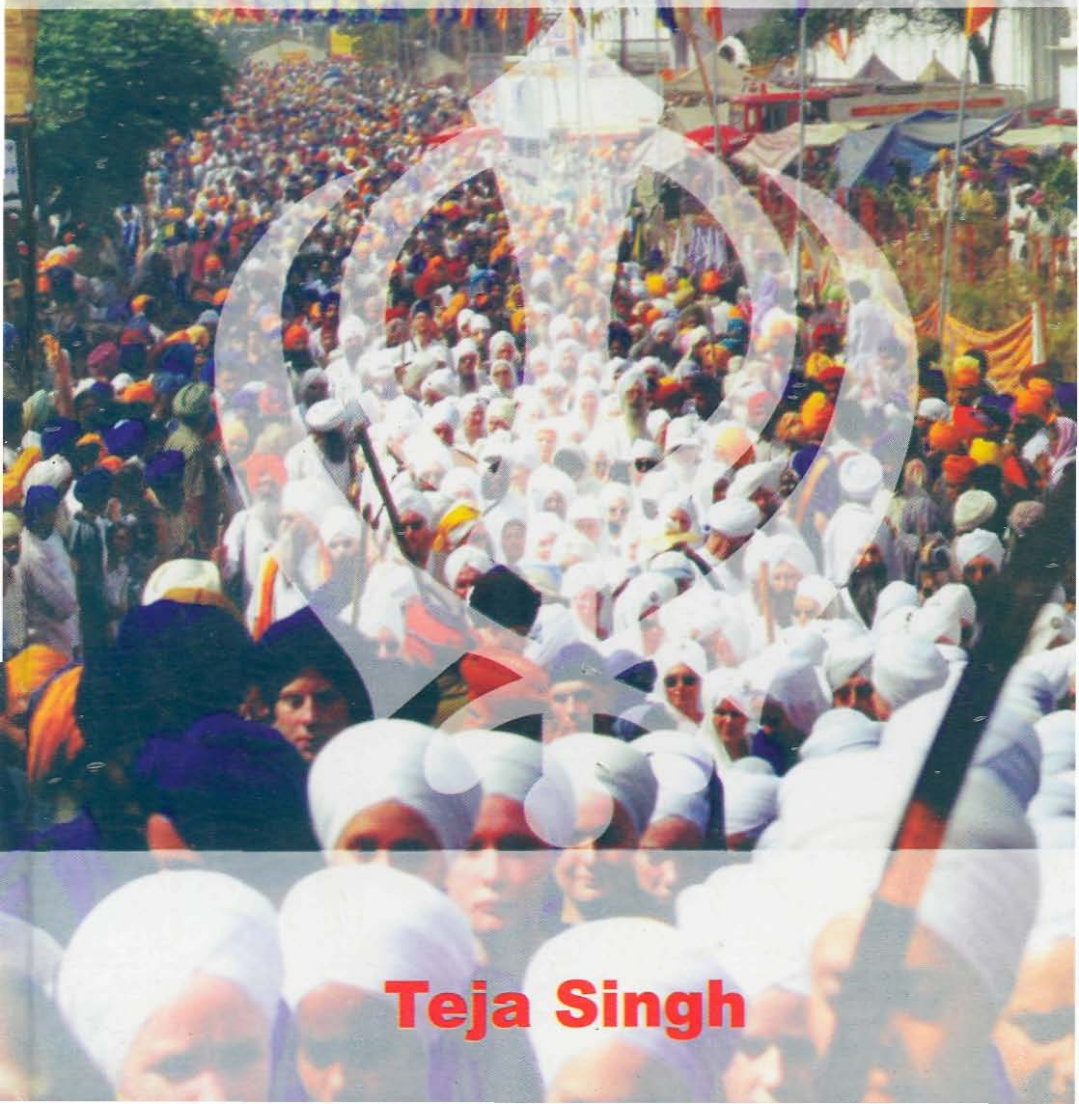


# **UNDERSTANDING** **SIKHISM**



**Teja Singh**

*Dedication*  
*To Harbans Kaur*

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# INTRODUCTION

**S**ikhism is a religion of action and human freedom. It is a religion original, distinct and revealed. It is the youngest religion of the world founded by Guru Nanak (1469-1539). Sikhism is monotheistic, very simple and a way to live a life, preaching the existence of only one God, common for all human kind. There are no superstitious rituals or dogma to be performed and no physical or man-made form or deity to be worshipped. It rejects the theory of the incarnation of God in humanized form-*avataars*, and has nothing to do with the theological ideology of Hinduism or of Islam.

The ideology of the Sikh faith is based on the teaching enshrined in Guru Granth Sahib, a recorded scripture revealed by six founding Sikh Gurus and a number of mystical saints. Guru Granth Sahib is unique, as it was compiled by the Fifth Guru, Guru Arjan Dev, and was scribed by Bhai Gurdas Ji in his presence.

The coming chapters will reveal in detail that which makes Sikhism a uniquely spiritual and socially uplifting religion. The teaching of Sikhism is not restricted to a particular community, faith, culture or to one time period. It lays emphasis on brotherhood of all mankind, Unity of God, and humanitarianism of the spirit. Sikhism is international in approach, preaching good moral conduct, purity of heart and the practice of righteous deeds.

Max Arthur Macauliffe said:

Now there is here presented a religion totally unaffected by Semitic or Christian influences. Based on the concept of unity of God, it rejected Hindu formularies and adopted an independent ethical system, ritual, and standards which were totally opposed to the theological beliefs of Guru Nanak's age and country. As we shall see hereafter, it would be difficult to point out a religion of greater originality or to a more

comprehensive ethical system.

*The Sikh Religion, Introduction, ps. liv-lv.*

The Sikhs owe it to the world to share their rich heritage with rest of mankind.

Further he says:

The Sikh religion, as compared to other religions, presents no mysteries and embraces an ethical system such as has never been excelled.

In response to this, H.H. Justice Mota Singh states, “We fulfil Macauliffe’s words by inculcating in the youth a sense of pride – pride in their community, in its origin and its history, its religion and its language.”

Our youth should feel proud to have such a rich heritage of a glorious religion preaching humanitarianism. It is imperative that the Sikh youth community share this rich heritage with the rest of mankind.

The word ‘Sikh’ means a disciple, a learner, a seeker of truth; he or she should have faith in Guru Granth Sahib and in the teachings of the ten Gurus. Sikhism is a way of life as defined in Guru Granth Sahib and as practiced by Sikh Gurus themselves.

According to Sikhism the first and primal definition of God is Truth. Guru Granth Sahib begins with a digit ‘1’ that signifies that God is one, and defines His supreme qualities further as below:-

ੴ ਸਤਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਕਰਤਾ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਨਿਰਭਉ ਨਿਰਵੈਰੁ

ਅਕਾਲ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਅਜੂਨੀ ਸੈਭੰ ਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥

॥ ਜਪੁ ॥

ਆਦਿ ਸਚੁ ਜੁਗਾਦਿ ਸਚੁ ॥

ਹੈ ਭੀ ਸਚੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਹੋਸੀ ਭੀ ਸਚੁ ॥ ੧ ॥

*Ek-onkaar sat naam karta purkh..*

*The Eternal, the All-pervading Creator*

*Without Fear without Enmity,*

*The Being beyond Time: Eternal, Immortal;*

*Unborn, Uncreated, Self Existent*

*By the Grace of the One Supreme Being,  
Jap (repetition)  
He is Truth from the beginning.  
He is Truth through the ages,  
He is Truth,  
Shall remain Truth forever.*

Thus the Creator is beyond birth and death, and self existent. His actions are spontaneous, of Justice invisible and above retribution. His gifts and bounties are showered equally on all. He is love and love is His creation. He is merciful, benevolent, munificent and beyond description. He abides in the heart of every animate and expects every person to love and serve His creation.

Sikh dharma (*faith*) practices cooperation, understanding, and solidarity to create and maintain a model society based on law of dharma (*Justice*). Sikh dharma accepts people of all sects, castes, creed, and backgrounds, uniting them within love for the eternal, divine law of dharma.

Swami Rama, a Hindu philosopher.

Sikh wisdom tells us to dispel thoughts of disparity. It is free from ethnical, racial, status or regional limitations; but sovereign and lays emphasis on forming an integrated and loving society, and on truthful living and peaceful co-existence.

ਸਚੁ ਤਾ ਪਰੁ ਜਾਣੀਐ ਜਾ ਸਿਖ ਸਚੀ ਲੇਇ ॥

ਦਇਆ ਜਾਣੈ ਜੀਅ ਕੀ ਕਿਛੁ ਪੁੰਨੁ ਦਾਨੁ ਕਰੇਇ ॥ (S.G.G.S. P. 468)

*One knows the Truth only when he receives true instructions.*

*Showing mercy to other beings,*

*And sharing in charities.*

Sikhism is a system of aspiration; activity and optimism about the future of humanity. It is a religion of comprehensive ethical system, accepting God's graciousness and will. It is a key to living a life with a mission to serve humanity while remembering the name of God (*naam simran*) all times, with emphasis on equality of men (includes women) especially to indentify with the lowliest.

Guru Nanak, therefore has firmly based Sikhism on spiritual

foundation on the wisdom of Unity of God, love, compassion for humankind and composed in the philosophy of, “May mind be humble and intellectually exalted.”

*“Let brotherhood be the highest aspiration of your religious order;”* says Guru Nanak, and:

*May the whole humanity  
Be blessed with peace and prosperity  
In Your Will by Your Grace, O Lord.*

**Teja Singh**

# PREFACE

**T**he world today is laden with conflicts and wars. Both, political leaders and religious philosophers, agree that religious differences are to blame in many cases all around the world. Very cruel and heartless wars are being fought because of religious differences. Surprisingly, the warring leaders on both sides often claim to have their God on their side, and also claim that they are fighting to further the cause of a god. President Bush and Saddam Hussain were only the most recent of a long line of political leaders who have drawn on religion to justify a military campaign and to seek god to help them in battle.

Instances such as these absurdities not only repel new generations away from religion but they also define religion as more of an evil than a virtue. This is a dangerous trend and people of faith must take serious notice of it. It is high time to define faith and spirituality based on one God, and one global family under God. These definitions must diverge away from the ethnic religiosities that are so powerfully promoted by self-serving clerics in every religion. The self-serving interpretations of Islam by Osama Bin Laden or caste system in Hindu society by Manu are just two of the examples.

There are many religions in this world. Some are flourishing, some are dying and, others are already extinct. In today's cyber age, we are living in a global nation where there are many customs, cultures, languages and dispositions. They are intermixing and often clashing. Further, all of these are being impacted by the new- age technology in far reaching ways. From medicine to electronics, or travel to entertainment, the technology of the modern world has transformed our day to day lives. It has also had a profound effect on the modern concept of religion and its propagation.

Electronic media and internet are becoming the largest source of information. This is true for religious information that goes in our



favour; it disarms clerics and clergy with their half-baked truths. Wider spread of information and opinions permit the truth to permeate through. The race for spreading different religious concepts is being seen on the many websites which preach individual ideas about religion and spiritualism. They provide original resources and wide diversity in their interpretations. This explosion of information is bound to impact positively on our living and our civilizations. Due to technological innovations, the daily life and its guiding principles are going to change in the near future. During this transitional period, many faiths and religions may face many fundamental and revolutionary questions impacting global living and honesty in the religious promise. The faiths not been able to cope with this challenge may extinct. The Sikh faith is the newest and is prone to impact on our civilization should we succeed in the dissemination of its universal principles. This is the feeling of the author of this book who is said to write this book to outline for the new youth the principles of the Guru's Wisdom, *Gurmat*, as the Sikh faith is known.

Founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak (1469- 1539), came to this earth when paths to enlightenment (religions) were corrupted so that most were essentially devoid of divinity; they were laden with religious strife, hatred, fanaticism, bigotry, and serving the unholy interests. Guru Nanak employed power of love and reason to draw together leaders of all faith and inculcated in them sense of global family under God. In this family diversity among faiths is considered to originate from the influence of different geographies and cultures, and it is appreciated. He wrote his hymns mostly in metaphors so that its intrinsic meaning transcends time and history.

Guru Nanak laid foundation of the new religion which was uniquely spiritual and which powerfully addressed social reforms applicable to the new world of diversity, technology, equality, human rights and which is generally uplifting. Guru Nanak was followed by nine successors; the last one Guru Gobind Singh chose *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* for the Light of Sikhee or *gurmat*, the Guru's wisdom, to reside in it eternally. According to his last sermon, the Sikhs would follow only the light and the wisdom imbibed in their scripture, *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*. This one act of the Guru's wisdom permitted the

preservation of the unity among Sikhs and protected their theology from and dilution on account of many onslaughts of time.

The Granth records scriptures revealed to the Sikh gurus and a number of holy saints and mystics. It uses many languages and metaphors to be recited and sung for it to communicate to the conscious of the seeker. Its readings must be done with the heart and mind beside the tongue.

Teja Singh wrote this book in English for popular and easy reading. There are not many books published in English for the Diaspora Sikh youth. In his book, Singh outlines the Sikh ideology. As a religion of humanity, preaching the ideology of equality and equal status of all human beings irrespective of gender, nationality, social status or religious beliefs. He points out that the religion was founded for well-being of humankind as enunciated by Guru Nanak. To him, Sikhism is the religion of the day and of the future. God's message of truth, love, forbearance, forgiveness and compassion for humanity teaches the notion of a kinship of all humankind. This message is bound to be supreme and shall reign supreme for the ages to come, he states. His hope is that the world will welcome and follow the tenets of Sikh faith for a peaceful co-existence.

Teja Singh wrote this booklet to "convey a concise gist of the Sikh values for the common person not conversant with the Sikh tenets." "I have tried to cover all the important aspects of Sikhism briefly to put across maximum to my best of efforts. I have referred some points of comparative religions for broadly and purely for study purpose with due respect to the followers of their religion." He said.

Sikh religion is original and independent which has nothing to do with older ideologies which have become archaic and often worthless. Although there is enough common with other world religions so that adherents of many religions called it their own, the religion is considered sufficiently novel to be designated as among the world's largest religions as Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism or Judaism. It has its own scriptures, known as *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, its own places of pilgrimages such as Janam Asthan Sri Nanakana Sahib (Pakistan), Sri Harimandir Sahib commonly known as Golden Temple (Northern India), and Takhat Sri Hazur Sahib (Southern India) where

the holy scripture was ordained as the eternal Guru. The uniqueness of the Golden temple is that it has four doors one in each principle direction to welcome people of all nationalities and religions without discrimination. Its foundation stone was laid by a mystic Muslim saint Saain Mian Mir of Lahore, Pakistan. Mr. Singh emphasized that Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Guru of the Sikhs, while compiling the Sikh scripture, made it an interfaith scripture by incorporating in it the hymns of the leaders of other religions. The Sikh Gurus believed that the spiritual essence of every religion may be the same; apparent differences are only to relate to different ethnic, cultural and geographical groups. Some differences are introduced later by the clergy and clerics for their self-serving purposes.

To introduce this book, I like to quote Max Arthur Macauliffe, who while addressing the Quest Society in London in 1910 said:

*We shall see hereafter, it would be difficult to point to a religion of a greater originality or to a more comprehensive ethical system. The values taught by Guru Nanak are as relevant today as in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The world today needs this faith of hope and optimism that preaches the welfare of all.*

Macauliffe further emphasizes that “*The Sikhs owe it to the world to share their rich heritage with rest of mankind.*” He continued to write:

*The Sikh religion, as compared to other religions, presents no mysteries and embraces an ethical system such as has never been excelled.*

I earnestly hope that readers of this booklet shall accrue some valuable knowledge and shall enjoy its reading.

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And

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# THE HOUSE OF GURUS

(Total Period: 240 years)

**G**uru Gobind Singh, at the time of his passing away, transferred the spiritual sovereignty vested in him to Guru Granth Sahib as a living embodiment of the Gurus, and his temporal sovereignty to the Khalsa Panth.

## Genealogy of Sikh Gurus

| <i>Guru</i>      | <i>Name</i>       | <i>Age</i>     |    | <i>Duration of Guruship</i> |    |
|------------------|-------------------|----------------|----|-----------------------------|----|
| 1 <sup>st</sup>  | Guru Nanak Dev    | 1469-1539      | 70 | Founder                     | 70 |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup>  | Guru Angad Dev    | 1504-1552      | 48 | 1539-1552                   | 13 |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup>  | Guru Amar Das     | 1479-1574      | 95 | 1552-1574                   | 22 |
| 4 <sup>th</sup>  | Guru Ram Das      | 1534-1581      | 47 | 1574-1581                   | 7  |
| 5 <sup>th</sup>  | Guru Arjan Dev    | 1563-1606      | 43 | 1581-1606                   | 25 |
| 6 <sup>th</sup>  | Guru Hargobind    | 1595-1644      | 49 | 1606-1644                   | 38 |
| 7 <sup>th</sup>  | Guru Har Rai      | 1630-1661      | 31 | 1644-1661                   | 17 |
| 8 <sup>th</sup>  | Guru Har Krishan  | 1656-1664      | 8  | 1661-1664                   | 3  |
| 9 <sup>th</sup>  | Guru Tegh Bahadur | 1621-1675      | 54 | 1664-1675                   | 11 |
| 10 <sup>th</sup> | Guru Gobind Singh | 1666-1708      | 42 | 1675-1708                   | 33 |
| 11 <sup>th</sup> | Guru Granth Sahib | Shabad<br>Guru |    | 1708-Eternal *              |    |



## GURU NANAK (1469-1539)

**G**uru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh faith was born on April 15, 1469, in a small village called Talwandi, which was later known as Nanakana Sahib now in Pakistan. Early in his life, Guru Nanak disregarded many Hindu rites and customs. Well versed in Sanskrit and Persian literature, he widely travelled to preach his divine message of love, humanity, humility and universal brotherhood to distant lands.

Guru Nanak when working in a provision store in village Sultanpur Lodhi, as an officer in the service of Daulat Khan Lodhi Viceroy of Punjab, one day went to a nearby river and was not seen for three days. When he came out of the river, the Hindu and Muslim people gathered around him. They asked him, where were you? Guru Nanak replied that he was called to the presence of the Lord, the Master. There, he received a holy message, "that there is no Hindu, there is no Muslim, and all are the children of a common Father." The message from the Lord needs to be delivered to all mankind.

This basic truth of 'brotherhood of all humankind and 'Naam Simran' was revealed to Guru Nanak when summoned by the Lord to His mansion, and recorded by the Guru in his autobiography. The Guru says:

ਹਉ ਢਾਢੀ ਵੇਕਾਰੁ ਕਾਰੈ ਲਾਇਆ ॥

ਰਾਤਿ ਦਿਹੈ ਕੈ ਵਾਰ ਧੁਰਹੁ ਫੁਰਮਾਇਆ ॥

ਢਾਢੀ ਸਚੈ ਮਹਲਿ ਖਸਮਿ ਬੁਲਾਇਆ ॥

ਸਚੀ ਸਿਫਤਿ ਸਾਲਾਹ ਕਪੜਾ ਪਾਇਆ ॥

ਸਚਾ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਨਾਮੁ ਭੋਜਨੁ ਆਇਆ ॥

(S.G.G.S. P.150)

*Me, the worthless bard, the Lord has blest with His service.*

*Day and night, many a time He gives His call,*

*And calls me He verily into His presence,*

*And there I sing His praise and receive the robe of honour.  
And nectar Name becomes my ever lasting food.*

That which was revealed to Guru Nanak during his life time, formed the basis of Sikh philoso-ideology and of Sikh faith. The faith and ideology were further nurtured and developed by nine other Gurus who succeeded Guru Nanak. Thus the Sikh Gurus were revealers of Truth and their revelations formed the basis of Sikhism. Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth Guru institutionalized Sikhism by creating 'Khalsa' (the pure ones) to spread and convey the above ideology to the whole of humankind.

## MISSION OF GURU NANAK

**G**uru Nanak travelled far and wide to spread the divine messages of the Oneness of God, and the brotherhood of all humankind. He travelled in search of the universal Truth, reaching India and abroad, thousands of miles away from his homeland. Without doubt, of all the prophets in the annals of human history he was the most extensively travelled. The reason to undertake such a long and arduous journey has been explained by Bhai Gurdas Ji, a Sikh savant and philosopher in a *Var* in Punjabi as below:

ਬਾਬਾ ਦੇਖੇ ਧਯਾਨ ਧਰਿ ਜਲਤੀ ਸਭ ਪ੍ਰਿਥਮੀ ਦਿਸ ਆਈ॥  
ਬਾਝਹੁ ਗੁਰੂ ਗੁਬਾਰ ਹੈ ਹੈ ਹੈ ਕਰਦੀ ਸੁਣੀ ਲੁਕਾਈ॥

*(Bhai Gurdas; Var 1, section 24/5- 6.)*

*Guru Nanak, once sitting in trance envisions that the whole world (humankind) is in flames (with fire of lust and anger), and in the absence of true Guru the world is groping in pitch darkness (of delusion) and he heard the cries of the common person.*

The people of India, due to long subjugation had become so pusillanimous and incapacitated that they were totally bereft of courage. They could not withstand the brunt of the attack of foreign invaders who brought forth atrocities and despotism. Those foreign invaders and their rapacious soldiers carried out carnage, raping, pillaging and plundering to such an extent that the people of India lay supine and prostrate before them. Guru Nanak raised his voice and expressed his sorrow against the atrocities and barbarism committed by the invaders. He also criticized their ruthless existence and their unjust sense of law and order, which showed no righteousness or fair dealings.

Internally, the Brahmin employment of the caste system, as well as



the differing practices of Hindu worship created hatred, jealousy and enmity among the people, so that they were unable to face the enemy jointly on the battlefield. Rather, the crafty local people for their personal interest encouraged and invited the foreign invaders to attack India. Such was the appalling condition of the Indians at the time of the advent of Guru Nanak.

Guru Nanak after witnessing the deplorable conditions of the common-man decided to undertake travels to disseminate the divine message of love to all and like to all, irrespective of any particular sect, gender or religion, and to build brotherhood and harmony among them. He, during his long and strenuous travels had discourses with the men of various religions and acquired the knowledge of these religions in depth. He visited various religious places of worship, noting the hollow, illogical and superstitious rituals and customs prevailing in their respective religions. Guru Nanak enlightened the men of these religions, preaching the divine message of worship of the Oneness of God. He advised them to base their religion on a humanitarian spirit and rational ideology with due respect and tolerance for all and their religions. During his visits to the Hindu religious places he apprised the common people about the futilities of superstitious rituals and the evils of the practices committed by the priest class to misguide them for their vested interests.

When in Multan, the Muslim Sufis and fakirs presented him with a bowl filled to brim with milk indicating that there is no place for him. Guru Nanak placed a jasmine flower on the milk bowl to show them the way to live with consideration, emitting the fragrance of good deeds without fear and panic. So was his heart-touching sermon imbued with love and kindness.

When in Mecca talking to Muslim Qazis, he was questioned to clear their doubt regarding greatness of his religion. The Qazis asked, "Who is great, Hindu or Musalman?"

ਬਾਬਾ ਆਖੇ ਹਾਜੀਆਂ ਸੁਭ ਅਮਲਾਂ ਬਾਝੋਂ ਦੋਵੇਂ ਰੋਈ ॥

(Var 1/33 Bhai Gurdas Ji)

*Replies Nanak, devoid of virtuous deeds both in the Court of the God shall weep.*

While visiting a leper, Guru Nanak dressed his wounds with ointment of sympathy and dressing of love that changed his living. His mystic sermon changed a robber to a benevolent, and his love for the honest bread earners brought forth a revolution, changing the lives of blood suckers to blood donors. He distributed food to the needy, and his merciful glance turned bitter fruits into sweet ones. He traded not for riches but to feed the hungry. His mere words changed the life of a thief to a saint. His divine vision showed the limitless expanse of the universe to Mecca gazers.

He lit the torch of cosmic knowledge for modern scientists when, in the praise of the Creator, he sang melodious Gurbani to express the beauty of cosmic drama and of the unlimited universe. The Guru explains thus the cosmic drama:

ਕੇਤੇ ਪਵਣ ਪਾਣੀ ਵੈਸੰਤਰ ਕੇਤੇ ਕਾਨ ਮਹੇਸ ॥  
 ਕੇਤੇ ਬਰਮੇ ਘਾੜਤਿ ਘੜੀਅਹਿ ਰੂਪ ਰੰਗ ਕੇ ਵੇਸ ॥  
 ਕੇਤੀਆ ਕਰਮ ਭੂਮੀ ਮੇਰ ਕੇਤੇ ਕੇਤੇ ਧੂ ਉਪਦੇਸ ॥  
 ਕੇਤੇ ਇੰਦ ਚੰਦ ਸੂਰ ਕੇਤੇ ਕੇਤੇ ਮੰਡਲ ਦੇਸ ॥  
 ਕੇਤੇ ਸਿਧ ਬੁਧ ਨਾਥ ਕੇਤੇ ਕੇਤੇ ਦੇਵੀ ਵੇਸ ॥  
 ਕੇਤੇ ਦੇਵ ਦਾਨਵ ਮੁਨਿ ਕੇਤੇ ਕੇਤੇ ਰਤਨ ਸਮੁੰਦ ॥

(Pauree 35, Japjee Sahib, S. G. G. S. Japji – 7)

*There are countless currents of air, water, fire; sources of life which exist in the immenseness of cosmos. How many "Krishna and Shiva" exist and admire? There are countless Brahmas shaping millions of forms, colour and garb. Several Indra Devta and moons, suns and several worlds are in existence. How many Sidhs, Buddhas, and countless Naths! Many are the goddesses of myriad kinds! Many the gods, demons, many sages, many jewels, oceans.*

Guru Nanak expressed his views in clear terms that only good deeds performed by individuals are acceptable in the Eternal Court, and that religion or caste carry no value there. Nothing except one's good deeds shall become a saviour and no one shall take a person's sins on his or her shoulders to protect that person in the court of the Lord.

While Guru Nanak was spreading the Word, Shaikh Braham asked

him, "Are you a Muslim?", Guru Nanak replied, "I will be telling a lie if I say I am a Hindu but I am also not a Muslim."

In Mecca he slept with his legs stretched towards Ka'ba to apprise the Muslims that God does not reside in one particular direction or at one place, but He is Omnipresent. Seeing this enraged Mullah, and he grabbed Nanak's feet to change their direction. At this moment, Guru Nanak enabled Mullah to envision the omnipresence of God. So was the miraculous experience that Mullah felt after touching the feet of Nanak.

Guru Nanak frankly talked to the Qazis about their daily practice of five *namaz* at five times, and explained to them the inner reality of this practice:

ਪੰਜਿ ਨਿਵਾਜਾ ਵਖਤ ਪੰਜਿ ਪੰਜਾ ਪੰਜੇ ਨਾਉ ॥

ਪਹਿਲਾ ਸਚੁ ਹਲਾਲ ਦੁਇ ਤੀਜਾ ਬੈਰ ਖੁਦਾਇ ॥

ਚਉਥੀ ਨੀਅਤਿ ਰਾਸਿ ਮਨੁ ਪੰਜਵੀ ਸਿਫਤਿ ਸਨਾਇ ॥

ਕਰਣੀ ਕਲਮਾ ਆਖਿ ਕੈ ਤਾ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਣੁ ਸਦਾਇ ॥

(S.G.G.S. P.141)

*Five prayers at five times, five are their names:*

*Truth is first, honest labour second and*

*Charity third place claims;*

*The fourth asks for honesty in conduct and*

*Fifth is the praise and prayer to God.*

*Support these prayers with your virtuous deeds, and*

*Then call yourself a true Muslim of the Lord.*

From Mecca the Guru went to Baghdad where he countered the Caliph who was highly convinced of the Guru's teachings. Caliph bestowed upon Pir Nanak a *chola* (long cloak) as a respect and honour. This *chola* is preserved at Gurdwara Dera Baba Nanak at Kartarpur (now Pakistan) as an invaluable relic of the Guru. Bhai Gurdas rightly says:

ਜਿਥੈ ਬਾਬਾ ਪੈਰ ਧਰੈ ਪੂਜਾ ਆਸਣ ਬਾਪਣ ਸੋਆ ॥

(Var, 1/27/4)

*Wherever he put his step he left behind indelible foot prints that became a place of honour and worship.*

*So was the gleaming personality of Guru Nanak.*

Guru Nanak did not encourage the worship of particular planets or the practice of going to forests or snow-laden hills for meditation. He also discouraged the performance of yoga practices to receive the God's blessings. Rather, he emphasized the need to free one's mind from lust, greed and ego to receive the Lord's benevolence and blessing.

Running away from the daily activities and responsibilities of family life is of no avail either. He did not spare yogis for deserting their family responsibilities and hiding in the Mountain caves, passing their days on the earnings of the others. Instead, he explained the spiritual discourse to Yogis how to practise yoga in true sense:

*True yoga is to contemplate God's Name and living a detached life from the worldly attachments (Maya) while enjoying family life.*

The Guru very expressively itemized the way of living. He also told the Yogi that living a life without extending love and compassion to others is worthless, and God can only be won over by humble devotion to His Name;

ਨ ਭੀਜੈ ਰਾਗੀ ਨਾਦੀ ਬੇਦਿ ॥

ਨ ਭੀਜੈ ਸੁਰਤੀ ਗਿਆਨੀ ਜੋਗਿ ॥

ਨ ਭੀਜੈ ਸੋਗੀ ਕੀਤੇ ਰੋਜਿ ॥

ਨ ਭੀਜੈ ਰੂਪੀ ਮਾਲੀ ਰੰਗਿ ॥

ਨ ਭੀਜੈ ਤੀਰਥ ਭਵਿਐ ਨੰਗਿ ॥

ਨ ਭੀਜੈ ਦਾਤੀ ਕੀਤੇ ਪੁੰਨਿ ॥

ਨ ਭੀਜੈ ਬਾਹਰਿ ਬੈਠਿਆ ਸੁੰਨਿ ॥

ਨ ਭੀਜੈ ਭੋਜਿ ਮਰਹਿ ਭਿਜਿ ਸੂਰ ॥

(S.G.G.S. p.1237)

*He is not won over by music, songs or the Vedas.*

*He is not won over by intuitive wisdom, meditation or Yoga.*

*He is not won over by feeling sad and depressed forever.*

*He is not won over by beauty, wealth and pleasures.*

*He is not won over by wandering naked at sacred shrines.*

*He is not won over by giving donations in charity.*

*He is not won over by living alone in the wilderness.*

*He is not won over by fighting and dying as a warrior in battle.*

Guru Nanak even questioned the kings for the atrocities inflicted on the innocent people. Babar, the Emperor who invaded India, carried out general carnage and massacre of unarmed helpless people. In response to these actions Guru Nanak went to Babar and admonished him for the bloodshed he carried out. He also expressed his feeling to God about the carnage committed by Babar:

ਕਰਤਾ ਤੂੰ ਸਭਨਾ ਕਾ ਸੋਈ ॥

ਜੇ ਸਕਤਾ ਸਕਤੇ ਕਉ ਮਾਰੇ ਤਾ ਮਨਿ ਰੋਸੁ ਨ ਹੋਈ ॥ ੧ ॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥

ਸਕਤਾ ਸੀਹੁ ਮਾਰੇ ਪੈ ਵਗੈ ਖਸਮੈ ਸਾ ਪੁਰਸਾਈ ॥

(S.G.G.S. p.360)

*O Creator Lord, You are the Master of all. If some powerful man strikes out against another man, then no one feels any grief in their mind. || 1 || Pause || But if a powerful tiger attacks a flock of sheep and kills them mercilessly, and then its master must answer for it.*

The Guru also shunned Malik Bhago, a government official, for offering food to his manes for their liberation, while extorting money from the poor people of his domain. Malik invited Guru Nanak to partake in the food that was being offered to his manes. Guru Nanak declined, saying that the food being offered to the manes was not earned truthfully, but by sucking the poor people's blood. Listening to the Guru's remarks, Malik got furious, but Guru Nanak was patient, and showed him the right path, and eventually Malik fell to the Guru's feet. The Guru explained that the right thing is to serve the needy that need it indeed. So was the legendary way of Guru Nanak, full of compassion and love.

Though he alienated himself from the Hindu philosophy, Guru Nanak still advised the Hindus to become kind hearted human beings. This was the same for the Muslims. He had a number of discourses and discussions with Hindu and Muslim priests, as well as with priests of many other faiths. He preached to them, telling them to rise above the man made rituals and to live a truthful life rendering service to mankind. The Guru showed that the world is engulfed by false and futile rituals that divert from the right path to contemplating God.

Bhagat Kabir also rejected the ideology of the Pundits and Mullahs. He said that God could only be found within, provided one

cleansed one's heart with humble devotion to Him, loving His creation.

Sumit Kaur, born in a Christian family, abandoned Christianity as a teenager. Feeling that Christianity was not serving her day-to-day life, she came into the Sikh fold. She says, "Guru Granth does not just fit alongside other scriptures, it is light-years ahead of them, because of the fact that it is for the whole of the humanity. Other scriptures are exclusively for the followers of their own faith, who regard others as infidels." She further says, "For, if a Hindu shall be true to the essence of his faith, he will have to practise the caste system, which in itself is highly exploitative. And a Muslim would have to consider women inferior and all non-Muslims as infidels, which is equally exploitative. ....The Guru on the contrary, has described his concept of Hindu and Muslim in Guru Granth Sahib. And that has nothing to do with the philosophy of Hinduism or Islam."

Sumit Kaur has not spared the Christian religion. She says, "The one, into which I was born, believes in virgin birth, another in the inferiority of women, yet one in the inequality of human beings, and finally, one in the coming of a new saviour. Why and how on earth should and could *Sikhi* fit in among such religions?"

Abstracts of Sikh Studies, p. 27 -28 vol. VII, Issue I, Jan-March.

## ORIGIN OF THE UNIVERSE

**G**uru Nanak explains the existence of the universe as revealed to him. "When the God willed He created the universe. And He will withdraw the whole existence into Him as and when He desires so." In the beginning there was only God and His Will (*Hukam*) prevailed for a million trillion years. God was in a state of absolute stillness, or *sunya*. There was complete darkness but the Absolute Lord was in *Sunya Samadhi* (constant-profound meditation). "*Sunya* is not 'void/emptiness' as claimed by science and certain religious groups, expect *Akal Purakh*. This 'emptiness' does not accord with science, because one can't have something from nothing. From the *Sunya*, God created Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. Created was the moon, the sun, the earth, water, air and so on. It is certain that there must have been a time when there was no Shiv Shakti, Brahma, etc. but the absolute *Akal Purkh*."

Unlike in Hinduism, they are not deities but names of different powers. The root causes of all this, [is] in fact the Creator itself. It is these powers that have been mentioned in Japji Sahib, stanza, 30.

The Sikh Bulletin, p. 4 –January-February. 2006

Guru Nanak explains cosmic phenomenon of the creation of the universe as below which condemns the Hindu myth that Lord Krishna was the incarnation of God and the Creator. This myth stands further rejected by the Guru as below:-

ਅਰਬਦ ਨਰਬਦ ਧੰਧੂਕਾਰਾ ॥ ਧਰਣਿ ਨ ਗਗਨਾ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਅਪਾਰਾ ॥  
ਨਾ ਦਿਨੁ ਰੈਨਿ ਨ ਚੰਦੁ ਨ ਸੂਰਜੁ ਸੁੰਨ ਸਮਾਧਿ ਲਗਾਇਦਾ ॥ ੧ ॥  
ਖਾਣੀ ਨ ਬਾਣੀ ਪਉਣ ਨ ਪਾਣੀ ॥ ਓਪਤਿ ਖਪਤਿ ਨ ਆਵਣ ਜਾਣੀ ॥  
ਖੰਡ ਪਤਾਲ ਸਪਤ ਨਹੀ ਸਾਗਰ ਨਦੀ ਨ ਨੀਰੁ ਵਹਾਇਦਾ ॥ ੨ ॥  
ਨਾ ਤਦਿ ਸੁਰਗੁ ਮਛੁ ਪਇਆਲਾ ॥ ਦੋਜਕੁ ਭਿਸਤੁ ਨਹੀ ਖੈ ਕਾਲਾ ॥

ਨਰਕੁ ਸੁਰਗੁ ਨਹੀ ਜੰਮਣੁ ਮਰਣਾ ਨਾ ਕੋ ਆਇ ਨ ਜਾਇਦਾ॥ ੩॥

ਬ੍ਰਹਮਾ ਬਿਸਨੁ ਮਹੇਸ਼ੁ ਨ ਕੋਈ॥ ਅਵਰੁ ਨ ਦੀਸੈ ਏਕੋ ਸੋਈ॥

ਨਾਰਿ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਨਹੀ ਜਾਤਿ ਨ ਜਨਮਾ ਨਾ ਕੋ ਦੁਖੁ ਸੁਖੁ ਪਾਇਦਾ॥ ੪॥ .....

ਨਾ ਸੁਚਿ ਸੰਜਮੁ ਤੁਲਸੀ ਮਾਲਾ॥ ਗੋਪੀ ਕਾਨੁ ਨ ਗਊ ਗੋਆਲਾ॥

ਤੰਤੁ ਮੰਤੁ ਪਾਖੰਡੁ ਨ ਕੋਈ ਨਾ ਕੋ ਵੰਸੁ ਵਜਾਇਦਾ॥ ੫॥ (S.G.G.S. p.1035-36)

*For endless eons, there was only utter darkness.*

*There was no earth or sky;*

*There was only the infinite Command of His Hukam.*

*There was no day or night, no moon or sun;*

*God sat in primal, profound Samadhi.[1]*

*There were no sources of creation or powers of speech, any air or water.*

*There was no creation or destruction, no coming or going.*

*There were no continents, nether regions or seven seas, rivers or flowing water.2*

*Existed then neither heaven or mortal world or the nether world;*

*Neither hell or heaven or time that destroys.*

*Hell or heaven, birth and death were then not,*

*None arrived into the world or departed.3*

*Then were not Brahma, Vishnu or Shiva;*

*None other than the Sole Lord was visible.*

*Neither existed there female or male or caste or birth-*

*None suffering and joy received.4.*

.....

*There was no purification, no self-restraint, and no rosary of basil seeds.*

*There were no Gopis, no Krishna, no cows or cowherds.*

*There were no tantras or mantras, and no hypocrisy;*

*No one played the flute.” 7.*

God created the vast expanse of universe by uttering One Word (Shabad) (big bang, as the scientists named it). Thus the whole creation was spontaneously completed by Him. This fact also has been vividly explained as below in Japji Sahib by Guru Nanak.

ਕੀਤਾ ਪਸਾਉ ਏਕੋ ਕਵਾਉ॥

ਤਿਸ ਤੇ ਹੋਏ ਲਖ ਦਰੀਆਉ॥



ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਕਵਣ ਕਹਾ ਵੀਚਾਰੁ ॥

(S.G.G.S. P. 3)

*You created the vast expanse of the Universe with One Word!  
Hundreds of thousands of rivers started to flow.  
How can Your creative Power be described?*

And

ਆਸਣੁ ਲੋਇ ਲੋਇ ਭੰਡਾਰੁ ॥ ਜੋ ਕਿਛੁ ਪਾਇਆ ਸੁ ਏਕਾ ਵਾਰੁ ॥

ਕਰਿ ਕਰਿ ਵੇਖੈ ਸਿਰਜਣਹਾਰੁ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਸਚੇ ਕੀ ਸਾਚੀ ਕਾਰੁ ॥ (S.G.G.S. p.7)

*One world after world is His Seats of Authority and His Storehouses.*

*Whatever was put into them was put there once and for all.  
Having created the Creation, the Creator Lord watches over it.  
O Nanak! True is the Creation of the True Lord.*

Guru Gobind Singh explains in clear terms the existence of the universe in the couplet given below. He explains in *Chaupayee*,

ਜਬ ਉਦਕਰਖ ਕਰਾ ਕਰਤਾਰਾ ॥ ਪ੍ਰਜਾ ਧਰਤ ਤਬ ਦੇਹ ਅਪਾਰਾ ॥

ਜਬ ਆਕਰਖ ਕਰਤ ਹੋ ਕਬਹੂੰ ॥ ਤੁਮ ਮੈ ਮਿਲਤ ਦੇਹ ਧਰ ਸਭਹੂੰ ॥

*With a forceful sound the whole universe was manifested into countless forms. And the Creator will withdraw the whole existence into Him as and when He desires so. 13*

The above revelations have been corroborated by Gurdas Ji in his Var as below.

ਉਅੰਕਾਰ ਅਕਾਰ ਕਰ ਏਕ ਕਵਾਉ ਪਸਾਉ ਪਸਾਰਾ ॥

(Var. 1/4/1)

*With one wonderful sound of Ek-onkaar the whole manifestation came into existence.*

The Guru further explains that whatsoever God has put into the universe neither increases nor decreases and for all times it will remain constant:

ਜਿਮੀ ਜਮਾਨ ਕੇ ਬਿਖੈ, ਸਮੱਸਤ ਏਕ ਜੋਤ ਹੈ ॥

ਨਾ ਘਾਟ ਹੈ ਨ ਬਾਢ ਹੈ, ਨ ਘਾਟ ਬਾਢ ਹੋਤ ਹੈ ॥

Guru Gobind Singh Akal Ustat

*On the planets and in the whole space*

*There pervades one great energy throughout  
This creative energy neither decreases nor increases,  
Neither shall there be any change at any time.*

Whatever Guru Nanak said five hundred years ago, is today being accepted and agreed upon by modern scientists. *Aka: Purkh*, the Spiritual Energy consists of very small particles called Quark, Meson, and Lepton. These three particles, according to the modern research form Proton and Neutron. These two particles further form Nucleus and when Nucleus is put together with Electron (another subatomic particle), the Atom is produced. Atoms produce molecules and matter. The matter in myriad form makes the universe. Thus the Spiritual or Great Energy is the creator of the universe and is found in every particle (found) in the space, and the Sikh philosophy confirms it.

According to Guru Gobind Singh, it is a 'play' that exists only until God brings the 'play' to an end. He explicitly defines the attributes of the Great Energy, the God in his composition "Jaap Sahib" in the following words:

ਚੱਕ੍ਰ ਚਿਹਨ ਅਰੁ ਬਰਨ ਜਾਤਿ ਅਰੁ ਪਾਤਿ ਨਹਿਨ ਜਿਹ॥

ਰੂਪ ਰੰਗ ਅਰੁ ਰੇਖ ਭੇਖ ਕੋਊ ਕਹਿ ਨ ਸਕਤਿ ਕਿਹ॥

ਅਚਲ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਅਨਭਉ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼.....

*God is metaphysical, unborn, beyond time, Eternal, Uncreated, Self-existent, without form, colour or contour, Self-illumine with limitless powers. He can neither be described nor can be depicted into an image or idol. He is universally pervasive in His manifestation.*

So the True Lord created the life with Cosmic-consciousness. According to the Law of Nature, the cosmos are constantly changing. All objects, living or non-living; visible or invisible, macro or micro forms are in continuous motion. The object seemingly fixed to us is in reality in constant motion. Gurbani enlightens us that even the smallest items like atoms and molecules separated by tremendous distances are constantly moving with an unimaginable speed that the eye cannot visualize. Guru Arjan says that the mind also goes on wandering at an incredible speed, but fails to realize without the Guru.

ਪਰਮਾਣੇ ਪਰਜੰਤ ਆਕਾਸਹ ਦੀਪ ਲੋਅ ਸਿਖੰਡਣਹ॥

ਗਛੇਣ ਨੈਣ ਭਾਰੇਣ ਨਾਨਕ ਬਿਨਾ ਸਾਧੂ ਨ ਸਿਧੁਤੇ॥ (S.G.G.S. p. 1360)

*If one moves like an atom through the skies, continents*

*And regions, in the twinkling of an eye.*

*Yet he cannot attain the real objective without the Guru.*

Now the question arises as to who is behind this mysterious phenomenon or motion? Who transforms matter into energy and what is energy exactly? It is all mystery and shall remain forever a mystery. What is true is that the Law of conservation of energy, the existence of which Sikhism acknowledges, is a phenomenon that is similar to the concept of existence of God: it can neither be created nor destroyed, and it is always there. When some item (matter) is destroyed it changes into different forms.

Energy can be manifested in many different forms such as sound, light, heat, gravity, electricity and magnetism. Its origin is *Sunya* and it is self-existent.

The said Primal Power, the *Akal Purkh* is the real energy behind every thing. Motion produces energy and energy produces motion and vice versa. Every matter is charged with energy and nothing exists without it. God is the energy, and energy is the Primal Power. Matter and energy are interchangeable. The matter (charged with energy) cannot have consciousness without the soul, which is part and parcel of God. Through energy we all are being produced, nourished, and destroyed. This energy is defined in three forms in Japji Sahib, stanza 30 in the following words:

ਏਕਾ ਮਾਈ ਜੁਗਤਿ ਵਿਆਈ ਤਿਨਿ ਚੇਲੇ ਪਰਵਾਣੁ॥

ਇਕੁ ਸੰਸਾਰੀ ਇਕੁ ਭੰਡਾਰੀ ਇਕੁ ਲਾਏ ਦੀਬਾਣੁ॥

ਜਿਵ ਤਿਸੁ ਭਾਵੈ ਤਿਵੈ ਚਲਾਵੈ ਜਿਵ ਹੋਵੈ ਫੁਰਮਾਣੁ॥

*As per prevalent legend, the One Mother conceived alone in some mysterious way, and she procreated three deities; the Creator (Brahma), the Sustainers (Vishnu) and the Destroyer (Shiva).*

According to scientific research these three deities are nothing but Quark, Meson and Lepton.

The existence of this whole system further explains Guru Nanak;

ਕੇਤੇ ਪਵਣ ਪਾਣੀ ਵੈਸੰਤਰ ਕੇਤੇ ਕਾਨ ਮਹੇਸ ॥

ਕੇਤੇ ਬਰਮੇ ਘਾੜਤਿ ਘੜੀਅਹਿ ਰੂਪ ਰੰਗ ਕੇ ਵੇਸ ॥ (Japji Sahib, Stanza 35)

*So many winds, waters and fires; so many Krishnas and Shivas. So many Brahmas, fashioning forms of great beauty, adorned and dressed in many colours.*

There is no end to these creative forces and there is no end to the planets, suns and moons. The vastness of nature is beyond our visionary powers. We all are the product of the energy and in energy we merge, but in different forms.

Guru Arjan very clearly has explained the evolution of life. It evolved through countless forms of life – other species such as worms, insects, elephants, fish, deer, snakes etc – and moved through inanimate life forms to animate life forms. It took a million trillion years for the evolution of the human life to come into present form. The cycle of life and death is unending. God's greatness is beyond measure and can not be estimated. Guru Arjan says, "He, alone knows His extent."

ਕਈ ਜਨਮ ਭਏ ਕੀਟ ਪਤੰਗਾ ॥ ਕਈ ਜਨਮ ਗਜ ਮੀਨ ਕੁਰੰਗਾ ॥

ਕਈ ਜਨਮ ਪੰਥੀ ਸਰਪ ਹੋਇਓ ॥ ਕਈ ਜਨਮ ਚੈਵਰ ਬ੍ਰਿਖ ਜੋਇਓ ॥ ੧ ॥

ਮਿਲੁ ਜਗਦੀਸ ਮਿਲਨ ਕੀ ਬਰੀਆ ॥ ਚਿਰੰਕਾਲ ਇਹ ਦੇਹ ਸੰਜਰੀਆ ॥

(S.G.G.S., p.176)

*In so many incarnations, you were a worm and an insect; in so many incarnations, you were an elephant, a fish and a deer. In so many incarnations, you were a bird and a snake. In so many incarnations, you were yoked as an ox and a horse. || 1 || Meet the Lord of the Universe — now is the time to meet Him. After so very long, this human body was fashioned for you.*

The sun, moon and all other planets work under His command and perform their respective duties. In fear of God all planets spin, winds blow, thousands of rivers flow and all the gods and goddesses obey His command. Every thing dances as willed by Him and everything is spontaneously duty bound. There is no end to this motion, thus the

creation itself is an enigma.

ਭੀਤਰਿ ਅਗਨਿ ਬਨਾਸਪਤਿ ਮਉਲੀ ਸਾਗਰੁ ਪੰਡੈ ਪਾਇਆ ॥

ਚੰਦੁ ਸੂਰਜੁ ਦੁਇ ਘਰ ਹੀ ਭੀਤਰਿ ਐਸਾ ਗਿਆਨੁ ਨ ਪਾਇਆ ॥ ੨ ॥

(S.G.G.S., p.1171)

*The vegetation is in bloom, though within it is fire,*

*The earth is swamped not, though bounded by the seas;*

*The sun is hot and the moon is cool, both reside in the same sky,*

*But one knows not His wisdom.*

Cosmological ideas as enunciated in Guru Granth Sahib have been found to be most scientific and compatible with the modern cosmological theories of science. Guru Granth Sahib undoubtedly is a guide to science. It states the simple facts that God created the universe and He only knows who created it, and when. This great energy is a mysterious phenomenon that sometime gives rise to revelations by the way of unstruck sound (ਅਨਾਹਦ) and premonitions. Hence the question of the creation of wondrous energy may remain a mystery. Guru Nanak calls this mysterious phenomenon 'Truth' which is true from the beginning, true from the ages, and shall remain true for all time to come. Thus Sikhism is a most modern and authentic faith for the present and future age. ●

## Science versus Sikhism:

Science and Sikhism are not compatible though science and other religions may be. While science deals with the matter and things happen because of a favourable conditions or chance. But Sikhism is philosophy that deals with spirituality and things happen because of the Will (Hukam) and graciousness of *Akal Purakh*;

ਹੁਕਮੈ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਸਭੁ ਕੋ ਬਾਹਰਿ ਹੁਕਮ ਨ ਕੋਇ ॥

(S.G.G. S., P. 1)

*Everyone is subject to His Command; no one is beyond His Command.*

Where science ends, Sikhi begins. Those who have found Him have become like Him. He is beyond description and so are His saints! No body created Him; He is rootless and free from

illusion”.

Dr. Hardial Singh Dhillon.

The Sikh Bulletin, p.24, issue, November-December.2004

**Bradshaw also says:**

The Guru Granth Sahib of all the world religious scriptures, alone states that there are innumerable worlds and universes other than our own. The previous scriptures were all concerned only with world and its spiritual counterpart. To imply that they spoke of other worlds as does the Guru Granth Sahib is to stretch their obvious meanings out of context. The Sikh religion is the truly answer to the problems of the modern man.

Article in the Sikh Review, Calcutta

## THREE PILLARS OF SIKHISM

**G**uru Granth Sahib is replete with numerous commandments for the benefit of humankind. It works to raise and improve family life through devotion to God. It answers all the questions related to the human mind and mental state. Gurbani is a psalm that gives peace of mind.

There are numerous pillars of Sikhism such as, *Tan (body)*, *Man (mind)*, *Dhan (wealth)*, and *Naam (remembrance of God)* *Daan (charity)* *Ishnaan (bathing)* etc. All such pillars, mentioned in Gurbani, form the very basic foundation of the Sikh philosophy and theology. The Sikh philosophy advocates living a life in devotion to Lord and rendering selfless service to human society.

A religion bereft of love, compassion and truthful earning (*Kirt*) is nothing but dogmatism, groping in the dark.

Guru Nanak therefore based his first fundamental ideology on the following three pillars:

- i) **Kirt Karo:-** truthful earning and truthful living. If truth enshrines within, only then can one earn and lead a truthful life. Truth that can lead a life in the right direction is provided in the heart. Says the Guru:

ਸਚੁ ਤਾ ਪਰੁ ਜਾਣੀਐ ਜਾ ਰਿਦੈ ਸਚਾ ਹੋਇ ॥

ਕੂੜ ਕੀ ਮਲੁ ਉਤਰੈ ਤਨੁ ਕਰੇ ਹਛਾ ਧੋਇ ॥

ਸਚੁ ਤਾ ਪਰੁ ਜਾਣੀਐ ਜਾ ਸਚਿ ਧਰੇ ਪਿਆਰੁ ॥ (S.G.G.S., P.468)

*One knows the Truth only when the Truth is in his heart.*

*The filth of falsehood departs, and the body is washed clean.*

*One knows the Truth only when he bears love to the True Lord.*

And

ਘਾਲਿ ਖਾਇ ਕਿਛੁ ਹਥਹੁ ਦੇਇ ॥

ਨਾਨਕ ਰਾਹੁ ਪਛਾਣਹਿ ਸੇਇ ॥

(S.G.G.S., p. 1245)

*He who earns his livelihood by honest means and labour  
And shares something out of that earning among the needy,  
O Nanak, he has only found the right way.*

Honest earning not only cleanses the mind of evil thoughts but also exalts self consciousness and brings awareness. It also infuses the spirit of sacrifice for the sacred and right cause for the benefit of the society.

- ii) **Vand Chhako:-** sparing and sharing some portion of honestly earned money for the needy. Sharing with the needy gives solace and happiness to the mind, and elevates thinking and one's psyche. It also eliminates the fears and anxieties of the donor. It is better if possible to provide monetary aid to the needy for the purpose of setting up trade or learning a set of skills in a progressive way so to manage livelihood on a sustainable basis.

Sharing does not mean merely sharing of one's earnings, but also sharing the sorrow and happiness of one's fellow brothers both in adversity and privilege. Apart from sharing money, one should also spare some time for welfare work in social and religious activities to disseminate the divine message of Guru Granth Sahib to the budding generations worldwide. Guru says;

He who does not contribute to the society has no right to claim benefit from it.

- iii) **Nam Japo:-** remembrance of God's name and contemplation within, with the mind constantly fixed on God. Guru Arjan Dev proclaims the benefits of *Nam Simrin* in the very first stanza of Sukhmani Sahib.

ਸਿਮਰਉ ਸਿਮਰਿ ਸਿਮਰਿ ਸੁਖੁ ਪਾਵਉ ॥ ਕਲਿ ਕਲੇਸ ਤਨ ਮਾਹਿ ਮਿਟਾਵਉ ॥

(S.G.G.S., P. 262)

*Meditate, meditate, meditate in remembrance of Him, and find*



*peace.*

*Worry and anguish shall be dispelled from your body.*

The spiritually conscious mind attains poise and tranquility, frees itself from selfishness and worldly attachments, and eliminates the deepest fears, anxieties and mental tensions. Such an awakened mind treasures the wealth of godliness, compassion, and inner sympathy for others. There upon the thirst for worldly pleasures and attachments disappears. The spiritually conscious mind regains peace of mind, infuses high-spiritedness and relieves ego and wrath. In the realm of truthfulness there lies devoutness for divine truth, obedience, longing for the Lord's grace and willingness to serve humankind. The mind ingrained with the seed of *Nam Simrin* (remembering of Nam) is the wealthiest and the most respected and accepted here and thereafter. The Lord's grace gleams spontaneously on the face of the individual, and the mind blooms like a lotus, free from worldly attachments and illusions. *Nam Simrin* is a remedy for bodily ailments, a combatant of deceptive thinking, and a giver of peace.

Thus the glory of all life lies in remembrance of the divine Name. The Guru defines brevity of true religion in the following terms:

The highest among all religions is: to contemplate the Divine Name and to adhere to purity of conduct. The repetition of Nam is to inculcate good attributes and qualities (God like) within oneself to purify one's conduct and thinking. Service and remembrance (*Sewa* and *Simrin*) form an integral part of a balanced life in true sense. These three fundamental doctrines form the very basic foundation of Sikhism. Further more the Tenth Master combined *bhakti* with *Shakti* to infuse high spiritedness, spirituality and spirit of sovereignty to dispel fear and anguish in the Sikhs.

*Nam Simrin*, in the Sikh way of life does not mean merely muttering the Divine name. It is much more than repeatedly muttering the name, but one has to be imbued for yearning for the beloved, mind transcending to the state of truthfulness, and one must sacrifice oneself to ever-perfect *Akal Purkh*. "*Simrin*, according to the Guru is the

feeling which gathers itself grain by grain and suddenly gives birth to the highest arts of celestializing nature and man.” Says Prof. Puran Singh.

The above three fundamentals proclaimed by Guru Nanak not only discipline the individual but also create a better society to live in, allowing a better understanding of life, and a friendly environment of a blissful and loving coexistence.

## THREE COMMANDMENTS

**G**uru Gobind Singh's concept of a nation is of an existence conscious and free from fear, timidity, and humiliation. He preaches a spirit of nationalism, spirituality and sovereignty. At the time of creation of Khalsa Panth, he said:

ਜਉ ਤਉ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਖੇਲਣ ਕਾ ਚਾਉ ॥ ਸਿਰੁ ਧਰਿ ਤਲੀ ਗਲੀ ਮੇਰੀ ਆਉ ॥  
ਇਤੁ ਮਾਰਗਿ ਪੈਰੁ ਧਰੀਜੈ ॥ ਸਿਰੁ ਦੀਜੈ ਕਾਣਿ ਨ ਕੀਜੈ ॥ (S.G.G.S., p. 1412)  
*If you desire to play this game of love,  
Step onto my path with your head on palm.  
If you desire to tread on this path of love,  
Hesitate not to offer your head.*

So in this unique way he selected "Five Beloved Ones". "*Punj Piare*". Those who were willing to lay down their lives for (i) sovereignty (ii) brotherhood of mankind (iii) annihilation of injustice, corruption and egotism (iv) eradication of the caste system and social ills of society, and (v) the safeguard human rights.

The Guru states further:

*Take the broom of divine knowledge into thy hand,  
And sweep away the filth of timidity.*

Thus elimination of timidity as an objective in both body and mind was a central focus of Guru Gobind Singh, with equal stress on synthesis of the spiritual and temporal authority. The Guru says to maintain dignity of the concept of "Spirit and Sword", and the spirit of the saint and soldier, in doing this, it is necessary to follow three commandments:

## **Degh, Tegh, Fateh**

*Degh*, the concept of common kitchen,  
A virtue of love, equality and compassion.  
And selfless service to all and every one,  
And perception of spiritual realisation.

*Degh* here symbolizes “*Langar*”, a common kitchen; free food for every one. Guru Nanak initially introduced this concept of free kitchen, so that no one in the kingdom of God should go hungry. It is here that the high and the low, the kings and the paupers, the learned and the ignorant, all share the common food (*langar*) without distinction and discrimination at one common platform.

*Tegh* is a Persian word, which means a scimitar or a dagger, but here the Guru declares it, ‘the scourge of the wicked and protector of the weak and the destitute’.

It is the weapon of defence and not of offence. It is a sign of sovereignty, compassion, piety and purity. It is a gift that the Guru gave to the Khalsa Panth. The Guru tells us that the sword raised to defend the righteous cause is a “Holy Sword.” Better death in war than a life of slavery, a life without honour and dignity is a curse:

ਜੇ ਜੀਵੈ ਪਤਿ ਲਬੀ ਜਾਇ ॥

ਸਭੁ ਹਰਾਮੁ ਜੇਤਾ ਕਿਛੁ ਖਾਇ ॥

(S.G.G.S., p. 142)

*If one loses honour in life,*

*Impure is all that one eats.*

*Fateh*: means victory. It is not only in the battlefield, but in all the disciplines of life. A true Sikh must stand distinguished in every field of life, because he represents his master as a distinct person, and must feel proud of being a distinguished person.

The first two commandments of *Degh* and *Tegh* are the basic needs of every nation and every human being. A well-fed and well-armed nation is bound to be ever victorious and progressive in every field of life. Thus the Guru prays to God to be victorious in every facet of life:

*O’ the Beneficent Lord, grant me this boon,*

*That may I not deter from right doings,  
Devoid of fear, may I fight in battlefield!  
Inspired with confidence to stand victorious.*

These three Commands bestowed upon the Sikh mean to impart better and generous qualities in him and in every human being. By the grace of these qualities the Sikhs do stand distinct in the world today.

Prof. Puran Singh very lucidly and diligently expressed his views about Sikh religion: But let me say, that, assuredly, the Guru's religion is the religion of Nature and of the soul. It is absolutely different from the theological and philosophic nonsense of the Brahmins. It refuses to have any concern with the reality composed of certain set of final mental concepts such as the Brahmanical philosophic speculations put forth. Concepts are dead matter. The religion of the Gurus is, briefly the art of living, keeping the divine light aflame, more artistic than metaphysical or theological, and more full of labour, craft, and the appreciations of the beautiful in man and nature and their handicraft.

The Spirit Born People, p. 127.

## THE INSTITUTION OF COMMON KITCHEN

**T**he Sikh Gurus established the institution of common kitchen that shook the very foundation of the Hindu caste system and the social arrogance of the Muslims. The visionary strategy of Guru Nanak was to establish an ideal society of universal brotherhood where every human could enjoy equal rights to live a life of equal status, honour and respect. His aim was to develop a well fed, healthy, and cohesive society, free from abhorrence and repugnance. To achieve this goal, it was necessary to introduce a system of common kitchen for all to cleanse dregs of caste, barring any restriction.

Later on, Guru Amar Das, the third Guru Nanak made *Pangat* (sitting in a row) a precondition for *Sangat* (congregation) to meet him. In other words, he made it obligatory for all persons to sit together without distinction to partake food in *Langar* before they could attend the congregational meetings and prayers. This practice, to a large extent removed the inferiority complex among the low caste people and the untouchables, and it gave them a chance to mingle with the upper class people. This was necessary if mutual bonds of human feeling were to be developed among all sections of society.

Some high caste people, finding the institution of common kitchen a great blow to their prestigious social status, started creating problems for the Guru. Local henchmen were hired by these high caste people to intimidate and harass the Sikhs visiting the Guru. The high caste went to the extent of lodging a complaint with the Emperor Akbar, who happened to be nearby Lahore. Their major objection was that the Guru was desecrating the Hindu faith by permitting untouchables to sit and eat beside the high caste. Akbar summoned the Guru to Lahore to give his reply to the charges levelled against him.

Bhai Jetha, later to be known as Guru Ram Das, was sent to Lahore

to represent and refute the charges against the Guru. After listening to the Guru's emissary, the Emperor not only rejected the memorandum of the plaintiffs, but also paid homage to the Guru, visiting Goindwal (a town). Before meeting the Guru, Akbar himself observed the rule of the *Pangat* by partaking of food while sitting along side the common people. He was so pleased by the establishment of the common kitchen of the common people for the common people that he wanted to donate a Jagir (fiefdom, income from a unit of villages) for the expenses of *Langar*. The Guru declined the offer stating that it must remain a common man's affair. *Langar* had to be run by voluntary contribution of the common people for the common cause and not by the donations of the Emperor or any particular person.

The institution of *Langar*, introduced by the Sikh Gurus, bears testimony to one of the highest tenets of Sikh faith. None knew better than the Sikh Gurus that religious instructions sound hollow and hypocritical to a hungry man. This axiom was held high by Bhagat Kabir when he said:

ਭੁਖੇ ਭਗਤਿ ਨ ਕੀਜੈ ॥ ਯਹ ਮਾਲਾ ਅਪਨੀ ਲੀਜੈ ॥ (S.G.G.S., p.656)  
*I am so hungry; I cannot perform devotional worship service.*  
*Here, Lord, take back Your mala (rosary).*

Guru Arjan, the Fifth Master has himself prayed to the Almighty for the care of all beings as follows:

ਸਭੇ ਜੀਅ ਸਮਾਲਿ ਅਪਣੀ ਮਿਹਰ ਕਰੁ ॥  
 ਅੰਨੁ ਪਾਣੀ ਮੁਖੁ ਉਪਾਇ ਦੁਖ ਦਾਲਦੁ ਭੰਨਿ ਤਰੁ ॥ (S.S.G.S., p. 1251)  
*In Your Mercy, O God!*  
*Care for all beings and creatures.*  
*Produce corn and water in abundance;*  
*Eliminate pain and poverty,*  
*And carry all beings across.*

The institution of *langar* is still prevalent not only in India but also in the other countries where the Sikh Diasporas have migrated and settled internationally. It was the primary mission of Guru Nanak that started the *langar* practice. This institution has brought the Sikh faith to

the forefront among the nations of the world, and is the pride of the Sikh people.

There is an interesting poem by an American lady Mrs. D.L. Haris when she visited Golden Temple, Amritsar and enjoyed the meals in the langar. The poem titled 'Bridges of great and least' reads as follows:

*I ate a langar meal  
Crossed legged on floor  
I had a strange appeal  
Of Sikhism's religious core.*

*The essence of langar  
Equality of man with man  
Caste or creed no bar  
No even evil done.*

*No one can pick his food  
Nor friend to eat it with,  
Here nature's bounty is good  
All humans' kith and kin.*

*Sikhism's ritual langar,  
Simple free love feast  
Hatred will never mar  
This bridge of West or East  
Or  
This bridge of great and least.*



## SEWA (SERVICE) IN SIKHISM

**G**urbani enlightens us about the vital benefits of Sewa:

ਵਿਚਿ ਦੁਨੀਆ ਸੇਵ ਕਮਾਈਐ ॥ ਤਾ ਦਰਗਹ ਬੈਸਣੁ ਪਾਈਐ ॥ means:

*If we serve the people in this world, we get a place of honour in the court of the God.*

Sewa (service) to humanity is an essential part of Sikhism. Guru Nanak after the completion of his long travels, settled in Kartar Pur (now in Pakistan), and took up agriculture as his profession. He tilled the fields with his own hands, and the food that he produced was used in the langar for the benefit of the needy. Sewa became part and parcel of the life of Guru Nanak. During this time, he also laid stress on the *Sangat* for service to the creation of the Creator.

Today in every Gurdwara the usual service involves singing hymns, sweeping and cleaning Gurdwara precincts, cooking and serving food, washing used dishes, and other related services. Caring the sick, sharing and serving human beings become an integral part of the Sikh faith.

Sikhism preaches that all services done for the welfare of humanity bring joy and happiness in life and shall carry respect in the court of the Lord. Sewa eliminates ego and timidity and gives peace of mind. The Guru thus wanted his Sikhs to be the serving-person of humankind.

Sewa can be performed with *Tan* (body: manual service), *Man* (mind: intellectual service) and *Dhan* (cash and kind). Manual service carries more value, especially feeding the hungry, caring for the sick, sharing sorrow and happiness, and dusting the shoes of the members of the *Sangat*. However, all other forms of sewa also hold great

importance in the Sikh way of life.

Guru Gobind Singh once refused to accept drinking water from the tender hands of a young man who never did any social service. The Guru said;

“Hands which do not serve humanity are worthless.

Hands that serve more are sacred than the lips that pray”.

Apart from the manual service, the Guru advises every Sikh to denote one tenth of his or her earning to charity for langar, temples, educational institutions, hospitals, orphanages and other centers engaged in the welfare work of the society. Bhai Gurdas defines the benefits of service in a *Kabit* (poetic stanza) as below:

ਪੰਚ ਬਾਰ ਗੰਗ ਜਾਇ, ਬਾਰ ਪੰਚ ਪ੍ਰਾਗ ਨ੍ਹਾਇ,

ਤੈਸਾ ਪੁੰਨ ਏਕ ਗੁਰਸਿਖ ਕਉ ਨ੍ਹਵਾਏ ਕਾ ॥

ਸਿਖ ਕਉ ਪਿਲਾਇ ਪਾਨੀ.....

ਤੈਸਾ ਪੁੰਨ ਸਿਖ ਕਉ ਇਕ ਸਬਦ ਸਿਖਾਏ ਕਾ ॥

*Five times going to Ganges,*

*Equals times five, taking a dip at Praag\*;*

*One gets the same charity benefit,*

*When one gives a Gursikh a bath.*

*Serving water to a thirsty person,*

*With hands, and mind dedicated;*

*Carries a reward of equivalent value,*

*As that of performing one Asmed Yag.*

*He who builds seven temples of gold,*

*Reaps the fruits of the same value,*

*That equals to teaching one,*

*Gurbani Shabad to a Gursikh. 673*

Thus service to humanity carries the highest value in the Sikh faith, and because of this, Sikhs enjoy performing sewa not only in

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(Note:Prag is confluence of rivers Ganga, Jumna and mysterious river Sarasvati at Allahabad, India, a sacred bathing place as per Hindu myth.)

Gurdwara but also in all other fields of life.

Guru Arjan prays to God to emancipate him through the service of the people. He says;

*Divine Lord! To me show your grace,  
That Nanak by serving your people release may find.*

*(S.G.G.S., p. 1338)*

## SHABAD AS CONCEPT OF GURU

**T**he Shabad (a word) has a sound, rhythm and vibrations. Hearing Shabad (Naad) produces mystical effects on the mind, brain, and body of the listener. The hearing of Shabad, as explained in four stanzas of Japji Sahib, has multidimensional effects on the human sub-consciousness that elevates the mind to higher altitudes of consciousness. The electromagnetic field waves have profound curing effects on the mind, heart and nervous system of the human body as well as other living creatures. Thus the purpose of writing Gurbani in music cum poetic form was to create this mystical effect on the human body, and to concentrate on the Guru Shabad. The effect is a tranquilizing of the mind, and blossom of joy in the body. Guru Amar Das lays emphasis on listening to the Guru Shabad:

ਜਿਤੁ ਸੁਣੀ ਮਨੁ ਤਨੁ ਹਰਿਆ ਹੋਆ ਰਸਨਾ ਰਸਿ ਸਮਾਣੀ ॥

(37 stanza of Anand Sahib)

*Hearing which, one's mind and body blossoms forth in joy,  
And tongue is imbued with the elixir of the Lord's Name.*

Guru Nanak, during one of his travels went to Sumer Mountain where he met a group of *Sidhas*. During the conversation (known as *Sidh Goshat* as recorded in S.G.G.S.) the Guru was asked to answer the questions of the *Sidhas* as follows:

ਕਵਣ ਮੂਲੁ ਕਵਣ ਮਤਿ ਵੇਲਾ ॥

ਤੇਰਾ ਕਵਣੁ ਗੁਰੂ ਜਿਸ ਕਾ ਤੂ ਚੇਲਾ ॥

ਕਵਣ ਕਥਾ ਲੇ ਰਹਹੁ ਨਿਰਾਲੇ ॥

ਬੋਲੈ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਸੁਣਹੁ ਤੁਮ ਬਾਲੇ ॥

ਏਸੁ ਕਥਾ ਕਾ ਦੇਇ ਬੀਚਾਰੁ ॥ ਭਵਜਲੁ ਸਬਦਿ ਲੰਘਾਵਣਹਾਰੁ ॥ ੪੩ ॥

*What is the root, the source of all?*

*What teachings hold for these times?*

*Who is your guru? Whose disciple are you?  
 What is that speech, by which you remain unattached?  
 Listen to what we say, O Nanak, you little boy.  
 Give us your opinion on what we have said.  
 How can the Shabad carry us across the terrifying world-ocean? ||  
 43 ||*

## Guru replies:

ਪਵਨ ਅਰੰਭੁ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਮਤਿ ਵੇਲਾ ॥  
 ਸਬਦੁ ਗੁਰੁ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਧੁਨਿ ਚੇਲਾ ॥  
 ਅਕਥ ਕਥਾ ਲੇ ਰਹਉ ਨਿਰਾਲਾ ॥  
 ਨਾਨਕ ਜੁਗਿ ਜੁਗਿ ਗੁਰ ਗੋਪਾਲਾ ॥ (S.G.G.S., p. 943)  
*From the air came the beginning.  
 This is the age of the True Guru's Teachings.  
 The Word is the Guru, upon whom I lovingly focus my  
 consciousness;  
 I am the disciple.  
 Speaking the Unspoken Speech, I remain detached.  
 Nanak, throughout the ages, the Lord of the World is my Guru.*

Word is the Guru, because through Shabad (Word) one can communicate and attain knowledge, and can exchange knowledge and ideas. The Guru explained that by virtue of the knowledge one can attain the desired goal of life. Therefore the Shabad is the Guru and spiritual teacher, profound and unfathomable.

ਸਬਦੁ ਗੁਰ ਪੀਰਾ ਗਹਿਰ ਗੰਭੀਰਾ ਬਿਨੁ ਸਬਦੈ ਜਗੁ ਬਉਰਾਨੰ ॥  
 ਪੂਰਾ ਬੈਰਾਗੀ ਸਹਜਿ ਸੁਭਾਗੀ ਸਚੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਮਨੁ ਮਾਨੰ ॥ (S.G.G.S., p. 635)  
*The Word of the Shabad is his Guru and spiritual teacher,  
 profound and unfathomable;  
 Without knowledge (the Shabad) the world is insane.  
 He is a perfect renunciate, naturally at ease,  
 O Nanak, whose mind is pleased with the True Lord.*

And

ਅਖਰੀ ਗਿਆਨੁ ਗੀਤ ਗੁਣ ਗਾਹ ॥ ਅਖਰੀ ਲਿਖਣੁ ਬੋਲਣੁ ਬਾਣਿ ॥ S.G.G.S. p.4

*From the Word, comes spiritual wisdom, singing the Songs of His Glory.*

*From the Word, comes the written and spoken words and hymns.*

The divine word was revealed to the Gurus from time to time, and these revelations formed the basis of the Sikh theological faith, known as a Revealed Faith. Whatever was revealed to them was recorded in their hand and was passed over from Guru to succeeding Guru in the same authentic form. The Fifth Guru, Guru Arjan Dev collected and compiled the Gurbani of all the preceding Gurus along with the Bhagat-bani of the various saints in anthology, the Granth Sahib.

Guru Nanak in his twenty-seventh year, made the first prophecy at Sultanpur Lodhi, Punjab. When he reappeared from the River Bein, he claimed that the Creator had summoned him to His Mansion, and ordained him to sing His praises and glory.

The Guru says of the Lord:

ਤਾ ਮੈ ਕਹਿਆ ਕਹਣੁ ਜਾ ਤੁਝੈ ਕਹਾਇਆ ॥  
ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਹਰਿ ਕਾ ਨਾਮੁ ਮੇਰੈ ਮਨਿ ਭਾਇਆ ॥

ਤਾ ਮੈ ਕਹਿਆ ਕਹਣੁ ਜਾ ਤੁਝੈ ਕਹਾਇਆ ॥ ੨ ॥ (S.G.G.S., P. 566)

*When I spoke, I spoke as You made me to speak.*

*The Ambrosial Name of the Lord is pleasing to my mind.*

*The Name of the Lord seems so sweet to my mind;*

*it has destroyed the house of pain.*

*Peace came to dwell in my mind, when You gave the Order.*

*It is Yours to grant Your Grace, and it is mine to speak this prayer;*

*You created Yourself. When I spoke,*

*I spoke as You made me speak.*

Guru Nanak told his followers, 'Whatever He is singing is 'the Truth' as he receives from the True Master'. Guru confirms this to Bhai Lalo, saying:

ਜੈਸੀ ਮੈ ਆਵੈ ਖਸਮ ਕੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਤੈਸੜਾ ਕਰੀ ਗਿਆਨੁ ਵੇ ਲਾਲੇ ॥

(S.G.G.S., p.722)

*O Lalo! As the divine word comes to me,*

*So I narrate it.*

*Nanak says the word of Truth; he expresses it,  
Since it is the time to convey the truth.*

**Note: -**

(Bhai Lalo, a low caste carpenter, a disciple of Guru Nanak)

Guru Ram Das, the third Guru declared:

ਬਾਣੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗੁਰੂ ਹੈ ਬਾਣੀ ਵਿਚਿ ਬਾਣੀ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਸਾਰੇ ॥  
ਗੁਰੂ ਬਾਣੀ ਕਰੈ ਸੇਵਕੁ ਜਨੁ ਮਾਨੈ ਪਰਤਖਿ ਗੁਰੂ ਨਿਸਤਾਰੇ ॥ (S.G.G.S. p. 982)  
*The holy Word, the Bani is Guru, and Guru is the Bani.  
Within the Bani, the Ambrosial Nectar is contained.  
If His humble servant believes,  
And acts according to the Words of the Guru's Bani,  
Then the Guru, in person, emancipates him.*

The Guru says, to understand the Wisdom of the Word, one has to recite the Lord's name with understanding and wisdom. He proclaims that to live a life with right understanding can lead to the divine path, obtaining honour in the court of the Lord.

ਅਕਲੀ ਸਾਹਿਬੁ ਸੇਵੀਐ ਅਕਲੀ ਪਾਈਐ ਮਾਨੁ ॥  
ਅਕਲੀ ਪੜ੍ਹਿ ਕੈ ਬੁਝੀਐ ਅਕਲੀ ਕੀਚੈ ਦਾਨੁ ॥  
ਨਾਨਕੁ ਆਖੈ ਰਾਹੁ ਦੇਹੁ ਹੋਰਿ ਗਲਾ ਸੈਤਾਨੁ ॥੧॥ਮਃ ੨ (S.G.G.S. p. 1245)  
*Recite His name with understanding,  
With understanding obtain honour,  
Reveal Him to yourself with understanding,  
With understanding become the donor,  
Says Nanak, this alone is the path divine;  
All others lead to the devil.*

And

ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਕੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਸਤਿ ਸਤਿ ਕਰਿ ਜਾਣਹੁ ਗੁਰਸਿਖਹੁ  
ਹਰਿ ਕਰਤਾ ਆਪਿ ਮੁਹਹੁ ਕਢਾਏ ॥ (S.G.G.S., p. 308)  
*O Sikhs of the Guru, recognize that the Bani,  
The Word of the true Guru, is true, absolutely true.  
The Creator One Himself causes the Guru to chant it.*

“So revelation is the Guru and Guru is the revelation”. Bhai Gurdas, the celebrated Sikh theologian of the Guru period, stated clearly that, “Only the Shabad as revealed by the Guru is the real portrait of the Guru.”

The Sikh Gurus, in person, were never considered as ‘the Guru’, but as the revealed divine Word, and as a recognized and venerated one. The Tenth Guru, like the others, laid emphasis on the Word, the knowledge. At the time of departure to his eternal house, he ended the personal line of Guruship and signed the final volume of Granth. He then declared it as the eternal Guru of the Panth Khalsa. His command to this effect was recorded by Bhai Nand Lal and others like Prahlad Singh in *Rehitnama* ( *A book of guideline of Sikh code of conduct* ) . The Guru’s final message to this affect is daily sung by *Sangat* in every Gurdwara world over as:

ਆਗਿਆ ਭਈ ਅਕਾਲ ਕੀ, ਤਬੀ ਚਲਾਯੋ ਪੰਥ॥

ਸਭ ਸਿਖਨ ਕੋ ਹੁਕਮ ਹੈ, ਗੁਰੂ ਮਾਨਿਓ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ॥

*With the command of the Timeless Lord, the Panth has been established.*

*All the Sikhs are directed to recognise the Granth as Guru.*

*Recognise the Granth as the person or body of the Guru.*

*Those who seek shall find him in the Shabad.*

A revelation is considered as the basis of the Sikh theology that is rationalized entirely in the Guru Granth. A case is presented to weaken any effort by those clergy or by those historians who may attempt to construct any theological concept for Sikhs based on history itself. To go contrary to our Guru’s intention by permitting any transgression of history into constructing our theology will cause irreversible damage to our religion. Further, in view of the Twenty-first century’s emphasis on pluralism and belief in the common good for all the people as the basis for progress of any religion, it is essential that the revelation as the basis of Sikh theology be highlighted. By canonizing the Guru Granth, Guru Gobind Singh immortalized the revealed theology and gave it a unique



standing. That standing of the Guru Granth will bring strength to a unity among the global faith communities and degrade any regional fanaticism, sectarianism or ethnocentrism.

- Dr. Harbans Lal.

Journal of Guru Nanak Foundation,  
New Delhi, July-December 2003. p.7

It is now the bounden duty of the Sikh to preserve the Gurbani in its original form. There is no doubt that efforts by the enemies of the Panth are attempting to distort the original script by making additions or deletions of *matras* which create confusion among the future generation. Their strategy is to create doubt in the minds of the Sikhs about the authenticity of the original volume prepared by Guru Arjan Dev, now preserved at *Kartar Pur* Sahib in the possession of *Sodi parwar*. Bhai Harbans Lal's warning is well in time for the Sikh community to be vigilant.

## HOUSEHOLD WAY OF LIFE

**S**ikh wisdom holds the household way of life in high esteem. It rejects the practice of renunciation, the observance of fasts, and the rituals and asceticism of the Hindu way of life. The Sikh faith rejects the practice of deserting the household responsibilities to hide in the mountains or forests. Rather, it lays emphasis on performing all family duties honestly, while enshrining Lord's name within. The Guru says, "By availing all the facilities of family life such as playing, eating attiring beautifully and enjoying life one can achieve emancipation." So are the beautiful injunctions of the Guru for a family person.

The highest Sikh way of asceticism had been described by the Tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh:

ਰੇ ਮਨ ਐਸੇ ਕਰਿ ਸੰਨਿਆਸਾ ॥

ਬਨ ਸੇ ਸਦਨ ਸਭੈ ਕਰਿ ਸਮਝਹੁ

ਮਨ ਹੀ ਮਾਹਿ ਉਦਾਸਾ ॥ ੧ ॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥

ਜਤ ਕੀ ਜਟਾ ਜੋਗ ਕੋ ਮੰਜਨੁ ਨੇਮ ਕੇ ਨਖਨ ਬਢਾਓ ॥

ਗਿਆਨ ਗੁਰੂ ਆਤਮ....

(Shabad Hazaare, Guru Gobind Singh)

*O mind the right way of asceticism is to consider thy house as the forest,*

*And to free thyself from the worldly attachments;*

*And enshrine within the Lord's Name,*

*Make celibacy your matted hair;*

*With divine knowledge as Guru, the guide...*

The Sikh Gurus upheld sex as inherent in all living creatures for the continuation of race, as a play of nature. Therefore they sanctified marriage socially, legally and religiously. Even all nine Sikh Gurus were married and had a family. According to the Sikh Gurus, woman was not considered an evil or a hindrance in the way of emancipation.

She was given respectable positions in both social and religious life, was been permitted to take active part in day to day family affairs. Emancipation can be attained by living an honest family life enshrining the Lord's name within, believing in His existence with devoted mind and serving His creation.

The Sikh Gurus, in an effort to break the religious shackle of the Brahmanical control over the common people, rejected the prevailing belief in idol worship as well as the system of priesthood. They conferred the status of priesthood upon the Sikhs irrespective of gender. The Sikh women were permitted equally to perform their religious or social functions independently, and without the guidance of a priest. They were allowed to perform religious ceremonies according to the Sikh tenets and traditions. This was the way during the Guru Period and is still the way today as per tradition established by Akal Takhat.

In Sikh Wisdom, hell and heaven do not exist, nor do the man made concepts of gods and goddesses. Sikhism rejects all unscientific concepts and perceptions of the priest class of various religions. The perception of a class system, designed to gain access to heaven or salvation, is one created by the human mind. Sikh wisdom states that heaven is in the place where the praises of the Lord are sung. Further, the place bereft of the Lord's laudations is considered hell. A happy family life is itself a paradise, where as a life full of tension, daily bickering and misunderstandings is hell. Heaven and hell are therefore understood as states of being on earth. The mythological sense of heaven and hell carry no importance in Sikh philosophy.

The Sikh Gurus have denounced the theory of the incarnation of God in human form. Countless Hindu Avatars like Ram Chandra, Krishna and other prophets have come and gone. In *Akal Ustat* Guru Gobind Singh holds that God created many Hindu gods like Indras, Upindras, Brahmas, Rudras and many prophets of other religions. He created and destroyed them, and again created and destroyed. The cycle of creation and destruction goes on as He wishes. Nothing is permanent in the universe. It is a play that shall go on as He wills.

So Guru Nanak has rejected the theory of incarnation of God in human form. In Japji Sahib he mentions as under:

*Therein are numberless forms of air, water and fire,  
Numberless Krishnas and Shivas;  
Numberless the Brahmas fashioning universe  
Of various forms, hues and aspects... ..  
Many are the species of gods, demons, ascetics,  
Many oceans harbouring the jewels...  
Says Nanak: All such are without end.*

—(pauri 35)

A true Sikh, a *Brahmgianee*, living a family life must resign to the Will of God as per the Guru's injunction, accepting His sweet will.

ਤੇਰਾ ਕੀਆ ਮੀਠਾ ਲਾਗੈ ॥

ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਪਦਾਰਥੁ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਮਾਂਗੈ ॥

(S.G.G.S., P. 394)

*Your doings seem so sweet to me.*

*Nanak begs for the treasure of the Naam,  
The Name of the Lord.*

Consider the following story:

An enlightened Sikh of India named Bhai Bhikhari, was making preparation for the marriage of his son. He was also at this time making the necessary arrangements for the cremation and obsequies of someone unnamed. Unaffected by both happiness and sorrow, his guests watched him keenly but did not question him. The marriage was performed with full gusto as usual and after the completion of the wedding ceremonies, the married couple and the guests came back to groom's house. The moment the bride and the bridegroom entered the house, the bridegroom suffered an attack of severe pain in his stomach and died immediately. Now the guests gathered there questioned the father of the groom, saying, "Why did you perform the marriage of your son when all that you knew well before?" Bhai Bhikhari replied composedly: "Though I knew all that but did not want to interfere in the Will of the Lord. I accepted all that as His sweet Will."

So is the state of the mind of a *Brahmgianee*, unaffected by the sorrows and pleasures of life. The Sikh way of life encourages Sikhs to

live a family life like a lotus in a pond unaffected by the waves of lust and anger, sorrow and happiness, and always rising above the hardships and the pleasures of life.

## HINDU CASTEISM

**B**y rejecting the orthodox view of law of *Karma*, the great redeemer of Mankind struck at the roots of the caste-ridden system of social inequality. By harmonizing spiritualism with humanism, Guru Nanak reinvested man with a dignity of his own. In redefining man's relation with God, he not merely stressed the divinity of man and the humanity of God. God no longer remained merely transcendental and aloof as in Shankar's Advaita Vedanta, having no real relation with man and the world... This is how Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikh faith, revolutionized the modes and moulds of thought, initiating a new revolutionary movement aimed at the spiritual reconstruction, moral regeneration and social amelioration of conditions of Man. - Narayan Dr. K. R., Guru Nanak Foundation, *Studies in Sikhism* Journal Vol.X11, No. 1, New Delhi, July-December, 1993.

Manu, a Hindu philosopher is supposed to be the originator of the caste system. He had a genius idea to divide the people into different categories to facilitate a regulated social system. This type of system allowed the state management to be run in an efficient way, with control kept in the hands of the upper caste people. The caste system divided society into two main groups: the lower caste and the high caste. The lower caste, or class, consists of the so-called untouchables, whereas the highest caste is a class of royalty. These two main classes are further divided into hundreds of sub-castes. These class divisions, slowly and steadily with the passage of time, took an evil turn and created hatred among those categorized in these divisions. The Brahmins became the master and controller of all the religious, social and political activities. They ultimately became the originators of all

the ills in society. They forbade the non-Brahmins from studying Vedas, Shastras and other scriptures. In the course of time the field of education became their absolute preserve and they refused to teach others. Shankeracharya, a Hindu philosopher made *Varnashram dharma* a must to adhere to hereditary professions, and to debar entry of the lower class into religious places. He even revised the original text of Bhagavad-Gita to align its philosophy with that of the Hindu caste system.

The Shudras, or untouchables, who tried to listen religious teachings, had their ears numbed with the molten lead. They were treated so inhumanly, and regarded as being lower than an animal. Even worse was the treatment of women, who were treated worse than an animal and regarded as a lower life form.

Guru Nanak realized that there could be no social revolution without a frontal attack on the caste system which had crippled human society to such a large extent. Hence, he and the succeeding Sikh Gurus were highly moved against the brutal treatment given to the lower most class. They vehemently preached against the *Varnashram dharma*.

However, since the low caste were not permitted to learn their scriptures, they were left in lurch. Crafty Brahmanical priests tried to keep them under their firm control by placating the lower caste with a developed noble mode of idol worship. The system of idol worship worked well to achieve their designed motives of control for a time, but it would not last forever. During the rise of Bhakti movement, Hindu low caste and Muslim mystic saints raised their voice against idol worship and thoroughly condemned it, especially Bhagat Kabir. He repeatedly ridiculed this system, stating:

ਬੁਤ ਪੂਜਿ ਪੂਜਿ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਮੂਏ ਤੁਰਕ ਮੂਏ ਸਿਰੁ ਨਾਈ ॥  
 ਓਇ ਲੇ ਜਾਰੇ ਓਇ ਲੇ ਗਾਢੇ ਤੇਰੀ ਗਤਿ ਦੁਹੁ ਨ ਪਾਈ ॥ (S.G.G.S., P. 654)  
*Worshipping their idols, the Hindus die;*  
*The Muslims die bowing their heads.*  
*The Hindus cremate their dead, while the Muslims bury theirs;*  
*Neither finds Your true state, O Lord.*

The most striking expression of this gentle opposition to idolatry is Kabir's sentence. "If God is a stone, I shall worship a mountain." The Sikh Struggle, p.39

The Sikh Gurus too rejected the caste system vehemently, though they were to face deep rooted hostility from protagonists of the Brahmanical order, as certain aspects of Sikh culture were in complete contrast to the dehumanizing Brahmanical caste system. The Sikh Gurus found this system harmful both to spiritual and national growth, while the Brahmanical priest class saw it as an essential part of Hindu pride. The Gurus discarded this notion, considering it a futile argument on the part of the Brahmans.

In the struggle to set right the unbalanced social system, the Gurus were made to face great difficulties. Though they suffered physically they remained steadfast in their continued crusade against the evil system. They stood for and reiterated humanitarian values of equality, mutual love and understanding.

ਜਾਤਿ ਕਾ ਗਰਬੁ ਨ ਕਰਿ ਮੂਰਖ ਗਵਾਰਾ ॥

ਇਸੁ ਗਰਬ ਤੇ ਚਲਹਿ ਬਹੁਤੁ ਵਿਕਾਰਾ ॥ (S.G.G. S., P. 1127 / 1128)

*Guru says: O fool! Do not boast of your high caste.*

*The very casteism is responsible for many evils.*

The caste system wreaked havoc in all segments of the society, and created hatred among them. It split personalities, and created tension, struggle, contradiction, abhorrence and revulsion. This system spawned jealousy, confrontation, and even wars among the people of India. Men of courage and saints raised their voices for rectification of this social system, and spoke out against the inequities inflicted on the common people. Kabir lamented and raised his voice against discrimination, saying:

ਜੋ ਤੂੰ ਬ੍ਰਾਹਮਣੁ ਬ੍ਰਹਮਣੀ ਜਾਇਆ ॥

ਤਉ ਆਨ ਬਾਟ ਕਾਹੇ ਨਹੀ ਆਇਆ ॥ ੨ ॥ (S.G.G.S., P. 324)

*You claim to be Brahmin because of your birth from a Brahmin,  
If so, why you were not procreated in a different way?*

The Sikh Gurus strongly denounced the system of idol worship



and called it vainness; merely a waste of precious time. Rather, they stressed the repetition of the divine word 'Guru-Shabad', and for the benefit of the common people they wrote the divine word in the common language of the time, known as Gurmukhi. The stand taken by the Sikh Gurus became an eye sore for the Hindu priest class, and in return they started to take possible steps to misguide the simple minded people.

ਹਿੰਦੂ ਮੂਲੇ ਭੂਲੇ ਅਖੁਟੀ ਜਾਂਹੀ ॥

ਨਾਰਦਿ ਕਹਿਆ ਸਿ ਪੂਜ ਕਰਾਂਹੀ ॥

ਅੰਧੇ ਗੁੰਗੇ ਅੰਧ ਅੰਧਾਰੁ ॥

ਪਾਥਰੁ ਲੇ ਪੂਜਹਿ ਮੁਗਧ ਗਵਾਰਾ ॥

ਓਇ ਜਾ ਆਪਿ ਡੁਬੇ ਤੁਮ ਕਹਾ ਤਰਣਹਾਰੁ ॥ ੨ ॥ (S.G.G.S., P.556)

*The Hinds are blind and mute, groping in pitch darkness.*

*As guided by Narada the ignorant pick up stones and worship them.*

*Knowing not that stones they sink,*

*How can they ferry you across?*

The caste system to a great extent encouraged the foreign invader to plunder the national wealth, steal the honour of Indian women, and ruin an ancient civilization. It also became a major hurdle in the highest potentials of human development, in spiritual regeneration, in education and in many other facets of daily life. In south India, the caste system was exceptionally rigid.

According to (Hindu philosopher) Ramanuja, the grace of God was not available for the Sudra (Shudra) in this life; but by good conduct he may work his way to birth in a higher caste and then be admitted to the privileged group in social and religious matters. Guru Nanak recognized no such ineligibility based on caste.

The Sikh Review, December 2006, p.39

## SAINT-SOLDIER CONCEPT

**I**n Sukhmani Sahib, the Fifth Guru defines the qualities of a saint, his way of living, his character, and his spiritual thinking. Spiritually, a saint lives in such a high state that he is neither affected by sorrow nor happiness. Gold and dust carry the same value to him. He is *Jeewan Mukta*: living like dead, still perfect and punctual. This stage of living is of par excellence.

The Tenth Master has disciplined his Khalsa first as saint to follow the path shown by the Fifth Guru, and then as soldier to defend the dignity of others and of the self. Guru Arjan says that a person must live a life of contentment in humble way, performing good deeds and serving humanity like a humble farmer or a tradesman:

ਮਨੁ ਹਾਲੀ ਕਿਰਸਾਣੀ ਕਰਣੀ ਸਰਮੁ ਪਾਣੀ ਤਨੁ ਖੇਤੁ ॥

ਨਾਮੁ ਬੀਜੁ ਸੰਤੋਖੁ ਸੁਹਾਗਾ ਰਖੁ ਗਰੀਬੀ ਵੇਸੁ ॥

ਭਾਉ ਕਰਮ ਕਰਿ ਜੰਮਸੀ ਸੇ ਘਰ ਭਾਗਠ ਦੇਖੁ ॥ ੧ ॥ (S.G.G.S., p.595)

*Make your mind the farmer, good deeds the farming,*

*Modesty the water, and your body the field.*

*Let the Lord's Name be the seed, contentment the levelling plank,*

*And your humble dress the fence.*

*Doing deeds of love, the seed shall sprout,*

*And you shall see your home flourish.*

Guru Gobind Singh established Khalsa on Baisakhi day in 1699. It was a unique step forward in the transformation of ordinary men of different castes into one casteless society of a brotherhood of humankind. The establishment of Khalsa instilled a spirit of nationalism and sovereignty among the people, which the Guru held in high esteem, renouncing the divine right of kings. This transformation ultimately made Khalsa sovereign and supreme, thus ending the

supremacy of the Brahmanical priest class and their control over education, social and religious functions.

It was a miraculous happening when the five turn by turn offered their heads on the command of the Guru. The selection of five was an unparalleled epoch in the history of the human, but spontaneous, predestined and born of self surrender and love for the master, and of a unique order. The order of the Khalsa was based on the embodiment of five virtues.

- 1) **Daya** – the compassion, mercy and forgiveness.
- 2) **Dharm** – faith, the symbol of faithfulness and righteousness.
- 3) **Himmat** – the symbol of courage and strength.
- 4) **Mohkam** – freedom from evil and sensual desires and mundane attachment.
- 5) **Sahib** – a symbol of achievement, authority, knowledge and wisdom.

Forced surrender or trained surrender has no meaning. Surrender has to be complete, unconditional and spontaneous. Those who self-surrendered were named Daya Singh, Dharm Singh, Himmat Singh, Mohkam Singh, and Sahib Singh after their initiation through the *Amrit Pahul* ceremony. Thus those five beloved ones laid the foundation of the institution of brotherhood. It was left to Guru Gobind Singh to bring Khalsa to its final culmination, employing the program set forth by Guru Nanak. Cunningham, J.D. rightly puts as below:

“The great grand guru, Gobind Singh, who performed this miracle, so effectively raised the dormant energies of a vanquished people and filled them with lofty longing for social freedom and national ascendancy.”

Cunningham J.D., A History of the Sikhs, p.75

For the Khalsa ceremony, *Amrit Pahul*, a mixture of water and sugar crisps, was prepared in a steel bowl, and stirred with a steel double-edged sword called *Khandâ*, while the Guru recited five Gurbani hymns. The Guru prepared the Amrit and initiated the first Five Beloved Ones. Later on the Five Ones initiated the Guru, who had been known as Guru Gobind Rai, and renamed him as Guru Gobind

Singh.

This unique institution was to consolidate the disintegrated Indian people into one integrated nation, to bestow upon them the status of the nobles and kings, and to devote them to God. Out of them arose the distinctive people who lived with dignity and honour. These brave people laid the foundation for the sovereignty of India and for the future of the people.

A Sikh is distinct by *bani and bana* (shabad and dress). He is distinguished by his head-dress and unshorn hair. A Sikh is *sant-sipahi*, saint-soldier: a person adorned with spiritual cum virtuous qualities and soldierly spirit. The Guru, in the code of conduct for the Sikhs, defines their exclusive way of living and praying. He gifted his Sikhs with five K's: *Kirpaan* – the sword, *Kesha* – hair, *Kangha* – the comb, *Kacchaa* – the shorts, and *Karha* – the steel wristlet. His attire is of a distinctive nature that gives him an altogether different look. Apart from his dress a Sikh has to have full faith in the living embodiment of Guru Granth Sahib and in ten Sikh Gurus.

A Sikh, when time compels must be prepared to defend the honour of others and of his self. He or she must also be a spiritually enlightened and knowledgeable person. As a true soldier (*Sipāhī*), he is a storehouse of bravery and must have loyalty for his faith and the Guru. He is duty bound to his country. He should be ready to shed all that he possesses, including his blood, for a righteous cause. His every drop of blood, limb, and breath are of the country, for the country, and for the welfare of others. So is the concept of saint-soldier put forth by the great Guru Gobind Singh.

The Guru preached that religion and politics, though separate, have an interacting relationship, and should move hand in hand to serve the society. Faith provides the motivation for serving the people morally, while politics creates a social structure for providing security and lawful governance. In other words, the common objective of the two institutions is to provide service and render justice to create better living for the people. The concept of *sant-sipaahi* (saint-soldier) is the same as that of *Miri-Piri* as enunciated by the sixth Guru Hargobind Ji: A Sikh is to live by the Khalsa code of conduct, to perform his duty as

a sentinel, and to protect the sovereignty of his countrymen.

Prof. Puran Singh very lucidly and diligently expressed his views about the Sikh religion.

But let me say, that, assuredly, the Guru's religion is the religion of Nature and of the soul. It is absolutely different from the theological and philosophic nonsense of the Brahmins. It refuses to have any concern with the reality composed of certain set of final mental concepts such as the Brahmanical philosophic speculations put forth. Concepts are dead matter. The religion of the Gurus is, briefly the art of living, keeping the divine light aflame, more artistic than metaphysical or theological, and more full of labour, craft, and the appreciations of the beautiful in man and nature and their handicraft.

Puran Singh, *The Spirit Born People*, p. 127

Bhai Nand Lal, a poet cum Persian scholar lays emphasis in his *Tankhah Namah* in a couplet, *raj karega khalsa*, stating that Khalsa shall rule, which sowed the seed of Raj consciousness (spirit of sovereignty) and inspired the Khalsa for self governance.

Know it! For survival of any religious faith, sovereignty is the foremost requirement and a must. Without political power, spirituality (*dharmā*) cannot be established, but at the same time sovereignty must not over ride spirituality. The spirituality, basically, is a guide to guide the sovereignty for rightful governance. Without *dharmā* society is battered and beaten. Know it! Slavery can't have choice.

Religion without political freedom and dignity was an abject slavery, and politics without religious morality was an organized barbarism. Political power, as such, was a means to attain the objectives viz., to uphold the saints and destroy the wicked.

Sangat Singh in *Sikhs in History*, p. 84.

His status is the highest among the religious preceptors of all times. If humility par excellence was in evidence anywhere it

was Guru Gobind Singh. It is not my intention to denigrate the founders of religious sects of any country or time. We in India venerate all such persons, because in their own way they all exerted to induce people to goodness. But I assert unhesitatingly that all other teachers of True Way were impelled by the desire of self-edification and gave themselves a status higher than a mere man's that of near one or dear one or the beloved or an advisor or a co-equal or the son or the Lord Himself. They all reduced His dependence on others. They never preached Oneness and omnipresence of Akal. Guru Gobind Singh never claimed any kinship with Him of a special status for himself. He never incorporated himself in his actions which he proclaimed as directed by Akal. He described himself as a mere man though he did what no other religious great had done before. Hence I have reasons to consider him more worthy of respect and reverence than all others.

Daulat Rai on Sahibe-Kamal Guru Gobind Singh,  
English version, p. 67

The Khalsa's innovation in purity of conduct and adherence to moral obligations and duties had such a profound impact that Qazi Nur Mohammad, historian, though one of the bitterest enemies of the Sikhs, speaks highly of their conduct. The Qazi, in his book *Jung Namah* (1765) says:

They share their food with others, though they themselves have to go without food. They do not plunder the wealth of others, especially of the women. In no case would they slay a coward or attack the fugitive. They commit no adultery and speak no lie. They help the hapless at the risk of their own lives. They sleep on the back of their horses, go without food for days together, but commit no robbery. These Sug(s) (dogs) meaning- Singh's do not renege their faith but prefer to give their heads.

According to Muhammad Latif, a Muslim historian:

Guru Gobind Singh was great as a man, greater as a warrior and greatest as spiritual preceptor and philosopher. He was an able administrator to inculcate discipline in the world. In the gatherings of known scholars, he was unparalleled poet, true king sitting on the throne of the Guru, a fighter par excellence in the battle field and a humble *faqir* in the congregation of Khalsa. It was under his guidance that whimsical and disorderly people were knit into an organization, and the oppressed and the backward proved to be great heroes.

The Sikh youth can feel great and proud of owning their glorious heritage. The golden future is before them if they sincerely believe in, understand, and practice the Sikh philosophy in its true sense. Unless the Sikh conduct is practiced by a Sikh in his daily life, how can a non-Sikh see the greatness of this religion? If the young people who pledge their allegiance to the Sikh faith are addicted to drugs, alcohol, bad habits, and anti-social behaviour, then how they can communicate to others that the Sikh faith and high character go together? Sikhs have to tread the path with a resolute mind as laid down by the great Sikh Gurus. They should not allow themselves to be derailed by the pressures of a wrong and battered society. The firm decision has to be a resolution to stick to right path. The saint-soldiers chose the life of torture and suffering against promises of royal positions and pleasures on this earth. They spurned these promised for the sake of their love for their Gurus. They chose instead to tread a rough road:

*It is a rough road that leads  
To the height of greatness,  
Where most of the people tumble down.*

## **Concept of Sword:**

Sword is one of the Sikh symbols of Sikh faith; a gift bestowed upon the Sikh by Guru Gobind Singh. In Sikh philosophy, sword refers to sovereignty and righteousness. It is a mode of defence and emancipation of the repressed and oppressed class, defined as:

O Sword, vanquisher of the evil.  
Thy invincible arms crush the devil,  
Out of scabbard glitters you,  
The sword of justice and might.  
To dismantle the unsocialistic fabric,  
To rid humanity of shackles of subjugation  
To crush barbarism and despotism,  
Thou, the might against the oppression.  
And the scourge of the wicked,  
The destroyer of the crooked, the All Steel,  
I bow before Thee in reverence,  
O the mighty, the greatest, All Steel.

### **Concept of Khanda:**

Khanda, a collection of four weapons commonly used at the time of Guru Gobind Singh, is the insignia of the Khalsa Panth. It represents the Sikh faith. The symbol is deeply rooted in the history and reflects certain fundamentals of Sikh faith. Two swords symbolize the concept of *Miri-Piri*, one for sovereignty and the other for spirituality. The circle around Khanda is Chakra, the unending. It represents the Creator who is eternal without beginning or end. Khanda derives its name from doubled edged sword. One edge symbolizes divine justice, punishing the wicked oppressors; the other edge symbolizes freedom and authority governed by moral and spiritual values.



## THE KHALSA AND CODE OF CONDUCT

**G**uru Gobind Singh established Khalsa on Baisakhi Day in 1699 at Anand Pur Sahib, on the concept of the Unity of God and brotherhood of mankind. With the creation, Sikhism underwent a major transformation. The whole *sangat* of the Guru became Khalsa (*Gur sangat kini Khalsa*). The Guru transformed his authority to Khalsa to baptize the Sikhs. They were given *Amrit Pahul*: initiation into Khalsa fold without gender discrimination.

Khalsa requires the complete and total faith in Guru Granth Sahib (Gurbani) and in the ten Gurus. After the establishment of Khalsa, the Tenth master issued the following injunction: That the Sikhs shall worship none but one God. They will not install any idol or any other Hindu statues, and no guru in human form or god, goddesses to be worshipped. They will believe in no religious book other than Guru Granth Sahib, and should contemplate God and meditate upon Him daily: Guru Gobind Singh elaborate the Khalsa code for his Sikhs as below:

ਜਾਗਤਿ ਜੋਤਿ ਜਪੈ ਨਿਸ ਬਾਸੁਰ ਏਕ ਬਿਨਾ ਮਨ ਨੈਕ ਨ ਆਨੈ॥

ਪੂਰਨ ਜੋਤ ਜਗੈ ਘਟ ਮੈ ਤਬ ਖਾਲਸ ਤਾਹਿ ਨਖਾਲਸ ਜਾਨੈ॥ (33 Savaiye)

*He who has full love and confidence in God,  
Neither puts faith in fasting, in worshipping graves,  
Nor the idols and cemeteries the least.  
And forsakes duality for ever,  
Caring for dead, the least  
Recognises none but one God,  
Discards pilgrimage and penances of Hindu way.  
Khalsa, in whose heart the light of the Perfect One  
Shines is a true, pure Khalsa.*

ਸਾਚੁ ਕਹੈ ਸੁਨ ਲੇਹੁ ਸਭੈ  
ਜਿਨ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਕੀਓ ਤਿਨ ਹੀ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਪਾਇਓ ॥

(Tav Prasad Svaye)

*Listen! Yea all, I proclaim the Truth:  
They who love God shall attain Him.*

The Tenth Master also advised his Sikhs not to follow the different modes of worship as practised by different sects save for *Akal Purkh*:

ਕਾਹੂ ਲੈ ਪਾਹਨ ਪੂਜ ਧਰਯੋ ਸਿਰ  
ਕਾਹੂ ਲੈ ਲਿੰਗੁ ਗਰੇ ਲਟਕਾਇਓ ॥

ਕੁਰ ਕ੍ਰਿਆ ਉਰਝਿਓ ਸਭ ਹੀ ਜਗ  
ਸ੍ਰੀ ਭਗਵਾਨ ਕੋ ਭੇਦੁ ਨ ਪਾਇਓ ॥

*Some worship stones and put them on their heads,  
Some suspend Lingams from their necks.  
Some say God is in the south;  
Some bow their heads to the west.  
The whole world is entangled in false practices;  
They have not realized the mystery of the God.*

### **Khalsa stands for Purity:**

All true religions spring from life, exist in life, and their fulfilment is in life, and therefore, so long as a religion remains religion but does not become religiosity, it survives the tyranny of the age and time. Guru Gobind Singh wrote in the *Vichitra Natak* that morality is very dear to him and the Sikhs. This is a very significant and meaningful line of Guru Gobind Singh and expresses his fundamental belief in the moral conduct of a man and of a nation. With the dwindling standards of morality, religion itself dwindles and faith itself is eliminated.

Guru Nanak and The Logos of Divine Manifestation. p. 157,  
Sharad Chandra Verma.

In Sikhism, the inculcation of ethics and the practice of virtue in every-day life are vital towards spiritual development. Qualities like purity of mind, piety, compassion, service to humankind, generosity, patience and humility, form an essential part of Sikh conduct. The lives

of the Gurus clearly display their code of ethics. Whatsoever they preached, they themselves practised.

Guru Gobind Singh loved his Khalsa and expected it to be of high moral conduct. In very significant words he admires his Khalsa as his own form:

ਖਾਲਸਾ ਮੇਰੇ ਰੂਪ ਹੈ ਖਾਸ ॥

ਖਾਲਸੇ ਮਹਿ ਹੋ ਕਰੋ ਨਿਵਾਸ ॥

*The Khalsa is my special form,  
I manifest myself in the Khalsa.*

At the same time, in clear words, the Guru warns the Khalsa that he would withdraw his blessings if it retreats to Brahmanical ways and practices, and does not remain distinct:

ਜਬ ਲਗ ਖਾਲਸਾ ਰਹੇ ਨਿਆਰਾ ॥

ਤਬ ਲਗ ਤੇਜ ਦੀਓ ਮੈਂ ਸਾਰਾ ॥

ਜਬ ਇਹ ਗਹੈ ਬਿਪਰਨ ਕੀ ਰੀਤ ॥

ਮੈਂ ਨ ਕਰੋਂ ਇਨ ਕੀ ਪ੍ਰਤੀਤ ॥

*So long Khalsa remains distinct,  
I shall bestow my blessing on it.  
When it adopts Brahmanical customs  
I shall withdraw my blessing from it.*

The Guru perfected the Khalsa organization's structure and completely eliminated caste and profession distinctions. The downtrodden, exploited by the Brahmanical priest class, regained their self-respect and high position in society as Khalsa. Indeed it was a great transformation in the human life, a revolution, especially in the badly torn human fabric of India. Assuredly, Guru Gobind Singh's achievements and sacrifices greatly improved the lot of the people at the summit. Still he ascribed all his deeds and achievements to his Khalsa, and that was his extreme humbleness. He carried no credit for himself and proclaimed himself as a humble person:

ਇਨ ਹੀ ਕੀ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਕੇ ਸਜੇ ਹਮ ਹੈਂ

ਨਹੀਂ ਮੋਸੋ ਗਰੀਬ ਕਰੋਰ ਪਰੇ ॥

*Whatever exalted position do I have,  
It is all bestowed on me by the Khalsa,  
Otherwise there are millions of humble men like me.*

Guru Gobind Singh had keen kindness and love for the low-caste and the downtrodden. He, in his strenuous life, struggled to uphold the blue print of principles initially drawn up by Guru Nanak, although he was to pay a heavy price for them. The high class Hindus did not relish the Guru's ideas to elevate low-caste to their level. In the face of such ideas, the treacherous, ungrateful, and cunning high class instigated and misguided the Hill Hindu Rajahs, who waged war after war with the Guru in league with Mughal forces. The Guru was forced to defend his house and his valued institution. He states in *Bachitter Natak*, that without any reason or cause he was attacked again and again, simply because he was trying to protect the basic human rights of the unprivileged ones and to free them from age old subjugation. The high caste people were hell bent on keeping the low caste suppressed and repressed.

In fact it was a war between the high caste and the low caste; a war to upgrade the low caste, a war to break the shackles of slavery of centuries, a war between the good and the evil. The Guru stood determinedly and unbent to protect the underprivileged. Though he lost all that he had, including his entire family, he remained smilingly under sweet will of the Lord.

It is explicitly clear from the pages of history that the Guru never unsheathed his sword to attack any one person, to usurp any territory or wealth, or to avenge the wrong doings of the others on his predecessors. He established the Khalsa institution with the sole purpose of protecting the suppressed and upholding human rights. He states the specific purpose of his mission upon this planet:

ਹਮ ਇਹ ਕਾਜ ਜਗਤ ਮੇ ਅਏ ॥  
ਧਰਮ ਹੇਤ ਗੁਰਦੇਵ ਪਠਾਏ ॥

ਧਰਮ ਚਲਾਵਨ ਸੰਤ ਉਬਾਰਨ ॥  
ਦੁਸਟ ਸਭਨ ਕੋ ਮੁਲ ਉਪਾਰਨ ॥

*I have come to this world  
For this specific purpose;  
The Supreme Lord has sent me  
To uphold Dharma (Righteousness).  
He has commanded me  
To spread true faith everywhere, and  
Seize and smash the wicked and tyrants.*

It must be made clear that the Khalsa value system is not different from the ideology of Guru Nanak. In fact, it is the result of the values preached by Guru Nanak. Guru Nanak started his mission from Sultanpur Lodhi, with his first pronouncement that, "There is no Hindu, there is no Musalman." He convinced the people that salvation lies in submitting to the Will of the Almighty, enshrining His Name within and living a life of truthfulness. Guru Gobind Singh projected and nurtured the Guru Nanak's mission of the Unity of God and universality of mankind. He completed this mission at Hazoor Sahib, Nanded in Maharashtra, with thanks to *Akal Purkh*, after handing over the command to Khalsa Panth.

It was reserved for Nanak to perceive the true principals of reform, and to lay those broad foundations, which enabled his successor Gobind to fire the minds of his countrymen with new nationality. To give practical effect to the doctrine that the lowest is equal to the highest in race as in creed, in political rights as in religious hopes.

J.D. Cunningham, History of The Sikhs.

## STATUS OF WOMEN IN SIKHISM

**A**t the time of Guru Nanak's advent, the condition of women was undoubtedly depressed in India. The birth of a female child was considered as a bad omen in Hindu society and was looked upon with disfavour. Infants were killed mercilessly by their parents. Women did not enjoy equal social status with men and were not allowed to move freely in their society, especially in high society. They were forced to veil their faces, and to perform household chores and labour duties. They were, in essence, slaves. Gorakh Nath, the head of the *Sadhu* sect is said to have described women as "tigresses" who are "in continual search for beautiful men whom they eat". The Sikh Gurus, seeing the evils of the practiced treatment of women, made a frontal attack on this system, and elevated the status of women to equal that of men. With the help of the Gurus, women were for the first time able to enjoy an honourable position in society, given dignity and descent status. Men and women were now considered as two equally important limbs of the same society.

The practices of renunciation, asceticism, and the desertion of family life were condemned outright. The family life was deemed as superior morally and spiritually for a balanced and established human society. Guru Nanak denounced the common view of woman as a condemned limb of society. He proclaimed her as an equal and important partner to man:

ਭੰਡਿ ਜੰਮੀਐ ਭੰਡਿ ਨਿੰਮੀਐ ਭੰਡਿ ਮੰਗਣੁ ਵੀਆਹੁ ॥

ਭੰਡਹੁ ਹੋਵੈ ਦੋਸਤੀ ਭੰਡਹੁ ਚਲੈ ਰਾਹੁ ॥

ਭੰਡੁ ਮੁਆ ਭੰਡੁ ਭਾਲੀਐ ਭੰਡਿ ਹੋਵੈ ਬੰਧਾਨੁ ॥

ਸੋ ਕਿਉ ਮੰਦਾ ਆਖੀਐ ਜਿਤੁ ਜੰਮਹਿ ਰਾਜਾਨ ॥

(S.G.G.S., P. 473)

*It is by women, the condemned one that we are conceived;*

*And from her that we are born;*

*It is with her that we are betrothed and married.  
 It is the woman we befriend, and it is she who keeps the race going  
 When one-woman dies, another is sought for;  
 It is with her that we get established in the society.  
 Why call her evil? From her kings and great men are born.*

The third Nanak, Guru Amar Das, strongly outlawed the evil practice of *Sati*. *Sati* was the practice of burning a widow on the pyre of her deceased husband. It was the worst treatment ever given to women. The Guru abolished the *Sati* system and encouraged widow remarriage. He removed the stigma of widowhood and allowed these women to rejoin society. Widow Remarriage was given moral sanctity by the Sikh Gurus and this furthered their aim of giving equal status to women. Guru Amar Das defines the true meaning of a *Sati* as below:

ਸਤੀਆ ਏਹਿ ਨ ਆਖੀਅਨਿ ਜੋ ਮੜਿਆ ਲਗਿ ਜਲੰਨਿ॥  
 ਨਾਨਕ ਸਤੀਆ ਜਾਣੀਅਨਿ ਜਿ ਬਿਰਹੇ ਚੋਟ ਮਰੰਨਿ॥  
 ਭੀ ਸੋ ਸਤੀਆ ਜਾਣੀਅਨਿ ਸੀਲ ਸੰਤੋਖਿ ਰਹੰਨਿ॥ (S.G.G.S., P. 787)

*Do not call them 'satee', who burn themselves along with their husbands' corpses. O Nanak, they alone are known as 'satee', who die from the shock of separation.*

*The real sati is one, who after the death of her husband leads a pure  
 And chaste life.*

Guru Amar Das spoke out for women, insuring they were provided equal opportunities to lead a more meaningful life. Changes to the status of women enabled them to participate in both social and religious affairs; an opportunity they were previously denied.

On the religious front, the Guru created twenty two seats called *manjis* for the propagation of Sikh ideology throughout India. Of these twenty-two, four were headed by women. Through this system, women were allowed equal religious and economic status, and were, for the first time, given decision making powers in their society. Thus Sikhism became the first religion to allow women preachers.

With the creation of Khalsa, Sikhism underwent a major transformation. Khalsa is the name given to all Sikhs who have been

baptised under the religion, and who follow the Guru's teaching, renouncing all non-Sikh practices. They were given *Amrit Pahul*: initiation into the Khalsa fold without gender discrimination. Thus the women were elevated, and made equal, becoming an integral part of every facet and celebration of Sikh life. At the time of taking *Amrit* the man was given surname "Singh" meaning prince, and "Kaur" was added to the woman's name, meaning princess.

The system of dowry which had long been prevalent in India was denounced by the Gurus. It was seen as a curse on society; one of its major evils, allowing women to be battered and brides to be burned. This system created unrest in the home, often leading to divorce. The Sikh Gurus preached against offering and accepting a dowry to the parents of both the bride and the groom. By abolishing this criminal system, the Gurus helped to create a more peaceful home life, where equality, spirituality, and congenial relations were enjoyed between the husband and wife. Thus Guru says:

ਹੋਰਿ ਮਨਮੁਖ ਦਾਜੁ ਜਿ ਰਖਿ ਦਿਖਾਲਹਿ ਸੁ ਕੂੜੁ ਅਹੰਕਾਰੁ ਕਚੁ ਪਾਜੋ ॥

(S.G.G.S., P. 79)

*Ostentatious displays of dowry do not have any place in Sikh marriages.*

*Other dowers by worldly displayed, are all false, worthless self display.*

Sikh ideology lays emphasis only on 'the dowry of *Hari Naam*'; of divine qualities. The Guru says accept the dowry of *Hari Naam*.

ਹਰਿ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਮੇਰੇ ਬਾਬੁਲਾ ਹਰਿ ਦੇਵਹੁ ਦਾਨੁ ਮੈ ਦਾਜੋ ॥

ਹਰਿ ਕਪੜੇ ਹਰਿ ਸੋਭਾ ਦੇਵਹੁ ਜਿਤੁ ਸਵਰੈ ਮੇਰਾ ਕਾਜੋ ॥ (S.G.G.S., P. 78-79)

*O my father, give me the Name of the Lord God as my wedding gift and dowry. Grant me the Lord as my robes of devotion, and as my glory, to accomplish my works.*

These changes created a great social and religious revolution in the ways of thinking and the day-to-day living of the Sikhs. Through this revolution, the Sikhs were freed from evil practices and from the Brahmanical supremacy and dominance that polluted their society. These changes brought tremendous self confidence to both men and



women. The reformed socialistic and spiritual pattern developed and implemented by the Gurus for the welfare of human race taught the Sikhs to die valiantly for the cause of freedom and righteousness, and to protect their honour and dignity. And with the status of women equalling that of men, Sikh women played an honourable and outstanding role in the struggle for the survival of Sikhism during the crucial Mughal period in Punjab. The Sikh woman truly enjoys a supreme status.

Bhai Gurdas rightly says, *“Of all the Vedas knowledge and all other virtues, it is the woman who can best guide man to the gates of salvation.”*

## A DISTINCT FAITH AND NATION

**T**he Sikhs, according to the 1998 Encyclopaedia Britannica, number 22.52 million world-wide. Sikhism ranks as the sixth major religion of the world. The Sikhs, being hard working people, have settled abroad and have become a well established and respected community in the international field. Today, India is represented by a Sikh Prime Minister, and among the three hundred and eight members of parliament in Canada, eight of those are Sikhs. The Punjabi language ranks fourth in Canadian parliament after English, French and Italian. It is a matter of pride for the Sikhs that they are well settled all over the globe and are flourishing politically, religiously and economically.

The Sikhs today live throughout the world while still maintaining their distinct identity. They have been, and continue to be a significant contributing force in the economies of their respective settled countries, and are considered to be socially and economically well placed. They bore all hardships happily and proved their worth and mettle where they migrated.

Max Arthur Macauliffe in the preface of *The Sikh Religion* states:

I bring from the east what is practically an unknown religion. The Sikhs are distinguished throughout the world as a great military people, but little is known even to professional scholars regarding their religion ... All persons of discrimination acquainted with the Sikhs set a high value on them, but it appears that knowledge throughout the world regarding excellence of Sikh religion would enhance even the present regard with which they are entertained, and that thus my work would be at least of political advantage to them.

*The Sikh Religion, Preface, p.i, vii.*

The Guru's mission was to spread God's message of a brotherhood of humankind, world wide, as the key to individual wellbeing. At the time of the birth of Guru Nanak, the people were absolutely divided and demoralized. The age old subjugation not only ruined the political life but also the social and economic spectrums. The low caste people were deprived of education and access to religious literature. Guru Nanak, in his time, felt the need to erase the dividing line between the low caste and the upper class. The succeeding Sikh Gurus introduced various systems to improve their social and religious ways of life. Guru Gobind Singh finally brought forth the Khalsa way of life to bring the conceptual vision of Guru Nanak to completion.

Sikhism is thus in complete contrast to the age-old beliefs and practices of enforced celibacy, barren asceticism, rigid ritualism, formal piety and mortification of human frame to attain salvation or liberation. Hence according to C.H. Payne:

The seed which (Guru) Nanak sowed produced richer harvest not because he expounded a nobler philosophy or preached a purer morality but because he adopted his teachings to the needs of human life; realized what they failed to realize that a religion, if it is to be living force, must be a practical religion, one that teaches mankind not how to escape from world but how to live worthily in it; not how evil is to be avoided but how it is to be met and overcome."

It is necessary to state who the Sikhs are and what they stand for. Sikhism, a revelatory religion, arose in the 16th century as a new revolutionary ideology aimed at the spiritual rejuvenation, moral uplift and social emancipation of people. On the one hand it confronted the dogmatism and religious hypocrisy of the priestly classes and on the other hand it challenged the religio-political oppression of the contemporary rulers. Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh religion, stressed the unity of God and brotherhood of man. He attacked the pillars of traditional society as caste, idolatry, ritualism, asceticism and intermediary role of the priests in man's relations with God.

Dr. Gurdarshan Singh Dhillon.

Sikhism is a faith, pure in content that has its own identity, basic principles, and code of conduct. The Sikh mode of worship preaches absolute faith in one God, the Supreme. It is an ideal religion for the modern man, universal in humanitarian spirit and affirmative in ideology. It has no ties to the practice of worship as specified in Hinduism nor has it any similarity with Islam or Christianity. Sikhism has its own independent history, entity and identity. It has its own religious, spiritual and temporal authority, centred under the supreme control of Akal Takhat Amritsar. Its rich literature and culture are infused with a high-spiritedness called *Charhdi Kala*. Guru Nanak has firmly based Sikhism on a sound spiritual foundation, based on the wisdom of the Unity of God, and compassion for humankind. It is composed in the philosophy of, "May mind be humble and intellectually exalted." Sikhism is a key to living life; a life of high morals free from religious dogmas and whims.

Sikhism is a way to equality. Guru Nanak was very much upset by the poor treatment given to the low caste classes. He declared that he had nothing to do with the upper castes and volunteered himself to be among the lowest of the low. He had a great heart to embrace and love the low caste people, which he did in practice.

ਨੀਚਾ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਨੀਚ ਜਾਤਿ ਨੀਚੀ ਹੂ ਅਤਿ ਨੀਚੁ ॥

ਨਾਨਕੁ ਤਿਨ ਕੈ ਸੰਗਿ ਸਾਥਿ ਵਡਿਆ ਸਿਉ ਕਿਆ ਰੀਸ ॥

ਜਿਥੈ ਨੀਚ ਸਮਾਲੀਅਨਿ ਤਿਥੈ ਨਦਰਿ ਤੇਰੀ ਬਖਸੀਸ ॥ (S.G.G.S., P. 15)

*Nanak seeks the company of the lowest of the low class,  
the very lowest of the low.*

*Why should he try to compete with the great?*

*In that place where the lowly are cared for—*

*there, the Blessings of Your Glance of Grace rain down.*

Consider the following story:

The apostle of benevolence and caretaker of the lowliest, one day knocked at the door of Bhai (brother) Mardana's house, his life-time low caste Muslim companion and bard. As the door opened, said Nanak, "O Bhai Mardana, I am feeling very hungry, I would like to have some food to eat here with you." So a long time desire of the wife

of Marana was fulfilled, which was once expressed to her husband satirically. So unique was Nanak, heart full of humanity, generosity and kindness who had deep affection for the poor and the low caste. He had strong yearning for their welfare and amelioration, both religiously and politically.

The Sikhs do not believe in a predestined or pre-ordained course for the soul. Our present actions coupled with God's Grace can change the course and set us on a new path. The sum total of our present actions can over-ride our past impressions and efface them altogether. Virtue or sin, therefore, is in the hands of the individual. In the company of saints, and by acting on the Guru's advice, the Sikhs can change the course of their soul. As Bhai Gurdas Ji explains, "*Take the highway and avoid narrow lanes.*"

This idea is summed up by Guru Nanak, when he says that nothing can be achieved by words alone. He says:

*We do not become saints or sinners  
By merely saying that we are;  
It is the actions that are recorded.  
According to the seed we sow,  
So the fruit we reap."*

In order to deserve God's grace, the Guru outlines a course of eradicating lust, greed, anger, ego and sensual desires, while resigning to the Lord's sweet will and remembering Him always.

Sikhism as a religion differs from almost all other world religions in one way or another. The Sikhs pay respect to Guru Granth Sahib because it embodies the philosophy of the Sikh Gurus, as well as a number of other saints of different religions, places, languages, castes, and time periods. In Sikhism very little importance is paid to pilgrimages, asceticism and austerities. God, according to Sikhism can be realized easily by leading a pious family life. Sikhism also rejects the authority of *Vedas*, *shashtras* and that of the priestly class. It denounces the Hindu modes of worship, asceticism and penances.

Sikhism rejects the theory of finality of Mohammad as a prophet and that of Quran as a revelation. Fasting, according

to Sikhism brings no merit to human soul. Although for personal physical benefit anyone can observe a fast but for spiritual benefit its efficacy is completely ruled out.

Introduction to Sikhism by G. S. Sidhu. P. 7

Sikhism has been acclaimed by H.L. Bradshaw as the “Faith of the New Life” and “*Sommum Bonum* for the modern man and woman.” It was he who also stated that this religion:

...completely supplants and fulfils all the former dispensations of older religions. The other religions contain Truth but Sikhism contains the fullness of Truth. The older faiths were good in their day, but that day is now past and we are living in dispensation of Guru Nanak. Just as we appreciate the discovery of modern living and do not want to exchange our modern jet lines, automobiles and electricity for the horse-drawn carriages and candles of the past, we do not want to exchange the New Age faith of Guru Nanak for any of the old age systems and their antiquated philosophies... The Sikh faith is the universal religion for the present space age. The Sikh religion is truly the answer to the problems of the modern man.

Dr. Harnam Singh Shan,  
Sikhism— The Faith of the New Age. P. 13

The Sikh faith is unique in fact that it gives great importance to an eco-friendly environment. It lays emphasis upon keeping our environment neat, clean and green. Guru Nanak was a visionary. He could well understand the importance of ecological balance for healthy living of all the living creatures, so he ordained in prayer the importance of the safekeeping of a healthy environment. In the last stanza of Japji Sahib, he adorns natural resources as such:

*Air the Guru, Water the father,  
Great Earth, the Mother.  
Nurses— Night and Day,  
In whose lap the world doth play.*

Air is important for life, as is the Guru for spiritual enlightenment;

as the man, without breathing air dies physically, so without enlightenment man dies spiritually.

Air as Guru does not mean spiritual Guru; in Sikhism the spiritual Guru is only Shabad and not the air. Therefore, air being a life-line of all the living beings is only named symbolically as guru. Therefore it becomes our sacred duty to keep it free from pollution for our healthy living.

Water is a valuable asset for the sustenance of life, as is father for creation of race; so without water the creation of life and growth of plants, flora and fauna, that landscape and beautify our earth is not possible. Earth, the great mother, similarly provides food and various plants and herbs for our daily use of life, so the earth carries same importance as a beloved mother.

Day and night play their part as nurses. As a nurse takes care of the child so the day and night keep us busy in life's activities. So the wonderful drama of the Great God continuously goes on in this vast universe as He wills.

Thus Guru Nanak highlights the important of nature and natural resources so that we may take proper care about them.

# GURU GRANTH SAHIB, THE ANTHOLOGY OF UNIVERSAL FAITH

*The Sikh religion is truly the answer to the problems of the modern man.*

*And it the only living faith that gives healing outlook on life.*

E. A. Bittencourt

Keeping in mind the great spiritual, social, and universal values of Guru Granth Sahib, Guru Gobind Singh installed the Granth as the Eternal Guru for the benefit of the Sikhs and of all humanity. He called it Shabad Guru. Through this action can be seen the genius and intellect of the great Guru. His visionary thinking was in fact light-years ahead. The greatness of the Guru is well captured in the following quote:

Guru Gobind Singh is the Guru of the modern times. Assuredly, the slaves of India have not understood him so far and are not capable of understanding his genius. The shadow of his large personality falls far away above the head of centuries, and so called best intellectuals of India, when they spread out their mind to understand the Guru, get bruised by mere thorns and give him up as something not as spiritual as Guru Nanak.

Prof. Puran Singh, Abstracts of Sikh Studies, p.23,  
July-Sept. 2004 vol. VI, issue 3.

The universality of Guru Granth Sahib is based on the oneness of God, and oneness of mankind. It gives equal respect to all the different names of God mentioned by the different religions and sects. This is the only Granth which contains the revelation of not only Sikh Gurus, but also of a number of saints of different faiths and different parts of



the country, speaking different languages and existing at different times. Out of these saints Bhikan Shah of Upper Pardesh, Bhai Satta, Bhai Balwand, Bhai Mardana and Baba Sheikh Farid of Punjab were all Muslims. Bhagat Ramanand of Banaras, Bhagat Jaidev of Bengal, Bhagat Parmanand of Maharashtra, Bhagat Beni of Bihar were all Brahmins. Bhagat Kabir was weaver of Banaras. Bhagat Ravi Das was a carcass carrier and shoemaker of Banaras. Bhagat Trilochan was a Vaish and Bhagat Nam Dev a tailor of untouchable caste of Maharashtra. Bhagat Dhana was a Jat and Bhagat Pipa a Rajput King of Rajasthan. Bhagat Sadhna, was a butcher from Sind, and Bhagat Sain Ji was a barber of Madhaya Pradesh. All these Bhagats of different castes and professing different professions sit together on the throne in Gurdwara.

All the people, including Sikhs, who visit a Gurdwara bow their heads in reverence. This is the universality of the Granth which is a unique example in the history of world religions. It gives a message to the world:

ਮਾਨਸ ਕੀ ਜਾਤ ਸਭੈ ਏਕੈ ਪਹਿਚਾਨਬੋ ॥ (Akaal Ustat, kabit. 15-85)  
*Recognise all humanity as one in spirit,  
 As all human beings manifestation of  
 One Divine Form and One divine Light.*

Guru Granth Sahib is the only scripture that gives equal respect to almost all the different names of God mentioned in the world religions, languages and sects. It is in poetic form and is co-authored by persons of more than one faith, proving the unity of God. Many authors and philosophers have given their comments about its contents, and have noted the concepts of Universality preached by the Sikh Gurus and other saintly persons whose sayings are included in it. The reader gets a logical and practical approach to the faith and a 'realization' of God in a simple way.

The Sikhs bow and pay reverence to Guru Granth Sahib. They do not bow or pay their reverence to the book but to the Divine Logos, which were revealed to the Sikh Gurus directly by God, the Almighty. It is 'Guru- bani'—the Voice of the Guru. People who draw inference

from the practice of paying reverence to the Guru Granth Sahib are wrong, when they say that Sikhs practise bibliolatry. Sri Guru Granth Sahib is a living embodiment of the Ten Guru. According to Guru Nanak, the Word is the image of the Truth the leads to ultimate goal to enshrine with eternal light.

Modern writers are expressing their thoughts on Sikhism and Gurbani in an unbiased fashion, based on research and education. Their findings have given them a great understanding of the religion, and its place in the modern world.

Miss Pearl S. Buck, a Nobel laureate, gave her comments on a foreword to an English translation of the Guru Granth Sahib by Gopal Singh Dardi. She wrote:

I have studied the scriptures of the great religions, but I do not find elsewhere the same power of appeal to the heart and mind as I find here in these volumes. They are compact in spite of their length and are a revelation of the concept of God to the recognition and indeed the insistence upon the practical needs of the human body. There is something strangely modern about these scriptures and this puzzled me until I have learned they are in fact comparatively modern, compiled as late as the 16th century. When the explorers were beginning to discover the globe, upon which we all live is a single entity divided only by arbitrary lines of our making. Perhaps this sense of unity is the source of power I find in these volumes. They speak to a person of any religion or of none. They speak for the human heart and the searching mind.

Rev. H.L. Bradshaw of the United States, after thoroughly studying the philosophy of Sikhism observed:

Sikhism is a universal world Faith, a message for all men. This is amply illustrated in the writings of the Gurus. Sikhs must cease to think of their faith as just another good religion and must begin to think in the terms of Sikhism being the religion for this New Age...the religion preached by Guru Nanak is the faith of the New Age.

Bradshaw also says:

The Guru Granth Sahib of all the world religious scriptures, alone states that there are innumerable worlds and universes other than our own. The previous scriptures were all concerned only with this world and its spiritual counterpart. To amply that they spoke of other worlds as does the Guru Granth sahib, is to stretch their obvious meanings out of context. The Sikh religion is true answer to the problems of the modern man.

Articles in the Sikh Review, Calcutta

Archer in his book on the Sikh faith very rightly commented:

The religion of the Guru Granth is a universal and practical religion....Due to the ancient prejudices of the Sikhs it could not spread in the world. The world needs today its message of peace and love.

Another scholar, Dorothy Field, in her book The Sikh religion, writes, "Pure Sikhism is far above dependence on Hindu rituals and is capable of a distinct position as a world religion so long as Sikhs maintain their distinctiveness."

Arnold Toynbee, a historian who has done much work in comparing cultures, writes:

Mankind's religious future may be obscure; yet one can be foreseen. The living higher religions are going to influence each other more than ever before, in the days of increasing communications between the all parts of the world and branches of the human race. In this coming religious debate, the Sikh religion and its scriptures, the Guru Granth, will have something special of value to say to the rest of the world.

And

Of all known religious scriptures, this book is the most highly venerated. It means more to Sikhs than even the Quran to Muslims, the Bible to Christians, and the Torah to Jews. The

*Adi Granth* is the Sikhs' perpetual Guru (spiritual guide).....a book that has meant and means so much to such a notable community as the Sikhs Khalsa, deserves close such study from the rest of the world.

Foreword to UNESCO's selections  
from the Sacred Writings of the Sikhs, London-1960, p. 9.

In other words, it is not only Sikhs who can see the great distinction between Sikhism and most other religions. This notion is fast becoming a philosophy which has validity for all cultures and non-Sikh writers. Toynbee also writes:

Unlike the other scriptures of the other creeds, they do not contain love stories or accounts of wars waged for selfish considerations. They contain sublime truths, the study of which cannot but elevate the reader spiritually, morally and socially. There is not the least tinge of sectarianism in them. They teach the highest and the purest principle that serve to bind man to man and inspire the believer with an ambition to serve his fellow men, to sacrifice all and die for their sake.

Max Arthur Macauliffe, English translator of the Granth, deems it necessary to draw the reader's attention to one significant feature of Sikhism which distinguishes it and separates it from the other philosophical and religious systems of thought:

The Sikh religion differs as regards the authenticity of its dogmas from most other great theological systems. Many of the great teachers the world has known have not left a line of their own composition, and we only know what they taught through tradition or second-hand information. If Pythagoras wrote any of tenets, his writings have not descended to us. We know the teachings of Socrates only through the writings of Plato and Xenophon. Buddha has left no written memorials of his teaching. Kung Fu-tze, known to Europeans as Confucius, left no document in which he detailed the principles of his moral and social systems. The Founder of Christianity did not reduce his doctrines to writing, and for them we are obliged to

trust the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

And

The Arabian Prophet did not himself reduce to writing the chapters of the Quran. They were written or compiled by his adherents and followers after his death. But the compositions of the Sikh Gurus are preserved and we know first hand what they taught. They employed the vehicle of verse, which is generally unalterable by the copyist, and we even become in time familiar with their different styles. No spurious compositions or extraneous dogmas: can therefore be represented as theirs.

Introduction-The Sikh Religion.

Having Sikhism in his mind, Macauliffe, in his book The Sikh Religion, poses and then answers the following question:

The author of the '*Vie de Jesus*' was a great admirer of Jesus Christ. Greatly impressed as he was of the spiritual message delivered by Christ and those of the Semitic thinkers that preceded him, he posed the question: Whether great originality will again arise or the world be content to follow the path opened by the daring creators of the ancient ages.

To this Macauliffe answers:

Now there is here presented a religion totally unaffected by Semitic or Christian influences. Based on the concept of the unity of God, it rejected Hindu formalities and adopted an independent ethical system, ritual, and standards which were totally opposed to the theological beliefs of Guru Nanak's age and country. As we hereafter, it would be difficult to point out a religion of greater originality or to more comprehensive ethical system.

Macauliffe tells us further:

Guru Nanak was not a priest either by birth or education, but a man who soared to the loftiest heights of divine emotionalism, exalted his mental vision to an ethical ideal beyond the conception of Hinduism or Mohammedanism. The most numerous and powerful of all is the great Sikh sect (religion) founded by Guru Nanak, which already forms a considerable section of population of the Punjab, and which is scattered in greater or less numbers, not only throughout the whole of India but also in Kandhar, China and Southern Asia.

It is also interesting to note the comments of Dr. W.O. Cole, of the United Kingdom, who has written more than half a dozen books on Sikhism. In 1985, he visited India where communal disturbances had created a virtual turmoil and thousands of people were killed. In a keynote lecture on the Mission and Message of Guru Nanak Dev, he gave a message to the Sangat, and through them, to all humanity:

Remember the tenets of Guru Nanak, his concept oneness of God and Universal Brotherhood of man. If any community holds the key to the national integration of India, it is the Sikhs all the way.

After the lecture, he was asked what drew him to study of Sikhism. He replied:

Theologically, I cannot answer the question what drew me to the study of Sikhism. You may call it, the purpose of God. But to be more specific, the unique concept of universality and the system of Langar (free community meals) in Sikhism are the two features that attract me to towards the study of Sikhism.

Langar is the exclusive feature of Sikhism and found nowhere else in the world. Sikhism is the only religion, which welcomes each and everyone to its langar without any discrimination of caste, creed, colour, or sex.

Spokesman, Toronto, Canada,  
“Sikhism: A Universal Message” *op. cit.* p. 40

Further, Owen Cole in his foreword to *The Teachings of Guru*

*Nanak*, written as recently as in 1983 has also stated:

The message of Guru Nanak was not only to the Sikhs in the sense in which that word is used today. There was as yet no Sikh religion. The teachings he gave were to all humanity for the benefit of all who would listen and respond. In today's global village it is as important as it was five hundred years ago that all those who wish to turn their thoughts from material and mundane concerns to matters of eternal significance, should be able to discover what the world's great sages have had to say. Guru Nanak is one of these, and through the English speaking countries, the message which he himself never allowed to be confined to Panjab is again reaching distant places. It also comes at a time when scholarly attention in Sikhism is growing and creating a need for sound, scholarly introductions to Sikh theology to be published.

One hears so much about what the religions have stood for in the past. The question I find young people of all religious backgrounds asking is, "Has religion any value and purpose today?" If this book helps us think this issue it will have made a great contribution to human development.

Cole, W, Owen, in his foreword to *Teaching of Guru Nanak*,  
Harnam Singh Shan; Chandigarh, 1983, pp. 7-8.

There is a philosopher name Bertrand Russell, whose prolific writing on Sikh religion, politics and morals always stimulated interest, often to his detriment. He often expressed what he regarded as the absurdities of religion. But he said that "if some lucky men survive the onslaught of the third world war of atomic and hydrogen bombs, then the Sikh religion will be the only means of guiding them."

Russell was asked if his statement implied that the Sikh religion was not capable of guiding mankind until and unless there was a third world war. He replied:

No. It has the capability, but the Sikhs have not brought out, in the broad daylight, the splendid doctrines of their religion

which has come into existence for the benefit of the entire mankind. It is their greatest sin and Sikhs cannot be freed from it.

HH Justice Mota Singh,  
Abstracts of Sikh Studies, p. 21, issue 3, July-September 2006.

The opinion of some Hindu mystics also needs to be quoted to better know their experience with the Sikh faith. Swami Nitya Nand, expired at the age of 135 years, writes in his book Gur Gian:

I, in the company of my Guru, Brahma Nand Ji, went to Mathura... While on pilgrimage tour, we reached Punjab and there we met Swami Satya Nand Udasi. He explained the philosophy and religious practices of Nanak in such a way that Swami Brahma Nand Ji enjoyed a mystic lore. During the visit to the Golden Temple, Amritsar, his soul was so much affected, that he became a devotee of the Guru. After spending sometime in Punjab he went to Hardwar. Though he was hail and hearty, one day I saw tears in his eyes. I asked the reason for that. He replied, "I sifted sand the whole of my life. The Truth was in the House of Nanak. I have to take one more birth in that house only then I will attain Kalyan." After saying that the soul of his body left.

Swami Nitya Nand also wrote his own experience, "I also constantly meditate on Waheguru revealed by Nanak. I practiced Yoga Asanas under the guidance of Yogis."

(Reproduced from, Sikhism, a Universal Message)

Guru Granth Sahib preaches humanism. It projects humanity as one, created by One God, who is the Supreme Being and of eternal manifestation.



## HUMAN RIGHTS AND SIKH IDEOLOGY

Here is a word – compassion that best captures the kind of active concern for others that the term “human rights” should signify. Compassion, as the theologian Oliver Davies has argued, is neither love nor mercy; it has a cognitive element (understanding the others), an affective element (feeling for the others), and a voluntarist element (doing something about the others). Davies observes that “there is something subversive, indiscriminate and boundary-crossing about compassion,” and he is right about this: It is through the rallying power of compassion that we can use human rights to frame and mobilize responses to suffering and to atrocities. Compassion is a universalistic, disposition from which virtue flows, and the linguistic medium through which it expresses itself is the language of human rights.

Toronto Star, January 15, 2006.

ਚਾਰ ਵਰਨ ਇਕ ਵਰਨ ਹੋਇ ਸਾਧਸੰਗਤਿ ਮਿਲ ਹੋਏ ਤਰਾਬਾ ॥

ਚੰਦਨ ਵਾਸ ਵਣਾਸਪਤਿ ਅੰਵਲ ਦੋਮ ਨ ਸੋਮ ਖਰਾਬਾ ॥

*Varan Bhai Gurdas, xxxiv/4*

*Bhai Gurdas, a Sikh philosopher praises Guru Nanak who has created a Classless society, where there are no divisions as first rate, second rate or third rate citizens. He has equalized (mixed like fragrance of sandal wood) all the four classes and has established a society of saints.*

Thus Human rights may be defined as, “The dignity of every human being; his inalienable fundamental rights, the inviolability of life, freedom and justice, the sense of solidarity and the rejection of discrimination.”

There has been number of prophets throughout history that have come with the intention to teach and spread the formalities and

importance of their own religious ideologies. These prophets, however, made hardly any efforts to improve the social and economic conditions of the common people. The issue of human rights was not addressed. Paradoxically, some of these prophets and philosophers preached against the social and religious privileges of the women.

Guru Nanak was the first to acknowledge the basic fundamental rights of every person irrespective of colour, caste, creed and gender. He recognized freedom of worship and of faith as a basic and a foremost birth right. He equally advocated the right to liberty and life, the freedom to preach, and the freedom of speech, the right to possess property, the right to equal treatment in services without discrimination, and the right to political and economic freedom.

The Guru, while professing human rights, condemned the imposed caste system, racism and censure of the female gender. He had a sincere love for those who wanted to help others. By his wisdom of equality, he brought a man named Mardana, a low caste Muslim, with him in his travels. He equally shared his love and feelings with his adored disciple, Bhai Lalo, a poor Hindu low caste carpenter. As a true believer of the equal status of all humanity, he firmly stood for women's equality in social life. Discrimination and hatred did not carry any value for him. His theo-ideology was conceived in the womb of kindness and love for humanity which he expresses lucidly in Japji Sahib, saying, "*Compassion is the mother of true religion;/Held in a beauteous order by (thread of) contentment*". Pauri-15

He who realizes this truth becomes virtuous. Religion devoid of compassion and virtuous deeds is not a religion at all, but a bundle of man made dogmas and rituals.

Sikhism, as an ethically and spiritually based religion, always stood for upholding the oneness of humankind, preaching human rights and empathy for all beings. Guru Gobind Singh established a classless society and rejected the man made divisions of mankind, proclaiming, "*Recognise all humanity as one.*"

All the Sikh Gurus stood for these principals despite having to go through very turbulent times that resulted in unjustified and unaccountable martyrdoms. Guru Arjan was the first Sikh Guru to be

executed during the reign of Emperor Jahangir at Lahore in the year 1606. The second martyr, Guru Tegh Bahadur, father of Guru Gobind Singh, though he did not believe in Hindu rituals, still sacrificed his life for their freedom to worship. In this respect the Guru's martyrdom is unparalleled in the annals of human history. He laid down his life to defend the freedom of worship, conscience, and religious tolerance. His philosophy of "accept no fear, extend no fear" is a guide for the modern world, showing the perseverance of his mind to protect the others' rights. Guru Gobind Singh, in his autobiography mentioned the reasons of his father's Martyrdom of supreme sacrifice as below:

*For freedom of worship he offered his head,  
The principle "To die for others" he spread.  
Without exorcising any occult power,  
And dauntlessly saved tilak and sacred thread.  
He offered his head but heaved not a sigh of regret.*

Two innocent younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh, at the ages of seven and nine, were entombed in bricks at Sirhind, under the order of Nawab Wazir Khan, when they refused to submit to the Islamic ideology forced upon them. There are countless Sikh martyrs who laid down their lives to protect Human Rights, fighting against discrimination, forced conversion, fanaticism and barbarism. Those martyrdoms have infused an element of awareness of the rights and fearlessness in the Sikhs:

ਪਰਵਾਰ ਨਾਹੀ ਕਿਸੈ ਕੋਰੀ ਬਾਝੁ ਸਚੇ ਨਾਹ ॥ (S.G.G.S., p. 473)  
*Other than the holy Lord for none have they fear.*

The creation of the Khalsa Institution was in fact a revolution, apprising the people to stand for their fundamental rights and human values, based on the first principle of 'One Father and we all as His children'. Thus the Guru created a socio-religious society based on egalitarianism and Unity of God, and a belief in brotherhood. God alone is the Master who cares and nourishes passionately. Thus declares Guru Granth Sahib:

ਤੂੰ ਸਾਝਾ ਸਾਹਿਬੁ ਬਾਪੁ ਹਮਾਰਾ ॥ ਨਉ ਨਿਧਿ ਤੇਰੈ ਅਖੁਟ ਭੰਡਾਰਾ ॥  
 ਜਿਸੁ ਤੂੰ ਦੇਹਿ ਸੁ ਤ੍ਰਿਪਤਿ ਅਘਾਵੈ ਸੋਈ ਭਗਤੁ ਤੁਮਾਰਾ ਜੀਉ ॥ ੨ ॥  
 ਸਭੁ ਕੋ ਆਸੈ ਤੇਰੀ ਬੈਠਾ ॥ ਘਟ ਘਟ ਅੰਤਰਿ ਤੂੰਹੈ ਵੁਠਾ ॥  
 ਸਭੇ ਸਾਝੀਵਾਲ ਸਦਾਇਨਿ ਤੂੰ ਕਿਸੈ ਨ ਦਿਸਹਿ ਬਾਹਰਾ ਜੀਉ ॥ ੩ ॥

(S.G.G.S., p. 97)

*Thou Lord of all, our father,  
 In Thy possession lie unending stores,  
 With the nine treasures overflowing.  
 In these all are sharers:  
 To none dost Thou appear alien.*

Guru Granth Sahib is the supreme scripture that preaches the Fatherhood of God and universal brotherhood, where none is alien. So declares the Guru:

ਬਿਸਰਿ ਗਈ ਸਭ ਤਾਤਿ ਪਰਾਈ ॥ ਜਬ ਤੇ ਸਾਧਸੰਗਤਿ ਮੋਹਿ ਪਾਈ ॥ ੧ ॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥  
 ਨਾ ਕੋ ਬੈਰੀ ਨਹੀ ਬਿਗਾਨਾ ਸਗਲ ਸੰਗਿ ਹਮ ਕਉ ਬਨਿ ਆਈ ॥ ੧ ॥  
 ਜੋ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਕੀਨੋ ਸੋ ਭਲ ਮਾਨਿਓ ਏਹ ਸੁਮਤਿ ਸਾਧੂ ਤੇ ਪਾਈ ॥ ੨ ॥  
 ਸਭ ਮਹਿ ਰਵਿ ਰਹਿਆ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਏਕੈ ਪੇਖਿ ਪੇਖਿ ਨਾਨਕ ਬਿਗਸਾਈ ॥

(S.G.G.S., p. 1299)

*I have totally forgotten my jealousy of others,  
 Since Company of the Holy I have attained. -Pause  
 No one is my foe, no one a stranger.  
 I get along with everyone. (1)  
 Whatever God does, I accept that as good.  
 From the Holy, sublime wisdom I have obtained (2)  
 The One God is pervading in all.  
 Beholding Him, Nanak is in bloom of joy.*

## GURDWARA: A HIGHWAY TO ETERNITY

**A** Gurdwara may be referred to as a Sikh temple, but it is much more than that. It is not merely an edifice of bricks, mortar, and other building materials, but it is a doorway to the ultimate destination; a place in unity with God. With the display of Guru Granth Sahib, the Gurdwara becomes a *Sanctum Sanatorium*.

The Gurdwara is a school for spiritual and moral teaching, a kitchen to feed the hungry, a shelter for the shelterless, and a lodge for a traveller. It is a place for the martyrs to stand in the face of adversity, and an assembly of brotherhood of all humankind. Its doors are open to all without any restriction and discrimination.

In this modern age of advanced technology and advanced civilization, non-Muslims still cannot enter a mosque or visit Mecca. Hindu temples are restricted for the low caste Hindus and non-Hindus, and similarly only Christians may enter many Christian churches. Sikh Gurdwara is the only religious place where everyone is welcome, without restriction or discrimination, to take part in *sangat*, to listen melodious *Kirtan* and *pangat*, and to enjoy free food in the common kitchen. Langar (free kitchen) is an exclusive feature in Sikhism found nowhere else in the world.

The foundation stone of one of the most prestigious Gurdwara, Harimandir Sahib, or 'Golden Temple', was laid by a Muslim Sufi called saint Mian Mir. Unlike other religious buildings, it was built on a lower plinth level than that of the surrounding area, expressing the spirit of humility for the visiting devotees. It has four doors, one in each direction to welcome people from all directions and of all castes.

There is an interesting story which is worth noting here:

In Punjab, once there lived a Muslim mystic poet and fakir, Bulhe

Shah. He happened to go to a Hindu temple and requested food and a night's stay. He was refused and was denied entry into the temple, being a non-Hindu. Also he tried for food and a night's stay in a mosque. Here too, though he was a Muslim, he was denied and turned out. Finally he went to a Gurdwara, a Sikh temple where he was welcomed by the Sikh priest who extended him hospitality, served him food and made arrangements for his night's stay to his satisfaction. He was very pleased. In the morning he took his breakfast to his contentment. While leaving the Gurdwara he uttered the following couplet:

ਇਟ ਖੜਕੇ ਦੁਕੜ ਵਜੈ ਨਾਲੇ ਤਪੈ ਚੁੱਲ੍ਹਾ।

ਇਨ੍ਹੀਂ ਗਲੀਂ ਰਬ ਰਾਜੀ ਨਾਲੇ ਰਾਜੀ ਬੁੱਲ੍ਹਾ।

*Here in Gurdwara, the construction work is in progress,*

*Praises of God are sung melodiously,*

*Besides that, food is being served to all,*

*With all these formalities, the God is pleased, so is Bulha.*

The above couplet of Bulhe Shah, expresses well the high traditions of the Sikh faith. The Gurdwara welcomes everyone. Whosoever shall visit is provided with the necessities of life without any discrimination or consideration of status. The door of the Gurdwara is always open to the needy so that they may be served there. A unique doorway to the eternal house imparts peace of mind upon whosoever steps into it.

## SIKH WAY OF LIFE

**T**he Sikh faith is a simple way of living based on a “live and let live” ideology. Unfortunately it is mostly misunderstood in the world as it has not been projected in the right light. The Sikh Gurus laid its foundation expressively and vividly on honest earning, meditation (*simrin*) and service (*sewa*) to humanity with a devoted mind. While living a simple life, one has to be a ‘human being’ and not ‘human doing’, meaning that one must be kind, humble, generous, and benevolent. Sikh life requires one to be spiritual in order to achieve the destined goal of a true realization and union with the Master.

The Sikh way of life can be categorized under three heads:

A) Sikh,

B) Sikhi, the Sikh way of life,

C) Sikhism.

- A) **Sikh:** A Sikh is a disciplined student, a knowledgeable and peace loving person, who believes in Sikhism. A Sikh should be the embodiment of love, compassion and sacrifice, adhering to the code of conduct of Sikhi.
- B) **Sikhi:** The way of life and belief in the philosophy of Guru Granth Sahib. The practice of the Guru’s instructions, and the preservation of Sikh religious symbols. The resignation to the sweet will of God, in order to achieve His blessing.
- C) **Sikhism:** The doctrine of philosophy that makes up the Sikh faith and enshrined in the Sri Guru Granth Sahib. The code of conduct recognized by the Khalsa Panth.

Guru Nanak says ‘*Sikhi*’ is a game of love:

ਜਉ ਤਉ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਖੇਲਣ ਕਾ ਚਾਉ ॥ ਸਿਰੁ ਧਰਿ ਤਲੀ ਗਲੀ ਮੇਰੀ ਆਉ ॥

(S.G.G.S., p. 1412)

*It is the game of love, come forward with your head on palm,*

*If you so desire to play this game.*

And

*There is love and all love,*

*Gold, diamonds, precious pearls and rubies,*

*Dominion, authority, fortune and mansions,*

*All are nothing, of no value.*

*Seek no desire for all these.*

The fourth Guru has very specifically depicted the daily life routine and timetable of the Sikh as follows:

ਗੁਰ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਕਾ ਜੋ ਸਿਖੁ ਅਖਾਏ ਸੁ ਭਲਕੇ ਉਠਿ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਧਿਆਵੈ ॥

ਉਦਮੁ ਕਰੇ ਭਲਕੇ ਪਰਭਾਤੀ ਇਸਨਾਨੁ ਕਰੇ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਸਰਿ ਨਾਵੈ ॥

ਉਪਦੇਸਿ ਗੁਰੁ ਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਜਪੁ ਜਾਪੈ ਸਭਿ ਕਿਲਵਿਖ ਪਾਪ ਦੋਖ ਲਹਿ ਜਾਵੈ ॥

(S.G.G.S., p.305)

*He who is called a Sikh of the Sat guru,*

*Should rise early and remember the Lord's name.*

*He should get up early and take bath and*

*Have a dip in the Pool of Nectar.*

*Through the Guru's Teaching he should dwell upon the Lord*

*That all his sins are washed off.*

## **Who is a Sikh?**

A practicing Sikh, dead to the world,

A Sikh lives in the spirit of the Guru.

A man does not become a Sikh

By merely paying lip service to Him.

A Sikh dispels all doubts and fears,

And lives a life of deep patience and faith;

Verily, he is a living martyr.

A slave of love of the Lord,

He does, what the Lord Wills;

He forgets all hunger and sleep in His love,



His hands are busy helping the needy,  
 His hands are busy comforting the weary;  
 His hands are busy serving the lowly;  
 His hands are busy washing their feet.  
 Thought-provoking, tolerant and composed,  
 He lives in the service of humanity.  
 In pleasure, a Sikh laughs not,  
 And in suffering, he cries not;  
 He is a seer living in His Presence;  
 He is a devotee imbued in His love.  
 He progressively casts into perfection;  
 And is blessed and worshipped  
 Like full moon on sacred days.

Bhai Gurdas, *Vaar.3, Pauri. 18*

According to the Sikh tenets, human life is a God given gift, and its purpose is to achieve a union with God. It is not evil or suffering. It must be lived and enjoyed fully, remembering God's Name through meditation. Mother earth is *dharmasala* (a place of righteous action), and here one should avail the opportunity of human birth. One must company of *sadh sangat* (religious congregation) and enshrine the Lord's name throughout all their life, so that they may achieve life's ultimate goal of union with God through the virtue of His grace.

Guru Nanak said that religion is, in fact, to be practiced as a way of life. When one's belief is put into practice for the welfare of the people, only then does one become religious. Otherwise, religion is nothing more than a theoretical concept for mental exercise that leads to bickering and argument, and ultimately to bloodshed.

Guru Gobind Singh demolished all barriers and dogmas that stood in the way of the progression of mankind, whether they were social, political or religious. He made his Khalsa classless by rejecting the Nash doctrine advocated by the Hindu priest class:

- i) **Dharm Nash:** freedom from restrictions of Hindu *varanashram dharma*.
- ii) **Karam Nash:** freedom from rituals of *karam-khand*.
- iii) **Bharm Nash:** freedom from superstitions.

- iv) **Kul Nash:** freedom from limitations associated with lineage of birth.
- v) **Krit Nash:** freedom from hereditary limitations (as restricted in Geeta) on choice of profession or occupation.

By eliminating the undesired Nash (nefarious) doctrine of caste and occupation imposed by the Hindu, the Guru created an egalitarian society of all mankind, elevating the status of his disciples to be at par with the Guru himself, provided they live a disciplined life of high morality. As he says:

ਰਹਿਣੀ ਰਹੇ ਸੋਈ ਸਿਖ ਮੇਰਾ ॥ ਓਹ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਮੈਂ ਉਸ ਕਾ ਚੇਰਾ ॥

*He who lives by code of conduct is my recognized Sikh (disciple),  
And he would be my master and I be his disciple.*

*(Guru Gobind Singh)*

The Tenth Master further laid emphasis on worship, hard work, truthful living and virtuous deeds; deeds without aspiring for the fruit of the actions done. The end result is a disciplined mind, and it is the only mind worthy of living. The Guru held the tenets of *Sikhi* in high esteem and not the *Sikh*. A *Sikh* devoid of moral values and the right way of living is unacceptable to the Guru. For the Guru; the principles have to be a priority and not empirical. In admiration of the unparalleled qualities of Guru Gobind Singh, Daulat Rai states:

His status is the highest among religious preceptors of all times. If humility par excellence was in evidence anywhere it was in Guru Gobind Singh. It is not my intention to denigrate the founders of religious sects of any country or time.

Daulat Rai on Sahib-Kamal Guru Gobind Singh.

Guru Gobind Singh though adept in warfare, never fought to offend anyone or to usurp any territory, but struggled to defend his institution of piety and purity, human rights, dignity and the honour of common people. Lord Krishna fought about fifteen battles, one of which was fought in revenge against the wrongs done to his parents by his maternal uncle Kans. He was also responsible for general genocide in Mahabharata. Mohammed fought well over fifty battles in his life,

only one of which was defensive. The next hundred years of Islam were engulfed in unending, unrelenting warfare against practically all the then-known world.

Still neither Hindus nor Muslims have ever projected the glorification of soldieries of their religious prophets. They have, however, adored them as religious prophets and social reformers. In this area, the Sikh community has failed to elevate their own leaders. The Sikhs therefore need to reorganize their missionary work in the right direction so as to disseminate the Sikh philosophy of the Unity of God, compassion, and love, and to implement a policy of non-alienation and non-violence that has been upheld and handed down by the great Gurus.

Swami Hukam Sinho was a scholar from the Aligarh district of U.P. He was also one time president of the U.P. *Arya Pratinidhi Sabha*. He was an *Arya Smajist* who admired the values of the Sikhs. Once he happened to visit Harimandir Sahib, the Golden Temple Amritsar on the Diwali day. He felt so happy to see the entire populace sitting in one place, bathing in the same water, dining in the same hall, and serving all others together. He resolved to seek Sikh baptism and become a Khalsa. He revealed that his life spent before the baptism had been a waste, saying, "My childhood and youth were spent in fallacy and that I have become Sikh to improve my old age. This is Guru's grace on me who has given me the gift of Kesha and form of a Sikh." (Ref. *Safal Jivan*. p. 77).

## A RELIGION OF HUMANITY

**I**n the ideology of Guru Nanak the word religion as such did not exist. Guru Nanak's emphasis was on good conduct and deeds and being humanistic. He emphasised remembering the Lord's Name while doing service to humankind, loving His creation and residing under His Will, rather than being a religious ritualistic. He further believed that every professional or worker had to be faithful to his duty, earning truthfully. He was equally concerned with the governance of a just and humane social order, and peaceful coexistence. Guru Arjan Dev upholds the above fundamentals in the following verse:

ਹੁਣਿ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਹੋਆ ਮਿਹਰਵਾਣ ਦਾ ॥ ਪੈ ਕੋਇ ਨ ਕਿਸੈ ਰਵਾਣਦਾ ॥

ਸਭ ਸੁਖਾਲੀ ਵੁਠੀਆ ਇਹੁ ਹੋਆ ਹਲੇਮੀ ਰਾਜੁ ਜੀਉ ॥ (S.G.G.S., p. 74)

*Now, the Merciful Lord has issued His Command.*

*Let no one chase after and attack anyone else.*

*Let all abide in peace, under this Benevolent Rule.*

A religious organization or governance established on a just and altruistic social order, and committed to truthful living and human equality, is the right governance or religion. A religion or any scripture that promotes a class division, racism, subjugation or hatred among the people or abets to slaughter the believers of other religions has been out rightly denounced by the Sikh Gurus.

In this connection Swami had rightly mentioned in his Sanskrit book Chaturvarns Bharat Samiksha:

He further dismisses as outdated and useless, the unjust and callous Indian doctrine which has for its aims and objective perpetuating the socio-political subjugation and economic exploitation of masses represented by Vaishas and Shudras by

the two powerful classes of Brahmins and Kshatriyas.

But the Hindus think, conversely, that Sikh faith constitutes a danger to Hinduism. At the same time they realize that the Sikh faith has its own potential ideology and is universal, therefore they artfully proclaim Sikhs as part of Hindus. If so why do Hindus not adopt Sikhism en masse and act on the advice of Swami Ji to destroy all such literature that wedges schism in human society? Unfortunately they are ambitious to keep other religious organizations under their control, or further, to destroy all those that conflict with Hinduism. Wisdom should prevail upon them if they accept a faith that offends none, degrades none, treats all equal, and respects one and all. As the Gurbani guides us:

ਸਭੁ ਕੋ ਊਚਾ ਆਖੀਐ ਨੀਚੁ ਨ ਦੀਸੈ ਕੋਇ ॥

ਇਕਨੈ ਭਾਂਡੇ ਸਾਜਿਐ ਇਕੁ ਚਾਨਣੁ ਤਿਹੁ ਲੋਇ ॥

(S.G.G.S., P. 62)

*Call everyone high (noble), for none is low.*

*As the God, the sole potter,*

*Has fashioned all vessels alike,*

*And it His light alone*

*That shines in all creation.*

In this way Sikhism puts a stop to this “socio-political subjugation and economic exploitation” of low class at the hands of high-class, and of the poor at the hands of the rich. This contrast in thinking is one of causes of conflict between the Hindus and the Sikhs. Most of the Hindu *Varanashram dharma* and many other man-made whimsical rituals shall die a natural death due to advancement in education and awareness among the people. The monopoly of the education system has already slipped out of the fisted control of the high class Hindus. The low-caste people, with a background of quality education, are taking up various other professions outside their hereditary ones. The trend of inter-caste marriages shall also have negative effect over the caste system. The division of the human race and class race are nothing more than ills in the human society. Such thinking creates racism, terrorism, bloodshed and unrest in society.

Dorothy Field concludes thus:

Pure Sikhism is far above dependence on Hindu rituals and is capable of a distinct position as a world religion so long as Sikhs maintain their distinctiveness. The religion is also one, which should appeal to the occidental mind. It is essentially a practical religion. If judged from pragmatically stand point which is a favourite point of view in some quarters, **IT WOULD RANK ALMOST FIRST IN THE WORLD (sik)**. Of no other religion can it be said that it has made a nation in so short a time.

Ms. Field further observed:

The religion is one of the most interesting at present existing in India, possibly indeed in the whole world. A reading of the Granth strongly suggests that Sikhism should be regarded as a new and separate world religion rather than a reformed sect of Hinduism.

The Religion of the Sikhs, London, 1914, pp. 9 and 34-35

The uniqueness of the Sikh philosophy of the universality of human rights (*Gurmat*) set forth by Sikh Gurus is being recognized throughout the world and shall rule the world over shortly. *Gurmat* guides us to live in harmony with due respect to diversity. "*Let universal brotherhood be/The highest aspiration of your religious order.*" Says Guru Nanak in Japji Sahib.

Bhai Kanhiya, a *Sewa Panthi* and a devoted disciple of Guru Gobind Singh, once served water to the wounded in the battle field. He served water with deep compassion and human concern to the entire wounded not discriminating the foe and the friend. Sikh soldiers lodged a strong protest to the Guru for his actions. A disciple of the Guru said to him, "Master, I see your face in every human soul, I see your light in every heart and in the cries of the wounded I hear your voice and none else." The Guru was so pleased to listen to the reply of his disciple that he gave him ointment to dress the wounds of the wounded. So were the Guru and his disciple, an unparalleled and par excellence example of *Sikhi-values*. Thus, said the Guru, "The human

body that does not do any good to others is worthless.”

Saint Kabir equally lays stress on peaceful living, discarding all sorts of religious conflicts that give rise to racism and onwards to terrorism in the following couplet:

ਹਮਰਾ ਝਗਰਾ ਰਹਾ ਨ ਕੋਊ ॥ ਪੰਡਿਤ ਮੁਲਾਂ ਛਾਡੇ ਦੋਊ ॥ ੧ ॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥  
ਬੁਨਿ ਬੁਨਿ ਆਪ ਆਪੁ ਪਹਿਰਾਵਉ ॥ ਜਹ ਨਹੀ ਆਪੁ ਤਹਾ ਹੋਇ ਗਾਵਉ ॥ ੨ ॥  
ਪੰਡਿਤ ਮੁਲਾਂ ਜੋ ਲਿਖਿ ਦੀਆ ॥ ਛਾਡਿ ਚਲੇ ਹਮ ਕਛੂ ਨ ਲੀਆ ॥ ੩ ॥

(S.G.G.S., P. 1159)

*I have dumped down all my disagreement  
And abandoned I have both the Pundit and Mullah. I pause,  
I weave and weave and myself wear what I weave,  
And I sing of my God in a state, where I am not. -2  
Whatever was writ by the Pundit and the Mullah.  
That I accepted not and cast it aside. -3.*

Guru Nanak was most probably the first prophet who claimed the complete equality among humankind, including women, in every walk of life. The Sikh Gurus did not advocate or lay stress on proselytisation because it encourages racism and hatred amongst the masses. Conversely, the Sikh Gurus advised the people to live an existence of truthful living, as truthful living is higher than even truth. Unfortunately, the preachers of certain faiths lay emphasis on conversion in order to ‘save’ the people. They believe that their faith is the only true faith, and that others are pagan faiths. Gurbani condemns the theory of a ‘true faith’ beyond doubt, and proclaims that only good deeds could save the soul on the Day of Judgment. The Sikh faith teaches that no prophet or Avatar or a Saviour would be able to intercede or save you. Everyone, whatever faith he possesses, will have to reap the fruits of his doings. The True One can only be attained by the purity of mind and by virtue of virtuous deeds. God is the Father of all and not of any particular community. He is nobody’s private inheritance. No one can claim monopoly on Him. He belongs to every one.

The Almighty Lord can be worshipped through innumerable languages and in innumerable names- Creator, Allah, Ram, Gobind,

Guru and God. All names are equal; no name is superior or inferior. We may praise Him by any name and still can gain acceptance by Him. Those who love Him, achieve their goal in human life.

Guru Gobind Singh speaks the truth in saying:

ਸਾਚੁ ਕਹੈ ਸੁਨ ਲੇਹੁ ਸਭੈ ਜਿਨ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਕੀਓ ਤਿਨ ਹੀ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਪਾਇਓ ॥

*"Listen all, I proclaim the Truth; only those, who with loving devotion seek God, shall attain Him"*

Once Guru Arjan Dev said to his devoted Sikh Bhai Manj, "There is no teaching higher than Sikhism. The Guru's Sikhs make their lives worth and meaningful by having faith in Sikhism which is as sharp as the edge of a sword". Sikhism is a highway that leads to the ultimate destination without any obstruction or interception of priesthood or ritualism. Therefore, the Guru has abolished the position of priesthood, and set forth a direct approach to the Lord. Those who are willing can embark upon the ship of Lord's Name to reach their destination. Here everyone is welcomed and none is alien.

Baba Sham Singh, who lived unto the age of 123 and died in 1923, had compassion and humility that was legendary. He regularly performed the morning *Kirtan* services in Harminder Sahib, the Golden Temple. Once, a thief stole a silver plated *Chowrie* (whisk-fly) from his room. Someone spotted the thief who was selling some goods in the market and sought Baba Sham Singh's permission to bring him to his presence. No, said the saint, "I will go to him personally." He took with him some items, and after meeting the thief he said, "My friend, it is good you took away the *Chowrie* for the service of Guru Granth Sahib, but you left other items equally necessary for service in the Gurdwara. Here they are." The man was terribly ashamed of what he had done and repented. So was the greatness of Baba Sham Singh, in real terms a *Brahm Giani*.

Guru Nanak dispelled another traditional, but ignorant ideology. He stated that there is neither a place called heaven nor one called hell where people will go after death. Gurbani explains that keeping the Lord always in mind and singing His virtues, is being in heaven. Hell is suffering from ego, lust, greed, anger, jealousy or slander, etc. The



mythical concepts of hell or heaven are only created by the preceptors of their religions. One's deeds are the hell or the heaven and accordingly one will suffer and face the consequences in the court of the Lord.

ਹਿੰਦੂ ਤੁਰਕ ਕਹਾ ਤੇ ਆਏ ਕਿਨਿ ਏਹ ਰਾਹ ਚਲਾਈ॥

ਦਿਲ ਮਹਿ ਸੋਚਿ ਬਿਚਾਰਿ ਕਵਾਦੇ ਭਿਸਤ ਦੋਜਕ ਕਿਨਿ ਪਾਈ॥ ੧॥

ਕਾਜੀ ਤੈ ਕਵਨ ਕਤੇਬ ਬਖਾਨੀ॥

(S.G.G.S., P. 477)

*Think of this, and contemplate it within your mind.*

*O men of evil intentions.*

*Who will go to heaven and hell? || 1 ||*

*O Qazi, which book has you read?*

Sikh Gurus laid equal importance and prominence upon living in a state of humbleness, beholding the Lord ever present.

ਸਾਜਨ ਤੇਰੇ ਚਰਨ ਕੀ ਹੋਇ ਰਹਾ ਸਦ ਧੂਰਿ॥

ਨਾਨਕ ਸਰਣਿ ਤੁਹਾਰੀਆ ਪੇਖਉ ਸਦਾ ਹਜੂਰਿ॥

(S.G.G.S., P. 518)

*O Friend, I pray that I may remain forever the dust of Your Feet.*

*Nanak has entered Your Sanctuary, and beholds You ever-present.*

The Sikhism is a system of hope, activity and optimism about the future of the man with willingness to co-operate with other religions, while accepting God's graciousness and will. Sikh wisdom tells us to smoke out disparity of thinking, race, gender or religion. It is most modern of the world religions. It is a scientific, practical and universal faith. It has been acclaimed by H. L. Bradshaw as the "Faith of the New Age" and "*Summum Bonum* for the modern man and woman" It completely supplants and fulfils all the former dispensations of older religions. The other religions contain Truth but Sikhism contains fullness of Truth.

ਸਚੁ ਤਾ ਪਰੁ ਜਾਣੀਐ ਜਾ ਸਿਖ ਸਚੀ ਲੇਇ॥

ਦਇਆ ਜਾਣੈ ਜੀਅ ਕੀ ਕਿਛੁ ਪੁੰਨੁ ਦਾਨੁ ਕਰੇਇ॥

(S.G.G.S., P. 468)

*One knows the Truth only when he receives true instruction.*

*Showing mercy to other beings, he makes donations to charities.*

Sikhism knows no ethnical, racial or regional limitations, but

guides us to form an integrated and loveable society. Guru Granth Sahib is a blue print with which to live life. It is a gift to humankind. Its every word is a God sent message for the guidance of humanity. It teaches not to hurt anyone's feelings. As a true devotee of God, one should regard everyone's heart as a precious jewel if one seeks the Beloved one.

Says Baba Farid:

ਹਿਆਉ ਨ ਕੈਹੀ ਠਾਹਿ ਮਾਣਕ ਸਭ ਅਮੋਲਵੇ ॥

ਸਭਨਾ ਮਨ ਮਾਣਿਕ ਠਾਹਣੁ ਮੂਲਿ ਮਚਾਂਗਵਾ ॥

ਜੇ ਤਉ ਪਿਰੀਆ ਦੀ ਸਿਕ ਹਿਆਉ ਨ ਠਾਹੇ ਕਹੀ ਦਾ ॥ (S.G.G.S., p. 1384)

*Break not anyone's heart; all are the priceless jewels.*

*Precious, like jewels are hearts of all; harm them not at all.*

*If you desire your Beloved, then break no one's heart.*

Baba Farid, a mystic poet and saint shows extreme humbleness when he says "Strike not back blow in return".

ਫਰੀਦਾ ਜੋ ਤੈ ਮਾਰਨਿ ਮੁਕੀਆ ਤਿਨ੍ਹਾ ਨ ਮਾਰੇ ਘੁੰਮਿ ॥

ਆਪਨੜੈ ਘਰਿ ਜਾਈਐ ਪੈਰ ਤਿਨ੍ਹਾ ਦੇ ਚੁੰਮਿ ॥ (S.G.G.S., p. 1378)

*Farida, strike not back those that strike thee blow;*

*In utter humility and forgiveness, turn thy home.*

Sikhism is not only such an egalitarian, dynamic, and forward-looking faith, but it is also a complete religion in every respect... Sikhism has its own independent history, entity and identity; its own beloved homeland; a distinct language and its indigenous script; rich literature and culture; a rare optimistic and indomitable spirit...

Dr. Harnam Singh Shan, Sikhism, the Faith of the New Age. P. 30

The Sikh ideology of "God is at all times with us" gives us confidence and hope for the achievement of ideals and goals. It guides us to move forward in right direction hopefully keeping in mind that God is always benevolent and is ever fresh and new. This concept of optimism, "*Charhdi Kala*", challenges us so that we can live better. In the words of the noted Sikh writer Khushwant Singh, "This upmanship has sustained the community minuscule in numbers but grand in

achievements.”

The Sikhs in their daily prayer with folded hands call for the welfare of all humankind:

*May the whole humanity  
Be blessed with peace and prosperity,  
In Your will, by Your grace, O God!*

These radical principles established by Guru Nanak for welfare of the whole humanity have been accepted to be the faith of the new age.

**“Let brotherhood be the highest aspiration of your religious order.”**

## GLOSSARY

*Āchār*; conduct, manners, behaviour.

*Adab* (ādāb) form of address, good manners, civilities.

*Ādi*; Primal, first, origin, original.

*Ākāl*; Timeless, immortal, beyond time or death.

*Ākālī*; saintly Sikh warrior, member of Sikh political (Ākālī) party Ākālī Dal.

*Ākāl Takhat Sahib*; throne of Eternal Lord, established by sixth Sikh Guru in 1609 A.D. at Amritsar, supreme seat of authority of the Sikhs. There are four more *Takhats*; known as *Takhat Kesgarh Sahib* at *Anandpur Sahib*, *Takhat Patna Sahib*, the birth place of Guru Gobind Singh. *Takhat Hazoor Sahib* at Nanded Maharashtra, India and *Takhat Damdamā Sahib* at Talwandi Sabo Punjab.

*Amrit*; Nectar, elixir of life, name of the God.

*Anand*; Bliss, spiritual delight.

*Ardās*; a humble supplication, closing congregational supplication of the Sikhs.

*Avalār*; manifestation of deity into human form.

*Bābā*; grandfather, father, head of religious order, title of respect.

*Bachitar Nātak*; a work of Guru Gobind Singh, brief account of his autobiography.

*Bhagauti*; an epithet for God, sword; symbol of Divine Power.

*Baisākhī*, Indian New Year day, birthday of Khalsa, on this holy day of 1699 A.D. Guru Gobind Singh established institution of Khalsa, Indian festival.

*Bānā*; dress, a type of dress, a typical dress of Khalsa.

*Bāni*; speech, language, utterance, composition of utterance or speech.

*Bhai*; Revered brother and saint, Sufi.

*Brahmā*; the first member of the Hindu Trinity, supreme, god.

*Bramh Giani*; One who has a perfect knowledge and illumination of God. Spiritually perfect man.

*Dayā*; Mercy, compassion, pity.

*Degh*; Cauldron.

*Dharm* or dharma; Faith, religion, social and cultural duties, ethical conduct.

*Gian*; Knowledge, enlightenment, intellectual knowledge.

*Gurmat*; The wisdom or philosophy of Sikhism.

*Gurmukh*; Enlightened person, Guru-oriented person, one inspired by the Guru-given wisdom.

*Guru Granth Sahib*; the Holy Book of the Sikhs, Sikh scriptures.

*Hukamnāmāh*; Edict of the Guru. Letter of the Guru.

*Japjee*, *Japuji*; Morning Prayer, first composition of Guru Granth Sahib.

*Khandā*; Two edged sword. Insignia of the Sikhs. Introduced by Guru Gobind Singh at the time of creation of Khalsa Order.

*Langar*; Common kitchen, first started by Guru Nanak, free food for all human beings...

*Nand Lal Bhai*; Bhai Nand Lal Goya was a Persian poet. He was a tutor of Aurangzeb's son Bahādar Shāh, when he met Guru Gobind Singh. He was so inspired by divine visage of the that he remained ever in the presence of the Guru.

*Pahul*; Baptised water.

*Panj Piārūs*; The first Five Beloved elected for Khalsa baptism by Guru Gobind Singh., and subsequently became the embodiment of the Guru to initiate the Guru.

*Panth*; The word Panth was used for the *Khalsa Holy Order* as *Khalsa Panth* and for the whole Khalsa nation.

*Rehītnāmāh*; Guidelines of moral code of conduct.

*Sant*; A holy person, saint, enlightened holy person.

*Simrin*; recitation, remembrance of divine name, meditation on God's Name.

*Sawaiye*; Quatrain, poetic stanza.

*Tegh*; A sword, scimitar.

*Zafarnāmāh*; a letter, in Persian script written by Guru Gobind Singh to Aurangzeb, accusing him for breaking his oath on Quran, and treacherously attacking the Guru.