkot, Shahabad, Thanesar, Kaithal, Malerkotla and Raikot raised tribute to Ranjit Singh after his occupation of Lahore. Thus large number of vassal chiefs went on paying tribute to Ranjit Singh. They sent contingents too whenever they were called upon to do so.

The territories directly administered by Ranjit Singh were divided into large number of primary units over which Governors were appointed by the Maharaja. Each primary unit consisted of ta 'alluqas', also called parganas, over which Kardars were appointed for the collection of revenues and the maintenance of peace and order.<sup>79</sup> Diwans and treasurers were appointed to maintain records relating to different heads of income and expenditure but the finance was only in one concern of Ranjit Singh.<sup>80</sup>

In the army of Ranjit Singh more than half of them were Sikhs. Several Commanders of the infantry and artillery units were Sikhs. Ranjit Singh encouraged the Punjabies in general and Singhs in particular to join the infantry and the artillery.

Thus for good administration Maharaja selected high caliber senior officers without any social or religious differences. Maharaja never blamed himself to be infallible and absolute. He was always open to correction and his laws and ordinances were subject to amendments and alteration. He always took the final decision after consulting his ministers and courtiers. Welfare of the subjects was prime policy of his state. He should always give priority to his official duties over his personal comforts and needs and never has he postponed his work on next day.

In the words of Sir John Gordon, The Maharaja was always generous to the vanquished and would never reduce anyone to desperation. There was never any sentimental manifestation in his politics and would never leave in his state a hostile or disgruntled power that might build up rebellion against him.<sup>81</sup> Ranjit Singh always regarded the chiefs and granted them liberal terms. Ranjit Singh was well known for his generosity of heart.

Ranjit Singh also encouraged trade by ensuring safe passage for the caravans of trades and imposing lenient duties. Banking facilities were available through the system of Hundis and Insurance (bima) was available at low rates. Trade and manufacturing were almost exclusively family enterprises. There was no corporate business organization in the dominions of the Maharaja. Internal trade was more important than external trade. Amritsar was linked by road with Lahore and through Lahore with Multan, Boinagar and Pesharwar. All these cities were linked with a number of towns in turn were linked with smaller towns and villages.<sup>82</sup> In this way all the Gurus and Sikhs followed the tenets and practices promulgated by Guru Nanak.

Banda Bahadar has used one inscription on coins and another on his seal, both inscriptions implying that the power and authority of the rulers was derived from God and the Gurus. These legends were used by the Sikhs who established their rule in the late eighteenth century. One kind of coin was minted at Lahore and the other at Amritsar. Both these coins were current in the dominions of the Sikh rulers including the territories of Charhat Singh and Mahan Singh, the predecessors of Ranjit Singh. It was natural for Ranjit Singh to continue with a well established tradition.<sup>83</sup>

Maharaja Ranjit Singh would not issue a coin in his own name but maintained the same old inscription of the forts after the name of Gurus. The fort of Gobindgarh at Amritsar was built in the name of Guru Gobind Singh and the garden of Ram Bagh laid out in Amritsar was named after Guru Ram Das.<sup>84</sup> So in this way he proclaimed himself as the servant of the Guru.

Ranjit Singh died at Lohare on June 27, 1839, after nominating his eldest son Kharak Singh as his successor. Ranjit Singh evolved a structure of power by which he could reconcile all important sections of his subjects to his rule and he could induce many of them to be enthusiastic in his support. He revived prosperity and minimized oppression. He created opportunities for members of several sections of the society to improve their social position. It is this context that we can appreciate the position of Sikh community during the early nineteenth century.

Ranjit Singh was able to rise above the communal prejudices of his age and treated the men of different religious groups on equal footing. He gave full religious freedom to the non-Sikhs and imposed no restriction whatsoever upon them. Hindus, Muslims, European, Christians and Dogra Rajputs occupied high jobs in his administration along with the men of his own community. The Maharaja showed as much regard for the sacred places of the Hindus and Muslims as for those of the Sikhs.<sup>85</sup>

Ranjit Singh did not derive his title from either the Mughals or the Afghans: it was given to him by that mystic entity the Panth Khalsa ji. He acknowledged to earthly superior. He was impelled by the weight of tradition that had grown up over the years, that it was the destiny of the Sikhs to rule (Raj Karey ga Khalsa) and that perhaps he had been chosen by the Guru to be the instrument of their inscrutable design.<sup>86</sup>

Thus Ranjit Singh was a very fair ruler and a compassionate person who believed in equality of all people regardless of religion as the doctrine of Miri and Piri consider. It was essential to be a saint and a soldier at the same time to play an effective role in the society. Its efficacy was proved under the rule of Maharaja Ranjit Singh who was the ruler of Sikh state.

#### **Sikhs and Invasions of Ahmad Saha Abdali:**

Ahmand Shah Abdali was the ruler of Afgahanistan. He came to the Punjab time and again between 1747 and 1769 which was a crucial period in rise and

growth of the Sikh power.<sup>87</sup> After defeating the Mughal Governor Mir Mannu he annexed Punjab to Afganistan. Ahamad Shah Abdali and the Governors appointed by him committed innumerable atrocities on the Sikhs. On the occasion of the Diwali festival which fell on 22<sup>nd</sup> of October, 1761, the Sikhs passed a Gurmata in general assembly held at Amritsar that Aqil Das of Jandiala, a supporter of Ahmad Shah Abdali should be chastised and the provincial capital captured. As the Dal Khalsa moved upon the Lahore, the citizens, knowing the weakness of the governor, opened the gates of the city. Jassa Singh entered the capital and the Sikhs proclaimed him king with the title of Sultan-ul-Qavm and struck coins in the name of Guru. Aqil Das immediately wrote to Ahmand Shah for help. Abdali, who was already on the march came at once. The Sikhs were surrounded by Afgan forces on February 5, 1762 near the village of Kupp in the tract around Malerkotla. The Sikhs suffered a heavy loss of about ten to twelve thousand killed at the lowest estimate. This dreadful carnage is known as Wadda ghalughara or the Great Holocaust. During this invasion, Ahmand Shah blew up the buildings of the Sikh temple at Amritsar and filled up the sacred tank with the debris.<sup>88</sup>

Ahmed Shah Abdali presumed that he had so punished the Sikhs that their generations would remember and so large a number of them had been killed that Sikh spirit would end. But the Sikhs had always been facing adversities. They deemed this critical time also as a trial by the Almighty-just as gold gets purified in the crucible, in the same way the Khalsa assumed that the impurities had been washed away and the pure Khalsa had survived.<sup>89</sup>

Thus in this great holocaust Abdali massacred thousands of Sikhs but could not dampen their spirits. Despite all this the Sikhs stood firm like a rock during his eighth invasion, Abdali led many campaigns but almost all the campaigns had to face defeat. He tried every method to divide the Sikh leaders but could not succeed. Finally he realized that it was no longer possible to control the Sikhs so without any success he returned to Afghanistan. In this way, despite his best efforts Ahmad Shah Abdali failed to crush the Sikhs.

From ancient time the Sikhs are struggling for their existence and basic Human Rights.

The whole Sikh movement had been for a national awakening which first released the spirit of the people and then stirring them to a political consciousness knit them together their followers as a revolutionary force to defend their rights and had secured from the Brahmin and the Mulla the freedom of food, the freedom of worship, the freedom of expression and freedom of missionary activity. The sixth and tenth Gurus had taught them to fight in battle and to destroy the awe inspired by the Mughal despotism; but their objective being always defensive. They had withstood the temptation of acquiring territory, making prisoners or wresting wealth from the enemy. Banda was the first man among Sikhs to think of founding a Political Raj. He fought battles not to cripple the Mughal power, but to destroy it root and branch.<sup>90</sup> Thus all Sikh Gurus and their followers created a will in the ordinary masses to resist tyranny and to live and die for humanity and Human Rights. They always fought in defense and never in offence.

Some scholars are of the opinion that the political concern of Guru Hargobind and Guru Gobind Singh and all other activities of Sikhs appear to be a deviation from the teaching of Guru Nanak. Steel for the sword of Guru Gobind Singh was provided by Guru Nanak. So it can be said that for the political achievement of the Sikhs, the sole credit for this miracle of history goes to Guru Nanak. He was the first medieval Indian saint who condemned war and denounce exploitation.

In this way all the Gurus follow the tenants and practices promulgated by Guru Nanak. The truth revealed by Guru Nanak was cherished by his successors. His nine successors continued to emphasize message given by him. All the nine Sikh Gurus followed the master plan in every aspect of life prepared by Guru Nanak.

Guru Nanak's nine successors just not continued the missionary work of Guru Nanak set by him but also looked after the organizational setup. The organizations like 'Manji' and 'Masand' greatly strengthened the grass roots of new polity which the Sikh Gurus has evolved. The System of Sangat and Pangat gave equal status to all human beings without any discrimination of caste, creed, self and nation etc. Similarly system of 'Daswand' started to use amount for institutional purpose which strengthened and consolidated the Sikh movement. The Sikh political philosophy had clearly emerged on the line suggested by Guru Nanak.

The Sikhs had challenged the Mughal power and their mission was liberation of people from religious and political and social tyranny. The use of sword as a means of defense became popular among the Guru's followers.

Khalsa was not only a militant body. It was an organization who fought against the social inequalities and social conflicts of the masses. The objective behind it was to restore the religious, social and political values in the society. Guru Gobind Singh organized it for victory upon all types of evils. Khalsa was inspired by religious ideals to fight against tyranny and oppression but not to fight against the Muslims or Islam. The Sikh fought many battles and achieved success not for expansion of political oppression but for preservation of human values, religious liberty and Human Rights. The purpose of Guru Nanak was to establish righteous rule.

When the Sikhs became rulers, they continue the traditions of their Gurus to promote Human Rights, inequality, brotherhood of man, justice through Panchayat. Service to all humanity and righteousness were cardinal principles of Sikh life emphasized through Sangat and Pangat.

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## CHAPTER-6

### GURU NANAK'S REIGION VIS-À-VIS FREEDOM OF FAITH

The word 'Religion' is derived from the Latin word 'religare' which means to tie back or to back bind. In the words of W.L Reese, Religion refers to an institution with a recognized body of communicants who gather regularly for worship and accept a set of doctrines offering some means of relating the individual to what is taken to be ultimate nature of reality<sup>1</sup>.

Similarly according to the Webster's International Encyclopedia, Religion is a system of belief to which a social group is committed, in which there is a supernatural object of awe, worship and service. It generally provides a system of ethics and a world view that supply a stable context within which each person can relate to the others and to the world can understand his or her own significance.<sup>2</sup> We can say that religion is that supernatural power with which man wants to relate in order to lead good life, perfect life and to get security.

In the words of S. Radha Krishnan, Religion in India is not dogmatic. It is a rational synthesis which goes on gathering into itself new conceptions as philosophy progress. It is experimental and provisional in its nature, attempting to keep pace with the progress of thought.<sup>3</sup>

According to the Dictionary of Philosophy, A scientific analysis of religion rests on the premise that it is a complex social phenomenon, a system of specific ideas, feelings and religious rites and in a class society also of institutions that bring together professional clergymen. Marx calls Religion 'opium for the people.'<sup>4</sup>

Thus, it can be said that Religion is a name of a fear or belief under which we leave the effects of our action to any divine being so that our next action can be satisfactory. It is not mere intellectual conformity or ceremonial piety. It is spiritual adventure. It is not theology but practice.

Religion thus provide ethical directive to life. It is only in and through this world that a man can achieve the highest goal. This world is understood to have the spiritual significance. Guru Nanak realized the preciousness of life in this world and proclaimed that 'The body is the palace, the temple, the house of God into it, He has put his light.'<sup>5</sup> The body is to be used as an instrument of spiritual gain and service to human life. It gives an individual the opportunity to develop himself personally and do well to others. Guru Nanak admits that worldly life has spiritual significance in being a part of God's universal purpose. This earth is a platform for fulfillment of moral, social and other obligations.

According to Guru Nanak religion has its obligations not up in the clouds but in midst of everyday life. A truly religious man has to live in the midst of the common people ministering of their needs and facing their problems. Guru Nanak felt that the sufferings of the people were due to the religious anarchy, rigidity of caste system and supremacy of escapism. He felt that the disunity amongst the people was caused by the diversity of the faith and belief.

Many a great saviors have appeared on the world scene from time to time to save humanity from the clutches of the evil forces and for giving a message of God, the source of all virtue. Many religions have been founded by such saviors, sages and prophets. Each religion has played its part to curb evil and spread dharma. All the great religious leader of the world has played their parts in molding the character of man from time to time. Guru Nanak was not only a saint, a mystic and a philosopher but a prophet as well. Guru Nanak's religion is popularly known as Sikhism, which aims at reunion of the individual with ultimate reality.

At the time of Guru Nanak religious institutions were only beauty shows without meaning. As Harbans Lal said, when Guru Nanak came to this world a class of religious leaders routinely concocted religious practices to thrust on people to serve many unholy interests. These interests were mutually supportive and were successful in designing a variety of concealed tricks to

fool people who were seeking salvation. The religious institutions had devised 'beauty shows' with religious practices that were intended to attract innocent minds. Many other tricks were implemented to speed a religion's institutional agenda. Miracles were invented to convert people and influence human behaviour. People were asked to invest massive amount of money, time and mind in ritualistic illusions and also in corrupted beliefs.<sup>6</sup> Thus Guru Nanak found the common people of his age ignorant and superstitious. All the religious leaders or protectors of religion like Qazies, Brahmins and yogis tell lies and dwell in impurities. They themselves do not know the real way. So there was an all round degeneration.

Before knowing about Guru Nanak's religion, it is necessary to make a brief survey of religions that were prevalent in India before the advent of Guru Nanak, because the philosophies of the earlier religions cannot be ignored. The value of the new will manifest itself in a clearer setting only if the existing truths are faithfully kept in view.

### **HINDUISM:**

Hinduism is one of the most ancient and popular religion of the world. It accepts the authority of Vedas. Vedas are simply hymns address to some god or goddesses. To the orthodox it means knowledge par excellence, the sacred or revealed knowledge.<sup>7</sup> Vedas are believed to be divine revelations which have come down from God through the high religious treatises which are four in number like:

1. Rig Veda
2. Yajur Veda
3. Sam Veda
4. Atharva Veda

**Rig Veda:** The hymns contained in Rig Veda are recited in the form of worship. It contains 1017 hymns in praise of many gods or devtas like Agni, Inder, Asvin, Sarita, Surya, Varana, Pusan, Rudra, Vishnu etc. it indicate the worship of deities.

**Yajur Veda:** It contains instructions, in prose to perform the rites. It is divided in two parts, white Yajur Veda which contains sacrificial formulas and other is black Yajur Veda which contains explanatory passages.

**Sam Veda:** The hymns of Sam Veda are sung at the time of Yajnas (ceremonial and sacrificial rites).

**Atharva Veda:** It is a mainly metrical with some prose passages in its last portion and contains charms and spells to drive away disease, to injure the enemy to bring prosperity and long life to king, to achieve domestic happiness and for other similar purpose.<sup>8</sup>

The four Vedas contain the divine, infallible knowledge revealed to those primal men whose soul was specially illumined by the grace of God to receive and impart to humanity the words of Almighty God. The purpose of this revelation was to enlighten and spread godly knowledge to man so that he may live a happy life in this world, be aware of his innate divinity and try to realize eternal bliss.<sup>9</sup>

In the words of Surinder Singh Kohli, the four Vedas are known as Samhitas. Each Veda consists of four parts i.e. Mantra, Brahmana, Aranyaka and Upanishad. The Mantras present the first stage of the Vedic thought wherein prayers are offered to different deities. The Brahmanas contain the formulas of sacrificial rites. The Aranyakas are the forest treatises, which give philosophical interpretation of the rituals.<sup>10</sup>

The earliest Vedic mantras are indicative of the worship of deities. The highest among the gods are Indra, Varan, Savitri, Pushan and *Vishnu*. They were worshipped with the chanting of mantras. To perform a Yajna, ceremonial fires were kindled accompanied with certain rites. Then some articles of food e.g. milk, honey, ghee grain and their preparations, flesh and a stimulating juice called soma were offered to the fire. Agni, the fire god, was considered the mouth of the deities and anything put into it was thought to be on its way to the gods. It was believed that if the gods were pleased, worldly wealth etc. would be granted.<sup>11</sup>

The Upanishads are the most important portions of the Vedas and contained the knowledge and philosophy of Vedas relating to god, man and universe. Upanishads deal with the Philosophy of Brahman and Upasana of the Absolute or Nirguna and qualified or Saguna Brahman respectively.<sup>12</sup> The Upanishad has been called Vedanta because it is the end part of Vedas. According to Radha Krishnan, the word 'Upanisad' is derived from Upa(near) Ni(down) and Sad (to sit), i.e. sitting down near.<sup>13</sup> Similarly in the words of Darshan Singh, the literal meaning of the word 'Upanisad' is to sit beside the Guru and to gain Jnan.<sup>14</sup> Upanishads are 108 total in number out of which 13 are well known. The Upanishad attempts to search the absolute essence and the basis of the phenomenal world. According to it Atma and Brahmana are not two separate entities. In the view of Upanishads, the soul is not born with the body, nor does it perish with bodily death. It is unborn, eternal from the beginning. After death it migrates from one body to another, until it attains release from the cycle of birth and death by obtaining the realization of the reality.

The Vedas are also known as Shruti. Beside Shruti the Hindu scriptures include Smritis which include Itihasa, Puranas, Agamas, Shastras of philosophy and ritual etc. There are eighteen Maha Puranas and eighteen Upapuranas. There are six shastras of Hindu Philosophy and several law books called Dharma-Shastras.<sup>15</sup> Hinduism believes in caste system (Varan Vyavastha) and stages of life (Ashram Dharam). It also believes in theory of Karma Kanda, doctrine of rebirth, rituals, ceremonies, sacraments, idol worship, bathing in pilgrimages etc. Hinduism also believes in theory of incarnation. According to it Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva are the creator, preserver and destroyer of the world.

Ramayana and Mahabharat are two epics which come under the scripture of Hinduism. Ramayana is the life story of Ram and its author is Valmiki while Mahabharat is the story of Kauravas and Pandavas and its author is Vyasa.

### **Guru Nank's Attitude towards the Hindu Scriptures**

Guru Nanak talked frequently about the Vedas, the Smritis, the Shastras, the Purans and six schools of philosophy and also about Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh, Shiva, Siddhas and Nathas etc. There is no direct denunciation, no categorical rejection; there is no irreverence; but there is no acceptance either. This attitude may amount to a virtual rejection of the traditional authority of the Hindu scriptures.<sup>16</sup> It is absolutely certain that from Guru Nanak's point of view these scriptures were totally irrelevant to salvation to hear or to read, to write (expositions) or to understand them was to amass mere 'burden'<sup>17</sup> So the authority of the Vedas was set aside by the Guru. He does not believe that truth revealed in them is absolute or complete and by reading one can realize perfection. The learned Brahmin in study of texts engaged realizes not true teaching.<sup>18</sup> Guru Nanak searched all the Shastras and the Smritis, but they do not worship God like:

Numerous Shastras and Simritis have I  
studied and searched:

Saith Nanak: All these equal not meditation  
on the invaluable Name Divine.<sup>19</sup>

Thus all men perform rituals enjoyed by them, but they will not get any comfort from these things. Numerous historical events during his life of seventy years amply make it clear that he always preached the primary truths. He did not indulge in whole sale condemnation of any of the then existing religion or whole sale refutation of any systems of philosophy. He picked out that which was of primary value, the fundamental truths of universal application and presented them to the world in his own sweet and loving manner. He talked of right or wrong practices not right or wrong men. He accepted or rejected principles not personalities. Yajnas or sacrifices were also discarded. The Guru denies Brahmanical Karma Kanda and its formation and preaches love of God and service of mankind. In order to keep their position, Brahamins spread many superstitions among the masses. All the ceremonies

and rites that were to be performed by the people, from his birth to his death, had to be performed under the supervision and direction of a Brahmin.

**Mode of Worship and Idols:**

Regarding their modes of worship and idol, Guru Nanak says the supreme reality is all in all Himself. He can neither be established nor created by anyone.<sup>20</sup> He is without any form, shape and colour. Guru Nanak ridicules the idea of falling at the feet of idols and said to the Pandit:

You keep the idol of God with all other gods in your house. You wash it and worship it daily. You offer saffron, sandal and flowers falling, at its feet.

You greatly try to propitiate it. Begging from men you wear and eat which is worthy of punishment.

The idol not saves us from dying. It is nothing but the blind wrangling of the society of ignorant.<sup>21</sup>

It is clear from above passages that Guru Nanak did not believe in idol worship. Ignorant fool worships a stone. How can a stone help you to swim across, this worldly ocean, where in it itself is drowned.<sup>22</sup> Further Guru Nanak attached no importance to pilgrimage like:

What good bathings at tirthas, with the mind full of impurity of pride.<sup>23</sup>

Guru Nanak says in fact that there is no use of pilgrimage when the heart is not cleansed of pride. Even 'sixty-eight bathing' are of no avail.<sup>24</sup> Wandering to the sacred places cannot wash off the dirt of misery.<sup>25</sup> True faith is in the Nam and Sabad.<sup>26</sup>

As Guru Nanak Says:

My man is my temple, and or my body  
is the robe of a Qalandar; my being is  
filled by the Sabad; I may not find another life.<sup>27</sup>

So, Guru Nanak forbade image-making and idolatry worship. His religion was a matter of heart and not of outward formality. He gave primary importance to moral conduct over everything else. Equality justice and selfless service are

the foremost essential qualities for him and are the priceless value of his important religions.

**Incarnation:**

In Hindu religion Brahma (the creator), Vishnu (the preserver) and Shiva (the destroyer), these three gods formed trinity and numerous other gods and were worshiped besides, the three chief ones. Guru Nanak discarded the worship of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva.

The three gods who were thought of as creator, the sustainer, and the destroyer of world, are God's handiwork. It is God alone who performs these all duties and these are his own powers which have been assigned different names. He himself has brought into being the entire creation and is carrying on the job.

Guru Nanak called himself the Divine Bard. In an earlier age, he would have been called an avatar, as in the loving and devoted tributes paid to him by those who felt the powerful impact of his personality, he was so called but neither he nor any of his successors in the apostolic seat claimed the divine status.<sup>28</sup> So Guru Nanak did not believe in theory of incarnation or Avtarvad. He himself and his successors never claimed to be so.

The Guru instead of accepting the Avtaras as God on earth used the same names for the high and formless God. The names like Rama and Krishna in the Granth are name of God, not of the persons who were the sons of Dashrath and Kaushaliya and Vasudeva and Devaki respectively. When ever the Guru refers to them in the latter sense he considers them as ordinary mortal beings and takes away from them all the halo of divinity.<sup>29</sup> Nanak in his slokas says that if Ram had been God he would not have lost his queen Sita, and he would have healed himself his half-brother Lachman instead of calling Hanuman to do so.<sup>30</sup>

Thus they were just ordinary men having ups and downs in the life. Had they been God they would have never met that fate. So Guru Nanak condemned incarnation.

Further Hinduism believes in caste system and ashram system. But Guru Nanak rejected the barriers of caste and the division of life in ashrams. He has

stressed the necessity of leading a house holder's life. Hinduism believes in the theory of Karma and the doctrine of rebirth. Guru Nanak also accepted these doctrines, but he has laid emphasis on the doctrine of Grace. Guru Nanak was born and bred in the Hindu folds and saw all the Hindu ceremonies very closely. He rejected the Hindu ceremony of sacred thread, and all other external impurities. Guru Nanak does not subscribe to the idea of incarnation, he said:

My master is the one. He is the one. My brother  
He is the only one.<sup>31</sup>

Further: You are the one! You are the one<sup>32</sup>

Guru Nanak emphasized the greatness of God as the sole creator, the sole sustainer and the sole destroyer of his own creation.

### **The six Metaphysical Systems**

Nyaya and Vaiseshka: The period of Gautama and Kanada has been determined near about 300 B.C. Nyaya and Vaiseshka were both completed simultaneously by Gautama and Kanada respectively.<sup>33</sup> Both believe in the authority of Vedas.

Kanada and Gautama have admitted nine basic substances. The atoms of four substances are earth, water, fire, and air. These all are eternal but differ in quality. Akasha is an eternal all-pervading physical substance which cannot be perceived but can be inferred from its quality of sound. Space and time are also imperceptible; both are eternal and all pervading as well. Soul is also immortal and pervades everywhere. Soul is distinct and separate from the body, the sense, the mind and the stream of consciousness. So the soul is material object. The qualities of soul are desire, volition, pleasure, pain etc. Knowledge or consciousness is an attribute of the soul. When mind attain liberation through the knowledge of reality, it becomes free from all connections with body.<sup>34</sup>

Mind is an active and imperceptible substance which is an internal organ. It is meant for experience of the soul and its attributes like pain and pleasures.

All these worldly objects are composed of atoms and living in time, space, ether and affect one another. The individual souls are not dependent for their life existence on merely physical principles. Both the systems believe in theism and existence of God who is unique, limitless and permanent. He is omniscient, omnipotent, cause of origin. God is the efficient cause of universe but not material cause. He is not creator but governor of the world and dispenser of rewards of action.<sup>35</sup>

### **Guru Nanak's attitude towards Nyaya and Vaisesika:**

Guru Nanak does not agree with the Nyaya and Vaisesika in their metaphysical derivations and doctrines. For Vaisesika and Nyaya system, the categories and the substance are the realities. But according to Guru Nanak God is the only reality. Guru Nanak believes in one God who is formless, unique, unapproachable, ineffable, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, transcendent as well as immanent. Guru Nanak describes:

The supreme Lord is unique, immortal, causae-sui, casteless and without any illusionary involvements. He is in accessible to the mind and intellect and beyond the reach of senses. He is formless and without configuration. The seekers sought Him present in each and every heart.<sup>36</sup>

Nyaya like Vaisheshika believes that the eternal atoms are the material cause of the world and God is the efficient cause but according to Guru Nanak God is the cause of all causes. Cause and effect are under his command, but he himself is not subject to any causation. He is the primal and final cause, self-luminous and self expressed. Guru Nanak proclaims:

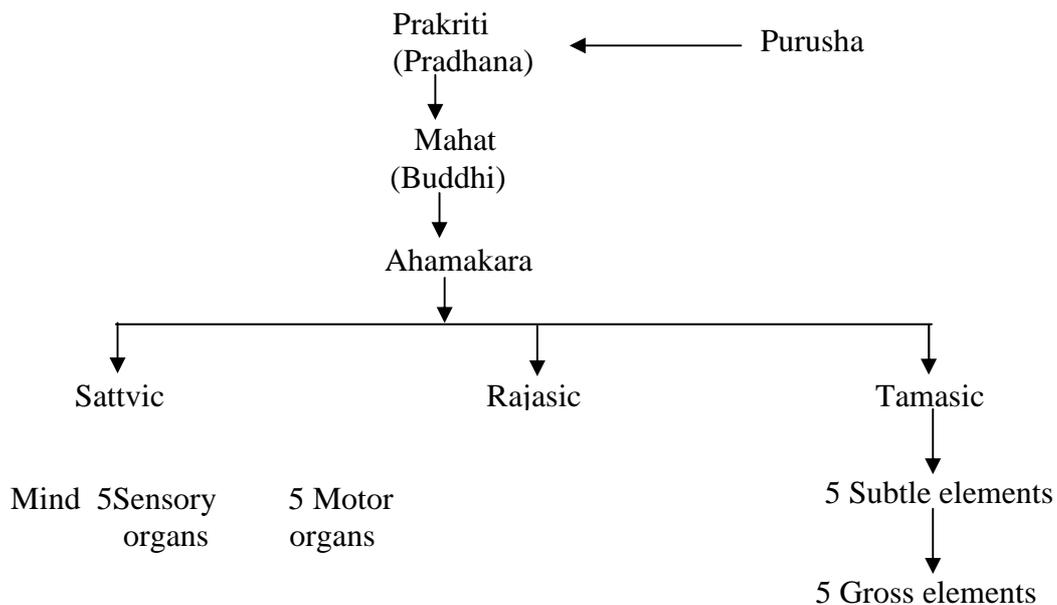
God is cause of all causes.  
All are under his control,  
He himself hath created the world,  
and disciplined it as to His will.<sup>37</sup>

According to Guru Nanak there is no need to prove the existence of God. He considers God as truth in the beginning, truth in the present and truth in the future.

### **Sankhya System:**

The word Sankhya is derived from the word ‘Sankhya’ which means right knowledge as well as number. Sankhya means the philosophy of right knowledge.<sup>38</sup>

It accepts two ultimate independent realities i.e. Prakriti and Purusha. Purusha is the soul, the self, the spirit, the subject, the knower. It is neither body nor senses nor brain nor mind (manas) nor ego (ehankara) nor intellect (buddhi). It is not a substance which possesses the quality of consciousness. Consciousness is its essence.<sup>39</sup> Purusha is without activity, neither has it been created nor does it produce anything. Purusha is not one. They are numerous. It is also non active. Prakriti is also an eternal entity. It is not created by anybody rather the entire universe has sprung from it. Prakriti has three Gunas like Satva, Rajas and Tamas. Satva stands for light and produces pleasure. Rajas for activity, it leads pain and sufferings, whereas Tamas stands for obstruction. It causes attachment and inertia and results in slothness. When these qualities stay in the state of perfect equilibrium no change take place. Change takes place only due to the disturbance of this equilibrium. Prakriti produces a total of 23 elements and together with Purusha and Prakriti. There are 25 elements in all which can explain all things, these are:



The original Sankhya was monistic and theistic. But under the influence of Materialism, Jainism and early Buddhism, became atheistic. It is orthodox because it believes in the authority of Vedas. It does not establish the non existence of God. It only shows that Prakriti and Purusha are sufficient to explain this universe and therefore there is no reason for postulating a hypothesis of God.<sup>40</sup>

Further Sankhya system is based on the principle of cause and effect. Nothing can come out of void. The purpose of world creation is to enable the Purusha to know himself through the knowledge of Prakriti and thus attain salvation. Salvation results from knowledge. Karma or worship cannot replace it. All attachments can be ended through meditation because it purifies the mind. God has no existence. The universe is an automatic creation and is a perpetual existence. Universe has no creator everything in the world is evolutionary.

#### **Guru Nanak's response toward's Sankhya system:**

Unlike the Sankhya world is not an automatic creation. It is created by the Divine will. As Guru Nanak says:

Himself these He creates and destroys.

From the attribute less void arose species of creation

And forms of utterance from the void arisen

Into the void are these absorbed.

The creator the marvel of creation has displayed

From His ordinance is the miracle made manifest

From the attribute less void were created the Pair night and day.

And creation, destruction, joy and suffering.

The God directed male eternal, above joy and suffering arisen.<sup>41</sup>

Thus, it is through the Divine will that one comes in the world and then merges in His will. The world came into being through His supreme will and the heaven and the earth and the under world he up holds his creation through His own will.

According to Guru Nanak it is not soul and matter but God who is supreme spirit alone. The phenomenal universe is his creation. He manifests himself in it. He creates it when he will and when he wishes it to be no more. He absorbs it within himself. Purusha and Prakriti both are production of Divine will. They are not eternal entities. Sankhya school denies the existence of God and teaches that Prakriti creates the universe. The Purusha is a mere witness. But Guru Nanak doesn't believe in duality as Sankhya system persists. The whole universe is ultimately spirit and consciousness and Prakriti as mere matter.<sup>42</sup> Further universe is not an eternal existence. It is not even perpetual fluent entity. It has its beginning and end as well everything in this universe takes birth, live for some time and then decay. It undergoes a change every moment. Nothing is stable. Thus we can say that Sankhya system is a dualistic where as Sikhism is a monistic. Sankhya system proclaims that God is not the creator of the universe. The law of Karma and transmigration itself is the prime-mover that creates it. But Guru Nanak postulates that God is unique creator and also dispenser of Karma as fructification.

### **Yoga System:**

The word *Yoga* is from root 'Yuj' and its meaning is, to get liberated or to be unified.<sup>43</sup> Traditional founder of Yoga system is Patanjali. The word 'Yoga' literally means union i.e., spiritual union of the individual soul with the universal soul. Yoga is a spiritual effort to attain perfection through the control of the body, senses and mind, so that these should not disturb the mind striving for the removal of the veil of ignorance. According to Patanjali Yoga is defined as the cessation of the modification of chitta. Whenever our sense organs come across the objects surrounding them, their contact with the mind develops several waves and their suppression means Yoga. Just like Kapila, Patanjali also considers 'Purusha' and 'Prakriti' eternal, but apart from these two, 'Ishwara' is also an eternal existence. According to Patanjali the trinity of Ishwara, Purusha and Prakriti is eternal. Ishwara (God) is a unique being, unaffected by anguish, actions, their results and desires. His omni-science is

limitless. He is present in living beings only in an embryonic form. He is the supreme enlightener of all ancient apostles and also immoral. He is represented by the word 'oam' and concentration on its meaning constitute the way of Yoga<sup>44</sup>.

**Ashtanga Yoga:** Yoga advocates control over the body, the senses and mind. It does not want to kill the body but it commends its perfection. To achieve perfection Yoga gives us the eightfold path of discipline (Astanga yoga):

1. Yama: It is abstention from injury through thought, word, deed falsehood, stealing, from passions and lust, and from avarice.
2. Niyama: It is self culture and it includes external and internal purification through contentment, austerity, study and devotion to God.
3. Asana: It means steady and comfortable posture.
4. Pranayama: It means control of breath and deals with regulation of inhalation, retention and exhalation of breath.
5. Pratyahara: It means control of the senses.
6. Dharana: Dharana or concentration means the stead fastness of the mind on a particular object or fixing the mind on the object of meditation.
7. Dhyana: It means meditation. It is the steadfast contemplation without any break.
8. Samadi: It is the final step of Yoga which means concentration. Here the mind is completely absorbed in the object of meditation. In Dhyana the act of meditation and the object of meditation remain separate. But here they become one. It is the highest means to realize the cessation of mental modification which is the end.<sup>45</sup>

When Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi are practiced simultaneously it is called 'Sanjam'. The Yoga system describes the fruit of 'Sanjam' of different things and disciplines as various kinds of supernatural attainments. There are some persons who from the very birth are in possession of such powers while a few acquire them from the use of some medicines. Austerities, mantras and trances are also the means for their acquisition. Most of the people at the time of Guru

Nanak's advent had been under the influence of split earned Yogis belonging to the Natha sect. Those Yogis used to influence people by making a show of supernatural power, or by blessing and cursing them. They earned their livelihood through the spreading of jantras ,mantras and tantras. They invented thousands of new gods and goddesses, besides employing several types of austerities, hypnotic practices and tantra-mantra in order to win over the devotion of their followers.

These Yogis or Nathas were not in favor of adopting the householder's way of life. They also opposed women.

**God:** Yoga accepts the existence of God. Patanjali define God as a special kind of Purusa who is always free from pains, actions, effects and impressions. But God of Yoga is not the creator, preserver or destroyer of this world. He is only special Purusa. He does not reward or punish the soul. He cannot grant liberation.

#### **Guru Nanak's response toward's Yoga System:**

Yoga System believed Purusa, Prakriti, and Ishvara as eternal entities but for Guru Nanak everything comes from Him, abides in Him and when the universe dissolves, it returns to Him. Guru Nanak disagrees with Patanjali that God is neither creator nor protector. His view is entirely contrary as Guru Nanak proclaims:

Him self he created, and manifested His Name then the second object, expanse of the universe he made settled on His creation, in joy He beheld it. Thou solely the bestower and creator in Thy pleasure dost grant boons and show grace. All to the thee is known by Thy command dost confer life and take it back seated on thy cushion, creation dost Thou behold in joy.<sup>46</sup>

Human mind is polluted with egoism. Like Yoga, Guru Nanak does not believe that it can be removed only by adopting the postures of Yogas or by the control of senses. For this purpose, the real necessity is to purify egoism which could only be possible by adhering to the Guru's precepts.

Patanjali recommends the methods of concentration, meditation and absorption. His system also lays down the ritual called '*Yoga-praxis*' (*yog-yukti; jog-jugat*) consisting in certain ritual prescriptions and absorptions and the method of 'breath-control' and asanas (poses conducive to acquiring facility in attaining Yogic experience). This ritual too the Guru has disapproved, like all other manner of ritual. He has commended solely the method consisting of concentration of mind, meditation and finally, absorption. Cumulatively this spiritual path is called Sahj (attainment of poise and enlightenment through 'natural' means and not artificial ritual practices or austerities, etc.). The repeated stress on Sahj in the scripture has already been indicated, both in the positive injunctions towards this as well as the warning against Yogic ritual.<sup>47</sup>

Similarly for Guru Nanak, Sahj did not mean a relaxation of morals or an attempt to realize God through sexual union. Sahj according to him was nothing but Nam Yoga. The seeker was asked to concentrate on His name in his heart.<sup>48</sup> So Guru Nanak has no sympathy with yogi's aim of gaining supernatural power.

In fact for Guru Nanak the primary objective is to realize the Divine presence within one self by purifying the mind and restraining sensual desires. Yogis lay stress upon the yogic garb. But Guru Nanak wishes to wear the ear-rings of incessantly enshrined 'Sabad' which pushes away the ego and attachment.<sup>49</sup> In Japuji Sahib earrings of santokh along with the bowl of labour, ashes of dhyana, patched coat of continuous remembrance of death are prescribed by Guru Nanak for a true Yogi. The Lord is neither obtained by wearing a religious garb nor by giving alms at holy places. If we inquire even from the readers of Vedas they would also tell that world is cheated without accepting the Lord's name.<sup>50</sup> So according to Guru Nanak a true yogi is that who keeps himself away from these miracles and condemns the cultivation of such occult powers.

Guru Nanak does not show any appreciation for bairag, external renunciation, asceticism or sanyas in any form as:

Innumerable anchorites claim the world to renounce the true anchorite is one that to that Master's pleasing. In this heart hearing the word, in fear of God absorbed. The Lord's tasks he performs.<sup>51</sup>

The ascetic who does not cast away 'self' cannot be a real renunciants; his Bhakti in forests and his stay in sacred places are fruitless. Nothing can be gained by wandering all over the world. Inner dirt can be cleaned only by true Guru's instruction. As Guru Nanak says:

By wandering is not assuaged the fire of desire should one wander in all ten directions cursed be such a life and such garb, it washes not off inner impurity.<sup>52</sup>

The sadhus, yogis and sidhs adopted the life of renunciation and fled away to the heights of Himalayas and those who remain behind were completely demoralized and devoid of self-respect.

According to Guru Nanak the people like Yogis, Sanyasis, Ascetic renounced the world and wandered from one place of pilgrimage to another, from one monastery to another, carrying their staffs, rosaries and pipes hemp or *ganja*, with their bodies smeared with ashes and marked with sectarian symbols. They were ascetics and believe in austerities, abstinence and tapas which they believe, gave them miraculous powers.<sup>53</sup> Guru Nanak could not ignore this and he had several discourses with them. He found them so tied to rituals and formalities in religion. He denounced the empty formalities to which they attached so much and gave them a true definition of the concept of Yoga like:

Yoga is neither in the patched coat, nor in the yogi's staff, nor in besmearing oneself with ashes, nor in wearing of earrings nor in the close-cropping of the head, nor in the blowing of the horn. If one remaineth detached in the midst of attachments, one attaineth to the (true) state of Yoga. One becometh not a yogi by mere talk. if one looketh upon all creation alike, that one alone is acclaimed as a true yogi. Yoga does not consist in abiding in the cremation grounds and among the tombs nor in

entering pseudo-trances. Yoga consists not in roaming in the world nor in bathing at pilgrim spots. If one remaineth detached in the midst of attachment, then verily, one attaineth to the (true) state of Yoga.<sup>54</sup>

Thus Yoga school believes in renouncing the world whereas Guru Nanak preaches to live in it, but with the spirit of detachment. So all the formalities and outward symbols of Yogis have been rejected by Guru Nanak because he believes in mental purity which is possible only through Nam of God, while living household life. Guru Nanak believes more in mental purity in comparison to physical purity. The Guru Nanak's differences with yogis were fundamental in matters both of belief and of practice. According to Guru Nanak simple loving devotion to God is the best form of worship rather than tough physical technique of the Yoga.

#### **Mimamsa and Vedanta Schools:**

Mimamsa literally means 'revered thought'. Mimamsa applied to the interpretation of the Vedic rituals which commanded highest reverence. The school of Mimamsa gives philosophical justification for the Vedic ritualism. The earlier portion of the Veda i.e., the Mantra and the Brahmana portion, is called Karmakanda while later portion, i.e. the Upanishads is called Jnanakanda, because the former deals with action, with the rituals and sacrifices, while the later deals with the knowledge of reality. Mimamsa deals with the earlier portion of the Veda and therefore called Purva-Mimamsa and also Karma-Mimamsa, while Vedanta deals with the later portion of the Veda and is therefore called Uttara Mimamsa and also Jnana-Mimamsa. The former deals with Dharma and latter with Brahma.<sup>55</sup> Purva Mimamsa regards the Veda as eternal and authorless and of infallible authority. It is essentially a book of rituals dealing with commandments prescribing injunctions or prohibitions.<sup>56</sup> The author of Purva-Mimamsa system of philosophy is Rishi Jaimini. The aim of this system is to investigate into the nature of Dharma as propounded in the Karma-Kanda, section of the Vedas. Jaimini admits the

reality of the objective world and opposed to subjectivism. According to Jaimini universe has no origin and no end. It has neither been created nor would it end in totality. It accept four categories of the being 1. Substance 2. Quality 3. Action 4.Generality.

The world is a reality. It is eternal as well. It is without an origin and without an end. Individual souls are numerous and are distinct form the mortal physical bodies and the sense organs. They perform actions and also reap the consequences. Mimansa criticizes the existence of God and remarks that even if He exists, he cannot interfere with the karma and its fructification. Liberation is the result of the exhaustion of all the past karmas, without leaving any residue or liability. It means emancipation from rebirth. It is not a state of bliss.<sup>57</sup> It is opposed to such violence as leads to the killing of living being but to kill an animal in a sacrifice is permitted, since it is enjoined upon the Vedas and is not sinful. Violence for the sake of personal benefit is a sin, but if it is dedicated to the sacrificial observance, it is proper and in order.<sup>58</sup>

### **Vedanta**

Vedanta is the end portion of Veda that is why it is known as Vedanta. It pertains to Upanishads. Badarayana tried to systematize the teaching of Upanishads in Brahma Sutra. The Brahma Sutra, Upanishads and Bhagvad Gita constitute together the Prasthan Treya (the triple foundation) of Vedanta. Several commentaries have been written on these three scriptures.<sup>59</sup> Sankara is well known because of his Advait school. According to Sankara Brahman is the ultimate reality. He is Sat, Chit, Anand. He is impersonal has no attribute. He is permanent, infinite, essence of all existence, all consciousness, all bliss. He is changeless, without any unfulfilled desires. It is impossible to give any positive description of Him. He is described as *Neti-Neti*, not this not this. Brahman never created the universe that we see and it is only an illusion of mind that puts on an appearance of plurality of existence on the one Brahman. Brahman only exists and is real. The soul of man, the Atma is part of Brahman and is real in that sense but the visible universe is '*Mithya*' i.e. unreal. It is

illusion of universe 'Maya' that makes it appear as such and it is illusion of individual. Avidya or ignorance that makes it feels as separate 'self' from Brahman.<sup>60</sup>

According to Shankaracharya, Maya is neither real, nor it is non-real, nor real-non-unreal (sat-asat). Basically being untrue it is not without an end. It is like the hare-horns which are apparent but actually have no existence. The individual soul and the phenomenal universe both are the outcome of Brahman coalition with Maya. It is difficult to state how the world of plurality came into being out of one undifferentiated Absolute. The world has been called the Maya of Brahman. The existence of the world is dependent on the being of the Absolute, but Absolute is unaffected by the world.<sup>61</sup>

Knowledge is the only means of liberation, when the soul acquires the transcendent knowledge of self and realized that 'I am Brahma' then he becomes free from the cycle of transmigration and get liberated. Other means of liberation except knowledge are mortification, meditation and reflection. The ignorance of the individual is beginning less. The entire world is a play of Maya. The limitation of each person arises from the ignorance of his own individual soul. When the limitations are removed, no trace of differentiation remains between one soul and another.

#### **Guru Nanak's Attitude Towards Mimamsa And Vedanta:**

Guru Nanak respects the Vedas and considers them as reverential scriptures. But he is not entirely dependent upon them. He disagrees with the Karmakanda of Vedas and disbelieves that they are the only source of liberation. According to Guru Nanak the objective world is not an unoriginated, unending, perpetual and everlasting entity. There was a time when there was nothing but God alone. The formless God Himself created and dissolves the universe as and when He wills or commands. God and soul are interconnected with each other like sun and its rays, the ocean and its drops. But the distinction of soul and God is due to the formation of a separate individuality origination by one's ego and this ego enmeshes the cycle of birth

and death, to give and take, the joy and sorrow, the virtue and evil, liberation and ties etc.

So we can say that karmas are not all powerful by resigning to the will of God. When ego disappears, individual achieves liberation even during his life time. Such liberated person completely surrenders to the Divine will, and dedicates his entire effort and action to God

**About Vedanta:**

Both Sankara and Guru Nanak are monistic idealistic. According Sankara the soul, the world and the Brahma are not distinct realities, but are one. The apparent multiplicity of both men and things is due to Maya or Avidya, just as through illusion a rope in a dark light is taken as a snake. Similarly under the influence of Maya and Avidya, the ignorant soul considers himself to be separate from God and regards the world as real.<sup>62</sup> According to Guru Nanak the reality of world and soul is not illusion but they are real only in a relative sense. Nothing is real in the sense in which God is real. Like Vedanta, Guru Nanak also believes that the Brahman is the only ultimate reality. But disagree with Sankara that 'Maya' is the main cause of the phenomenal universe. According to Guru Nanak it is manifested and formulated by God's *Hukam* as Guru Nanak says in Japji:

By His Divine Will all forms came into being. The  
capacity of that will is beyond expression, by His

Divine will all forms develop life in them and they gain honour.<sup>63</sup>

Further according to Vedanta Maya is an illusion but Gurbani admits it is a transmuting entity. It is an ever changing existence. It keeps on changing every moment. The fresh objects take place of the old one. So the world in which we live cannot be mere illusion though the world is transitory, it is relatively real. According to Guru Nanak, Brahman manifests himself and through *Hukam* creates the universe. They look different but virtually, are one. The distinction is caused by egoism and absence of egoism would again make them one. According to Vedanta Brahman is non-active and unconcerned truth

and Maya is indescribable. It is neither real nor non-real nor it is real unreal but the individual and the visible world are its support. But as per *Mul-Mantra*, Guru Nanak has attributed Brahman as the creator and also the (Purakh) all pervading. As Guru Nanak says:

HeHhimself is absolute (Nirgun) He Himself is related  
(Sargun). He Himself is formless sitting in invisible,  
changeless postures. He Himself is visible in His own  
creation says Nanak.

God is one, therefore individuals must realize His oneness as explicitly explained and emphasized by Guru Nanak. According to Vedanta Knowledge and renunciation are compulsory to attain knowledge for its practical aspect or for being '*Gian Nishtha*'. But according to Gurbani, renunciation or sanyas are unnecessary for achieving the ultimate goal. The equanimity neither is subjected to the Karmas nor can be attained by knowledge or meditation. It is not even gained through adoration and austerity. It can be achieved only adopting, the Guru's advice because Guru's advice would eradicate the ego and doubt would be dispelled. Adorations and austerities, knowledge and meditations, karma and ritual, yog and sanyas (renunciation of the world) charities and benefactions, rules and routines, fasts and sacrifices do not scale equal to the relation of Divine name.<sup>64</sup> So in this way Guru Nanak denounced all the external performances of Vedanta to gain God and recommended Divine Nam, the only criterion to attain ultimate goal.

### **Buddhism:**

Buddhism is one of the oldest faith of India. It is more than 25 hundred years old. The founder of this faith was prince Siddhartha who later on earned popularity and distinguish as Mahatama Buddha or Gautama Buddha. He was the son of king Shudodhana of Shakya clan and ruler of Kaplavastu. He was born to queen Mahamaya at Lumbini garden near Kaplavastu. He married princess in a swyamber by gaining success in specific competitive tests of gallantry feats. He had also a son born of her. All this glamour could not attract him and one day he went out side of home and he saw this world is full

of suffering, suffering of disease, suffering of old age, suffering of death and so many other sufferings. To him the supreme task was to wipe off the tears of humanity grooming under the weight of tribulations and trouble. He underwent rigid austerities for many years and at last on auspicious day when he was in meditation the four noble truths revealed to him which are as:

1. There is suffering: life is full of misery and pain from poverty disease, old age, death, selfishness, meanness, greed, anger, hatred, quarrels, bickering, conflicts, exploitation etc.
2. There is a cause of suffering: Everything has a cause so if there is suffering, cause must be there.
3. There is a cessation of suffering: everything arises depending on some causes and condition, if these causes and conditions are removed the effect must else cease.
4. There is a way leading to this cessation of suffering: By following ethical and spiritual path miseries can be removed. This is the noble eight fold path like: right faith, right resolve, right speech, right action, right living, right effort, right thought and right concentration.

One of the main causes of suffering is taken by Buddha as the trishna of human mind, its hankerings and cravings after worldly object which are very transitory and short lived. Nothing is permanent. Everything that exists is momentary. The soul or consciousness is not excluded from the law of impermanence. Soul is not a constant entity. It changes every moment rather all worldly objects are transitory. Transmigration is not for an abiding soul. A new life takes its birth out of the ever changing status of life.<sup>65</sup>

Gautama revolted against the existing orthodox Brahmanical system predominated by rituals and the ceremonies involving animal slaughter. He also deprecated the caste supremacy of Brahmanas. He was however not destructive in his outlook. Gifted with extraordinary intelligence and analytical powers, he accepted the best of the existing system and rejected what did not consider useful or beneficial to a man to gain knowledge and emancipation.<sup>66</sup>

The doctrine of *pratityasamutpada* or dependent origination is the foundation of all teachings of the Buddha, which means everything is relative, conditional, dependent, subject to birth and death and therefore impermanent. There are twelve links of casual wheel dependent origination.

- |  |                               |
|--|-------------------------------|
| 1. Ignorance                           | 7. Sense-experience           |
| 2. Impression of karmic forces         | 8. Thirst for sense-enjoyment |
| 3. Initial consciousness of the embryo | 9. Clinging to this enjoyment |
| 4. Psycho-physical organism            | 10. Will to be born           |
| 5. Six sense organs including mind     | 11. Birth or rebirth          |
| 6. Sense object contact                | 12. Old age and death         |

Out of these twelve links the first two are related to past life, the last two to future life and the rest to present life. This is the cycle of birth and death. This is the twelve-spoked wheel of dependent origination. This is the vicious circle of causation. It does not end with death. Death is only a beginning of a new life. It is called *Bhava-Chakra*.<sup>67</sup> This *Bhava-Chakra* can be destroyed only by knowledge. So knowledge is the sole means of liberation. We can say that ignorance is a cause of bondage where as knowledge is a cause of liberation.

### **Nirvana:**

The very word Nirvana means blowing out. It is the cessation of all suffering. Nirvana means that stage when all the desires and passions have been consumed. He goes neither this way nor that but obtains utter peace. Nirvana is freedom from all desires, desires from attachment, infatuation, and aversion and so on. Buddha discarded physical exercises and rigid austerities and emphasized that these could be of no avail in attaining the state of Nirvana. He said that the right thing for a man is to eradicate the very sense of this false individuation. Abstract knowledge, moral actions, purity of mental life are necessities to reach the goal (Nirvana). Buddhism has no specific connective view of God. Buddha negates God's existence and is considered to be an atheist. Buddha was an intellectual who was worried by the problems of old

age, pains and suffering. He was a religious man in the ethical but not the spiritual sense.

Shunyavada is one of the most important schools of Buddhism. According to him shunya is not 'empty void'. It means 'indescribable'. The world and the absolute both are shunya, because the world is neither existent nor non-existent and the Absolute is transcendental. Thus everything is shunya.<sup>68</sup> Thus the stage of shunya cannot be described.

### **Guru Nanak's Response towards Buddha Philosophy:**

Buddhism and Guru Nanak both revolt against the Brahmanical rituals (Karma-Kanda) and division of caste system. Both try to break these barriers and preached principle of equality and said that humanity is the real caste of human being. Guru Nanak stresses that caste and power have no place in the Divine court, there one has to bow irrespective of his caste, power or position held by him in this world. The supremacy of man is actually based upon the actions performed by human being on the caste in which one is born. As Guru Nanak says:

God does not mind one's caste or birth,  
one should therefore, learn to lead a truthful  
living for one's deeds proclaim one's caste and respect.<sup>69</sup>

So all the human beings are equal and develop from the one source. Guru Nanak does not believe in any sort of distinction and considers all humanity on same level. But Guru Nanak disapproves the Buddha's mode of mendicancy and system of begging from door to door. Guru Nanak condemns beggary and recommends the noble way of a house holder.

Further Buddha denies the existence of God or is silent about the existence of God and established the supremacy of man on ethical basis while Guru Nanak believes in the existence of God and ethics is the pre-requisite to achieve the spiritual end as it stated by Guru Nanak:

Truth is highest of all virtues but higher still is truthful living.<sup>70</sup>

The Guru agreed with the four noble truths and eight fold paths, but he rejected the agnosticism, image-worship and asceticism of Buddhism.

According to Guru Nanak liberation can be only attained through the grace of the Lord. Nirvana of Buddhism falls much below the spiritual ideal of the Guru. For the Guru the final emancipation consists not only in the cessation of misery, but also in the merger in the absolute.

In Sidha Goshti, the Guru has elucidated his concept of Shunya. There is Shunya inside and in the three worlds, but the knowledge of Shunya in the fourth state i.e. Turiya is essential. The secret of the immortal Shunya can only be known through the remembrance of the Nam of the Lord.<sup>71</sup> So Shunya can be realized with the help of Nam of the Lord.

### **Jainism:**

The word Jainism goes back to 'Jina' which derived from the Sanskrit root 'Jin to conquer means victor i.e. one that has successfully subdued his passions and obtained mastery over himself.<sup>72</sup> The Jains believe in 24 *Tirthankaras*, of these, the first was Risabhadeva and the last Mahavira, the great spiritual hero. He was the last of the prophet, but he cannot be regarded as the founder of the Jainism, because even before him, Jaina teachings were existent. But Mahavira gave a new orientation to that faith. Mahavira reformed the organized Jainism giving it a specific and concrete shape. According to Jainism Moksha is a state of complete liberation from bondage of 'karma' good and bad and their reaction or rewards. Karma create bondage, bad karmas are bondage of iron chains while good karmas are bondage of golden chains. But bondage is still bondage. Good karmas will take the soul to Devloka, the realm of godly souls, where they enjoy the rewards of their good karma until their force is exhausted. Those godly souls again take birth as human beings in order to attain Moksha which is the final stage and complete liberation from the bondage of Karma.<sup>73</sup> Only Karma makes the destiny of human being. Law of Karma is a sole factor causing rebirth in different bodies.

Jainism is not based on Vedas. The Jaina thinkers believe in pluralism. It is called Anekantavada or the doctrine of the managers of reality.<sup>74</sup> According to them ultimate reality could be testified from many angles. The souls are

innumerable and eternal. The universe is beginningless and endless. The souls called 'Jivas' are not only in human forms but birds, beasts, trees, plants, air, lumps of clay, chalk etc.<sup>75</sup> All Jivas have lower degree than humans. The Jivas are real and eternal but their bodies and form changes. Jains believe in transmigration of soul.

According to Jainism, tri-jewel is necessary to attain Moksha like, right knowledge, right conduct and right faith. It is must for a Jaina devotee to take five kinds of vows for perfection like: 1. Ahimsa (Non killing) 2. Asatyatyaga (truthfulness) 3. Asteyavrata (nonstealing) 4. Branmacharya (Chastity) and Aparigrahavrata (renouncing all love for anything or any person. Jainism doesn't believe in sanyasa or renunciation of the world. The monks and nuns lead extremely hard lives practice voluntarily strict test austerities. They eat what is given in charity. They do not stay in houses but in Apasras (Monastries) and only for short periods. They drink boiled water given by saravaks and also avoid bathing and washing as far as possible, because water is also ekindrya Jiva the use of which causes destruction. There of the saravaks and saravikas also similarly practice austerities as strictly as possible. They keep a piece of cloth tied before their mouths, so that no Jiva may be injured and killed in the process of inhaling, as the air is also an ekindiraya jiva its destruction or injury is avoided as far as possible by the mouth cloth. The monks and nuns carry cotton thread brushes to clear the ground. They sit upon to avoid injury to any Jiva. When the saravak realizes that he is becoming old and weak and feels his death to be approaching they die by voluntary starvation. They take vows to avoid wrong and follow right actions for laymen. Jaina's twelve vows are prescribed like.

1. Never to destroy Jivas which have more than one sense.
2. To avoid falsehood
3. To avoid stealing
4. To practice chastity i.e. to be absolutely faithful to one's own wife.
5. Avoiding evil thoughts about other women
6. To curb desires to use minimum of things
7. To limit one's travels by putting the maximum distance and circumference to be traversed
8. To limit the numbers of things of domestic use such as towels, clothes, articles of food, toilet,

bedding etc. 9. To abstains from doing meditation with intention of evil to others and not to persuade people to do evil. 10 To spend at least forty eight minutes every day in meditation avoiding all evil actions and evil thoughts 11. To avoid going beyond any fixed limits of distance and restricting items of diet. 12. To lead a monk life in apasara and to give Jaina sadhus food, water and other necessities.<sup>76</sup>

Jains don't believe in God but they are not treated as atheist or nastiks. They think that soul is a substance to the perception of which they can reach by hard mediation and austerities. But beyond this there is nothing for them. Jainism believes in doctrine of syadvada according to which human knowledge and human judgments are relative and limited.

**Guru Nanak's comments on the way of life of Jains:** Guru Nanak criticized the way of living of Jains and said:

They drink, dirty water and eat what is left over by others; they spread out their ordure, not minding the foul smell; they are shy of water; their hair are plucked by pluckers whose hands are smeared with ash; they have discarded the occupation of their parents and their families weep for them; they do not observe the Brahmanical rites, and the Brahmins do not eat their food; they cannot find refuge in any of sixty-eight places of pilgrimage; they have no tilak-mark on their foreheads and they always remain filthy; they sit together, each covered with a cloth, as if in condolence, and they do not go to any open assembly; they tie cups to their waists, thread on their hands, and they walk in a single file.<sup>77</sup>

Similarly in Var Malar Guru Nanak asserts:

Jains are thrown astray, by primal writ misled.

They utter not the Nam.

With their hands they pluck their hair, cutting not these,  
in filth they remain involved night and day.

To devotion to the holy word indifferent.

Neither perform they cast obligations nor have decencies,  
their life a waste.

Impure their minds, unused to caste codes,  
impure the food they consume.

None without submitting to the holy word,  
has found way to true conduct.

The God-directed into the holy Supreme Being are absorbed.<sup>78</sup>

Further, Guru Nanak then mentions the uses of water as a great gift from God. If the pluck heads do not wash, let there be seven handfuls of dust on their heads.<sup>79</sup>

Now, it is clear that Guru Nanak neither accepts the doctrine of non-violence in the sense the Jainism has adopted, nor it believe in the non activity to get free from the bondage of the Karmas. According to Guru Nanak *Bani* the karmas originate when the soul takes its very first birth as a man and due to the impact of egoism soul commits actions and these actions create pains and pleasures for him. Egoism result in strong bondage. According to Guru Nanak one would become in the next world, as to his deeds performed in this world.<sup>80</sup>

So every man has to be examined on the basis of actions done by him as well as intention under which it is committed. Guru Nanak emphasizes to eradicate the egoism by getting in union with God and become benevolent.

Guru Nanak desired mankind to shun all such useless practices like avoiding food, clothing, shoes ,speaking, roaming about with half naked bodies, smeared all over with ashes etc. Guru Nanak advised people to devote their heart on Nam of God which is the only remedy of all sufferings.

Thus it can be concluded that in Guru Nanak's compositions he refers to the six schools of Hindu philosophy as:

Six the system, six their teachers,  
And six their different teachings;  
The Lord of them all is the one Lord  
However various his aspects are.<sup>81</sup>

Guru Nanak did not want to involve in any controversies with the six systems and their teachings. He just emphasized on the unity of God which transcends all philosophical differences and doctrinal disputes.

### **Islam:**

The word Islam literally means peace, submission and obedience means submission to the will of God. Muslims use Allah for God which is an Arabic word and used for God or Almighty only. Islam started with Prophet Muhammad who was born in the year 570 A.D. in Mecca. He was the posthumous son of Abdulla who belonged to the family of Hasim, the noblest family of koresh section of the Arabian race. Muhammad's mother died when he was six years old.<sup>82</sup>

He passed happy married life with Khadija who was elder by 15 years to Muhammad. He had three sons and four daughters though all the sons died in childhood. People at the time of Muhammad were divided into many tribes who were constantly at war with each other. They worshipped various gods and goddesses and about a hundred idols of these deities were worshiped in the shrine of Kabha which was erected originally by Abraham and Ishmael for the worship of one God. Idolatry, superstition, sin, immorality, crimes of infanticide and wickedness reigned supreme in the land which was at very low ebb of civilization. But Muhammad rebelled against the unsatisfactory prevailing conditions. When he was forty, a vision appeared to him in cave. He heard word *Iqra* (read). Muhammed was puzzled. He was an unlettered person. The cry of *Iqra* was repeated and the first revelation of God to his last prophet was made and this man, who had never before this time, suddenly become the greatest preacher of all times. His message was simple. He told the people that 'God is one', and all human beings are equal, and that "those among you are superior who are more righteous and the best effort is the proclamation of truth in front of a cruel ruler."<sup>83</sup>

Through these revelations Muhammad began to teach tenets of his new religion of Islam claiming himself as prophet of God or messenger of God. The message clashed with the vested interests. He and his followers were threatened and offered bribes and tortured so much so that they had to leave Mecca and take refuge in Medina. In Medina, he became both the spiritual and temporal head of his people.

His message spread, and soon the whole Arabian Peninsula embraced Islam. In 633 A.D. Mohammad died peacefully in his own house. Holy Quran is the only miracle claimed by Mohammad which is revealed to him. It is a Divine guidance. Quran is full of numerous verses depicting good and bad rewards for the two opposing categories of human beings. God is the supreme judge who occupies the highest throne in the universe according to the teachings of Quran. All actions of human being in this life are preserved and will be placed before God on the Day of Judgment. God will adjudge each individual according to his deeds rewarding the good with paradise and condemning the evil to hell.

According to the teachings of Islam for a Muslim, it is obligation to offer prayer of few minutes to Allah five times a day, another obligatory is they must fast each year for one month with the sighting of the ninth lunar month. Because fasting restricts and controls all basic physical needs and it provides training for patience, for bearance and understanding. Fasting does not teaches only to control his diet for a month, but it also instruct him to control all those motivational forces which could result in harm either to himself or to his fellow beings.

The third obligatory duty of a Muslim is to pay a tax to the poor, means the poor have a right to share the good fortune of the wealthy. It is only through love that we can bridge this distance and to help to needy and poor without expectations of a worldly reward. It is one way to show our love for God and getting near to him. Islam religion advices on both spiritual and temporal matters to help us to create a happy society. Mohammad was a divine

messenger and great man of religion and faith. He was a perfect human being and he awakened people from adormment, dreamy condition to the realization of God. Belief is the greatest virtue in Islam. A great portion of the holy of Quran is full of exhortation to people to believe in one God and his messenger, Prophet Muhammad. Belief in God and the prophet is one great step which takes man towards his goal. Thus Muhammad urged upon the people to follow him and to put their faith in him so that they may follow a right religion, a straight path which was to worship one God. Belief in one and worship of him alone constituted the straight path and a right religion. This was the central theme of Muhammad's preaching and teaching of highest and primary importance.

### **Nanak's Attitude towards Islam**

Islam is a monotheistic faith, but believes in the Prophethood of Hazrat Muhammad. It is said, "There is no God, but Allah and Muhammad is the apostle of God." The Guru accepted the first part i.e. the unity of God, but did not agree with the second. He was emphatic on the point that there was no adviser of the Lord, no lieutenant, son or relative of God.<sup>84</sup>

Both reject idol worship and insist on a life of purity and faith and have a democratic approach to human problems. Both Prophet Mohammed and Guru Nanak were kept to make their followers immune from meaningless observances, rites and rituals. They fought against hum-bug, hypocrisy, bigotry and fanaticism. Both advocated a sort of middle path, between extreme asceticism and greed for worldly delights, they both stressed purity of heart combined with the fulfillment of the necessary foundation of body, mind and soul. Both believe in practicing humility of the right type and in removing racial, religious or regional pride. Both combined piety and practical living.<sup>85</sup>

Both Islam and Guru Nanak stand for the creation of a classless society by eliminating all possible social conditions of ending all classes and resolving disputes peacefully. In Islam the Namaz incorporates certain fixed physical movements where as according to Sikhism prayer is purely a spiritual-cum-

mental function and the body is not involved in it. The Muslim should pray five times a day under all circumstances and situation. But the Guru Nanak believed that we can pray to God at any time. The five prayers suggested by the Guru, which are truth, honest earning, welfare of humanity, sincerity and praise of Lord.<sup>86</sup>

Secondly Sikhism believes in transmigration of soul or the cycle of birth and death and the way to get rid of this cycle and union with God through leading truthful life and meditation. When the human soul reaches that climax, it merges with the cosmic soul just as water merges with water and light with light. But according to Quran, human soul after death remain in state of suspension till the dooms day reaches and then the dead person get out of their graves, assume their souls and go before the reckoned for having their account of good and bad acts settled. Those who believe in God through Rasul or Mohammad will go to heaven and those who did not, they will go to hell, where they will be mercilessly and continuously tortured.<sup>87</sup>

Thus Quran will not forgive those people who didn't believe in God and they will be punished for this reason but God of Guru Nanak is ever merciful and God does not discriminate between believer and non-believer. Further Sikhism believes in equality of men and women, where as Islam accords a lower status to women. According to a Sura of Quran women cannot under take prayer during the period of menstruation and cannot join crusade along with men are for such other reason cannot be equated with men. In Sikhism, if during a war the enemy's woman fold fall into the hands of Sikhs. They are to be honourably returned to their kinsmen and not to be molested or maltreated. But according to Islam the women and children of the enemy are treated as a part of the war booty and Hazarat Mohammad himself purchased some of them on paying the suitable price or compensation to the commanders who had captured them.<sup>88</sup> In this way the attitude of Guru Nanak and Hazarat Mohammad was different regarding woman.

### **Religious leaders at the time of Guru Nanak**

At the time of Guru Nanak mainly two religions Hinduism and Islam were in existent. Society was going through an era of corruption in citadel of religion and type of spiritual decay had become the order of the day. So Guru Nanak's task was restore the reign of truth and justice and rekindle the light of love and goodwill among members of all communities through his message of equality of all religions.

At the time of the birth of Guru Nanak man had developed a conflict with his milieu. Unable to face the world he was virtually running away from the society. The persons, who tended to be spiritual, were renouncing the world, living in forests and hill-tops. Genuine religious feelings and morality gave way to hypocrisy, empty ritualism, ceremonialism and fanaticism.<sup>89</sup>

The popular religion about the time of Nanak's birth was confined peculiar forms of eating and drinking, peculiar ways of bathing and pointing the forehead and such other mechanical observance. The worship of idols, wherever they were permitted to exist, pilgrimages to the Gangas and other sacred places, whenever they were allowed the observance of certain ceremonies like the martial and funeral rites, the obedience to the man dates of the Brahmins and lavishing charitable gifts upon him constituted almost the whole of Hinduism as it was then current among the masses.<sup>90</sup> The Guru points to the hypocrisy of Brahmin, the Hindu priest:

They tax the cow and the Brahmin and  
with the Cow-dung they hope to save themselves!  
They wear dhoti, the frontal-mark and rosary  
(like the Hindu) but they eat the barbarian's (Muslims)  
Grain within, they worship (their idols), (outside).  
They read Quran and observe the code of the Turks.  
Shed thy deceit and hypocrisy, O Brahmin,  
For, it is through the Lord's name  
That one swims across.<sup>91</sup>

Similarly in another verses Guru Nanak said:

You read books, perform your twilight devotions, argue,  
worship stones, and sit like cranes.  
You utter falsehoods as excellent jewels; you meditate  
on the Gayatri three times a day.  
You wear necklaces, put sacrificial marks on our foreheads,  
carry two dhotis and put towels on your heads.  
If you knew God's designs, you would know that  
yours is verily a vain religion.  
Saith Nanak, verily reflect that without the true Guru  
You shall not find the way.<sup>92</sup>

As for Muslims, they were no better than the Hindus. They are even ignorant of their religion and the teachings of Islam were unknown to them. Qazis and Mullas, who professed to have knowledge of the tenants of Islam were in reality ignorant of shariat. Only upper class among them led a luxurious life at the cost of the poor and the lowly. They were degenerating fast and regarded Hindus as their slaves and treated them with great disdain.<sup>93</sup> Qazis pretended to be religious but were misusing their judicial power to make money. Guru Nanak says:

In the present age, Quran and other Semitic scriptures  
have become the approved books.  
The Brahmins and Vedas and the Purans  
are not being given their due respect.<sup>94</sup>

Thus the Hindus have four castes and Muslims were divided into four sects. With jealousy, arrogance and vanity they fought with each other uselessly. Muslims regarded the Mecca-Kaaba as sacred while Hindus worshipped the Ganga and Benares. Islam was reduced to simple circumcision where as Hindus only wore the sacred thread and frontal marks. Ram and Rahim denoted only one God but their followers had split along different paths in ignorance.

The people had forgotten the teachings and saying of their holy books, the Quran and Vedas. The world was lost in avarice. Truth had vanished and

Mullas and Brahmins were struggling against each other to destroy themselves.<sup>95</sup> So it was observed that both Hindus and Muslims had forgotten the tenets of their religions and had gone astray. They were indulging in superfluous ceremonies and were performing useless rituals. Therefore, none of them was a true Hindu or a true Muslim at this critical time. Guru Nanak realized that it was his duty to reform them. Guru Nanak condemned religious imperialism of the Qazis and Brahmins.

So the Hindus and Muslims had totally forgotten their ideals and had disregarded the fundamentals of their respective faiths. Guru Nanak showed them the right path. Guru Nanak gave new message to the people. He declared “Na Ko Hindu, Na Ko Musalman,” there is no Hindu, there is no Muslim, all human beings are children of Super Being. It was the message of universal brotherhood of man. All men are equal in the eyes of God. Guru Nanak preached harmony, tolerance and cooperation for mankind, and its ultimate union with the Almighty. The Guru strove for amity between different faiths and sects and gave people message of love and fraternity. He respected all prophets and seers without accepting any body’s authority. Guru Nanak was thus a prophet of reconciliation, reconciliation between creed and creed, class and class and was in the true sense of the word a remarkable bridge builder. He is remembered throughout the world as:

Baba Nanak Shah Fakir, Hindu ka Guru, Musalman ka Pir

Guru Nanak advises the Qazi to adjust his conduct to his profession, and become a true Musliman. Qazi is advised to treat good conduct as his Kalima and to replace his five daily prayers with five principles of conduct and worship life-truth, lawful earning, wishing well of others, right intention and praise of the Lord.

Similarly according to Guru Nanak, the true Pandit is that who adopts the God’s Nam because without the true Nam, the tilak mark and sacred thread are meaningless. All pilgrimages, fasts and tripss are condemned in the *Bani* of Guru. Neither four Vedas, nor the eighteen Purans, nor bathings, nor ritual charities, nor fasting will decide the honour one shell receive, it depends upon

true conduct.<sup>96</sup> All the meditations, bathes and outward knowledge are of no avail. Only purification of mind is necessary.

Guru Nanak tried to minimize the differences of two religious communities and to a great extent he was successful. The great hurdle in the way of uniting the Indian people at that time was the ego and obsessions of superiority complexes which carry seeds of hatred for one another. The Brahmins representing the Hindu extremism, and the Mullas, representing the Islamic extremism, clashed with each other and incited people against one another. Each claimed superiority over the other. The Brahmins dubbed the Muslims as malechhnas while the Muslims called the Hindus as kafirs and idoltors. In such a situation, Guru Nanak realized that there could be no conscious combination or compromise in the sphere of religion. People react and resist and became adamant when any string of their faith and belief is touched. He therefore stressed the underlying cultural unity without cutting out and bypassing religion altogether.<sup>97</sup> Thus according to Guru Nanak, the need of the hour was unity in diversity, mutual respect and tolerance for each other's religion. He inspired both communities to ignore the outward crust and evolved the Indo-Muslim cultural synthesis. He wanted to knit together Hindus and Musalmans under the banner of a common faith. Guru Nanak preached continual vigilance and fearless struggle for the rights of the people. His religion was all embracing and based on universal love.

Guru Nanak was one of those great reformers who tried to find a common code of conduct for Hinduism and Islam. He tried to bring the two religions nearer each other by stressing the common features of both and attaching their external observances. He made his effort to bring about a synthesis of the two.

### **Exploitation of Hindus by Muslim Rulers**

The Muslims had been in India for over three hundred years. The impact of the advent of the Muslims in India on the life of the people cannot be minimized. They were not like the earlier invaders who were absorbed or who merge in Hinduism, Islam had a distinct culture; it was aggressive,

individualistic, iconoclastic and theoretic. Its approach was that of a conqueror, displaying a sense of superiority in all things and it believed in converting the infidels by force, if necessary. It drove the Brahmin into his conservative shell as a protective device and the result was that he became more conservative and his emphasis on caste, rituals, pilgrimages, defilement and purification increased all the more. The Hindu faith was at its lowest ebb and the great golden son of the pure and radiant faith had yet to rise.<sup>98</sup>

Muslim rulers hated the Hindus and their religion as heretics, anti God and anti-religions. The Muslim society-starting with the ruler, down to the lowest person regarded it as their sacred duty and best service to God and the prophet to convert as many Hindus to Islam as possible even at the point of sword. Most of the Muslim rulers who had rules over India till the time of Guru Nanak, had tried to eliminate Hindu society and Hindu religion by converting the Hindus to Islam by demolishing their temple, by prohibiting them from performing pilgrimages and religious rites, by burning their sacred books and insulting their gods and goddesses, and by a hundred other acts of oppressions and suppression, as also through allurements.

Hindus were beheaded if the Muslims religious susceptibilities were burnt by them even slightly. Hindu could never hope to get even handed justice in cases of religious disputes. A large number of Guru Nanak's composition speak eloquently of his attitude towards the corrupt, oppressive and unjust regimes of Muslim rulers and the ruling Muslim class, and his severe condemnation of the conditions prevailing in India in Guru Nanak's time.<sup>99</sup> Even the basic right to Hindus was not provided. Even in the judiciary matter was extreme discrimination against the Hindus in all administrative matters. Hindus had no rights. They were treated as just slave. Their life, property and honour were not safe. They lost all sense of honour and self respect .So Muslims had degraded the Hindu society morally, culturally and religiously.

### **Sacrifices of Sikh Gurus and their followers for the sake of religious freedom:**

Sikh Gurus who have added new chapters of heroism in the human history. They fought and died for their faiths. According to Guru Nanak, God has created the world and main objective of man is to attain oneness with God. For the achievement of this objective the right to freedom of religion is very important. The choice should be of the man himself. Guru Nanak condemned the rulers of his times who took away this right of the people. The Hindus, who happened to be the 'Ruled' class become target of the ruler. He severely criticized the policy of levying tax on the temples and the religious rites of the Hindus.<sup>100</sup>

The great saga of sacrifices begins with the martyrdom of Guru Arjan at Lahore. Mughal emperor Jahangir out of jealousy and intolerance for the new rising faith ordered that Guru Arjan to be put to death in such a way that not a drop of his blood should fall because according to the philosophy of Mughals that would make him a martyr and invite the wrath of God on the rulers. Consequently Guru Arjan was made to sit on red hot iron plate continuously for hours and the red hot sand was poured on his head. He was then placed in the boiling cauldron but not a single sign of pain was heard from his lips. The Guru instead went on reciting the Sukhmani till the last breath and thus add new luster to the pages of self-sacrifice (May 13, 1606).<sup>101</sup> So in this way Guru Arjan Dev sacrifices his life for the sake of religion. He preferred martyrdom to the forced conversion and became the first martyr at the alter of a basic human religious rights in the history of Sikhism. Guru Hargobind the sixth Guru, following the teachings of Guru Nanak of respectful living and standing up for Human Rights, took up arms against the tyrannical conduct of Mughal Emperors who were exploiting the Human Rights of the people.

Similarly, like Guru Arjan Dev, Guru Teg Bahadur also sacrificed his life for the sake of Dharam. Describing the martyrdom of Guru Teg Bahadur, Guru Gobind Singh said:

He sacrificed his life, for protecting the rights of the Hindus, to wear their sacred thread and frontal marks: He gave up his head without uttering a word of sorrow for the sake of righteousness.<sup>102</sup>

The martyrdom of Guru Teg Bahadur is a great event in the history of India. The sacrifice had far-reaching effects. He chose to sacrifice his life 'for the sake of dharma'.

Guru Teg Bahadur made himself a martyr in defense of the right of every man Hindu, Sikh, Muslim to live his life in the manner sanctioned by the religious faith which he professed.<sup>103</sup>

Aurangzeb was advised by Maulvis and Ulemas that if he wanted to convert Dar-ul-Harb in Dar-ul-Islam then he should convert the Brahmins of the country first, as they were the learned people and were the exponents of Hindu religion, scriptures, rites and ceremonies. They were the real rulers of the Hindu society. If they were converted, there would be no problems for the emperor and the country would soon be converted in to Dar-ul-Islam. The experiment of mass conversion was first tried in Kashmir. They (Brahmins) were given an ultimatum either to embrace Islam or be prepared for execution. Then, in their desperation, some Brahmins proceeded to Anandpur to meet Guru Teg Bahadur and seek his help. They were hopeful that Guru would come to their rescue. He would surely save dharma from extinction. Their honour and faith, they were sure, could be protected by the Guru. After reaching the Guru's darbar, the Brahmins told him their tales of woe. The Guru was moved by their sad plight. He told them that some priestly and noble soul must lay down his life for saving dharma and honour of the aggrieved people. Freedom of worship was the right of every individual and it had to be protected. The Guru advised them to go to the Emperor and tell him that they, together with all the Brahmins of Kashmir, were ready to embrace Islam, if Teg Bahadur, who was their Guru, was first converted.<sup>104</sup> In June 1675 the Guru was arrested and brought to Delhi. The Guru and his companions were kept in the kotwals lock-up at Chandni Chowk in Delhi.

Two of his followers Bhai Mati Dass and Bhai Dayala, were sawn alive and boiled to death respectively, before the eyes of the Guru in order to terrorize him. But the Mughal Emperor was mistaken because far from the Guru being, terrorized, even the humblest Sikh never showed the least weakness in the face of death in the entire Sikh history. The Guru was then beheaded (Nov.11, 1675) in Chandni Chowk Delhi, where now stands Gurdwara Sis Ganj:<sup>105</sup> This was the second martyrdom in the history of Sikhism in the defense of Human Rights. Guru suffered martyrdom to uphold the basic Human Rights of religion and freedom of conscience of his ideological opponent.

Never before in the history of world, had the leader of a new faith volunteered to lay down his life for the protection of another faith. Thus, Guru Teg Bahadur becomes a martyr at the altar of dharma. He laid down his life for the protection of the Hindu Dharma. He saved the Hindu religion from total annihilation and the country as a whole from being converted into Dar-ul-Islam. He made the supreme sacrifice for the faith and tenets in which he himself did not believe and which he tried to reform. Guru Teg Bahadur did not believe in idolatry or in the sacred thread of the Hindus. He came to their rescue as he believed in the individual's right to worship God in his own way. He offered himself for supreme sacrifice. Guru fought for the people's right of worship.

The Guru was thus self-sought martyrdom, a willing sacrifice for religion knowing fully well the might of the Emperor and his own comparative helplessness. He yet took up the cause of the persecuted Hindus. His offence, in the Emperor's eyes, was thus exceedingly serious and it is no wonder that he met his death in execution.<sup>106</sup>

Guru Teg Bahadur sacrificed his life for protecting the sacred mark of the Hindus, for freedom of conscience and worship, and for the sake of dharma righteousness.

### **The Sikh Tradition of Martyrdom:**

For justice and for the Panth the Sikhs are taught to undergo suffering to the point of martyrdom. Like Guru Arjan Dev ji and Guru Tegh Bahadur ji,

Sahibzadas Ajit Singh, Jujar Singh, Joravar Singh, Fateh Singh and other Sikhs or Khalsa who died fighting after the final evacuation of Anandpur are presented as shahids. Bhai Tara Singh used to carry his head on his palm, standing for justice and defying the 'Turks'. He believed that martyrdom led to Patshahi.<sup>107</sup> Boota Singh sacrificed his head to protect the honour of 'Singhs'. Boota Singh resolved to defy the Mughals, to give his head prove his Khalsahood and justify the Khalsa's claim to Patsahi.<sup>108</sup>

The martyrdom of Bhai Taru Singh underscores the sanctity of the kesh. His scalp was removed with his hair intact while he was alive. As a true Sikh Bhai Taru Singh had supported the Khalsa with his modest means and without giving offence to the administration for the sake of the Panth and to expose 'Turks' he bore all kinds of hardship.<sup>109</sup> Similarly Matab Singh did not wish to lag behind in giving his head to weaken the Turks. This was his way of being faithful to dharm and to Sikhi. Offering himself voluntarily to be broken on the wheel, he attained martyrdom. Nihang Gurbakhash Singh, the leader of the Singhs who died fighting a huge force of Afgans to defend the Harmandir Sahib.<sup>110</sup> From the above passage it is clear that martyrdom was core of the Sikh tradition. The Sikhs sacrificed themselves for the Panth or for others.

In the Sikh ardas, among other things, the Khalsa are reminded to turn their thought to the cherished five, the four Sahibzadas, the forty Muktas, the loyal members of the Khalsa who gave their heads for their faith, who were hacked limb for limb scalped, broken on the wheel or sawn asunder, never for shaking their faith and who were steadfast in their loyalty to the uncut hair of the true Sikh.<sup>111</sup>

Similarly Bhai Mani Singh was asked to embrace Islam but he replied that he might be cut limb by limb but he would not for sake his faith and embrace Islam. In this way we can say the Sikhs sacrificed their lives cheerfully for the sake of the justice and sacred cause.

Guru Gobind Singh and his Sikhs played their role well in defending the Human Rights of the people against the mighty Mughal empire with the spirit.

The Guru sacrificed whole of his family in the cause of humanity, so that the people may live the life of freedom as per their conscience.

According to Guru Gobind Singh all human beings are made of the same five elements there is no room for any superiority or inferiority of any being. Similarly the Guru rejected discrimination based on religion to quote him:

The temple and the mosque are the same; the Hindu and Musalman prayers are the same; all men are same; it is through error they appear different deities demons, Ya-kshas, heavenly singers, Musalmans and Hindus adopt the customary dress of their different countries.

All men have the same eyes, the same ears, the same body, the same build, a compound of earth and air, fire and water.

Allah and Abhekh are the same; the Purans and Quran are the same; they are all alike; it is the one God who created all.<sup>112</sup>

Guru Gobind Singh saw one God abiding in all persons round the globe and anyone who meditates on his name could achieve salvation.

Guru Nanak did not see any good coming from the Hindus taking to Islam, for in actual practice. Muslims in India themselves did not understand the finer points of their faith and mistook the external observances as the end all and be all of their religion. To him, people of the four Varnas of the Hindus taking to Islam must have appeared a jump into a blind alley and those of the three higher ones motivated by opportunism.<sup>113</sup>

Guru Nanak preaches understanding among different communities and people with different ideologies and lays emphasis on setting difference through mutual discussions. So according to Guru Nanak all human beings are the creation of one father they do not recognize any manmade distinction in the name of religion, language or country.

Guru Nanak had respect for all religious faiths as it showers recognition and honour on all of them. The only condition is that of truthfulness, benevolence of heart.

Although Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh religion not proclaim in so many words that he was going to found a new religion. But his outright condemnation of the ritualism and force of Brahmanical religion and bigotry of the followers of Islam was so vehement and so effective that a large number of the adherents of both these religions become Guru Nanak's followers and gradually evolved themselves into a new sect which was ultimately transformed into a full-fledged religion.<sup>114</sup>

Like a true crusader he launched a war of ideas against ignorance and superstition and focused the beam of his divine light against the major citadels of the religion of those days and scored victory after victory over them. He openly challenged the hollow and bankrupt religious theories and practices of Hindus and Muslims. He preached to all a religion of the heart as distinguished from a religion of external forms and unavailing rituals. He found that the acts and austerities practiced and professed by religious men of his age and country were without divine love or devotion and consequently continued no merit before God.<sup>115</sup>

He scrutinized Hindus, Muslims priests and prophets, and found not one godly person among them. They were all groping in the blind pit of superstition. Religious men possessed no knowledge and the world was rushing to its ruin for want of a divine guide. Rulers were also oppressive every where. The fence began to eat the field instead of protecting it. Guru claims proved faithless to their trusts and consumed the wealth of their wards. Judges took bribes and perpetrated in justice. In such crucial time Guru Nanak established a separate religion and laid out an easy and simple way of obtaining salvation by enshrining the God's name in their hearts and leading truthful lives. The Guru Nanak tried that man should be free from ignorance, sin and mechanical religion. Guru Nanak told the people what to aim at and how to proceed. Guru Nanak wanted to bring man face to face with Supreme Being. He rejected all the inter mediator like Avatars and Prophets and also stressed that by reading of the Vedas and books of Musualmans God's secret cannot be known. Guru Nanak's religion which has based on the theory of

fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man threw open the gates of spiritualism to all those to whom it had been denied for centuries. It also granted them the equality in social status which was denied to them by the monopoly holders of religion in Hinduism<sup>116</sup>.

In this way Guru Nanak brought religion so near and within easy reaches of common man so that he could aspire to elevate himself to Godhood while leading normal worldly life.

### **Guru Nanak's idea about the origin of the creation:**

Guru Nanak has described God as the creator in the *Mul-Mantra*. He creates; therefore, He is the cause, the origin of the creation. Guru Nanak explains the situation in his verses before the evolution of the world like:

In the beginning there was indescribable darkness.

Then was not day, or night, or moon, or sun, God was in meditating on the void. Then were not continents, or hells, or seven seas, or rivers, or flowing streams. Nor was there paradise, or a tortoise, or nether regions; or the hell or heaven of the Muhammadans, or the destroyer death; or the hell or heaven of the Hindus, or birth or death; nor did any one come or go.

Then was not Brahma, Vishnu, or Shiva; No one existed but the one God. Then was not female, or male, or caste, or birth, nor did any one feel pain or pleasure.

There was no caste or religious garb, no Brahman, or Khatri. No *hom*, no sacred feasts, no places of pilgrimage to bathe in, nor did any one perform worship.

There was no love, no service, no Shiv or Energy of his; Then were not Vedas or Muhammandan books, no Simrities, no Shastars; The imperceptible God was Himself the speaker and preacher; Himself unseen he was everything<sup>117</sup>.

God decided to bring the universe into being. It was experience not metaphysics which concerned the Guru:

The infinite Lord has enshrined his might within all.

He himself is detached and without limit or equal.  
He created nature and inanimate nature came from  
The existing void from his own being (Sunte)  
came air, water and the world, bodies and his spirit  
with them. Your light, O Lord is, within fire, water  
and living beings and in your absolute self lies the  
Power of creation.

From the Absolute Lord emanated Brahma, Vishnu  
and Shiva: from Him came all the ages.....  
All that springs from the Lord merges with him again.  
By His play the Lord has created nature and by his  
Word has manifested the wonder.

From Himself He has made day and night.  
From Him came creation and destruction, pleasure and pain.  
The godly-minded remain stable and detached.  
From the effect of good or ill and find their home in God.<sup>118</sup>

Now it is clear from the above passage that the universe is a creation of God or  
the will of God but this will cannot be described in words as Guru Nanak  
says:-

All forms come into being by His will,  
But it is not possible to describe that will in words  
The living beings are created by His will,  
Through His will they are exalted.  
Everything is bound down within God's will.<sup>119</sup>

Similarly in another hymn he said:

From the true one proceedeth air, from air water  
and from water the three worlds; light was infused into every heart.  
The pure one becometh not impure; he who is imbued  
With the word obtaineth honour<sup>120</sup>

Now the question arises, according to the above verses if this universe is the  
creation of God, from where evil comes in it. Guru Nanak believes that

egoism, the delusion have also been created by the Lord. Egoism is the caused of the world. This ego or Haumai is big obstacle in the way to spiritual progress. Egoism separates man from God as:

In ego man comes, in ego he goes.

In ego he is born, in ego he dies.

In ego he gives, in ego he receives.

In ego he earns, in ego he loses.

In ego he is true or false.

In ego he has considerations of sin and nurture.

In ego he descends to hell or rises to heaven.<sup>121</sup>

Only Name or remembrance of Lord can get free us from these obstacles. It ignores the presence of God and His Will. It carries man away from all light and virtue and thrusts him in the abyss of darkness and evil. It is self-centeredness and opposed to God. Without the realization of God man remains entangled in the net of Maya. The man who does not get rid of ego is termed as Mannukh, the self-willed person who attributes things to himself in opposition to the omnipotence of God and his *Hukum*. Only if the man is rightly attuned can one perceive God within one self. Ultimately a time comes when ego loses its identity and merges in God's will. It is very difficult to achieve this stage. Many difficulties and hurdles lie in man's path. God's grace and Guru's word are two sources and assistance. Only God's name can reduce ego of man and in its place God's name can be replaced. Haumain is the problem and meditation on God's Name is remedy. Physical body through which meditation is to be done which is described as temple of God must be kept absolutely cleans, well nourished and fit. As it is said by Guru Nanak:

In ego he laughs, in ego he weeps. In ego he begrimes, in ego he washes himself,

In ego he is misled into the consideration of castes and kinds, in ego he is foolish, in ego he is wise, and loses, all sense of salvation and liberation. In ego he absorbed in Maya (illusion), in ego he is over taken by delusion.

In ego are man born as creature.

Man can see the gate, if he understands his ego, without realization all the talk of ego that entangles a man. Nanak, under the supreme wills our record is made. As one sees the one, we perceive the others.<sup>122</sup>

Egoism is a condition of mind. It influences each and every activity of man throughout the course of his existence which may run into myriads of births and lives. An egoist sees everywhere the projection of his own mind. It keeps man away from the true reality, true purpose of his life, salvation and union with God.

It must be remembered that in Guru Nanak's teachings, human birth was the first step on the road to liberation. It provides the opportunity for meeting God. Ego is an obstacle between man and God like:

In egoism man fails to perceive the true nature of liberation. In Haumi there is worldly attachment and its shadow, doubt. By acting under the influence of Haumi man causes himself to be born repeatedly if he understands egoism he can find the door of liberation but otherwise he argues and disputes. Our karma is described according to the Divine will. He who sees the nature of the Divine will perceives his egoism also.<sup>123</sup>

Dependence upon God and obedience to His will is essential for liberation. By meditation and devotion, man will get attained to the will of the supreme. Under the instructions of the Guru man surrenders himself completely to the will of the Lord.

### **Time of creation:**

As it is said by Guru Nanak in Japji:

What was the occasion, what the time, what that date and that day what reason was it and what month it was, when all that hath from was first created? The learned Pandits knew not that occasion; had they known, they would have recorded it in the

*Puranas*, the holy scriptures of the Muslims-find that time. The Yogi-the ascetic-too nor anyone can know that date or that day or that reason or that month! The creator alone who fashioned this universe knows it. Then in what words mayst I speak of Him? How mayst I praise Him? What description mayst I give of Him? And how mayst I know Him? O Nanak, every one for speaking speaketh, each wiser then the other. But great is the Lord and great is his name, whose will is done. He who knoweth the ego in Him hath no honour ahead, O Nanak.<sup>124</sup>

In brief it can be said that God is the creator of all things-Karta Purkh. He is autonomous. He does not consult anyone. He acts independently. God is source of all good. He is all pervading. All is God. There is nothing but God. We human beings are children of God and we cannot describe the events of the time when he originated. As Guru Arjan Dev says in Sukhmani Sahib, how a son can be a witness of the events attending his father's birth; all are limited by and act within his divine order.

How can a son be a witness of the events attending his father's birth; all are limited by and act within His Divine order.<sup>125</sup>

Guru Nanak emphasized that instead of accepting blindly cosmic theories, man should apply his God given sense of reason. As it said in Japji:

What one says (about creation etc.) should first be subjected to human sense of reason; God's works are beyond any calculations. The so called bull (supporting the earth) is in reality the 'Dharam', the divine law, which is born out of His benevolence. The contentment (acceptance completely of God's will) is what keeps the entire creation in place within the divine order.<sup>126</sup>

Further Guru Nanak said:

Uncounted are worlds below and uncounted above: none can find limits of his creation even if they exhaust themselves; even Vedas have come to this one conclusion, thousand of books, the eighteen Puranas, the books of semantic religions accept this much that

origin of creation is one God; limits of this creation may be written if there be any limits at all. In finding end of creation one finds his own end; Nanak says we may call him great; He himself knows how great He is.”<sup>127</sup>

So no mythology was produced, no cosmology was invented. No conjectures were hazarded as to how and at what time the universe came into existence. Why was this universe created?

According to Guru Nanak purpose of world's creation is the evolution of human soul. The Lord had brought into existence this universe with a view to enabling men to attain to the status of saints through his spiritual development. In other words, the soul has to pass through a number of births in order to evolve itself to the highest spiritual state. This earth has been created to evolve really God oriented men through succession of births and deaths.

### **Nature of God:**

Guru Nanak's basic thought on religion can be summed up in just two words, unity and fraternity. The 'Mool Mantra' the first revelation from God to Guru Nanak which is:

Ik Onkar, Sat Nam, Karta Purakh, Nirbhau, Nirvair, Akal Murat, Ajuni, Sai Bhang, Gur Parsad, These words constitute the essential attribute of God which can be explained as:

He is the sole Supreme Being; if eternal manifestation  
creator, immanent reality; without fear,  
without rancor; timeless form, unincarnated,  
self-existent, realized by grace of the holy preceptor.  
In primal time, in all time, was the creator,  
nothing is real but the eternal,  
nothing shall last but the eternal.<sup>128</sup>

### **God is infinite:**

No human being can describe his greatness because human being is finite, while God is infinite then how a finite human being can describe the infinite God. Only He can know Himself.

There is no limit of his virtues; nor any limit to speak of them. There is no limit to what he doeth; nor any limit to what he giveth. There is no limit to what he heareth, No limit is known to what is innermost in his mind. No limit is known to what of form he hath created; nor is any limit known to his this or that end for the sake of fathoming the unfathomable, several seekers have cried in agony. But his limit wouldst not be ever known the infinity of the infinite none shalt fathom the more thou speakest the more doesn't it become! Great is the Lord and high his seat; and higher than the high is Nam.

If there be one so great and high, He alone wouldst know the highest to high. How great He is. He known by Himself. O Nanak, He the kind and merciful Lord bestoweth his ever flowing bounties by his grace and kindness.<sup>129</sup>

So it is really difficult for a man to define God.

### **God is True and all Knowing:**

God sees and understands all. He is everywhere. He is omniscient who knows everything in advance. He knows all the evil deeds of man nothing can be hide from him.

God is truth and truth is higher then everything else. Truth is liquor with the sugar of the Nam of the Lord.<sup>130</sup> Those who recognize truth, they are always happy.<sup>131</sup> But the purity of mind is necessary for the attainment of truth.<sup>132</sup> A person who tells lie can never become pure.<sup>133</sup>

### **God is all giver:**

God is a giver of everything. God bestows his gifts on him He pleases. God is all adorable. The giver gives, but the receiver is sometimes tired.<sup>134</sup> All his creation worships him.

The entire sky is the salver, the moon and the sun and the lamps.

The luminous stars are studded in it like jewels.

The winds waft the scent of all the flowers on earth,

The incense is the scent of the sandalwood from malai.

Thus is his worship performed, o thou the destroyer of births.

And the unstuck melody of his word ringeth through the universe.

Millions are thy eyes and yet thou hast no eye.

Millions are thy forms and yet thou hast no form.

Million are thy feet and yet thou hast no feet.

Million are thy noses and yet thou hast no nose.

O wonder of wonders.

Thou art the spirit that prevadeth all

Thou are the light that lighteth all hearts.

All through the Guru's instructions this light is illuminated

O people, that alone is worship which pleaseth my Lord.

Like the honey bee my mind cherishes for the Honey of His lotus feet.

O Lord, quench the thirst of Nanak, the sarang

O Lord, of bliss, so that he mergeth in his Nam<sup>135</sup>

It is clear from the above passage that God is all powerful. Everything is created by Him. He is the master of the universe.

### **God is Just:**

In the eyes of God all are equal. He treats everybody alike. He does justice to all. Man should avoid any kind of injustice. The justice of God is based on truth<sup>136</sup>. So the seeker is required to base his life on truth and justice. God does not discriminate people on the basis of wealth, caste, class, sex and creed.

### **God is Love:**

God never hates any body, God is present every where in the form of Love. Nobody can get God or realize Him without love. So love is an essential requisite for a devotee of the Lord.

### **God is Pure:**

The seeker should remove all impurities. Everybody except the Lord and his accepted devotees is impure.<sup>137</sup> The purity and oneness with God can be achieved by doing good actions and with the grace of God.

### **God is Sweet:**

The seeker should be sweet in words, deeds and actions. The qualities of God are innumerable. He is the bestower of qualities, but there is none who can in turn give any quality to God<sup>138</sup>. The Guru believes that there are two kinds of actions i.e., good and bad. The doer cannot escape from reaping the fruits of his actions. He has to undergo punishment for his bad actions.<sup>139</sup> So man should do good deeds and should avoid bad actions.

### **God is Transcendent and Immanent:**

According to the Guru Nanak God is both transcendent and immanent. Transcendent has been expressed in term of distance as well as authority. He farther and farther and higher than high.

God is transcendental in the sense that it is His will which is responsible for all creation and He is not subject to material limitations. God is immanent at the same time. He resides in everybody as Jiva. He permeates and pervades the whole creation. In fact whole world or creation, visible or invisible is related to Him. God is sitting idle outside and watching it. He sees Supreme Being within the world-process as well as outside it:

God created Himself, and assumed a Name  
Second, besides himself, He created nature  
Seated in Nature He watches  
With delight what He creates.<sup>140</sup>

God is creator of all that exists including the material world and souls. He is both the efficient and material cause of the world. After creating everything, He indwells in everything; He is 'Karta Purakh'. He watches with interest the working of the Law created by Him as transcendental onlooker. He also penetrates all His creation and actively participates in the working of the law as immanent spirit.<sup>141</sup> In this way God is both transcendent as well as immanent.

**God is formless and ineffable:**

God who is absolute, eternal, akal and formless cannot be grasped by human understanding which is strictly limited and any effort to define Him would circumscribe the infinite to bring within narrow bounds the one who is boundless.<sup>142</sup> God is arup-nirankar-the formless one. Nanak utters:

You do not have any form nor any material sign;

You are above all this.<sup>143</sup>

Thus God is beyond all worldly descriptions.

No one has comprehended thy *Hukum* and none can describe it. Where a hundred poet together their singing could not even approach a description of it. No one has grasped its worth: all but repeat what they have heard.<sup>144</sup> So God is beyond human understanding.

**God is described as Nirgun and Sagun:**

God is described as Nirgun or absolute, and Sagun or personal. Before there was any creation God lived absolutely in Himself, but when He thought of making himself manifest in creation, he become related. In the former case, when God was Himself self-created, there was non else; He took counsel and advice with Himself; what He did came to pass. Then there was no heaven, or hell, or the three-regioned world. There was only the formless one himself: Creation was not there. When God become Sagun or manifest, He become what is called the Name, and in order to realize Himself, He made nature where in He has His seat and is diffused everywhere and in all direction in the form of love.<sup>145</sup> So God is both Nirgun and Sagun.

### **Importance of Guru:**

Guru Nanak lays emphasis on the absolute necessity of the Guru. According to Guru Nanak:

The Guru is the ladder, the small ship, the raft by means of which one reaches God. The Guru is lake, the ocean, the boat, the river, the sacred place of pilgrimage. If it pleases Thee I am cleaned by bathing in the lake of truth.<sup>146</sup> Without Guru, in spite of vast knowledge there would be darkness all round. As Guru Nanak said in Japji:

Under the Guru's instruction God's word is heard; under the Guru's instruction its knowledge is acquired; under the Guru's instruction man learns that God is everywhere contained. The Guru is Shiv; the Guru is Vishnu and Brahma; The Guru is Parbati, Lakshmi and Saraswati.<sup>147</sup>

Thus, it is the Guru who removes all the barriers of ignorance and man gets enlightenment with Guru's instruction. As it is said:

There can be no deliverance without the guidance of the Guru.<sup>148</sup>

The spirit of God resides in all the human beings. But in the Guru, the Divine spirit, finds its expression. In others it is not visible on account of their egoism. Egoism is always due to maya which keeps human beings ignorant of the light within their heart. It (Maya) leads one from one sin to another. The Guru must be perfect in all respects if the ideal Guru is imperfect, the society and the individuals who constitute it will not be able to develop their personality. Their development will remain imperfect.<sup>149</sup> In the hymns of Guru Nanak as a whole it has been specifically made clear that the Guru is communicator between God and man and the medium through which the word and the grace of God are made available to all men. It is only Guru who communicates the words of God.

As it is said:

Without the true Guru none hath found God:  
God hath put himself into the true Guru; he hath made  
manifest and proclaimed this.

Salvation is ever obtained by meeting the true Guru who hath  
banished worldly love from within Him.

Best are the meditations of Him who hath fixed his mind  
on the true one: He hath found the giver of life to the world.<sup>150</sup>

The Guru is an intermediary between God and creation. The Guru is created by the Lord Almighty. He is the bridge between God and man. The Guru forms the staircase to lift man to God. The Guru is the ship that carries man across the ocean of life. The Guru is the light of the world; his teachings banish the darkness of the soul. He sheds light all the time.<sup>151</sup>

When a man comes in contact with the impersonal personality of the Guru, in the inner realm of his soul, all of a sudden his inner self bursts forth into a new universe of white blossoms, just as spring is to the trees, so is the advent of the Guru an inspiration to the human race. And it is worthwhile to put up with a thousand winters for the sake of one day of blossoming as in spring. Guru is the highest and most perfect being who brings about this spring to inspiration to human being.<sup>152</sup> In the *Bani* of Guru Nanak he has laid a great stress on the need of Guru because, it is through Guru, man can gain emancipation, through his words. Similarly disciple also keeps the intractable mind on the right path.

To sum up, Guru is an essential pre-requisite for the emancipation from the worldly enmeshments and liberation of the soul and its mergence into God. But man is also instructed to be aware of the fake Gurus who are amassing great wealth by deceiving the spiritually ignorant people like Brahmans of Guru Nanak's times.

The Guru is the mediator and bridge builder. Guru has been described as the enlightener, who has, within his purview, the whole creation. He wants to unite all who are undergoing misery because of the separation from the Lord. The separation has been due to the wrong canalizations of the forces. The mind, instead of realizing its original nature, rushes towards world enjoyment and is thus bound down by lust, anger, greed, attachment and ego. The senses and sense organs lead it towards its doom of transmigration, until and unless the intellect comes to its rescue. Mostly the intellect is also over powered by

the mind and the senses. It is the Guru who purifies our mind and intellect.<sup>153</sup> Guru Nanak says, the mind is like an elephant and body like a forest the Guru controls the elephant with his good of true word.<sup>154</sup> The Guru is one who unites every separated soul with the Lord. A meeting with the true Guru results in killing the ego. Everyone tried hard, but none could realize the Lord without the Guru. The Guru takes us out of illusions and puts us on the right path.<sup>155</sup> So without Guru there is no honour and no emancipation. The Guru is like a river with pure water, which removes all the dirt.

The main functions of the Guru are to give the word to the disciple and impart knowledge to him. The water is contained in the pitcher; there can be no pitcher without water. The mind can be controlled by knowledge and there can be no knowledge without the Guru.<sup>156</sup> Guru stands in Sikh religious thought as much for the human teachers or preceptor as for the Divine<sup>157</sup>. Thus Guru impart knowledge to his disciple and remove all his ignorance by providing him true and perfect knowledge.

### **Nam:**

The Nam is not merely a word or group of letters; it is vital force. The Nam that is usually repeated by the Sikhs is 'Wahe Guru' which literally means the wonderful preceptor. The preceptor in this case is God himself, who is an indescribable wonder and whose creation creates a sense of wonder (Vismad). The Nam (Wahe Guru) thus produces a link between the soul and the over-soul i.e. wonderful preceptor. It is an airship taking us into the wonderful Lord<sup>158</sup>.

The Nam is a seed-Mantra (*Bija Mantra*), which, when sown in the field of body, grows in time, bringing forth the fruit of the union with the Lord. Guru Nanak has given us a primary formula (*Mul-Mantra*) which has been repeated many times in the body of Guru Granth Sahib. The first word (or letter) of sacred formula is Ik-Oam-Kar and the formula itself occurs in the very beginning of Japji.<sup>159</sup>

Nam has been assigned a very important place in Sikhism as.

All beings by the might of the Nam are sustained.

By the might of the Nam are sustained continents and universe.

By the might of the Nam are sustained  
the Simritis, Vedas and Puranas.

By the might of the Nam are sustained the process of listening,  
enlightenment and meditation.

By the might of the Name are Sustained the skies and nether regions.

By the might of the Name are sustained all being.

By the might of the Name are sustained all habitations and a bodies.<sup>160</sup>

Without Nam one has no honour and live his life in shame and is in the tight grip of maya and it is totally robbed by it. Without the Nam of God, birth into this world is fruitless. Without Nam one eats poison, speaks evil, dies without merit and so transmigrates. Without the Nam there is no salvation. As it is said by Guru Nanak in Japji:

By hearing the Nam of God men become sidhs, pirs, surs, and naths;

By hearing the Nam man understandeth the real nature of the earth,  
It's supporting bull, and heaven;

By hearing the Nam man obtaineth knowledge of the continents, the worlds  
and the nether regions.

By hearing the Nam death doth not affect one  
Nanak, the saints are ever happy

By hearing the Nam sorrow and sin are no more.

By hearing the Nam man becometh as Shiv, Brahma and Indar

By Hearing the Nam even the low become highly lauded

By hearing the Nam the way of Jog and secrets of the body are obtained. By hearing the Nam man understand the real nature of the Shastars, the Simrities and the Veds, Nanak the Saints are ever happy.

By hearing the Nam sorrow and sin are no more.

By hearing the Nam truth, contentment, and divine knowledge are obtained.

Hearing the Nam is equal to bathing at the sixty-eight places of pilgrimage.

By hearing the Nam and reading it man obtaineth honour.

By hearing the Nam the mind is composed and fixed on God  
Nanak, the Saints are ever happy, by hearing the Nam sorrow and sin  
are no more.<sup>161</sup>

According to Guru Nanak mere muttering and repeating of Name parrot like is futile. Remembrance to the Guru means keeping in mind the attributes of God, his will and his *Hukum*. To enlighten oneself and to get linked with Nam and realize God ultimately one must have to remove ego so that one might be able to come near God without any hindrance. To cultivate righteousness, virtue and giving up vice are the ways to realize the essence of God.

Nam, in fact, is a realization of unicity between man, creation, God, the coming of God's grace within oneself which obliterates the sense of the other and makes one not only be himself, but be a portion and link of God.<sup>162</sup>

Similarly:

By devotion to the Name comes true honour and credit

By utterance of the holy word  
Is shed the malady of egoism.<sup>163</sup>

Thus by imbibing Nam, man does not fall victim to Haumai which causes many evil. All sins are washed away with holy Nam.

The birth is useless without the name of the Lord. One eats poison, speaks poison and wanders uselessly without the Nam of the Lord. One may study holy books and perform sandhya but without the word of the Guru, there is no release and one perishes without the Nam.<sup>164</sup> If the word or Nam of Guru is repeated with complete devotion and surrender, the Lord meets the devotee and a permanent union is attained. Ethical qualities are necessary for spiritual development, continence, patience, fear of the Lord, love etc. are pre-requisites for the retention of the Nam of the Lord in the human body.<sup>165</sup> Thus it is through Nam that one can unite himself to the Divine spirit.

### **Goal of Human life:**

Some prophet says that goal of human life is achievement of 'Moksha'. According to Vedas Moksha is Swargya loka, Devayana or Brahmaloaka where

soul goes with subtle body or 'linga sarira' to have joyous and blissful life, and according to one view, remaining separate all along, not rejoining the ocean of bliss that is God. In Jaina philosophy Moksa is the state of complete aloofness in a realm of self-exaltation .Then according to Buddha 'Nirvana' the state of complete freedom from desires and sorrows.<sup>166</sup> But Guru Nanak's views are different from these two philosophies. He says:

I crave not the kingdom, nor the 'Moksha'  
but I crave O Lord, love of thy holy feet.<sup>167</sup>

Thus deliverance from the cycle of transmigration and to attain oneness with God through good deeds is the ultimate goal of human life.

As Guru Nanak said in Japji:

God created night, seasons, lunar days and week days  
wind, water, fire and nether regions.

In the midst of these He established the earth as a temple.

In it He placed living being are of different habits and kinds. Their names are various and endless, and they are judged according to their acts. True is God, and trace in His court.

There the elect are accepted and honoured.

The merciful one marketh them according to their acts.

The bad and the good shall, there be distinguished.

Nanak, on arrival there, this shall be seen.<sup>168</sup>

Similarly According to Sri Guru Arjan Dev ji:

Out of eighty four lakhs of lives; God has bestowed upon man

The highest status; he who misses this opportunity;

falls in the miserable cycle of births and deaths.<sup>169</sup>

Through how many births the soul has to pass before getting a human life depends upon the working of the law of Karma. God is absolutely just and gives man the pain of births and deaths strictly according to his deeds in human life. It is also possible, in accordance with this law, that man's deeds may not be as good as to unite him with God but also not as bad as to thrust him down to or lower life and he may have before death a yearning for the

supreme Lord.<sup>170</sup> The soul which is unable to achieve union with God due to bad actions falls in the cycle of births and deaths. But when soul rejoins with the Supreme God during the course of life, it is real experience of union with God, a stage of 'Brahm Gyani' or 'Jeevan Mukh'. This is a state of entire bliss, entire light, complete merging of man's own will with supreme will of God.

It is a stage reached not by getting more and more a loop from the world, not by renunciation the world, not by becoming 'Sanyasin', but is a stage reached while living in the everyday world, glowing more and more with light divine, shining out brilliantly in the midst of the darkness of the world there by enlightening the paths of others around. It means acquisition by man of divine qualities by which he sheds his light on others, remaining himself immune from the touch of worldly darkness.<sup>171</sup>

The goal of life is to become a Gurmukh/Sachiara, This can be possible only through noble deeds and service of mankind not through asceticism or Monasticism. Gurmukh should follow the doctrine of kirt karo, Naam Japo and Vand Chhako. Gurmukh should be prepared to fight injustice, inequality and tyranny. Thus man can attain Jivanmukti which is the ultimate goal of Human life while living in the everyday world by keeping God in his mind.

### **How to achieve the Goal:**

At the time of Guru Nanak there were numbers of Yogis, Sanyasis, Pandits etc. were doing several practices to realize the highest state like:

The Siddhas and Pirs serve adepts in Yoga, to achieve miraculous powers but the True Guru instructed me not to forget the name of one God. Why do the Yogis, the pleasure-seeker, the kapriyas roam from place to place? Why do they not reflect on Guru's word, the essence of all essences? The Pandits, the Pandhas, the astrologers, read the Purans daily, but they fail to discover the substance within; they know not the Lord hid in

their hearts. Some ascetics practice austerities in the Jungles, others live for ever on the banks of holy rivers. Influenced by Tamas, if they do not know their selves why have they become udasis? Some exert to control their sex instinct and are called celibates. But without the Guru's word, they will not get rid of doubt, and will come and go again and again.

ascetic.<sup>172</sup>

Guru Nanak has not given any importance to external symbols. Adoption of the exterior symbols of the particular religion is of no avail like:

If a Hindu comes to join the Hindu fold, they put a cotton thread around his neck with chanting of mantras. But if after the investiture, he performs evil deeds. All his washings and bathings would stand him in no stead. Musalman praises his own creed and says without believing in the great prophet, none would be given a place (of honour);

But very few tread the path shown by him. None will enter paradise without good deeds. In the house of Yogis they point out the way and for that purpose, they put rings in his ears. With rings in ears, he roams about the world, but the creator Lord is presents everywhere.<sup>173</sup>

Without renouncing world and by developing virtuous qualities man can attain oneness with God. Guru Nanak taught that unity with the inner light can be realized while leading a householder's life and performing the worldly chores. Contentment, service and recitation and singing of Gurbani reshape the inner faculties of man.

**Correct direction to achieve goal of life:**

1. To achieve his goal man has to understand the will of God which is written within himself.
2. When God's will is understood a right, man's own will or 'Haumain' is asserted no more.
3. By his will God has created a law of His universe, Himself remaining above the current thereof.
4. To win his love man has to meditate on His name keeping in mind his great qualities and attributes.
5. Man needs assistance of true Guru to understand true form and will of Him who is Lord of all beings of the entire universe.<sup>174</sup>

When one practices the way of living righteously and honorably one becomes *sachiara*. *Sachiara* gets honour in the people's as well as God's court which is the final Goal of human life.

Guru Nanak delivered the message of love and faith to humanity. He proclaimed love of God as the base of religion. He emphasized submission to God's will as a final means of realization. He advised people to worship Him and Him alone. He also forbade image making and idolatry worship. His religion was a matter of heart and not of outward formality. He gave priority to moral conduct over everything else. Equality, justice and selfless service are the foremost essentials for him and are the priceless value of his imparted religion.<sup>175</sup>

Religion in its true meaning integrate the people in the bonds of harmony, love and respect for one another but when religion declines, it has always become an aggregate of superstitions, rituals and ceremonies. Guru Nanak therefore advised the people to shed the useless accretions to their religions and to understand their true message. He denounced all those people who perform unnecessary and useless religious practices. He admonished the Hindus as also the Muslims who were engrossed in mud-slinging on each other's religions. He ridiculed and exposed the hypocrisy of the priestly class of both main religious groups of the country. Hindus and Muslims- underlined

the need of that social order where in truly religious beings should enjoy the respect of the people as whole. In a way the Guru gave a new social philosophy of evolving a multi-national and pluralistic society.<sup>176</sup>

The true religion is thus to live a life of fullness in all its aspects. Guru Nanak teaches mankind how to live worthily in the world making the best use of life, not how to escape from the world and avoid evil but how to meet and overcome evil and live victorious life and in high spirits.<sup>177</sup> Similarly in the words of Gurbachan Singh Talib, Guru Nanak alone in India expressed fully the ideal of dharama. He gave people the creative idea that dharama postulates social and moral duties, in contradistinction to the injunctions of brahmin, sanyasi, yogi and bairagi, who had given to the people the partial and false gospel of blind and inconsequential self-mortification and the narrow ritualizing of the religious and moral life. He gave voice to the deep agony and suffering of the people and instructed them in the meaning of dharama a pure and righteous conduct in the individual sphere and the wider context of human relationship. It was dharama which gave them this urge towards spiritual and social idealism. It was the essence of dharama preached by Guru Nanak which brought to the Hindu the vision and courage to face up to the tyranny which had suffered for so many generations, as something in the way of divine, dispensation, helplessly.<sup>178</sup>

It can be concluded that Guru Nanak teaches man to live victorious life. He has made tremendous effort to raise the character of man himself and to enhance his capability and competency. Guru Nanak observed that man may possess all inner qualities which enable him to realize and unite ultimately with God. Guru Nanak raised dignity of man and assigned to him the job of thinking over and deciding all such matters by exercising his own wisdom. The Guru was born to lead mankind from darkness to light. When Guru Nanak born the darkness of evil was dispelled and the sunshine of truth and justice prevailed. He lead men to the path of goodness, virtue and kindled the flame of love and goodwill in the hearts of millions of country men by keying the foundation of brotherhood and mutual affection. Similarly Guru Nanak

condemned the ruler of his times who took away religious freedom of the people. Following the teachings of Guru Nanak, Guru Arjan Dev, Guru Teg Bahadur, Guru Gobind Singh and other several Sikhs sacrificed themselves cheerfully for the sake of dharam and for freedom of conscience.

Guru Nanak preached equality of all religions and of mankind. Guru raised a clear and powerful voice that God is one and all pervading and can be attained by 'Jap' or meditation of his Nam. According to Guru Nanak Dharma is a state of conscience, compassion, dedication, contentment, truthfulness and obedience.

Guru Nanak rejected all the extreme ways of practices and some of them totally. He did not hold that such practices are essential for the true dharm. Guru Nanak strictly rejected the practices of yoga, sacrificing of body, fasting, bathing in holy places, routine rituals, and ceremonies and modified the earning by giving importance to *Sahj* in life. He advocated renunciation of desires and denounced the hypocritical reading of scriptures. He inspired the people to live in accordance with their religious teachings instead of repetition of mantras. He recommended Nam-bhakti with concentration on supreme reality, who is one transcendent, immanent, creator, sustainer destroyer, fearless, all pervading, without enmity, timeless, unborn, self existent, consciousness and graceful.

The practice of the name fills man with the virtues of divinity and the devotee attains the status of *sachiar*. Dharma of Guru Nanak is not a matter of formal concepts, beliefs, worship and practices but a state of purity and strength of mind. He made a powerful attack on all that must be rejected, in order that the true essence of truth and spirituality should save and made operative in the practice of life.

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- <sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, p.136.
- <sup>128</sup> Guru Granth, p.1.
- <sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, p.24.
- <sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, p.15.
- <sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, p.55.
- <sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, p.472.
- <sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, p.56.
- <sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2.
- <sup>135</sup> Surinder Singh Johar, *op.cit.*, pp.6-7.
- <sup>136</sup> Guru Granth, p.463.
- <sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1012.
- <sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2.
- <sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, p.472.
- <sup>140</sup> Surjeet Singh Gandhi, History of Sikh Gurus Retold, pp.128-129.
- <sup>141</sup> Isher Singh, *op.cit.*, p.193.
- <sup>142</sup> Surjit Singh Gandhi, *op.cit.*, p.133.
- <sup>143</sup> Guru Granth, p.663.
- <sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, p.53.
- <sup>145</sup> Surinder Singh Johar, *op.cit.*, pp.3-4.
- <sup>146</sup> Guru Granth, p.17.
- <sup>147</sup> Maculiffee, *op.cit.*, p.198.
- <sup>148</sup> Guru Granth, p.1028.
- <sup>149</sup> Surinder Singh Johar, *op.cit.*, p.13.
- <sup>150</sup> Maculiffe, *op.cit.*, p.226.

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- <sup>151</sup> Surinder Singh Johar, *op.cit.*, p.15.  
<sup>152</sup> Ranbir Singh, Glimpses of the Divine Master, p.48.  
<sup>153</sup> Surinder Singh Kohli, *op.cit.*, pp.63-64.  
<sup>154</sup> Guru Granth, p.221.  
<sup>155</sup> *Ibid*, p.72.  
<sup>156</sup> *Ibid*, p.464.  
<sup>157</sup> Gurbachan Singh Talib, *op.cit.*, p.141.  
<sup>158</sup> Surinder Singh Kohli, *op.cit.*, p.68.  
<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, p.69.  
<sup>160</sup> Guru Granth, p.284.  
<sup>161</sup> M.A. Macauliffe, *op.cit.*, pp.200-201.  
<sup>162</sup> Surjeet Singh Gandhi, *op.cit.*, p.148.  
<sup>163</sup> Guru Granth, p.62.  
<sup>164</sup> Surinder Singh Kohli, *op.cit.*, p.66.  
<sup>165</sup> Guru Granth, p.8.  
<sup>166</sup> Isher Singh, *op.cit.*, p.168.  
<sup>167</sup> Guru Granth, p.534.  
<sup>168</sup> Maculiffe, *op.cit.*, p.215.  
<sup>169</sup> Guru Granth, p.1075.  
<sup>170</sup> Isher Singh, *op.cit.*, p.169.  
<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, p.174.  
<sup>172</sup> Taran Singh, *op.cit.*, pp.81-82.  
<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, p.83.  
<sup>174</sup> Isher Singh, *op.cit.*, pp.181-182.  
<sup>175</sup> Ajit Singh, Rajinder Singh, *op.cit.*, p.12.  
<sup>176</sup> Surjit Singh Gandhi, *op.cit.*, p.191.  
<sup>177</sup> Ajit Singh, Rajinder Singh, *op.cit.*, p.173.  
<sup>178</sup> Gurbachan Singh Talib, *op.cit.*, p.XVII.

## **CHAPTER-7**

### **GURU NANAK'S IDEA OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND ITS RELEVANCE TO THE MODERN MOVEMENTS OF HUMAN RIGHTS**

Sikhism is the youngest and most scientific religion of the world. The history of Sikhism is in fact the story of struggle for Human Rights. One major Human Rights movement started with the birth of Guru Nanak. During the time of Sikh Gurus, Human Rights were dangerously crushed by despotic Muslim rulers. Muslim foreigner's attacks were disturbing the whole pattern of society. The people were being demoralized and forced to embrace Islam. Guru Nanak, first Sikh Guru fought for the preservation of Human Rights and raised his voice against social injustice, inequality, religious repression, exploitation of women and degradation of human values. The religious, political and social conditions prevailing in his times were an assault on Human Rights. People were become selfish, narrow minded, proud and cynical. Humanity was being used ever as a mean and never as an end. Inequality, injustice, degradation, hatred, dishonesty, deception and exploitation were vices which eroded the basis of society. In such a horrible, repressive and violent circumstance one cannot dream of existence of Human Rights. Guru Nanak wanted to show the people the path of salvation and awaken them against political, economic and social tyranny.

Guru Nanak strongly advocated Human Rights for human beings. In the Guru Nanak's vision, all human beings have Human Rights simply due to the very fact of their being human. The state does not grant these rights, but it ensures the non-violation of these rights either by the ruler or from any other quarter. It was not easy task to bring about a change in the mindset of a society as a whole that had forgotten the meaning of self respect, honour and dignity. But Guru Nanak followed a more positive approach by suggesting

how a benevolent ruler should perform his duties and what should be the obligations of ruling elite.

**Right to Resist Oppression** : In Guru Nanak *Bani* subjects have been made conscious of their rights to raise their voice against the oppression of the ruler, who fails to serve the people. They are supposed not to bear oppression under any circumstance. Guru Nanak condemned the brutalities of the rulers of his time. He stood against the rulers without any fear and hesitation. He spoke against the injustice being done by the rulers of his time.

In the Guru Granth Sahib we have several hymns of Guru Nanak, which showed the sorrowful and deplorable pictures of those times, where the administrative officials exploit their citizens and violate the Human Rights like:

In Kali-Yuga have mankind turned dog-like, carrion its food  
false hood it barks out gone is righteous thinking those that in  
life had no faith, in death too foul is their repute.<sup>1</sup>

In the poetry of Guru Nanak he denounced with extreme passion the cruelty, the bigotry and the extortionist ways of the kings and their courtiers.

Nanak calls kings 'Tigers' and their courtiers 'Running dogs' who wake people out of their beds. The king's servants tear their nails into the bodies of the subjects and suck their blood.

In his writings recorded in Guru Granth Sahib, he condemned in very harsh words the corrupt rulers and dishonest people, who violate the right of the other people. They have been called dogs, butchers, mischief monger, hypocrite and ungrateful. Guru Nanak respected the basic Human Rights of the people. He mentioned:

No man shall coerce another, no man shall exploit another. Everyone, each individual, has an inalienable birth right to seek and pursue happiness and self fulfillment. Love and persuasion is the only law of social coherence and harmony.<sup>2</sup> Corruption according to the Guru Nanak is the root cause for the violation of Human Rights. Guru Nanak advised the people to live an honest life and earn living by honest means.

He enjoined his followers to stand up for their rights as well as for the rights of others. He also warned them the dangerous effects of corruption. He passionately argued that principles as laid down in his new creed should be defended at all costs, even at the cost of one's life, which are in fact, the basic Human Rights. His clarion call the defence of basic Human Rights is crystal clear when he says<sup>3</sup>

If you desire to join me in this game of love, in defending the principles as I have down in my new creed, then ever remain ready even to sacrifice your life for that causes.<sup>4</sup>

Guru Nanak emphasized a democratic idea when he enjoined upon the monarch to rule with the help of the representatives of his subjects in the discharge of his administrative functions and acquit himself in all fairness with justice, kindness and sympathy.<sup>5</sup> The ruler must do his duty, as a mandate from God:

With devoted heart render service,  
make faith in the holy thy vocation,  
restrain thy mind running evil wards.<sup>6</sup>

Guru Nanak accepted the monarchical form of Government. He condemned the various officers but not the offices themselves. Guru Nanak's condemnation of oppression, inefficiency and corruption was tantamount to revolt against the authority. According to Guru Nanak, if the ruler's orders were against justice and equity, it was not obligatory on the people to honour them.<sup>7</sup> Guru Nanak came into contact and conflict with the political order of his times. He suffered at the hands of unjust and cruel kings. This led him to

give deep thought to political system that the people would need for a better social, economic life and moral regeneration and fight for it. All the Sikh Gurus fought against the political tyranny of the Mughals by organizing the Sikhs into a well knit community.

Guru Nanak did not spare the subjects also. He blamed the subjects even more. In the opinion of Guru Nanak it was the fault of the people to obey the orders of the tyrannical rulers without discriminating between the right and the wrong. Guru Nanak did not accept the violation of Human Rights by the rulers, if the ruler violated any human rights of human beings, it is duty of the people to resist him and if the political system is not according to need of the situation, it must be changed and replaced by new one. So the people must be aware of their rights and prepare for the proper use of it whenever the need arises. There are many examples of Sikh Gurus like fifth Guru Arjan Dev ji, ninth Guru Tegh Bhadur ji, tenth Guru Gobind Singh ji who stood against unjust rule and devoted their life in fighting against the oppression. Even the use of arms is asked for the resistance against tyranny and injustice. Guru Nanak revolted against exploiters and advised to serve the cause of the weak and helpless, it is justice.

Similar views regarding the rulers have been expressed by the western political thinkers. According to Saint Thomas Aquinas, “if he becomes tyrant and pursues his personal interests, it becomes the duty of the subjects to resist. It is for this reason that the resistance of tyranny is not only a right but a duty”.<sup>8</sup> Like Saint Thomas Aquinas, T.H. Green also expressed similar views. According to him, “When the laws of the state are tyrannical and the state fails to promote the common good, resistance under these circumstances is not merely a right but it becomes a duty”.<sup>9</sup> Thus we can say that it is the duty of the people to resist against tyranny.

John Locke was a great defender of the Glorious Revolution (in England) of 1688. He was firmly of the opinion that the people must resist oppression.

## **Right to work and fulfillment of essential needs**

In ancient India, there were four values of life like: Dharam, Artha, Kama and Moksh. In the sphere of Artha came this right of the people to have employment and the things of the basic needs. Guru Nanak stresses the people's right to work when he says that the creator of the universe has himself assigned some work to every being. It implies that God has endowed everyone with the ability of doing some kind of work.<sup>10</sup> To quote Guru Nanak:

Himself the entire world has He created.

He who created it to various tasks has set it.<sup>11</sup>

Thus everyone should engage in some productive work to earn his livelihood. God Himself has assigned certain occupation to everyone in this Universe. According to Guru Nanak, if some one is unable to do any work or has not got any employment, it is duty of others to look after him. For this purpose, the system of 'daswand' was started. Guru Nanak gave an idea of earning one's livelihood through rightful means and to give some part of it as donation or charity.

Guru Nanak emphasized on basic three golden principles: Kirat Karna, Nam Japana, Wand Chhakna, means man should earn his livelihood by honest creative labour, he should keep in mind the name of God and he should share the fruits of his labour with his fellow beings. He instructed his followers to work, earn, spend and give out of their earnings to the needy. This leads a person to the ideal path of life. As it is said by Guru Nanak:

They alone have known the right way, who earns their livelihood through hard work, and share their earnings with those in needs.<sup>12</sup>

The Doctrine of 'Donation' will provide the individual with an opportunity to experience the sublime feeling of contentment while contributing his/her part of income for the collective welfare and upliftment of the society as a whole i.e. sharing his/her earning with others voluntarily. The

ethical principle of contentment plays a vital role in human life. It arouses in one's mind the sense of concern and care for his fellow beings and inspires him to serve human kind whole heartedly.

Guru Nanak says that an individual should set a-part, a portion of his earnings for the well being of the needy. A good human being according to Guru Nanak is one, who lives truthfully, honestly, fights injustice and compassion for the whole humanity and it is the duty of the ruler and other members of the society to see that none should remain naked and hungry. The Guru says that an individual should set apart a portion of his earnings for the well being of the needy.

Similarly 'Naam Daan Ishanan' is another common expression or a household phrase among followers of Guru Nanak. While Nam refers to constant remembrance of God, Daan means charity or altruistic deeds, and Ishnan signifies purity of body and mind through moral conduct.

It also brings forth the emphasis laid by Guru Nanak on the individual's right to work as one will engage in work only if one has right to work. It also implies that one has the right to fulfill one's essential needs. According to Guru Nanak:

The Lord by His might is the endless creator,  
The created being nothing urge against Him.  
To creating beings sustenance He provides,  
And his ordinance over all makes operative.  
Operating His ordinance is He all pervasive.<sup>13</sup>

It was centuries after Guru Nanak that a western political thinker, Harold J.Laski, observed that, "every citizen has right to work, that does not mean that he has a right to any particular kind of work. The right to work merely means the right to be occupied in producing a share of those goods and

commodities which are useful for society. If a citizen is not given right to work he is virtually denied the right to express his personality”.<sup>14</sup>

It was Guru Nanak who initiated the advocacy for every human being's right to work and fulfill his essential needs. Later on the right to work and right to basic need were also added in Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 under articles 23 and 25, according to which everyone has the right to work and free choice of the employment and everyone has the right to fulfill the basic needs of life like food, clothing, housing, medical care and other social services etc. Similarly, the Indian Constitution also granted this right to practice any profession to the people of India.

### **Right to freedom**

At the time of Guru Nanak, there was no interaction of common people with themselves on religious ground. Only the Brahmins planned religious activities and the rest was mute spectators of the ritual. Even the Mantras which were recited were beyond understanding of masses. Guru Nanak demolished all barriers in the way of progress of man, whether these were social, political or religious. Guru Nanak forcefully advocated certain rights relating to the freedom which are very essential for the development of an individual. These freedoms are describes as under:

#### **a. Freedom of Religion**

Many devout Sikhs died for the cause of righteousness and for the protection and preservation of freedom to worship freely, to uphold the Sikh faith and for securing basic Human Rights like justice, liberty, equality and freedom for all the people. Under right to freedom Guru Nanak gave special stress on freedom of religion.

Freedom of religion means every individual is entitled to freedom of conscience and the right to freely profess practice and propagate any religion or faith of his own choice. Any section of the people has the right to establish

and maintain institutions for religious and charitable purposes, to manage its own affairs in matters of religion. No person can be compelled to pay tax for promotion of any particular religion. With the advent of Islam in India, the religious freedom of the Hindus was lost. Several saints and religious reformers came forward throughout India in order to safeguard the Hindu society. For the sake of the right of freedom of religion, ninth Guru, Guru Teg Bahadar, laid down his life in 1675, in Delhi. Some Brahmins from Kashmir approached him to save them from forcible conversion to Islam by the then rulers. The Guru himself was not a believer of the faith of those Brahmins but he stood for the right to freedom of practicing any religion and laid down his life for the cause.<sup>15</sup> According to Guru Nanak, the main objective of man is to attain oneness with God, for the achievement of this objective, the right of freedom of religion is very important. The choice should be of the man himself. Guru Nanak's advocacy for this right of human beings is quite evident from his condemnation of the rulers of his times who deprived the people, especially the Hindus, of this right to practice their religion according to their own choice.

To quote him:

This is the age of the Muslim divines.  
temples and deities of Hindus are  
taxed such is the current practice.<sup>16</sup>

Similarly like Guru Nanak many western political thinkers also advocated the right to freedom of religion. But this was not true in the case of Plato, a great supporter of justice in his ideal state. He forbids the private religious exercises. But contradictory to Plato, Thomas Hobbes said, sovereign does not have any control over the personal life, the faith and belief and inner feeling of the individual.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, according to him the individual has complete liberty in the sphere of intellect and conscience, private faith and belief.

The right to freedom of religion advocated by Guru Nanak much earlier was included by the United-Nations Organization in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948, according to which every one has right to freedom to choose religion of his own choice without interference of anyone. The Indian Constitution has also granted this right to the people of India.

### **b. Freedom of Culture**

Guru Nanak also addressed the freedom of culture which implies that any section of the people have a distinct language, script or culture of its own and they have right to conserve it without interference of anyone. It is not the right of the ruler or officials to impose their own language or culture on the people of the state. Man will be free to follow the culture of his choice and to speak the language in the sphere of culture and language. The Guru advocated the freedom of culture. He was of the opinion that man should be free to follow the culture and language of his own choice. Guru Nanak forcefully condemned the ruler of his time for imposing their culture and language on the public. With the advent of Muslim rulers, the Hindus started acquiring the Islamic way of living. Guru Nanak criticized the Hindus for shedding their own culture and language under the pressure of the ruling class and adopting the culture and language of the ruling class, to please them. To quote Guru Nanak:

In your home the Hindu service you perform,  
but outside read books of Muslims  
and adopt their ways.<sup>18</sup>

Similarly:

Now is the age of the pitcher of Muhammadan ablution,  
The Muhammadan call to prayer, Namaz and its prayer-Mat;  
The Lord now is figured as wearing blue.

In each home is each one addressed by the Muhammadan honorific of  
Main.<sup>19</sup>

Now it is clear from the above verses that Guru Nanak did not like the imposition of elite culture on the subjects and equally the acceptance of alien culture or language under pressure. In Asa di Var he said:

In Kali-Yuga appeared Atharva-Veda, when God was given the name Allah. In this age people wear blue and is established the rule of Turks and Pathans.<sup>20</sup>

So we can say that Guru Nanak was in favour of freedom of culture. Later on Universal Declaration of Human Rights also granted this right according to which cultural right is very much necessary for the free development of individual's personality. Same right is also granted by the Constitution of India for all the citizens of India.

### **c. Freedom of Assembly**

For freedom of assembly Guru Nanak said that people should have freedom to assemble, hold meetings and to discuss their problems or complaints and to find out their solutions also. For this purpose the people should have right to hold the public meeting without any interference from quarters of the authority in the state. So every individual must be guaranteed freedom of association and public meetings. Concept of 'Sangat' was advocated by Guru Nanak according to which people should have freedom to hold assembly. The organization of the Sangat system by the Sikh Gurus was a revolutionary step. It practically helped in leveling down distinctions of caste, creed and colour in the society removing the barriers of tribes and station. It worked for equality and brotherhood of mankind and elevated the spiritual life of the people.<sup>21</sup>

As it is said by Guru Nanak:

How is Sat Sangat, the society of the holy known  
the name of the one God is mentioned there.<sup>22</sup>

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights also declared this right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association. This right is also added in the Constitution of India for the citizens of India.

#### **d. Freedom of Speech**

Freedom of speech implies that everybody has freedom of speech or expression without fear of any sort from the authorities. In modern times, it also includes the freedom of the press and electronic media. Guru Nanak encourages man to listen to something and to say something during the span of his life. As it is said by Guru Nanak:

As long as we are in this world  
Nanak, we should hear some what  
and speak somewhat of the Lord.<sup>23</sup>

It is clear from the above passage that Guru Nanak was in favor of freedom of speech of the people.

This freedom first advocated by Guru Nanak has been granted in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Constitution of India.

#### **e. Freedom of choice of occupation**

With freedom of speech he also stressed upon freedom of choice of occupation which means that every individual is free to choose any occupation of his choice irrespective of his/her caste, colour, creed, sex or descent. According to Guru Nanak nobody is to be restrained from engaging in any occupation because of his caste. Beside, no occupation determines one's caste, rather it is one's deeds that determine his caste.

Creating the beings, He Himself provides them Sustenance.<sup>24</sup>

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights has granted this right to the people under article 25. This right has also been given to the people of India in the Constitution of India.

### **Right of equality**

The most important right which was advocated by Guru Nanak was right of equality which implies equality of all individuals in the state. No discrimination made against anybody on account of his/her religion, caste, colour, creed, race, sex or descent etc. In India, since the Vedic period the Hindu society has been divided into four Varnas like Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra, but at that time, people were free to change their Varna. Everyone had the right to adopt the dharma of a particular Varna at his will. After some time, the Varna came to be determined from the birth of an individual, and gradually it took the form of a religious principle. All the four Varnas were classified into four castes. The duty of the Brahmins was to study and to teach the Vedas to perform and officiate at the performance of Yajnas (Sacrifices). The Kshatriyas were to study the Vedas, learn the art of fighting and defend the country. The Vaishyas could read the Vedas and their duty was to carry on trade and industry etc. The Shudras were required to serve all the other Varnas without a question. They were treated just like the slave.

Upanisads regard man's present caste as pre-determined. It holds that man's karmas determine his destiny. According to Upanisads Karma are responsible for man's caste. Caste is a fruit of man's previous actions, done by him in previous birth. Several bhaktas like Kabir, Ravidas from time to time makes a scathing attack on the caste system. Bhagat Kabir criticized those Brahmins who assume that Moksha can be attained by them alone. According to Bhagat Kabir:

In the womb dwelling, the mortal has no lineage and caste.

From the seed of the Lord, all have sprung.

Say, O Pandit, since when has thou been a Brahmin?

Waste not thy life by repeatedly calling thyself Brahmin.

If thou art a Brahmin, born of Brahmin mother,  
Then why hast thou not come by some other way?  
How art thou a Brahmin and how am I a low caste?  
How am I of blood and how thou art of milk?  
Say Kabir, only he who contemplates over the Lord is said to be  
Brahmin among us.<sup>25</sup>

So, Kabir don't recognize caste system and demolish all the barriers of colour, caste and creed. Similarly, Nanak taught that all men are equal. Before God, that there is no high, no low, no dark, no fair, no privileged, no outcaste, all are equal.

Guru Nanak also raised his voice against such division of Varna and gave right of equality to all men, without discrimination of caste, creed, sex or nationality. He established the equality by breaking up the caste system, achieved liberty from the age-old customs and traditions and brought about fraternity by striking at the root of the sense of the high and low. Guru Nanak rejected the caste system. According to him all human beings are equal. It is the deed of man that makes him high or low, good or bad. By birth everybody is free to do any job of his/her choice provided that he/she has the ability and competence to do it. To quote Guru Nanak:

Caste and dynastic pride are condemnable nations;

The one Master shelters all existence.

Anyone arrogating superiority to himself shall be disillusioned,

Saith Nanak: Superiority shall be determined by God.<sup>26</sup>

Guru Nanak believes in equality of the whole humanity and discards any root of division, distinction and discrimination created by Varnadharm. Guru says in Japuji:

Nanak, before the Lord there is no lower or high degree.<sup>27</sup>

Guru advocates the equality of all human beings, irrespective of birth and gender. It rejects all distinction of caste and colour. Guru Nanak rejects

casteism totally and vehemently. Guru Nanak further sets an example when he calls himself the lowest of the low as:

He is the lowest among the lowly,  
he is their companion and had nothing  
to do with the so called rich elders.<sup>28</sup>

So, the pride of caste is of no avail as it is said by Guru Nanak:

Know people by the light illumining them  
and do not ask for their caste and names  
because hereafter, caste is not considered  
and no one is differentiated by his caste<sup>29</sup>.

Similarly:

God does not mind our caste and birth, so let us learn the way of truthful living. For it is one's deeds that proclaims one's caste and respect.<sup>30</sup>

Guru Nanak preached egalitarianism or classless society by obliterating the class distinctions. As Guru Nanak said:

There is one common spiritual message for all Khshriya, Brahmins, Sudra and Vaishas<sup>31</sup>.

Guru Nanak abolished all the barriers of caste system by introducing the institution of Langar. Guru Angad took special step to popularize the institution of Guru Ka Langar (the community kitchen), where people of all castes and creeds, Sikhs and non-Sikhs are made to sit in one row (signifying equality) and partake a common food. Differences of social status and restrictions of caste were ignored in the kitchen service. It was initiated by Guru Nanak and extended by third Guru, Guru Amar Das Ji (1479-1574). The rules of Langar require that all should sit together at one place and partake of the same food without any distinction of high or the low. This practice has

been carried on and fortified by the rest of the Gurus and is an integral part of Sikhism now. Such an uplifting of lower caste was a novel experiment upon the Indian masses. Guru Nanak says that all men are equal because they all are of one seed, as from the clay we can make pots of different shapes but the clay remains same, so the body of man which is made from five elements, how can one amongst them be higher and another low.

Indian religious thinkers divided men in four Varnas and prescribed different dharmas for them but Guru Nanak does not divide men on the basis of creed, colour, race sex and country. For him, men are of two kind, Gurmukh (God oriented) and Manmukh (Self-oriented). Gurmukh is one who turned his face towards God and work for the welfare of the whole mankind. Manmukh is one who practices deceit, tyranny, falsehood and selfishness to gain worldly end. Guru Nanak intends to emphasize that man must transform himself from 'Manmukh' to 'Gurmukh' from 'particularity' to 'universality'. Man must comprehend unity in diversity.

Karl Mark born in 1818, about three and half centuries after Guru Nanak, became popular because of his ideology of classless society. But Guru Nanak had already formulated this ideology in 15<sup>th</sup> century. Guru Nanak talked about matter and spirit both. Guru Nanak had the betterment of masses in mind both materially and spiritually, whereas Karl Marx based his ideology only on the idea of matter.

Guru Nanak with universal approach is aiming at forging common bonds in the human race without discrimination of caste, creed, sex or nationality. The Guru Nanak repeatedly emphasizes contemplation and service to humanity, equality of mankind, love and respect for all human beings, and peace and harmony. Right to equality was firstly advocated by Guru Nanak, later on this right was granted by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights under article 2 according to which everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without the distinction of any kind, such

as race, colour, sex, language. The Constitution of India has also introduced the right of equality.

**Right to Family:**

In the ashram-system, there were four stages of life like:

- |              |   |                                 |
|--------------|---|---------------------------------|
| Brahmcharya  | – | The learner's stage             |
| Grihastha    | - | The house holder                |
| Vaanaprastha | - | The abandoner of worldly things |
| Sanyas       | - | The anchorite                   |

Guru Nanak has given the highest place to the Grihastha Ashram. He felt that the duties of last two ashrams can also be performed during this stage. A householder man or woman while performing the domestic duties can also achieve emancipation. His life ought to remain unsoiled like a lotus in the mud. To quote Guru Nanak:

As the lotus thrusts up wards, and does not drown in the water  
As the duck swims and does not become wet while swimming  
So can we, safely and unaffectedly, cross the ocean of the world  
By attuning our minds to the word of Guru and repeating the holy  
name of God.<sup>32</sup>

Under right to family, Guru Nanak made it clear that salvation can be obtained while enjoying all the pleasures of life and paying duties towards one's family. Guru Nanak appreciated the married life. All the Sikh Gurus were married man, except the eighth Sikh Guru, who died very young.

Guru Nanak does not prescribe renunciation of world for spiritual pursuits. He encourages man to live an active and purposeful life. Service to the mankind and truthful living are essential to win God's grace and to attain salvation. He teaches not to run away from the responsibilities but to overcome them. Most of the religions lay undue emphasis on the otherworldliness and exhort them to abandon the working world to become ascetics but Guru Nanak advocates spiritual emancipation right in this world, while carrying on the industrious activities. As Guru Nanak said:

Meeting a perfect master, under his perfect guidance a seeker is able to attain salvation, while living normal way of life like smiling, playing and enjoying of wear and food.<sup>33</sup>

In this way we can say, Guru Nanak has introduced the path of Jogi and Bhogi for seekers of truth. The practice of the Sikh way of life has been laid out by the Gurus in simple and practical manner, emphasizing hard work, honest living, love of fellow humans and through them service of the Almighty.

The Ashram Dharma's theory of dividing man's life into four stages was rejected by Guru and its place a healthy psychological re-adjustment with man's environment within the house hold life was preached and emphasized by the Guru Nanak. An ideal House holder in the eye of Guru is:

The true householder must his faculties restrain  
should beg of God to grant him prayer,  
austerities and self discipline.<sup>34</sup>

Thus, who disciplines his passions and begs from God alms of meditation, hard work and self-control is an ideal house holder. Guru Nanak advocates the activism of householder, whose prime duty is to serve one's family and to provide needs to the dependents and for the well being of the needy relations, consistent with one's capacity and economic means. To fulfill this responsibility one has to work or engage oneself in some trade or profession. In order to follow this spiritually, it is not necessary to renounce the family. As it is believed that God resides in all human beings. So God resides in family members too. By running away from the family means running away from God.

Like Guru Nanak, Universal Declaration of Human Rights recommended this right of family under article 16. Similarly the Constitution of India has also added this right in its Constitution for the people of India.

### **Right to Education**

Education is essential for bringing about awareness among the human beings and everybody has the right to get education. In ancient India, the right to get education was given only to upper three classes, i.e Brahmins, Kshatriya, Vaishya. The Sudras who were placed at the lowest caste could not get education. Of the three classes only the Brahmins had the right to teach, Kshatriya and Vaishya could get education, but could not impart it. But according to Guru Nanak all people have right to get education. Guru Nanak laid great stress on the need of education amongst the subjects of his time. Guru Nanak believed that it was because of lack of education that people tolerated the oppressive ways of their rulers. Guru Nanak says in Asa di Var:

The subjects, benefit of understanding,  
are carcasses full of straw.<sup>35</sup>

The Guru was of the view that had the people got proper education they won't have followed their corrupt masters. According to Guru Nanak all people have right to get education without any discrimination on the basis of caste, colour, creed and sex. Guru Nanak was of the opinion that one should get enough education so as to develop the faculty of mind. Guru Nanak emphasized the need of education among the people so that they become conscious and aware of their rights and duties.<sup>36</sup>

Guru Nanak stressed the inculcation of humanistic values in man through his proper education. How beautifully he sums up the social role of education like:

Education, if truly contemplated, makes a man altruistic.<sup>37</sup>

According to Guru Nanak only that education is meaningful and worth while which dispels ignorance and leads enlightenment. He said:

Just as darkness disappears when a lamp is lit so is evil removed by reflecting on scriptures (knowledge) just as moon elopes at sunrise so does ignorance vanish with enlightenment (wisdom).<sup>38</sup>

So, Guru Nanak stressed the cultivation of intellect, reason and wisdom. According to him:

Through reading, understanding and reflection  
one comes to know that truth lies within.<sup>39</sup>

So we can say that true knowledge leads to liberation (mukti), bliss (anand) and equipoise (sehaj).

Guru Nanak also emphasized the attainment of Divine knowledge. It is with such knowledge that deliverance is attained. It is with the broom of Divine knowledge that filth of timidity can be removed. From the *Bani* of Guru Nanak we come to know the content of education favoured by him. Guru emphasized that education should be based on right actions, sportsmanship, sense of responsibility, discipline of life and optimism. But it should be God centered. The Guru's teachings are amazingly modern and progressive, morally as well as sociologically. He befriended the downtrodden and championed women's right to respect, dignity and equality.

No doubt, the modern education system is doing a great job and raised the material standard of the people but what is most urgently needed is realization of spiritual potentialities of man. The ultimate objective of learned man should be not only to know the truth but implement that knowledge in practical life.

Like Guru Nanak many western political thinkers emphasized on the need of education. Plato laid great stress on the need of education. According to him "To make the society harmonious and to bring about unity in the state, proper education is essential. Education reforms the wrong ways of living by altering the whole outlook of life."<sup>40</sup>

Thus education is a means of self-development, which develops the qualities of an individual. Aristotle also regards the state mainly as an educational institution. The main function of the ideal state of Aristotle is

ethical. It aims at inculcating moral values in man. That state is the best state that enables everyone to lead a good and happy life. And good and happy life, for Aristotle, is moral life.”<sup>41</sup>

Like Plato and Aristotle, Harold J.Laski also expressed similar views regarding education. Laski is of the opinion that in the modern world the citizen who lacks education is bound to be the slave of others.<sup>42</sup>

So we can conclude that according to all these philosophers, education is very much essential for a man to lead a happy and prosperous life. It makes a man decisive or learns to choose between the alternatives. It also makes the society harmonious and reforms the wrong ways of living.

The right of education to the individual first stressed by Guru Nanak has been granted in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of United Nations Organizations under article 26. According to which for the fullest development of human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, education is essential. This right has also been granted to the Indians in the Constitution of India.

### **Right to Justice:**

In ancient India, it was the one of the fundamental aims of the state to promote Dharma or justice. In Vedic literature peace, order, security and justice were regarded as fundamental aims of the state. The king or the head of the state was supposed to be the upholder of the law and order. He was to punish the wicked and help the virtuous.

According to Guru Nanak, justice is one of the attributes of God. Injustice has no place in God’s order because He is absolute just. As it is said by Guru Nanak:

Into the court of the true one, enters not the false (unjust).<sup>43</sup>

Similarly:

One can run from man's court; but where is one to go  
if one runs away from the Lord.<sup>44</sup>

So, God being himself truly just, has given the right to justice to all human beings.

The judiciary of Guru Nanak's contemporary society was almost in the hands of Brahmins and Mullahs. There was no punishment for the administration for social and religious sins. He condemned the unjust ways of Qaziz and Brahmins:

Modesty and righteousness both have vanished and falsehood  
marched as head O Lalo, The function of Qaziz and Brahmins  
is over and devil now performs the marriage ceremonies.<sup>45</sup>

In such condition of terror and tyranny, where the justice was delivered by receiving bribe, how a person can imagine the existence of Human Rights:

Kings are accustomed to bribe and confiscate the right by having it.<sup>46</sup>

The kings not only took bribes for dispensing justice to the people, but they along with their courtiers and servants oppressed and tortured their innocent subjects in order to exempt them from the huge amount of taxes which they might or might not afford to pay. Guru Nanak condemned a greedy person who is interested in own material welfare, amasses wealth and exploits others. Guru emphasized the role of honest means of livelihood in a balanced and orderly society. Guru Nanak warned his followers against ill gotten wealth which corrupts the man.

To ensure peace Guru Nanak preached for protecting the Human Rights of the people, particularly of the lowly and the weak. According to him true religion lies in providing justice to all. Guru Nanak said that true kings are those who respect truth and delivered justice to all. The corrupt religious

teachers as well as corrupt judges were exposed through very harsh and strong words.

Guru Nanak has regretted that the Qaziz who live on bribe and tell lies and the Brahmans who pretend to be pious after having holy dip exploit the creatures of God:

The Muslim judge (Qazi) tells lie and accepts bribe, the Brahmans takes bath but kills Human Rights.<sup>47</sup>

Guru Nanak was totally against exploitation of any kind .He said that if we have respect for the rights of others around us it will certainly prevent exploitation. Guru Nanak time and again stressed that there can be no justice without social justice. Respect for the rights of others, prevents the exploitation of one by the other. The Guru as worst sin condemns the exploitation of poor by rich in any form as worst sin. He could not tolerate that the earnings raised by the sweat of labour should go into the coffers of the rich and exploiters. As we know Guru Nanak himself preferred to stay at poor carpenter's (Lalo) home and declined the invitation of a rich merchant Malik Bhagchand to partake of food served from his ill-gotten income. Malik Bhagchand exploits poor and sucks the human blood. Guru Nanak has also criticized those people who never refrained from sucking the human blood. According to him:

If sticking of blood renders the clothes impure,  
how could be pure mind of those people,  
who suck the blood of human beings.<sup>48</sup>

On the economic front too he challenged the dishonest and corrupt people defining them to be greatest sinners like:

To snatch anybody's rights is like eating cow meat  
for the Hindu and pig meat for the Muslim.<sup>49</sup>

Further Guru Nanak said:

He, who, in his ego, clings to what is not his, suffers miseries.<sup>50</sup>

This famous statement says that human beings are counseled to lead a life of contentment and to respect the rights of the person, property and dignity of others. The people's right to justice must be recognized and its non-violation should be ensured by the state. God himself has given all human beings the right to justice that must be protected by the state.

Various political thinkers and philosophers of western thought have propounded their theories on right to justice from time to time.

Justice is for Plato, at once a part of human virtue and the bond which joins men together in states.<sup>51</sup>

Saint Thomas Aquinas defines "Justice as the fixed and perpetual will to give to everyone his own rights".<sup>52</sup>

John Locke observes that justice lies in not depriving "An individual of his right of preservation of life, health, liberty and possession, his right of equality and right to enforce the law of nature to safeguard his right as well as the rights of his neighbor."<sup>53</sup>

Thus we can say that justice is the fundamental right of the people and it must be recognized and protected by the state. The right to justice was also added in Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Constitution of India.

### **Right of Women**

Guru Nanak also raised a forceful voice against injustice towards women. He had pleaded for the full rights to women. The condition of women at the time of Guru Nanak was very deplorable. According to him woman has the same rights as man has. There is no scope of any discrimination against women because of their sex. They are fully at par with men.

The position of women in Indian society during early Vedic period was good accepting the stray incidents of unwelcoming the female child. But it was not a general practice and the sacred writings were against it. During the early Vedic period, even widow remarriage used to take place. Women freely participated in religious rites and practices. Women were given education to train them to lead successful married life.

It was only afterwards that the position of woman started deteriorating. She was deprived of the right of practice religion. Woman started being treated as property. During this period there was a relative downfall in the position of women. The birth of girl was considered to be the cause of all sufferings and hardships. Their rights and privileges were curtailed to a great extent.

Manu has expressed his views regarding woman as “,In childhood a female must be a subject to her father, in youth to her husband and when her lord is dead to her sons; a woman must never be independent.”<sup>54</sup> Similarly, by a girl, by young women or even by an aged one, nothing must be done independently even in her own house.<sup>55</sup> So woman was never fit for independence. She was so humiliated that she was considered no better than a dog.

Sankarcharya had called women the gateway of hell. Tulsidas had classed them with the cattle and anti-culture and had prescribed rough behaviour for them.<sup>56</sup>

In ancient Rome also, the condition of women was not better. According to Roman law, “the children, the wife and the slave of a Roman head of a house were equally subject to his unrestricted power and equally outside the jurisdiction of the state”<sup>57</sup>.

Siddhas and Nathas considered women as the source of many evils. The effects of such thinking are visible even today in Indian society where the

women even in 21<sup>th</sup> century have not attained the desired equality of status with man. Before Guru Nanak, the thinker like Socrates and Aristotle has a very little to say in favour of social status of women. Aristotle says that male is by nature superior and female inferior, woman is weak and incapable of independence of character. Her best condition is quiet home life. Milton too is unhappy over the role of women behind the expulsion of Adam from the Garden of Eden. Tennyson considered the women unfit for academic pursuits and says she is fit only for home life and man is born to command and women to obey those commands.<sup>58</sup>

At the time of Guru Nanak, Muslims had imprisoned their women within the four walls of the house, open air and other outside gifts of nature were denied to them. They were allowed under a thick covering of burqua. The birth of a daughter in a family was sign of misfortune. In the days of Jahangir sati pratha was practiced. The widows were burnt alive along with the pyre of their husband, even forcibly against their wishes. The Hindus considered the women a very inferior thing, a sort of possession and device for sexual pleasure. She was kept within the four walls of the house<sup>59</sup>. She was denied of her rights and was treated as a slave. In Islam women were not admitted to prayers in a mosque with their man folk. Guru Nanak could not tolerate this sad plight of Indian women. He strongly advocated that women must enjoy the same rights as men enjoy. Guru Nanak unequivocally condemned the low status given to the woman of his time and said:

“In a woman man is conceived, from a woman man is born, with a woman he is engaged and then married, through a woman new friendships are formed, from the woman one continues his race, when one woman dies another is sought, one’s tradition through woman is carried on, why call her low, from whom the kings and men of power are born.”<sup>60</sup>

Guru Nanak denounced the idea of considering a woman impure during the period of her menstrual cycle. He attaches no impurity to it as it is a

natural cycle. He attaches impurity not to the natural bodily functions but to the bad qualities and bad habits like that of telling lies he says:

As occurs women's menses again and again,  
so abides falsehood in the liar's mouth.  
That ever brings ignominy to him.  
The mind's sutak is avarice the tongue's falsehood,  
The eye's sutak coveting other womenfolk's  
beauty and other's wealth.<sup>61</sup>

He also condemned the idea of attaching impurity at the time of delivery of a child and the period after it. There was a system to keep the mother separate from the rest of the family for the specific period after the child birth. In this way Guru Nanak does not find any logic in the idea of sutak and discards it only as an illusion of mind. To quote Guru Nanak:

All belief in sutak (i.e., impurity contracted by touch is illusion) that induces in man worship of someone other than God.

Birth and death occurs by Divine ordinance  
and all beings come and go by Divine will.

All food and drink are pure.

For, God himself has granted these  
for our sustenance.

They who realize this truth,  
by the Guru's, guidance,  
are not affected by this sort of impurity."<sup>62</sup>

Guru Amar Das ji, the third Sikh Guru and disciple of Guru Nanak, forbade the practise of Sati and give right of life to woman after the death of her husband. Sikhism and Islam does not approve of Sati, both are in favour of widow remarriage. Guru Arjun Dev ji encouraged widow remarriage. Guru Gobind Singh ji allowed women to come forward to drink Amrit and go to battlefield along with men. In Sikhism, men and women sit in a Gurdawara facing each other. They jointly offer prayers and sing hymns. Sikh woman

enjoy the privilege of conducting service in a Gurdwara and reading the scriptures. There are several examples in Sikh history like Bibi Bhani, Mata Gurjri, Mai Bhago, Mata Sundri etc.who worked and co-operated with men sometimes with greater vigor.

Guru Nanak took initiative for the advocacy of the women's Rights and later on Universal Declaration of Human Rights declared under it article 2. Similar provision has been made in the Constitution of India.

### **Relevance of Guru Nanak Dev's Human Rights in the Modern Movements of Human Rights**

If we are able to breathe the air of freedom today, it is only because of great sacrifice of martyrs like Guru Arjan Dev Ji, Guru Tegh Bahadur and Banda Singh Bahadur, who gave their blood and experienced extreme torture, suffering and hardship for the sake of dharma and freedom.

Banda Singh Bahadur laid the foundation of democratic system of rule, which changed into ruling misls and finally the establishment of Sikh Raj under the command of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Banda Singh Bahadur was enemy of cruel ruler, chieftains and landlords who treated general public as slave. By starting currency in the name of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind, he won successful war of freedom from slavery of Punjab from Mughal rule. He abolished the Zamindari System of land prevailing under the Mughals and declared the actual cultivators as owners of land.

Banda Singh Bahadur took upon himself the duty of serving the people and protecting the weak and helpless. He meant to tell the people at large that welfare state of their dreams had been established to the exclusion of the tyrannical government of the Mughal governors. He tacitly meant to convey to them that unjust officials have been substituted by the just deserving and competent. He wanted to make them alive to the consciousness created in the

masses for their rights and awaken them to strong sense of resistance and defiance to oppression.<sup>63</sup>

Thus he was not only a great warrior but also an able administrator. He dismissed Muslim officers because they had become very cruel and corrupt. In their places, able Hindus, Sikhs appointed who had ever become the victims of the tyranny of the Mughals. He had great compassion for the administration and gave them right of equality. This awakened in them a new sense of self-confidence. He was known for his impartial and prompts justice. While dispensing justice he never discriminated between the high and low. He always respected women, even though they belonged to the enemy camp. He had given orders to his soldiers not to molest women and gave them full respect.

Similarly like Banda Bahadur, Maharaja Ranjit Singh also followed the footsteps of Gurus and gave complete freedom of expression to his subjects in his polity though he was born and brought up in Sikh faith. But he did not proclaimed Sikhism as the religion of the state. He did not make any conscious effort to propagate it. His broad religious outlook was reflected in his according due respect to all religions. He was known for religious tolerance, social harmony, justice, and equality. Ranjit Singh's state was the most progressive state in India. He gave grants irrespective of religion and caste.<sup>64</sup>

In his administrative jobs there was no discrimination on the basis of caste, creed and religion. Besides the Sikhs, Muslims and Hindus were also given equal opportunities. He allowed men from religion other than their own to rise to commanding positions of authority. So in his state, he gave right of religion and equally to all people without any discrimination. In the Khalsa kingdom the ideals and duties of the ruler were to serve the people selflessly. He holds steadfastly to the values of justice, equality, freedom and human dignity through actions and deeds. Thus the Sikhs established their rule in the name of Guru Nanak in 18th century in Punjab.

Therefore the Sikhs are always known for heroic deeds and high character. Even the Muslim Qazi Nur Muhammad son of Qazi Abdullah belonged to village Gunjaba paid the highest tribute to the character of Sikhs of eighteenth century.

Qazi Nur Mohammad accompanied Ahmad Shah Abdali in his invasion in 1764. This is what he has to say about Sikhs who fought bitterly against his master.<sup>65</sup> Qazi Nur Mohammad has written the account of seventh invasion of Ahmad Shah Abdali. A bigoted writer who has got strong prejudice against Sikhs paid such a glowing tribute to their character, which is a matter of pride for Sikhs. He writes:

Leaving aside their mode of fighting hear you another point in which they excel other fighting people. In no case they would slay a coward or any obstacle in way of fugitive. They do not plunder the wealth and ornament of women be she a well to do lady or maid servant. There is no adultery among the dogs nor are these mischievous people giving the thieving. Whether a woman young or old they call her *Buddya* and old lady and ask her to get out of the way. The word *Buddya* in Indian language means an old lady. There is no thief at all among these dogs nor is there any house breaker born amongst these miscreants.<sup>66</sup>

Thus it is clear that Nur Muhammad, a Muslim Qazi appreciated the character of Sikhs though he belonged to the rival group. Similarly, when Ahmed shah Durrani was returning after his victory over Delhi, the Sikh bands attacked him near Goindwal and liberated about 2200 Hindu women from the clutches of the Afghan. The Sikhs bands pursued the Afghan forces upto river Attock.<sup>67</sup>

Thus above writings shows that the Sikhs of 18th century were protector, defender and respectful towards ladies. They were not corrupt and against any kind of destruction even in the critical times. They thought for the preservation of Human Rights of women belonging to other castes.

As Rattan Singh Bhangua in his Panth Parkash mentioned that how Sikhs saved the daughter of a helpless Brahman belonging to Jalalabad and honored her as 'Panth Ki Beti', which is the example of altruistic and heroic deed.<sup>68</sup>

### **Role of Sikhs in India's Freedom Struggle:**

The total contribution of Sikhs in India's struggle for freedom is surprising. Out of 121 patriots hanged 93 were Sikhs, of 2626 awarded life imprisonment 2147 were Sikhs of 1300 martyred in Jallianwala Bagh 799 were Sikhs. Considering that Sikhs were hardly 1.5 percent of the total population of India at the time, their sacrifices amounted to 90 percent.<sup>69</sup> Thus the Sikh community is community that suffered most. They sacrificed their life and everything for the rights of others.

During the five years of Akali Movement, 4000 persons suffered death, 2000 were wounded and 30000 men and women were jailed. The pension and jagirs of many were withdrawn, fines were imposed and property was confiscated. In the case of many others many lost their jobs, soldiers were court-martialled for wearing kirpan or a black turban. Printers, publishers and editors suffered for their sympathy with the movement. As a contemporary put it, the British authorities soon come to believe that Gurdwara reform movement was a subversive movement which aimed at overthrowing the British Raj and which therefore, it was necessary to suppress. For Sardul Singh Caveeshar, freedom of religion and freedom of the country went together. He regarded the Akali movement as only an offshoot of the national movement. The national spirit impregnated the Sikh hearts through and through; they desired to assume responsibility as much for the control and management of the temples as for the administration of the country.<sup>70</sup>

Therefore, Gurdwara's of Sikhs which were under the control of Mahants made them adulterers and corrupt. They considered income of

Gurudwaras as their individual income and they began to misuse it. Their immoral activities violated sanctity of Gurudwaras. The Sikh could not endure violation of sanctity of Gurudwaras and they started reform movement. In this movement many Sikhs got martyrdom and many were wounded. Sikhs had to give many sacrifices and the victory was of Sikhs. Eventually, the Government was obliged by passing Gurdwara Act in 1928 and handed over management of Gurdwaras to Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee.

Master Tara Singh, who pulled down the Muslim League flag atop the Punjab assembly at Lahore and tore it, which saved half of the Punjab for India. Otherwise the entire Punjab would have gone to Pakistan with River Yamuna as the dividing line between India and Pakistan.<sup>71</sup> It was the great contribution of Master Tara Singh in the history of India's freedom struggle.

Contribution of other Sikhs like Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru was marvelous in the struggle of freedom. Their objective was the freedom of India from foreign rule and restructuring of society on socialist principles. However their approach was militant. They favored violence in the cause of justice. They murdered J.P. Saunders, who was thought to be responsible for Lajpat Rai's death on 17 December, 1928 and threw bomb in the Legislative Assembly in Delhi on 8 April, 1929. Because of this reason Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru were hanged on 23 March 1932. Therefore they wanted systematic reconstruction of society after a complete destruction of the existing order.

The Sikhs of the Punjab never allowed the white rulers any respite. They kept them engaged with one *morcha* after another and those agitations produced a galaxy of eminent freedom fighters who earned a great name in national struggle for India's independence. Some of them are Baba Kharak Singh, Master Tara Singh, Sardar Pratap Singh Keisrah, Giani Gurumukh Singh Musafir, Sohan Singh 'Josh', Sardar Sardul Singh Caveeshar, Giani Zail

Singh, Sardar Hukam Singh, Sardar Gurdial Singh Dhillon and Darshan Singh Pheruman.<sup>72</sup>

Thus it can be concluded that there were so many incidents of defiance of the foreign rule by the Sikh soldiers and political activists. They are as loyal as they are valiant. They fought the war of India's independence with help of their countrymen whether they were Hindus or Muslims.

### **Muslim League and Riots of Calcutta**

In December, 1906 Muslim leaders from all over the sub-continent assembled in Dacca to attend to all India Mohammedan to establish a central political organization for Muslims called 'All India Muslim League'. The Muslim League was established with the primary aim of protecting the political rights of Indian Muslims and presenting their demands and problems before the British Government.

Direct Action Day, also known as the Great Calcutta killing, was on 16 August 1946, a day of wide spread riots and manslaughter in the city of Calcutta (Now known as Kolkata) in the Bengal province of British India. The Muslim league and Indian National Congress were two largest political parties in the constituent assembly of India in 1940s. In 1946 a plan to divide the British Raj India into Hindu Majority India and an Muslim Majority Pakistan was proposed. The congress rejected the alternative proposal outright. Muslim League planned general strike on 16 August to this rejection and to assert its demand for separate Muslim homeland.

The protest triggered massive riots in Calcutta. In Calcutta within 72 hours, more than 4000 people lost their lives and 100000 residents in the city of Calcutta were left homeless. Violence in Calcutta sparked off further religious riots in the surrounding regions of Noakhali, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and North Western Frontier Province. These events sowed the seeds for the eventual partition of India.<sup>73</sup> The Sikhs of Calcutta did a notable

humanitarian job at the time of great killing by saving many innocent lives .During Calcutta riots the main offenders were the Sikhs.

### **Partition of 1947:**

We all know the riots of 1947 were the worse that the Sikhs faced in the last century. Sikhs in 1947 lost all their property, money and many lost their lives. They choose to live in India and did not change their religion to secure their property, money or lives. The Sikhs were massacred by the Muslims of that area. But they sacrificed themselves to keep Sikhi alive. The ultimatum was given to the Sikhs either to embrace Islam or to face death. Most Sikhs preferred death to the shameful surrender of faith and died.

### **Massacre of the Thena-Khalsa area of Rawal Pindi March 1947:**

When the Sangat was doing Shri Rehrars Sahib Path, many thousand Muslims came and surrounded the building. The Sikhs had been given anchor to accept Islam or else they get ready to die. But the Sikh responded that they will never give up Sikhi and will never become Muslims. When Muslims tried to abduct the Sikh woman they jumped into a well to avoid getting dishonoded by Muslims. Near about 90 women jumped into well and after this bloody massacre, Muslims get scared and started running away. In this way the Sikh women saved their honour and did not accept Islam and continued the tradition of martyrdom initiated by the Sikh Gurus.

Communal riots occurred in various cities of West Punjab such as Rawal Pindi, Multan, Amritsar, Lahore and Gujranwala where thousands of Sikhs and Hindus were reported to be killed and number of Sikh Women were abducted who were raped, dishonored in the presence of their family members. Their houses were burnt and property was looted. Quite after Gurdwaras were burnt down and Sikh scripture desecrated. During the partition, the massive exchange of population that attended the partition of the

sub-continent and condition under which it took place is most unprecedented in the history.<sup>74</sup>

As a result of the partition, there was a sharp decline in the morals of the people. The serious economic crisis created by the forced migration provided a climate for immorality. The prevailing law lessens common in the east and west Punjab removed all social restraints and scruples. About fifty thousand women were abducted in both the Punjabs. The violent communal riots, murders and heinous crimes brought the people's morals to the lowest ebb.

The partition of the Punjab caused an upheaval in the social structure. The refugees found themselves aliens in their new surroundings. The very places, the physical and geographical environment and the people among whom they were required to spend their lives and develop new relationships were unfamiliar. This created a feeling of frustration and discontentment among the refugees. In the West Punjab, this led to the evil practices of beggary, prostitution, delinquency and crime.<sup>75</sup>

Thus, the partition of 1947 brings a lot of sufferings for the people of Punjab. The partition was a great holocaust. Man had become brutal and beast. The colours of rivers in both Punjabs had turned red. Everywhere there were bloodshed, murders, kidnappings and loot. In Pakistan, Non-Muslims had to rush towards India (east Punjab) leaving their lands, house, shops and industries etc. The same condition was of business of Muslims in East Punjab (India). They went to Pakistan leaving everything. Majority of refugees in both Punjabs had reached camps established by Governments.

### **Kashmir Attack:**

When Pakistanis attacked on Kashmir, the Sikhs were much in demand by all commanders on all the sectors of war. In the Chhamb sector where the Pakistanis had launched their major offensive with full armored

division covered by the Air Force, the Sikhs showed their metal by capturing 10 enemy's posts in 36 hours, by inflicting a crushing defeat on the enemy in chhamb sector. The Kashmir was saved from falling into the hands of Pakistani raiders. No less was the glory that they won in the battle of Burki and the battle of Punchh area and the Haji-Pir pass.<sup>76</sup>

Similarly the battle scarred areas of 1200 miles long zigzag from Barmer to Kargil brings to one's memory the drudgeries of the western desert warfare which were surpassed by these fantastically superb Sikh warriors, and the agonies of the sub-zero temperatures of Zozila and Dras areas which were happily endured by the tough Sikh heroes.<sup>77</sup> Therefore the Sikhs in army played their role of the defenders of the country as against any aggressor from outside.

### **Tsunami and Role of Sikhs:**

There is no doubt that maximum Sikhs have forgotten the message of their forefathers, but still there are some Sikh organizations working for the welfare of the humanity. Ghanaia is an international relief efforts establishment by united Sikhs in 2003 to provide impartial aid and assistance to victims in disaster situations. Ghanaia stands for giving humanitarian aid, necessities and assistance impartially to all that is inspired by Sikh saint Bhai Ghanaia Ji who served the army of the 10th Sikh Guru Gobind Singh. He served water, medicine etc. to ailing war soldiers and victims without prejudice, seeing the same God in all beings. All regardless of social status or religion knew him for service. Thus the Sikh Gurus who were forced to fight many battles in defense of religious freedom, thought that comparison and concern for others must extend even to foes on the battle field.

On December 26, 2004, the world witnessed one of the deadliest natural disasters in recent history. The Tsunami left millions with shattered lives, hundreds of thousand dead and as many lost homes, school, business

and means of livelihood especial in Indonesia, Thailand, Srilanka and India. The Tsunami affected millions of lives and livelihood. Thousands of people are still missing and more than a million have been displaced. The aim of Ghanaia Tsunami relief project is to provide immediate personal hunger aid, ready to eat cooked food in the form of Langer. It is their goal to immediately feed the displaced and homeless victims of this tragedy to prevent malnutrition and further health deterioration.

At Harmandir Sahib, the Golden Temple in Amritsar, free meals are provided all days. Everyday any one is welcome to eat at any time at Langer hall on Gurdwara ground. Many teams of Langer organizers and cook arrived in Tsunam-Hit-area to set up free kitchens, so that survivors could receive nourishment of body and spirit. System of Langer gave up clear message that Sikh Gurus have not established another Dharma to bring division in human beings but they were all for unity.

#### **Role of Sikhs in Haiti Earth Quake:**

Sikhs from allover the world reached Haiti to help with a reach and rescue mission. An earthquake measuring 7.0 hit Haiti around 10 miles south of capital city port-an prince bringing widespread devastation to the entire country. The earth quake, said to be the most powerful to affect Haiti in 200 years, struck at 4:53 p.m on Tuesday 12th January, 2010 at a depth of five miles.<sup>78</sup>

In this natural disaster millions have been affected by earth quake and thousand are feared buried under rubble of fallen building. People had lost their houses and means of livelihoods. They were waiting for medical expertise and other supplies. Haiti suffered from extreme poverty and many other problems.

Many Sikh organizations volunteer teams arrived Haiti to provide the necessities to the affected people. They serve Langer to the survivors of the

earthquake. The volunteer teams purchased food, water, medical facilities etc. and helped them in their difficult time. Thus the tradition of service to others which was started by Sikh Gurus is still continued by their Sikh followers.

In spite of great contribution of Sikhs in protection and promotion of Human Rights we are sliding down from the lofty principles of Sikhism. Modern conditions are not better than the ones described by Guru Nanak.

Administration is still corrupt and diplomatic which instead of protecting the people exploits them. Greasing palm is a normal practice about which Guru Nanak talked in his time. Inequality, injustice has still existed in the society. Powerfull and developed countries are dominating the weak countries. Modern materialistic civilization disturbed the balance of human existence. Democratic countries are not democratic in its real sense. The policy of ruling now is a 'Danda Niti.' Guru Nanak's divine message and practical life can provide guidance to solve the issues which have become a challenge to the humanity. The present crisis is due to the lack of faith in spirit of man and this leads him to the distortion of value, escapism and collapse of man in despair, frustration and helplessness which nurtured the social conflict, exploitation, hatred, enmity and violence. Most of the nations are facing war like situations on the issues of religion, race, colour, creed etc. The need of the hour is to propagate and practice the message of Guru Nanak in order to create the democratic way of thinking in human lives.

We have entered in an era of development and modernity. Development in the field of information and communication has narrowed the distance. The whole world has assumed the nature of a Global Village. International trade has greatly expanded that is why interdependences of countries have grown up. In the world's economic horizon international institution like World Trade Organization (WTO) determines the policies and these policies are mere puppets in the hands of developed countries. The main objective of globalization is to find out consumer and create markets. The aim is not welfare of humanity but to make maximum profit, whereas Guru Nanak

stressed upon the welfare of all humanity based higher moral values. In this world market man's capability and knowledge is also being sold like raw material. Unquenchable desire for more material progress has reduced man to a machine. This is a mad race of amassing more and more wealth and sources. Consequently instead of organized and common interest, personal interest of selfishness is given the priority. In such circumstances, in spite of being accomplished in knowledge and science, globalizations are creating such new values which are taking the humanity to its decline. But Guru Nanak taught the highest moral value based on justice, truth, generosity and love. He inspired man for hard work and clean earning by discarding greed and selfishness. Guru Nanak's message is still relevant to free us from the negative effects of globalization.

Similarly, media through its channels can create and distribute sufficient literature regarding Sikh philosophy, history, culture and ethics etc. We must have a Sikh media cell, independent TV channels, and independent news papers in English, Hindi and Punjabi.

Western culture through its channels openly exhibiting sex and violation and our young generation is being attracted towards it. They are forgetting their own way of living. Guru Nanak at time of Mughals criticized Hindus for adopting Mughal culture. Guru Nanak very much struggled to change the whole situation and awared the Indians about their own culture and language. So media can perform its vital role to save our culture and language.

No doubt that Government is doing various efforts to promote education. It has raised our material standard but what is most urgently required is to realize the spiritual potentialities of man. The ultimate objective of the learned man should be not only to know the truth but also the implementation of that knowledge in practical life. Only then we can be really educated people.

Today's politics is totally materialistic, which gave rise to material greed and leading a man into the deserts of desires and making them enemies to each other. Modern civilization by its deadly tools, obscene literature, and means of entertainment is driving the younger generation into sensuality and lust. The modern spiritual contractors fire such immoral feelings among them and run false religious formalities for their own selfish interests.

The incident of 1984 proved a watershed in the history of the Sikhs. There is sorrow in the heart of the Sikhs, because the people who protected the rights of others now find their own Human Rights being violated in spite of the fact that protective laws are there at national and international level. The situation at the international level has become graver with the passing of the law by French Parliament in 2005, which bans the turban of the Sikhs in the school of France. After France the turban controversy has spread to Belgium, Ireland and America in 2007, which is the matter of serious concern for the Sikhs all over the world. The Sikhs are troubled all over the world because their basic human religious rights regarding turban are being violated through the process of law in many countries in total contravention to the laws of the United Nations. Since in U.N's charter in 1945 many declarations and numerous covenants on the subject of Human Rights have been issued, but their implementation is most unsatisfactory. It needs serious consideration of the United Nations to save the people, like the Sikhs from continuous harassment and humiliation of public place due to violation of their basic Human Rights.<sup>79</sup>

Present century provides all modern facilities to man but he has lost moral values, mutual love, social and family relationships. In the modern scientific age man is confined, self centered, selfish and materialistic. In this materialistic age man is engrossed in pseudo-attachments and relationships have been ended. Joint family system is extinct. Emotional ties between parents and children are getting weak. Man has become victim of extreme stress and mental tension. No way to spiritual peace is visible. Old parents

become a burden to their children. They are being sent to old age homes, where they live miserable or pitiable life. Distance between husband and wife is expanding. Divorces are on the rise. In other words family relationships are being broken due to the lack of moral virtues and selfish egos of the individuals. Man has fallen down from moral values and is heading towards animal behavior. Bomb blasts in various countries give us examples of such tendencies in the thinking of modern man. In these blasts how innocent people are dying. All these are signs of diabolical thinking of present day man.

In the modern age, there is discrimination in the name of religion and language against which Guru Nanak raised his voice. Guru Nanak opposed a contradicted spread of religion through political power. He advocated religious freedom and multi religious system of India. But the politics of today have created such circumstances that there is conflict between man and man. These impostors exploit religion for their own ends. Their followers became fanatical and thus religion becomes instrumental in keeping the people bondage and superstitious. These cunning and crafty people misuse religion and people some times become disgusted with religion. Following Guru Nanak as a model guide can avoid such conflicts.

In spite of the abundance of knowledge, comforts and luxuries, there are conflicts among nations, races, religions, groups and sects. Man's scientific discoveries and inventions could not provide peace to him. Growing competition of nuclear weapons is posing a major threat to the world peace. Apart from this major threat the world at large is passing through number of other crises. Day by day gulf between the haves and have nots is increasing. Capitalist counties are trying to dominate the poor and developing countries. America's policies of globalization are widening the economic and social differences.

Most of the societies of the world have forgotten peaceful message given to them by their sages and seers. In such circumstances, it is only

religion that could play a positive role in balancing the human life. The message of Guru Nanak is very much relevant in this respect. There is needed to keep knowledge and values together which seems to be divorced from each other. At present in spite of message of Guru Nanak the people are quarrelling or even killing one another in the name of religion. They are just blind fanatics not religious. So Guru Nanak gave us a distinct philosophy and a new way of life which should be adopted by modern man.

The biggest problem of the world is lack of understanding. Guru Nanak preaches understanding among different communities and people with different ideologies and lay emphasis on settling differences through mutual understanding. If the ideology of mutual understanding is accepted, the danger of destruction which we are facing would be ended. Today collective leadership is being done away. Instead of 'Wahe Guru' we are addressing ardas to 'Guru'. In doing so we are reverting to 'Avtarwad'. Guru Sahib's pictures find place even higher than Guru Granth Sahib. This is pure idol worship. Priest class is emerging in the form of Dera, each Deras having its own Maryada.<sup>80</sup>

Now we will discuss about the role of Sikh organizations in present situation. The main objective behind the Gurudwara Management Act (1925) was to release the control of Gurdwaras from the hand of priest class. These Pujaries enjoyed the patronage of the British Government. In 1925 SGPC, a democratically elected committee of the Sikhs controlled over the Gurdawras. There was a time when the S.G.P.C. succeeded in maintaining the purity of Sikh tenets and spiritual tradition with the guidance of stalwarts like Bhai Kahan Singh, Bhai Jodh Singh, Bhai Vir Singh, and Principal Teja Singh etc. They were learned men who commanded respect because of their great contribution in the field of Sikh theology.<sup>81</sup>

But the current politico-religious organizations of the Sikhs like the Shiromani Akali Dal, SGPC are being dominated and dictated by hegemonic

leadership of an individual. Now the commands of Sikh institutions are in those hands that do not seem to be much bothered about principles of the Sikhism. Most of the members of S.G.P.C are busy either in politics or in personal gains. They are not performing their real duties as religious preachers. Similarly the missionaries from various Sikh institutions have 'Money' as the basic aim and not the establishment of Sikhism. This tendency has to be checked. Guru Gobind Singh study circle, a leading Sikh organization is doing a tremendous job to save Sikhism. A concerned effort is needed from all Sikh agencies.

Akal Takht is known as the nerve centre of the Sikh socio-religious concerns. It has been venue of the Sarbat Khalsa. The grand collectivity of Sikh community in the mystical presence of the Guru, there is also the doctrine of 'Gurumatta', the decisions taken in the name of Guru through good will and consensus. During the life time of the Gurus there was no need to appoint a Jathedar to Akal Takht as the religio-political authority was vested in the Guru. With the conferment of Guruship on the Granth and the Panth by the tenth master the institutions of 'Sarbat Khalsa' and 'Gurmatta' took firm roots in Sikhism. At these meetings vital matters including dangers confronted by the country and the community, were deliberated and 'Gurumatta' were passed. These Gurumattas strengthened the feelings of cohesion and co-operation among the Sikhs and filled their dropping hearts with fresh dynamism and vigor.<sup>82</sup>

Now we find very strong mutual differences among the national leaders of the Panth. Therefore most of the Sikhs now feels that Guru Panth needs to be revealed and strengthened to overcome the problems of Sikh community all over the world. Without Panth we cannot spread message of the Granth. Guru Panth directs all Sikh leaders to resolve their mutual differences and make them to move together in the Panth of Gurmat. Today, politicians misuse their powers to torture, kill, control or convert the followers of other faiths. But the religious leaders should stand against the politicians taking

away the Human Rights of the people. Religion becomes meaningless if it is not practiced to protest the weak and protest against rulers who take away the Human Rights of the people. This is what Guru Nanak undertook more than five centuries ago and brought a religious revolution for the service of the people. All the religious and political leaders need to sacrifice their ego and selfish interests for this purpose. We also observe that all communities of different colors and features everyday partake Langar together as equal without discrimination. This is an encouraging practice to realize the right of equality introduced by Guru Nanak.

Guru Nanak directed to give highest place to women in society but in the present time woman is being dishonored and humiliated. Female foeticide is the example of this. The girl child is being killed in the very womb of the mother. But the Sikh way of life opposes this and Sikhism does not allow keeping relation with a man who kills a girl child. So the social boycott should be done who so ever carry out such practice.

AIDS is another social evil which is crippling the society day by day. The main cause of which is immorality and low character. When a man or woman makes extra marital relations with other than wife or husband it ends the very existence of family. Feeling of such woman whose husband has illicit relations with other woman have been expressed in *Bani* of Guru Nanak.

Crimes against women are increasing. They are becoming victim to dishonour, disgraced, domestic violence and rape. The rises of woman race ensure the bright future of humanity. In this context, Guru Nanak's thinking can play a vital role. He advocated the empowerment of women.

Guru Nanak in 15<sup>th</sup> century lighted the torch of his thoughts, which illuminates or radiates the heart of everyone even today. Guru Nanak perhaps is the only poet of the world who by the power of his poetry gave birth to a brave race in India. He brought about a strong rebellion, which took firm determination to uproot tyranny and oppression from whole of the country.

Guru Nanak gave us a unique philosophy that is scientifically and logically sounds having universal acceptability. Guru Nanak his nine successors worked to redefine the religions, political and social values for mankind. Modern age has created such problem that needs immediate solution. In this context Guru Nanak's message is relevant to play creative role. So man needs to have a fresh look at the whole situation. It is the dire need of the hour to understand and implement the philosophy of Guru Nanak. This is the only way to save humanity from degeneration.

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## **CHAPTER-8**

### **CONCLUSION**

Before the existence of state, the family head enjoyed absolute rights over his family and rendered economic and social security. Gradual expansion of authority led to slavery ranging from family to the society outside. Various religious leaders and freedom lovers have tried to make people aware of their rights from time to time.

Human Rights are those minimal rights that every individual must have by virtue of being a member of human family, irrespective of any other considerations. In other words Human Rights are the essential claims for human security and dignity and have been integral part of society since the advent of civilization. Greek and Roman philosophers like Protagoras, Plato and Aristotle etc. favored principles of equality and condemned discrimination of all kinds. Similarly 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century philosophers like Hobbes, Rousseau and John Locke held that it is the responsibility of the state to protect the natural rights of its subjects. They considered the state to be at the mercy of individuals.

The struggle for Human Rights continued for centuries but some important landmarks in the development of Human Rights were Magna Carta (1215), American Declaration of Independence (1776) and US Constitution of 1789 which made important contribution in advancing the concept of Human Rights. In other words it can be said that these are some important pillars on which Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 was constructed. In Universal Declaration of Human Rights a list of 30 articles was contained mentioning various rights for human beings.

In Indian history Human Rights have always occupied an important place. Vedic rhymes and Indian scriptures speak of freedom of individual in state. Other various great personalities like, Kautilya, Ashoka etc. and Indian philosophical systems like Buddhism, Jainism etc. urged for Human Rights.

Middle Age was a dark period for Human Rights due to Mughals invasions followed by British rule. People like Vivekananda, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Jawahar Lal Nehru, M.K. Gandhi etc. also advocated Human Rights. Even the Indian National Congress made a sincere attempt to secure basic Human Rights for Indians and ultimately these were enshrined in the Constitution of India in the form of Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of the State Policy and provision were also made for their protection. No doubt that there are many organizations at national and international level for the protection of Human Rights. Still the rights of child, women, workers, prisoners, minorities etc. are in very poor condition. The situation of Human Rights in our country is still not satisfactory. Even after 63 years of independent existence we have not been able to provide even basic necessities of life to many of our people. The problems of poverty, unemployment, inequalities, sanitation, safe drinking water, ill health, nutrition, shelter, literacy etc. have got aggravated and alarming. Thus, the poor unprivileged are still devoid of the opportunities to live with honour and dignity. Thus the concept Human Rights could not become all embracing but still remains exclusionary in nature.

Guru Nanak, the first Sikh Guru had made remarkable contribution in the field of Human Rights. His whole life was dedicated to the struggle for Human Rights. He was one of the saints of 15<sup>th</sup> century who left an indelible impact on social, religious, political forces of the day. Guru Nanak traveled widely in India and abroad to make the people aware about their rights and duties. He visited all the important religious centres like Kurukshetra, Hardwar, Gorakmata, Nanakmata, Jaganathpuri, Mecca Madina etc. Guru Nanak found the common people of his age ignorant and superstitious. All the religious propagators like Qazies, Brahmins etc. were hypocrites and exploiters and were performing useless rituals to befool others.

Guru Nanak tried to bring the people out of the clutches of religious exploiters of his time and rejected all the outward observances and practices performed by them. He wanted to make them spiritually alive and conveyed that by bathing in pilgrimages, giving alms and charity to the Brahmans, they

cannot wash their sins. Guru Nanak preached to the Brahmans the greatness of the supreme one and futility of empty religiosity.

He condemned the monopoly of religious clerics of various religions prevalent in his time who denied right of religious freedom to the common people and taught the people the real meaning of religion and made them aware of their exploitation and victimization in the name of religion. Guru Nanak also advised all the religious leaders of his time to act according to their religious teachings instead of external observances and settle their differences through mutual discussion. He inspired them to play positive role in creating ideal society and advocated true devotion to God.

Muslim rulers hated the Hindus and tried to eliminate Hinduism by demolishing their temples, by prohibiting them from performing religious rites, by burning their sacred books and insulting their Gods. Even the basic rights were not provided to the Hindus. Their life, property and honour were not safe. Thus Guru Nanak condemned the rulers of his times who took away the right of freedom of religion. According to Guru Nanak God has created the world and main objective of man is to attain oneness with God. For the achievement of this purpose, right to freedom of religions is very important.

Guru Nanak strongly objected Muslim ruler's atrocities on the Hindus to curb their religious freedom. He was of the view that every human being has the right to pursue allegiance to any faith he chooses to follow. Guru Nanak strongly propagated religious freedom and this tradition was continued by succeeding Sikh Gurus and their followers. They created a new history by making great sacrifices for the protection of Human Rights even for other religions as in the case of Guru Teg Bahadur. Example of such sacrifices does not exist anywhere else in human history. Guru Nanak observed very minutely the existing religions of his times like Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, and Jainism and found them irrelevant to get salvation. He did not believe that truth revealed in them is absolute. He freely condemned their wrong ways or practices to get emancipation. Similarly, he did not want to involve in any

controversies with the six systems and their teachings. He just emphasized on the unity of God.

Like religious rights, political rights of the masses were also in danger in Guru Nanak's times. He painted a vivid picture of such barbarities in his *Bani*. He firstly criticized the political setup of Lodis for ignoring their duty of defending their subjects from the invaders like Babar. Secondly he censured the invaders for not following ethics during warfare and humiliating and demoralizing innocent civilian population. Thirdly he also castigated the people of India for not raising their voice against oppression and tyranny. Guru Nanak sought to infuse a new spirit among demoralized people and awaken political consciousness among them so they could resist oppressive rulers and clerics. The truth revealed by Guru Nanak was cherished by his successors. His nine successors continued to emphasize message given by him. Guru Nanak's nine successors just not continued the missionary work set by him but also looked after the organizational setup. The organizations like 'Manji' and 'Masand' greatly strengthened the grass roots of new polity which the Sikh Gurus has evolved.

The truth revealed by Guru Nanak was cherished by his successors. All the nine Sikh Gurus followed the master plan in every aspect of life prepared by Guru Nanak. All Sikh Gurus had organized the Sikhs to defend their rights and secure freedom of worship, freedom of expression and freedom of missionary activities. They hold the sword with the object of self-defense. Guru Gobind Singh established khalsa to spread righteousness, to uproot the state repression, injustice and to serve humanity.

In 18<sup>th</sup> century, Banda Singh Bahadur laid the foundation of a democratic system of rule which changed into ruling Misals and finally the establishment of Sikh Raj under the command of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Banda Singh Bahadur was the first Sikh who build a political power and fought against Mughals. Similary Maharaja Ranjit Singh established 'Khalsa Raj' by ending Mughal rule and brought peace and prosperity to kingdom. Human Rights of the people were being respected in his kingdom. Both Banda

Singh and Maharaja Ranjit Singh issued coin in the name of Gurus and proclaimed themselves as the servant of the Guru. It was the greatest political achievement of those times. They both fought many battles and achieved success not for expansion of political powers but for the preservation of Human Rights. They implemented the Guru Nanak's mission of self defense and sacrifice for national cause. Thus Banda Singh and Maharaja Ranjit Singh put Guru Nanak's idea about Human Rights into practical shape by establishing 'Singh Raj' following the tenants of Guru Nanak's teachings. Therefore all Sikh Gurus and their followers created a will in the ordinary masses to resist tyranny. They fought and protected Human Rights and worked for equality, justice and brotherhood of man.

Similarly, Guru Nanak had founded the Indian society in a deplorable state and divided into many sections which were fighting with each other uselessly. He strongly rejected the division of humanity in the name of caste, creed, colour or class. Guru Nanak wanted to restore the dignity of people of every section of society, preached about equality of all people by breaking the barriers of caste, creed, colour and class. He desired to turn the society into a community of Gurumukhs. To remove caste prejudices, Guru Nanak introduced concept of 'Sangat' and 'Pangat' which went a long way in uprooting caste system. Guru Nanak advocated the right of equality and condemned discrimination of any kind.

Guru Nanak's task was to restore the reign of truth, and justice and rekindle the light of love through his message of equality of mankind. Similarly, Guru Nanak propagated for equal rights of women with men. In Guru Nanak's creed they are given a respectable place in the society for being mother of kings and heroes. He condemned all social evils related to women and boldly exhorted for the rights of women. He denounced the idea of considering women impure during the period of her menstrual cycle. He attaches no impurity to it as it is a natural cycle. Similarly he discarded the idea of 'sutak' or the idea of attaching impurity at the time of delivery of a child.

Guru Nanak recognized the importance of human life and inspired the people to be aware of their rights. They should not bear oppression, violence and exploitation of any kind. They should fight if any body (ruler) in power attacks or snatches their basic rights.

Guru Nanak advocated for the freedom of speech and religion. According to him every human should be free to follow the culture or religion of his own choice. Guru Nanak forcefully condemned the ruler of his time for imposing their culture and language on the public and also criticized the Hindus for shedding their own culture and language under the pressure of ruling class and adopting the culture and languages of ruling class to please them. Similarly people should not be checked from meeting together in a social or religious assembly called 'Sangat' by Guru Nanak. He also emphasized that every individual has the right to express his feelings and thought without any fear of authority. With the freedom of speech or expression Guru Nanak also stressed upon the freedom of choice of occupation of his or her choice irrespective of his/her caste, colour, sex etc.

Guru Nanak also emphasized the right to education .According to him if people were educated they could be aware of their fundamental rights and duties. Guru Nanak upheld moral values through proper education. Similarly he advocated the right to family and taught spiritual growth along with worldly living. He did not encourage escapisms. According to him one can elevate oneself spiritually by living a house holder's life. Guru Nanak introduced the path of Jogi and Bhogi for the seeker of truth by emphasizing hard work, honest living, love of fellow humans and through them service of the Almighty. Guru Nanak espoused the rule of law and justice and condemned bribery, corruption and exploitation of any kind. According to his famous statement to snatch anybody's right is just like eating cow meat for a Hindu and pig for a Muslim. So people's right to justice must be recognized and its non violation should also be ensured. Guru Nanak emphasized the role of honest means of livelihood in a balanced and orderly society. Guru Nanak warned his followers against ill gotten wealth.

Human Rights which we are talking about in the present age of 21<sup>st</sup> century, Guru Nanak had already advocated their observance in 15<sup>th</sup> century. He visualized a new kind of society free from every kind of oppression, exploitation and suffering. But unfortunately modern conditions are not much better than the ones described by Guru Nanak. Administration is still corrupt and exploitative. Greasing palm is a normal practice about which Guru Nanak had criticized in his times.

Now the policy of ruling is 'Danda Niti'. Politics has become main centre of violation of Human Rights, which creates conflict between man and man. Politicians are misusing their powers to kill, torture, control or convert the followers of other faiths just for their selfish motives. Anarchy persists just like that in Guru Nanak's times. Religious institutions and politico-religious organizations are being dominated by leadership of individuals. Collective leadership envisaged in the concept of Sangat is being done away. Leaders of religious organization are misusing the funds given in the charity by people for their own benefits which are equal to exploiting and snatching the rights to others.

Today people are quarrelling or even killing one another in the name of religion. They have become so fanatic that they are even burning the religious scriptures of each other. Sikh preachers are no way different from the Qazis and Brahmins of Guru Nanak's times any more. They are religious only on surface. If we compare today's Sikh with the character of Khalsa of 18<sup>th</sup> century, they were the protectors and defenders of Human Rights. But today's many Sikhs far from defending others in distress, they could not defend themselves. There are many Sikhs who are far away from the teaching of our great Gurus. Today's many Sikhs are self-centered, selfish, materialistic and doing various sinful and ill mannered activities like taking drugs, attempting rape, killing innocent people and committing several other illegal activities. They are just like toys in the hands of politicians who are leading them into the deserts of desires and making them enemies of each other. Modern spiritual contractors fire immoral feelings among them and run false religious

formalities. It is matter of regret that the Sikhs, the followers of Guru Nanak have been miserable going astray. They are not Sikhs in true sense.

Many Sikhs are fighting in the name of man made religious institution and do not care for honour and dignity of living temples of God, that is, human beings. If Guru Nanak's teaching are not observed genuinely and sincerely the Sikhism is bound to suffer a decline. Guru Nanak dedicated his whole life for the rights and dignity for human beings. But his followers are throwing into dust the precious gems of thought of the great Guru.

The aim of my research is to highlight the importance of Human Rights in Guru Nanak *Bani* and to find out their relevance in present scenario. Guru Nanak understood the preciousness of human life and suggested certain basic rights without which human existence is incomplete. These basic Human Rights were being violated due to the social, political and religious conditions prevalent during Guru Nanak's time. Even today situation is similar and so unfortunate are the religious, political and social conditions. Beyond the provision of laws in our Constitution, we are unable to provide or protect Human Rights. So we need to take a fresh look at the whole situation. It is the dire need of the hour to understand, to revive and to implement philosophy of Guru Nanak. This is the only way to save humanity from getting degradation.

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