

Occasional Paper - 11

KHĀLSĀ-IDEOLOGY
and
GURU GOBIND SINGH'S PHILOSOPHY

by
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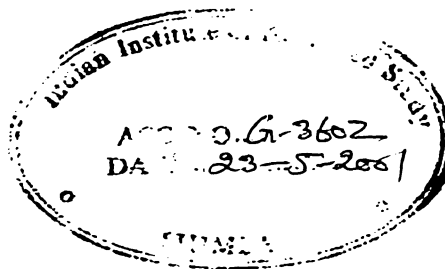
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PHILOSOPHICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE *KHALSA*-IDEOLOGY

Nirbhai Singh

The present paper is a philosophical exploration into dimensions of Guru Gobind Singh's *Khālsā*-ideology, militant civil society. It will be a critical and hermeneutical exposition of the time, culture and history of the Sikh Movement from Guru Nanak AD 1469-1539 to Guru Gobind Singh AD 1666-1708. However, with a view to understanding its philosophical and existential import in the present context of Indian social, political and religious consciousness the microscopic analysis of the key terms shall be taken up. These concepts are enshrined in the Sikh Scriptures, *Guru Granth Sāhib* and *Dasam Granth Sāhib* and are found in the Sikh tradition as well. While propounding their spiritual voluntarism the Sikh Gurus reinterpreted the ancient Indian spiritual culture both in theory and praxis. The Gurus took full cognisance of the Islamic culture which was the dominant culture in India in the 15th century.

Sikhism started as a pacifist movement but it developed into a militant one in defence of virtues and eternal human values. The *Khālsā* as an active resistance against evil was the reaction against tyranny of the then rulers. It

was reinterpretation of non-violence (*ahimsā*). For the Gurus violence or the sword as a self-defensive weapon for restoring peace and goodness in the society is a must. The creation of the *Khālsā* was a creative process of genius of Guru Gobind Singh who demythologised the Purāṇic myth of *satyayuga* and descended it on the earth in concrete historical time. The role of the Gurus in history was that of the guarantors of human values. They played a unique role in creating the history of Punjab's heroic tradition. This creative process continued through vicissitudes of history of the Punjab from 15th century to the first decade of the 18th century. There was a complete transformation from mythical time to the historical time. This was the unique contribution of the Sikh Gurus in the history of mankind.

For the Gurus the existential realities are to be confronted with action in history and not in imaginary and mythical reflections. Moral action in existential situations is the principle which the Gurus advocated for realising the eternal values by transcending the fear of death and thus overcoming the finitude of the temporal existence.

At the very outset some philosophical questions arise in our mind. What is the *Khālsā*-ideology? Who fathered this concept? What is the genesis, development and culmination of the *Khālsā*? What was the purpose of creation of the *Khālsā*? What is the relevance of the *Khālsā* in the present times? Such philosophical issues need to be analysed and explained.

I. *Khālsā* -Ideology

The systematic philosophical study of the concept of ideology has been done in the West, but here I would propose to explore into it in the context of Sikhism and the Sikh history and culture. It was coined by the French

philosopher Destutt de Tracy in a fifteen paged pamphlet in 1790. For Tracy "idologie" (Fr.) is the 'science of ideas'. He wanted to emphasise that ideology originates as a 'meta-science', a science of sciences. It claims to explain the primordial cause that is the root-cause of all sciences. It gives a scientific genealogy of its thought. It is interesting to note that the *Khālsā*-ideology comes quite closer to Tracy's view. The *khālsā*-ideology goes beyond spatio-temporal continuum and retraces its origin from the Eternal Being (*Akāla Purakh*). It probed a thorough going scepticism towards all external authoritative tyranny, evil and other atrocities of the Mughal rulers. It also analyses the inner psyche of the self. Evil and tyranny are also in the self owing to *kāma*, *krodha*, *lobha*, *moha* and *ahaṅkāra*. The *khālsā*-ideology advises us to make efforts for simultaneous inward and outward victory of mind over above mentioned five propensities and transcend all worldly attachments.

It may further be pointed out that the term 'ideology' has been differently used to characterise patterns of cognitive and moral ideals and the universe. It is the outcome of a cultural milieu as a corporate collective form when fossilized creeds become alienated from the core of flexible institutional systems and acquire the crusted or hardened nature of ideology and loses its existential usefulness. It outlives its social utility because of lack of diachronical social relationships and inherent dynamic nature of the ideal. If it does not change or mould accordingly, it would become a frozen, reactionary, dogmatic and conservative ideology. It would promote fundamentalism, terrorism and communalism. If an ideology, without losing its essential nature, does not come to terms with the present, it will collapse.

Hence restructuring of the *Khālsā*-ideology requires a critical and theoretical understanding and hermeneutical articulation in agreement with the existential socio-political matrix.

III. Genesis, Development and Culmination of *Khālsā* -Ideology

Great ideologue does not alienate himself from the creedal values and institutionalised social systems of his cultural milieu. However, ideology is to be modified in accordance with the contemporaneous needs of life. The ideologue may be a great original creative genius, but his newly created ideology should emanate from the on going cultural praxis. It is also not desirable for him to do away with his rich cultural legacy. So ideology is a natural outcome of a crisis between tradition and contemporaneous outlook of life. This crisis gives birth to the creation of a new ideology. It is thus obligatory for us to have a 'sound model' of multi-cultural and pluri-cultural understanding of the medieval Indian and Islamic social complex phenomenon. Guru Nanak's travels (*udāssis*) to different parts of India and abroad give a peep into the cultures and prevalent institutions and values of the medieval societies.

Then a question arises: Who conceived the concept of the *Khālsā*? In reply to it we can say that the seedling idea of the *Khālsā* was conceived by Guru Nanak. He was the first to pioneer this concept. Guru Nanak might have studied the degenerating social, moral and spiritual conditions. Religion was used as a tool to usurp political power. So much so that religious leaders of the time were devoid of spiritual knowledge. They were puppets in the hands of

the rulers. Hence for emancipation of the suffering humanity Guru Nanak articulated an ideology (*sacakhaṇḍa*). It is a realm of truthfulness in which theory and praxis are completely reconciled. Other eight Gurus developed this concept and finally Guru Gobind Singh on the Baisakhi day, March 30 AD 1699 (Julian Calendar) translated Guru Nanak's ideal spiritual space '*sacakhaṇḍa*' into a living reality in the history.

What was the reason for creation of the *Khālsā*? It is because the Guru realised that man is intrinsically or ontologically free and he also wants to be existentially free. He cannot be free until he is within the cocoon of his egoity (*haumai*) and worldly attachments *māyā*. So long as his ego is not developed into an autonomous self, his actions cannot be categorical imperatives. His concept of *subh karma* (good moral action) in history is revisiting the *Gītā*'s *nishkāma karma* (disinterested moral action) and the Kantian categorical imperative. It may further be pointed out that like the Vedic *ṛta*, *hukam/raṣā* is within the human person (*deha*). *Hukam* is accepted inherent in man as a *priori*. The realised person discharges categorical actions for realising the *Khālsā*-ideology in history.

Since we want to be free and overcome fears of uncanny calamities of natural forces and injustice imposed by others necessitate us to formulate ideology. It makes us free in practical life. It will develop harmony with others and nature. It is a rational discipline self-imposed by man for living a moral and peaceful life in the society. Thus for restoring human dignity and freedom of the subalterns of India the *Khālsā* Order was created. It is not only a rational construct, but also propounds a philosophy of voluntarism.

In the beginning Guru Nanak gave the concept of pacifist struggle against upper strata of the society. In his hymns devotion (*bhakti*) dominates. He advocated peaceful achievement of *sacakhaṇḍa*, a realm of truthfulness. Guru Nanak in his composition "Bābar Bānī" raised slogan against Bābar's evil designs. He was, perhaps, the first religious leader who could revolt against the Mughal invader. He was the true representative of the Sikh concept of active resistance in practice.

Guru Nanak made up his mind to do away with despotic rulers. For this purpose personality cult of the divine religious dignitaries and rulers was to be destroyed. The medieval kings considered themselves to be representatives of God on the earth. Guru Nanak divined that root-cause of evil in the world was charismatic personality of the kings and religious leaders.

First of all he initiated a movement of abolishing personality of the Gurus in Sikhism. We find that personality in the prophetic tradition was the central concept. The prophet was considered impartial interpreter of the Divine Law. We find that prophet Muhammad was the last and perfect representative of Allah. And later on the Khalifas were representatives of prophet Muhammad and trustees of Allah. The institution of the Khalifas degenerated when political power overpowered them. Similarly in the Indian polity the king is expected to be custodian of Īśvara and the Divine Law. Unfortunately the medieval kings concentrated all temporal power in their persons. In theory the Vedic ideal of democratic collective wisdom (*pañca*) was shelved for all practical purposes. In Guru Nanak's time there was a crisis between theory and practice. This caused genesis of the Sikh ideology.

Guru Nanak gave the idea of elimination of personality in his hymns. In his long composition the "*Siddh Goṣṭi*" "*sabada guru surati dhuni celā...*" (*Guru Granth*, p. 943). Again, the fourth Guru, Ram Dass reiterates: "*bāṇī guru guru hai bāṇī...*" (*Guru Granth*, p. 982). It was a process of elimination of Guru's charismatic personality in the course of Sikh history. Guru Nanak gave this idea a practical shape when he passed over *guru gaddi* (spiritual throne) to Guru Angad (second *guru*). He himself bowed before his disciple (*Bābā Lahenā ji*). For Guru Nanak the Divine Word (*śabada*) was prior to Guru's personality. This process of gradual elimination continued till the Tenth Mentor. Guru Gobind Singh finalised it by creating the *Khālsā*. When the Guru (Gobind Singh) himself got baptised by the five beloveds (*pañja piāre*), the Guru's personality was completely dissolved in the subalterns.

It is often argued that in contemporary postmodern era of industrialisation, consumerism and globalisation of cultures is bound to be an "end of ideology" and "end of history". These are sheer slogans for hiding the degenerating process of moral and spiritual values and highlighting supremacy of economics and technology. In this context I would like to submit that so long man as a creative being is on this dynamic planet ideology cannot come to an end. He has an inherent tendency to create defence mechanism for his security and protection. He has the potentiality of transcending the present crisis and creative faculty for articulating his future ideal world to live in. It can be said that in the modern age emphasis has been shifted from super-culture to subaltern culture or male dominance to feminine supremacy, lack of hero worship and trends of ecological studies. In this age of rapidly changing trends new ideologies will definitely take birth. We are to be on our guards that while carrying over our rich cultural heritage of religion,

art, poetry and other cultural contours the malignant impact of the scientific and materialistic Western culture and ideology do not mar our rich past.

IV. Theory and Praxis of the Khālsā

Now a question arises: Can ancient and medieval religious ideologies be called ideologies or not? My researches on the devotional literature on the medieval bhaktas warrant me to accept that a radical departure was made from the supernatural or otherworldly belief-systems of the medieval India. They refuted the medieval trends of the world and life negation which had resulted in an outlook of escapism and asceticism. Bhaktas, on the other hand, advocated and lived the principles of life and world affirmation and dynamic view of life. Their beliefs and ideas are scattered in their holy sayings which need to be systematised so as to cull out a rationally coherent ideology. Some of the bhaktas' hymns are in the *Guru Granth Sāhib*. In this sense ideas of the medieval bhaktas may be called the improvised materials for the Sikh or *Khālsā*-ideology. And in order to concretise their ideas in history, they preached in all parts of India and practised them in the society with a disinterested involvement in the world. This is how the ideal of theory and practice was reconciled in the Sikh Gurus' period.

Ideology is a set of principles determining the whole gamut of societal relationships. It is not a mere theory or doctrine. It is actually a practical process of inwardisation and socialisation of the self. Johan Bunyan's, *Pilgrim's Progress*, is a continuous process of emancipation of the self from the eternal sin. Five *khaṇḍas* (realms of emancipating consciousness) of Guru Nanak in the *Japuji* is a simultaneous twofold vertico-horizontal or inward and outward ethico-spiritual development and transformation of the human

consciousness (*surati*) for realising the ideal of Truthfulness (*sacakhaṇḍa*). This is not a supernatural otherworldly ontological realm cut off from social realities of this-world. It is an ideational linguistic construct which transcends and mirrors this-world. It is this-world in history through deeds (*karmas*). In the cultural and religious history of the Punjab from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh we see a process of concretisation of the ideal of *sacakhaṇḍa* in history in the creation of the *Khālsā* Order in AD 1699. The creation of the *Khālsā* was not a sectarian ideology but a living historical picture of Eternity on the earth. It was descending of *sacakhaṇḍa* on the earth.

Thus the medieval exclusivist view of ideology based on supernatural order was rejected and consequently historicity of human action was restored. There was no otherworldliness but a non-dual dynamic spiritual continuum. From the functional standpoint an inclusivist view of religion and ideology has almost similar functions to perform. The bhaktas and Gurus propounded a secularised/spiritual ideology in the garb of religious language. No doubt there are scattered mythical and metaphorical allusions and references of the otherworldly ideology in the devotional medieval literature, but the underlying philosophical thought-current is cosmically reoriented ideology encompassing this-world and the other-world or temporal and Eternal. So cosmic ideology and religion are considered as synonymous terms in the *Khālsā*-ideology. Wittgenstein implicitly recognised the problem of reconciling theory and praxis in the *Tractatus* as the action-guiding nature of value terms, but in his *Philosophical Investigations* and *Culture and Values* the idea of use or praxis becomes explicit. He claims that values are not in the world and transcend causal succession. His logical behavioural attitude is supplemented with praxeological one. Hence gist of the problem of ideology is that all practical

problems can be solved only if we have a sound rational theoretical foundation.

It implies that there should be no muddling of theory and practice. For example, collapse of Russian socialistic ideology is the result of muddling theory with practice. In addition to it, it was lack of sound hermeneutical restructuring of theory with the diachronical social praxis. Same is the fate of the present Sikh scholarship. I am yet to find a hermeneutically articulated treatise on the *Khālsā*-ideology falling in line with the present conditions. It requires rational understanding of the Sikh Scriptures in the contemporary context of Indian polity and the trends in the world over.

Then a philosophical question arises: How to articulate a sound theoretical structure of ideology? It should be done through a process of *distancing* or separating theory and practice. It needs sound *Epistemology of Sociology* which provides conditions of intelligible cognitive insight into the problem. For instance, the mother muddles the problem of an ailing child but the doctor resolves the problem with his mentally distanced attitude toward the patient. Psychologically it is a process of theoretical detachment or analysis by paralysis. In other words, cognitive and analytical activities should be kept apart from emotions and passions. For example, Ali., son-in-law of Prophet Muhammed, never attacked the enemy in anger. It is possible if one is in an unconditioned state of mind (*sahaj*). It is a state of simultaneity with this-world and the otherworld.

It implies that critical reflection is the basis of practical ideology. The medieval bhaktas and Sikh Gurus tried to implement their rational and meditatively articulated ideologies in their cultural milieu. Their emphasis

was on the crusade of the subaltern masses who were socially marginalised by the so-called upper strata of the society. It may not be misconstrued that upper strata of the masters was excluded from their ideologies. They were rather advocating for all and sundry the vital human values of freedom, justice, equality and so on. Lastly, practical problems have further their theoretical perplexities. These are to be resolved in every 'unique situation'. Therefore, the problem of reconciliation of theory and praxis always goes hand-in-hand in all the problematics. It is with a meditative insight such problems can be dissolved. The ideologue is required to be simultaneously in this-world and steadfastly attuned to the Eternal.

V. Khālsā and History

There is always suffering and evil in the existential human conditions. Buddha's philosophy starts from this view that 'life is suffering'. There are two ways of overcoming suffering and evil. One way is to grapple with the problem face-to-face. The second one is to withdraw from the world and lead a secluded life. Guru Nanak's philosophy also starts from pangs of suffering humanity. He chose the first alternative of active resistance. This choice is of the brave and fearless persons. It required transcending the state of *akrasia* by steeling the will. The ideal man of Sikh faith faces death as a reality and not an image. He transcends the fear of death in all existential predicaments. It is therefore to overcome the fear of death and suffering, one has to pass through the tunnel of temporal history of self-transcending actions. In this way the ideologue articulates ideology to tide over suffering (*dukkha*). Hence *sacakhaṇḍa* is a state of transcended human condition free from all kinds of suffering.

Man is finitude. He wants to transcend his finitude and become free in the world. He is to subjugate his lower sensuous being and create in him the real autonomous self. Man has thus dual nature. He is both a creature and a creator. His given self of being is *natura naturan* and the ideal self in man to be created is *natura naturata*. From Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh the process of reconconciling the dual nature of man continued in history and it was finalised in the hands of Guru Gobind Singh.

VI. Khālsā-Ideology and Time

Ideology may be mythical or beyond but it is created by man in historical time (*kāla*). He being finite is to transcend his temporal finitude. Death is the stumbling block in his way to achieve eternal life. It is the most horrible phenomenon for man which deprives him of his freedom. Wittgenstein is of the view that 'Death' never occurs in man's life.

- i) "Death is not an event in life: we do not live to experience death. If we take eternity to mean not infinite temporal duration but timelessness, then eternal life belongs to those who live in the present.

Our life has no end in just the way in which our visual field has no limits."

L. Wittgenstein: *Tractus Logico-Philosophicus* (6.4311)

- ii) "...Just as a man cannot report his death when it happens, but only sees it and describe it as something lying in the future..."

L. Wittgenstein: *Culture and Values*, p. 9c

Existentially we experience the cognitive fear of death which has an impact on our life as well. It is only the mystics who transcend the fear of death. They simultaneously live in the temporal world and Eternity. Creation of the *Khālsā* was a process of transcendence from the fear of death. Here I want to emphasise that real mystic lives in the present without burden of the past and anxiety or fear of the future. He lives in the eternal life. The mystic reduces past, present and future into a singularity of the 'Eternal Present'. Here temporality is stilled into the motionless transformed consciousness. For example, *sahaj* in Sikhism and *satori* in Zen Masters. Einstein also says that when a man can move at a speed of the light (i.e. 186, 000 miles per second) mathematical time becomes motionless. It is nothing but a realisation of a moving image of Eternity. In this sense Eternity (*Akālāpurakh*) in time (*kāla*) is realised. This is how the riddle of time and Eternity is resolved.

Time is the very matrix of dynamism of Sikh metaphysics. *Akāla* is plenum or inclusive of *kāla*. There was no state of Being which is without time. As, for instance, Goethe in the beginning his drama "Faust" interprets the Biblical concept of precreation as 'deed'. Similarly Sikhism reinterpreted the precreation or void world in the Indian culture and history as praxis. For the Sikh Gurus the Vedantic self-transcendence *turyā* and the Buddhist *śūnyatā* or voidness are not devoid of this-world (see, *Siddh Goṣṭi*, pp. 938-46).

For the Sikh Gurus time (*kāla*) is related to the self in history. The self is to develop from *manmukh* to *gurmukh* in the course of history. So the Sikh history is an emergence from the concrete time. Then a question arises: What is concrete time? Concrete time is not a mental construct as we find mythical time of four *yugas* in Indian thought. Concrete time implies reality of man is

concrete. It involves disinterestedness in the existential reality. It also implies reality of human action in historical time. There is no withdrawal from the historical responsibilities. It is an active reaction against tyranny and evil in the world.

We can sum up the above discussion that the *Khālsā*-ideology is a hermeneutical reinterpretation of the Purāṇic myth of the creation of the universe. The churning of the ocean for getting ambrosia (*amrit*) was a mythical legend available in the Purāṇas and the *Mahābhārata*. Guru Gobind Singh demythologised this myth. It was reformulated with the *tāntric* metaphysics. It was transformed into a living historical reality. According to the *tāntric* metaphysics the human person (*piṇḍa*) and the cosmos (*Brahmaṇḍa*) are all the micro and the macro realities respectively. He interpreted in the concrete historical situation. Unlike the Vedantic and the Buddhistic views Sikhism treats human person as a concrete gift of God (*Akāl purakh*). Human body is a raft to cross over this mundane world. Further there is no dichotomy between body and mind or *ātman*. The former is gross and the latter is subtle. There is a difference of degree and not of kind between the two.

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GURU GOBIND SINGH'S PHILOSOPHY OF SPIRITUAL VOLUNTARISM

The present research paper will be a philosophical exploration into the spiritual voluntarism of Guru Gobind Singh, Tenth mentor of the Sikhs. The revivalist movement of ancient Indian culture was initiated by Guru Nanak who pioneered the Sikh Movement, and other Gurus developed it in the course of history and Guru Gobind Singh gave it a finishing touch. His anthology, known as *Dasam Granth* supplements voluntarist philosophy of the Guru Granth. In the "Bacitar Nāṭak", an autobiographical narrative of the self, Guru Gobind Singh projects himself as an existential voluntarist in the historical battlefields. In his voluntarism will creates values and subordinates intellect or reason. Guru is custodian of eternal human values both in theory and praxis. He was a *sui generis* crusader of humanity in the world history.

The present paper will be a critical and hermeneutical exposition of the religious and cultural traditions of ancient Indian civilization and the decadent phase of medieval India. Islamic culture will also be reconciled with Sikh faith because it was a dominant culture when the Sikh Movement was fathered by Guru Nanak. With a view to understanding the philosophical import of Guru Gobind Singh's voluntarism in the contemporary context of India the

technique of 'verstehen Rom' and interdisciplinary method shall be used leading to axiogenesis, creativity and microscopic analysis of the concepts related with voluntarism used in the *Guru Granth* and the *Dasam Granth*.

The concept of other worldliness (*svarg*) is a post-Vedic development in Indian culture. With the passage of time people lost sense of time as a living reality. It resulted in world and life negation philosophy. There was a tendency of withdrawal from historical responsibilities. Gurus tried to controvert this trend. This was main cause for the birth of the Sikh Movement. It was a crusade against tyranny (*ati*) and evil (*badi*). It was a revolt of conscience against imposition of alien culture and revivification of native Indian culture. It was spiritual awakening of human self in praxis. The Gurus played the role of guarantor of justice and crusader of mankind. As religious leader Guru Gobind was creator of history. He was promoter of goodness (*dharma*), destroyer of wickeds, and protector of saints. His life is an epitome of struggle for eternal human values – truth, freedom, self-dignity, equality, fraternity, *et al.*

Guru Gobind Singh reinterprets the Purāṇic world-view from the voluntarist standpoint in the real historical times. He tries to reconcile martial spirit and saintlihood within the framework of non-dual dynamic ontology, in the "Kṛṣṇāvatāra". Guru Gobind Singh devotes 448 *chandas* (1369 to 1717) to narrate furious fights of an imaginary warrior Kharak Singh who symbolises Guru's ideal character (*sant-sapāhī*) baptised with *khaṇḍe kī pahul* (doubleedged sword). He gives a tough fight in the battlefield against Viṣṇu, Brahmā and Śiva. He was an invincible warrior. He bravely fights till his last breath. His voluntarism immortalises him. He gets *mukti* while discharging his duty for the sake of *dharma*.

The *Guru Granth* was prepared by the 5th Guru, Arjundev in AD 1604, and it was installed in Harmander Sahib (Golden Temple) at Amritsar. It treasures hymns of six Sikh Gurus, medieval bhaktas, sufis, *et al.* The hymns of the contributors are clothed in the *sādhabhāsā* which was used by the saints/bhaktas in whole of medieval India. All the *ipse dixits* of the contributors have been canonised within the philosophical framework of the Sikh world-view (*weltanschauung*). And the *Dasam Granth*, which is often attributed to the creative genius of Guru Gobind Singh, is a creative hermeneutical interpretation of Indian ancient spiritual heritage in history. The *Dasam Granth* is primarily a narrative reinerpretation of traditional Indian culture. The narrative part is to be understood in terms of semiotic codification and decodification of the mythical legends and the Purāṇic narratives. This kind of discourse in variety of metres is expressed in a language of the masses. Guru Gobind Singh's reconstruction of the native culture was a hermeneutical reconciliation of the indegenous, Semitic and Vedantic and other religious traditions of the Indian soil. He projects himself as an humble crusader of the subaltern (*dalits*) and humanity at large. His concept of the *subha karma* (good moral deed) is revisiting the ideal action of the *Bhagvadgītā's nishkāma karma* in history. His role in history was that of a guarantor of justice for all and sundry against tyranny (*ati*).

The contemporary interpretation of the Sikh world-view is a ticklish hermeneutical problem because its original medieval context has been changed by the tradition. New elements have crept into it through the accretion of historical consciousness. As we know the holy sayings of the bhaktas and the sufis were recorded in the manuscripts from the oral tradition

and their textual recensions and contextual universes were drastically transformed or distorted. And furthermore the Sikh Canon was standardised from the manuscripts of the hymns available in variant recensions and divergent contexts. Now when the philosophical interpretation of the Sikh Sacred texts is to be made in the contemporary context, we will have different meanings. It implies that sacred texts of the Sikhs have diachronic relationship with their significations or meanings. Tradition has added new elements in them. The underlying objective of the paper is to cull out altruistic, humanitarian and voluntaristic philosophical concepts which were at the back of the genesis of the Sikh faith from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh (AD 1708).

In order to have an objective and candid understanding of the Sikh voluntarism, we should accept that as compared to lower species man's interpretive nature is creative and dynamic. He has an inherent urge to control his environment because he has a voluntaristic faculty. He can articulate tools of language to formulate his thoughts and communicate them to others. He is the only creature who is capable of pure theoretical articulation of knowledge. By virtue of his creative or volitional cognition he goes beyond sheer sense observations. His actions are teleological. He stores in memory ideas and tries to restore them all for praxis. He has inherent potentiality of curiosity and wonder which help him to have theoretical articulation.

Hence it follows that the interpretation of the texts is a multiple deconstruction and reconstruction of the significance or meanings at different levels of hermeneutical creative process. These levels of understanding the meanings and the significance of the concepts depend upon interpreter's

practical interpretive intuitive enlightenment. This point can be substantiated from the Sikh Canon. All the contributors of the Sikh Scripture are the realised selves. They had transcended their I-hoods (*huumai/aham*) and were intuitively attuned to the Cosmic Law (*hukam/rta*) from within. They were simultaneously in time and attuned to Eternity (*Akālāpurakh*). Their cosmic non-dualistic visions motivated them to identify themselves with the masses. Their ideal of Vedantic non-duality (*advaita*) was realised in history by indentifying themselves with the people of the land. In this sense Sikhism may be interpreted as revival of the Vedanta in praxis. For the realisation of this ideal in history the Sikh Gurus made vigorous struggle both in theory and practice. Their personal non-attached involvements in the world were motivated for the amelioration of the subaltern humanity.

We find genesis of the Sikh Movement as a crusade of the suffering subaltern. It was a continuation of the medieval Bhakti cult initiated as a pacific struggle for revival of Indian culture and human conscience, self-dignity and freedom of man. It was a restoration of eternal human values. Original emergence of the Sikh Movement was for the peaceful achievement of the highest state of spirituality (*sacakhaṇḍa*) and a vigorous crusade of the wretched of the earth; i.e. *sarbat kā bhalā*. Guru Nanak was seized of secular or historical realities and responsibilities of his times.

With the passage of time from the founder of the Sikh faith (Guru Nanak) to the 6th Guru Hargobind it turned into an active resistance against atrocities and injustice inflicted by the alien Muslim invaders. It was primarily a movement of spirituality (*pīrī*) and less of polity (*mīrī*). It was a reaction against encroachment upon freedom and self-dignity of the Indians. Thus birth

of the Sikh faith may be termed a revolution or upsurge or revolt of the conscience against suppression and oppression of the subaltern. It may further be pointed out that societal religions are bound to be revolutionary or militant. As, for example, Judaism, Christianity and Islam are essentially revolutionary religions. These are called prophetic or Semitic religions. The prophets are crusaders of the suffering humanity. On the contrary, Indian religious traditions (*Śramnic* and *non-Śramnic*) were of interiority and externality. Here we find that the Sikh tradition tries to strike a synthesis between the inward and the outward realities. It gave birth to the concepts of self-defensive violence and martyrdom for the sake of truth and human values. And from the point of view of socio-political exigencies the concept of personal 'guru' as true king (*sacā-pāṭṣā*) was an internal development in Sikhism. Guru Hargobind concretized it by erecting *Akāla Takht* (Throne of the Eternal) adjacent to the Golden Temple at Amritsar. In this way spirituality was supplemented with temporality. It was descending of Eternity on the earth. It was yoking the Infinite (*akāla*) in the chariot of history or temporality. It was for this reason the Guru had to face wrath of the state or temporal rule.

We are then faced with a philosophical question whether use of sword was a deviation from the original doctrinal ideals of Guru Nanak. My answer to it is 'No'. The purpose of the paper is to argue that there was no doctrinal digression or deviation in the Sikh Gurus' period. The idea of active resistance to do away with evil, tyranny and injustice is present even in the *Guru Granth*. It was only executed by the Gurus in the course of the development of the Sikh history. Guru Nanak starts with the peaceful spiritual ideal of *sacakhaṇḍa*. It was developed into the *Akāla Takht* as a synthesis of the

spiritual and the temporal. The Guru as a charismatic personality assumes the role of a true guarantor or custodian of justice for the poor people. This ideal was finally concretized with the creation of the *khālsā* (saint = soulder) and the *Khālsā-panth* (the militant civil society) by Guru Gobind Singh in AD 1699. It was culmination of the Sikh spiritual voluntarism in its institutionalized and militarized structure. The whole historical vicissitude of the Sikh Movement shows the development and growth of Sikh praxis in concrete history but the very essence of its spiritual voluntarist doctrine of Sikh philosophy is finally concretized in Guru Gobind Singh's writings and deeds.

Sikh Gurus reinterpreted the Vedic concept of *ṛta* as *hukam*. *Ṛta* in the Vedic tradition was a dynamic cosmic principle. Sikhism also interprets it as a cosmic principle and a categorical imperative inherent in man as *a priori*. *Hukam* in the microcosm (*pinḍa*) and macrocosm (*brahamaṇḍa*) is the same. It was revival of *tāntric* metaphors of microcosm (*pinḍa*) and macrocosm (*brahamaṇḍa*) unlike the abstract Vedantic and the monastic Buddhism. Sikhism treats human body (*deha*) as a concrete reality in space and time. It is a boat for man to cross over the phenomenon world (*bhavsāgar*) and struggle against oddities of human life. It is from within the human person dormant consciousness is awakened and is further developed to the highest state of pure intuitive volition. In this sense the cosmic principle was interpreted as *hukam*, a dynamic voluntaristic principle. The realized self (*khālsā*) attuned to the cosmic law transcends the limits of causality and temporality without withdrawing from the existential socio-political responsibilities. And forging of the *khālsā* (*khaṇḍe kī pahul*) was restructuring of the heroic consciousness of

the subalterns of India. It was a synthesis of the sainthood with the martial spirit (*vīrarasa*). This was a reconciliation of the temporal and the Eternal. It was a concrete participation or embodiment of the Eternal in history embedded in Eternity and reconciliation with praxis of historical action.

Hukam, thus, interpreted is a historical categorical imperative. Guru Gobind Singh's concept of *subha karma* is a categorical imperative or command of the realised self from within to discharge historical responsibilities. It is obligatory for man to abide by *hukam* in thought, speech and action (*man, baca, karma*). Therefore, duty and values in Sikhism mirror Eternity (*Akālāpurakh*) harnessed in history. It was a creative activity carried out by the genius of the Sikh Gurus in the development of emancipatory history of humanity. In this sense the Gurus were creators of spirit dominated history. They created new values which restructured the Indian social order. The role of the Guru was to bridge gap between Eternity and history. They were seized of historical problems of the powerless and the victims of tyranny and injustice. From the existential standpoint they were completely committed and responsible for the crusade of the persons of downtrodden Indian soil. Guru Arjundev's and Guru Tegh Bahadur's voluntary events of martyrdom were supreme sacrifices for the sake of truth and human values. It shows their historical sense of responsibility against cruelties and atrocities of the then rulers. And Guru Gobind Singh completely indentified himself with the *Khālsā-panth*. He sacrificed his whole family for the sake of humanity. He had no remorse or false sense of pride and glorification. He rather remained steadfast like the ideal man (*sthitaprajña*) of the *Bhagvadgītā* (II 55-6). He was steadfastly attuned to the Will of *Akālāpurakh*. It implies that *khaṇḍā-*

baptism was a twofold identification of the individual will (*sainkalpa*) with the Divine Will (*hukam*) and the collective will of the people. It also reaffirms social relationships and living social realities.

Then a philosophical question arises: What is the significance of sword or *khaṇḍā* in Guru Gobind Singh's philosophy? For Guru Gobind Singh use of consecrated sword (*kirpān*) or *khaṇḍā* (double-edged sword) is a moral obligation for the *khālsā*. In the *Zafarnāmā* (*The Epistle of Victory*), he argues that when all reasons fail, the sword is the last resort for restoring justice in the society. It signified crusade against injustice and tyranny. Tyranny is within and without. Inner tyranny in human person is a disorder created by five psychological negative propensities i.e. *kāma*, *krodh*, *lobha*, *moha* and *ahamkāra*. All these are to be controlled and transformed into positive propensities; i.e. *santokh*, *dayā*, *dāna*, *tiyāga*, and *nimritā*. It will result in full control over mind. Mind will be fully stilled and disinterestedly involved and detached from the external world. It will realise its pristine self-luminous ontic nature. It is through this continuous spiral inwardisation, the Eternal is realised in pure cognitive will. Consciousness, will and knowledge are manifestations of non-dual reality in human action. Five *khaṇḍas* (dimensions of consciousness) in Guru Nanak's philosophical treatise 'Japuji' are ontic and epistemic dimensions of consciousness (*surati*). Human consciousness in the initial stage of *dharma-khaṇḍa* is completely stilled and emancipated from the worldly attractions. This process of transformation of the consciousness is carried out through *śabda-yoga*. This is the starting point of real twofold journey of the self towards the apex of consciousness. It is twofold because the self simultaneously develops inwardly and outwardly.

The next step is the simultaneous development of the cognitive; (*jñāna/giān*) affective (*saram*) and conative (*karma*) dimensions of the developing or ascending consciousness of the self. The inward journey of the self starts from the first person perspective (I-ness) to the third person perspective (Thouness). It culminates in self-consciousness (*sudhi*) where I-Thou dichotomy is transcended in complete identity of the individual consciousness (egohood) and the cosmic consciousness (*Akālāpurakh*). This perfected state of consciousness is *sacakhaṇḍa*. There pure will and consciousness are both one in essence. In its pure cognitive form it is consciousness of consciousness in praxis (*ātambodhi*). The agent discharges actions as a categorical imperative (*niškāma karma*). It is a transcendent state of consciousness which is beyond the attachments of the phenomenal world but it is not devoid of will. It is pure state of child's cognitive will (*bālabudhi*) having no worldly attachments. It is imbedded in the temporal world but is not affected by it. So spiritually developing consciousness is a continuum emancipatory consciousness from the gross worldly forms (*surati-śakti*) to pure cognitive will (*sudhi vivek budhi*). When it is put in practice, it would be disinterested volition in execution in history. Whole life of Guru Gobind Singh is execution of his voluntarist ideal in praxis. He created the *Khālsā*-ideology on the earth.

What is the crux of human condition in Guru Gobind Singh's thought? He has a realistic approach towards life. He tries to encourage man to be in the battle of life to tide over existential knotty problems. Man is required to accept life in full 'here' and 'now'. There is no dependence on the past and no false hope for the future. As regards the human condition there is no element of life which is derogatory. Medieval ideas of world and life negation are not

accepted in the false hope for the otherworld (*svarg*). Gurus vigorously tried to revive ancient realistic culture of India.

How can it be achieved? It can be achieved through *distancing*. It is a state of detached involvement. To reflect upon other's sufferings, without being emotionally involved in them, is the ideal of distancing. In the context of Indian tradition it is *saṁnyāsa*. It means that cognition (theory) and volition (praxis) should not be muddled with each other. As a matter of fact sound theoretical basis is necessary for workable praxis. We find that Gurus reinterpreted yogic *dhyāna* and *saṁnyāsa* including historical action with optimum balance between theory and practice. So *yogic-saṁnyāsa* is an other name of distancing. The spiritual *guru* or *saṁnyāsī* distances himself from the world and becomes emancipator of all.

What is man? What is the philosophy of human life? What is the purpose of human life? In Guru Gobind Singh's philosophy man is a concrete person placed in concrete historical conditions. His life is considered a rare opportunity in this world to realise ontic freedom (*mokṣa*). No other lower species are capable of it. Causality does have an efficacy for an ordinary man but it does not effect a realised man. The latter transcends the range of physical or temporal causality. For him there is no need of austerities (*tapas*), charity, pilgrimage, fasts, rituals and the like. He is not to run away from the worldly responsibilities. He can achieve self-transcendence while living in the world. His concrete life in history is not a gross materialism of the Cārvākas or pure abstract consciousness of the Vedantins transcended from the temporal realm. It is a dissociation or transcendence from both the extremes. It is a crusade against moral disorder from within human person (*pinḍa*) and without

in the society and the world at large. In the *Gītā* Lord Kṛṣṇa as an incarnate (*avatāra*) of Viṣṇu is conceptually a redeemer through Arjuna. The role of incarnate (*avatāra*) in the societal relationship has been rearticulated in the *Dasam Granth* of Guru Gobind Singh. In the *Bhagvadgītā* the incarnate's threefold duty is:

*In the protection of the virtuous, for the destruction of
Evil doers and for the establishment of dharma.*

(IV,8)

Same idea from existentialist stance has been repeated by Guru Gobind Singh in his "Bicitar Nāṭak" (chap. VI.3) with an emphasis on guru as an humble executor of the Divine Will (*main hūn param purakh ko dāsā*). The guru even assures the status of supreme Being. All the incarnates of Viṣṇu (24) Brahmā (7) and Śiva or Rudra (2) suffered from egoity or pride (*aham*). For this reason the guru dissolves his personality into the *khālsā* or the masses as redeemer of mankind.

But in Sikhism charismatic personality of the Guru is gradually dissolved. Kṛṣṇa in the *Gītā* as an essentialist teacher-guide and redeemer is executing his will through Arjuna. Here Kṛṣṇa in Guru Gobind Singh's *Dasam Granth* is more of existentialist than essentialist of the *Gītā*. Lord Kṛṣṇa in Guru Gobind Singh's longish poetic composition "Kṛṣṇa Avatāra" is presented as a heroic personality fighting against his kith and kin and other tribal heroes and kings in the battlefield. Here in his composition Kṛṣṇa is a true existentialist and voluntarist in discharging all moral and historical responsibilities. He always fights against evil. After creation of the *khālsā* the charismatic personality of the divine incarnate and the Semitic

prophethood as divine intercession was dissolved in the subaltern. Thus from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh realisation of societal relationships in holy assembly (*saṅgat*) have been emphasised and the process of abolition of charismatic personality was carried forward till the creation of the *khālsā*. Gurus, therefore, developed a creative and mystic relationship between guru (*śabda*) and the scripture (*Guru Granth*) and man. These are living relationships. All the baptised *dalits* then became heroes and crusaders of humanity. Guru Gobind Singh concretised this doctrinal development of dissolution and transformation of personal guruship into *śabda-guru*, when he himself got baptised by the five beloved ones (*pañja piāre*). In this unprecedented sacred event the Guru defused his will in the collective will of the five who symbolise supreme Reality. And later on in AD 1708 he apotheosised the Sikh Scripture as symbolising Divinity (*Akālāpurakh*) and the *Khālsā* as the democratic spiritual polity of the subaltern masses. This is a transfer of personal guruship into *śabda-guru* embalmed in the Sikh Scriptures. The historical events in the Sikh tradition played decisive role in the dissolution of the charismatic personality of the Guru. In this way the medieval feudalism and absolute monarchy were dissolved through the initiation of the *khaṇḍe kī pahul* (double-edged sword baptism). It was a reconstruction of the medieval hierarchical social structure into an egalitarian social order. It was transmuted into the spiritual voluntaristic and democratic militant civil society (*khālsā-panth*). Guru Gobind Singh completely identified himself with the *Khālsā-panth*. He sacrificed his father, mother, four sons and companions for the sake of the *khālsā-panth*. *Khaṇḍā*-baptism is a double-edged identification of the individual will with *Akālāpurakh* and the subaltern. Vertically it identified with the Eternal and horizontally it is identification with collective will of the

five beloved ones who represent the collective will of the people. It was revival of the Vedic concept of divinity in the *saṅgat* of five persons (*pañca*). So *khaṇḍā-pahul* is a synthesis of spirituality and secularity in which the former dominates. The *khālsā*-creation is a *sui generis* landmark in the world history of religions in which simultaneous concretization and diversification of *Akāl purakh* grounded in history takes place. It implies that temporal history is incorporated in Eternity. Here the Indian mythical concept of the *yugas* symbolising dynamic nature of *dharma* and time (*kāla*) in cyclically receding degrees of goodness was demythologized and was transformed into a concrete historical reality with the creation of the *khālsā-panth*. Now *Khālsā-panth* was the transformed mythical *satyayuga* realised in concrete history. The Purāṇic myth of churning the ocean (*samundramanathan*) for extracting nectar (*amrit*) was concretized with *khaṇḍe-kī-pahul*. It makes man transcend the fear of death and other sectarian limitations.

It leads us to the cardinal issue of Guru Gobind Singh's spiritual voluntarism which is at the back of historical responsibility of the Sikh Movement. Now some philosophical questions need to be clarified. Is individual will only a first person perspective? Is it a second person or socio-centric perspective? Is it a third person perspective of the Numinous? Logically there are above given three possible experiences of the self. I can reflect on my own *singular* experience from my own viewpoint and not from others perspectives. Similarly others' perspectives cannot penetrate into my experience. I experience from my own standpoint and others from their own ones. It implies that everybody's experience is always a first person *singular* perspective. This solipsism is to be bracketed. In Guru Gobind Singh's thought

the cage of first person *singular* perspective is *haumai* (egoity). The practical process of its break-up is carried out through meditative *nāma-simran*. It is a gradual inward process of self-transcendence of the dichotomy of I-Thou. The self comes out of its cocoon of *haumai* through self-transcendence and encompasses I-Thou perspectives within non-duality. The *khaṇḍā*-baptism is an inward self-transcendence of the individual will from the 'first person perspective' to the 'third person perspective' (*Akālapurakh*). It is a transformation of self from the 'first person perspective' to the 'third person perspective'. In other words, it is transcendence of I-Thou (*main-tūn*) dichotomy and realisation of mystic identity. It is a simultaneous identification with the subaltern.

This is carried out by the self through creative ascension of dialectical disinterested involvement (*śabda-yoga saṁnyāsa*). It is a journey of the self of going beyond the dichotomy of I-Thou. It is possible through *nāma-simran* and strong wilful desire (*liva*) to be one with the Numinous. It is a practical spiritual *sādhnā* of self-transcendence. Guru Gobind Singh and other Gurus denounce intervenient personality between man and the Numinous. It is the experience of tangible simultaneous immediacy of first person's historicity and Eternity. Ontic freedom is thus realized through history. It is pathway of self-transcendence in the second person perspective of *saṅgat* (holy assembly). It is a dialogical perspective which breaks open cocoon of solipsism (*haumai*) and stills the mind. When 'I' transcends my bodily consciousness, others also disappear. I realize complete harmony of 'I' with 'Brahman'. As a result of it the self harmonises its communicability and solidarity with others.

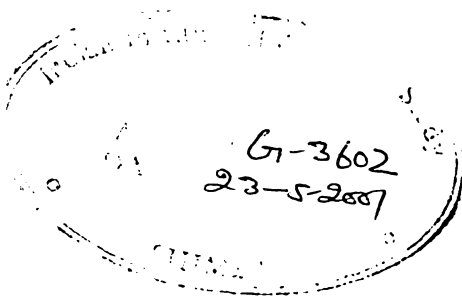
Nobody can be spiritualist without transending the fear of death (*kāla*). *Haumai* is the main impediment in achieving this goal. *Haumai* is false consciousness of one's separative independent existence. It is the root-cause of all evils (*badiān*). It creates a sense of forlornness, despair, fear of death and evil propensities. All these negative elements develop *akrasia* in individual's will. These false desires need to be corrected by reason. Reason is carried through language or words (*śabda*). Therefore, *śabda-guru* eradicates all false desires in the consciousness and will is immuned from the wordly attachments. It becomes strong enough to perform *subh-karma*. Then there shall be no schism between cognition and volition. It is a Socratic dictum that knowing implies willing. If one has true knowledge, one must do virtuous action. This is called Socratic dictum that 'knowledge is virtue'. If one is doing wrong, one is lacking true knowledge. Gurus also lay emphasis on the enlightened cognition (*vivek-budhi*) and steeling will (*saṅkalpa*) through *nāma-simran* and complete self-surender to *śabda-guru*. It is realising the Eternal Self where duality is transcended without actually cutting off from this world. The above discussion leads us to the conclusion that man has inherent creative force to transcend physical causality. Individual will is in historical time and is simultaneously attached with the cosmic Time (*hukam*). This cosmic creative will in man arouses desire in him to overcome human sufferings and evils. There is a desire in man to tide over his limits. It prompts him to know what lies beyond it. It is the outcome of intrinsic freedom in him. It also arouses desire in him for continuity after death. It makes him aware of his limitation. Hence going beyond physical causality and historicity is indicative of human freedom and creativity. The crux of the Indian Philosophy

and Sikh Guru's voluntarism is to be *in* this world and not *of* the world. This was reinterpretation of the concept of *yogic-saṁnyāsa* (self-transcendence) prevalent in medieval India. So the Gurus try to strike a reconciliation between theory and practice. It was restoration of reality of man's historical action and this-worldiness. The self is freed from bondage even if it is in the world and the body. Thus actions of the self are liberated in this very life (*jīvanmukta*).

For this reason man has to strengthen his will to remove his suffering and other fellow beings. In order to do away with evil within one's self, one is required to wade through historical actions in the society. The prevalent medieval religious traditions of India emphasise more on negative side of eradication of suffering by withdrawing from the historical responsibilities. Sikh Gurus themselves practically identified themselves with the subaltern to emancipate them. By surrendering one's will to God one opens up one's heart in self-confession and lays it open for others too. Self-surrender is a form of self-sacrifice for others. Offering of material gift on the altar of the deity is deposing the divine from its aloof otherness (transcendence) and is embodied in all and sundry. Man's relationship with Eternity becomes concrete. This relationship is diversified and defused in all human beings. One realises God in all. These are concrete interpersonal relationships. In the Vedānta the relationship between *ātman* and *brahman* is abstract and devoid of societal relationships and historicity. Gurus advocate concrete relationship between I and Thou with historically revisiting the spirit of Eternity. Time related to spiritual self is closer to Eternity. In this way Eternity is realised in history. It is *saṁnyāsa* in societal praxis. Man is always in the battlefield of life. The myth of beheading the five beloveds was a make-belief of a supreme sacrifice.

It was a complete transformation of their personalities. This sacrifice of the five beloved ones was a gatecrasher for modern democracy. Gifts offered in sacrifice is an experience of love. It is transformation from *natura naturata* to *natura naturan*. This is self-willed sacrifice or self-surrender identified with the plenary will. In this way one dissolves one's *haumai* and identifies with mankind.

Then the question arises: How to become timeless in time? Man is finite. He is born and created in time. Society as a 'second person' perspective is an *ati* (tyranny) from without because it is always cruel to man. And tyranny is within because of false worldly and bodily attachments. It results in fear of death. In the *Gītā* Kṛṣṇa's advice to Arjuna was that his will was dead from within due to fear of death. In Sikhism transcendence from the fear of death is through violence (*hiṃsā*). The highest form of non-violence is love for mankind and *Akāl purakh*. To weed out cruelty or tyranny sword (*bhagoī*) is a necessity. Sword symbolises grace (*kripā*) and not cruelty. Guru Gobind Singh's voluntarism is a praxis of justice for the subaltern or mankind through sword. I have been arguing that the movement of Sikhism started with *nāma-simran* to *khaṇḍe-kī-pahul* is an inner doctrinal development of the highest form of voluntarism. It is an *ahimsā* of the blissful sword as grace. Perpetual war with weapons against evil can be justified from the *Dasam Granth*. Thus religion of the sword (violence) was Guru Hargobind's and Guru Gobind Singh's innovative interpretation of *ahimsā* as a self-defensive weapon for upholding or restoring goodness (*dharma*) in the society.





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