MYSTICISM OF GURU NANAK

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Mysticism of Guru Nanak

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ABBREVIATIONS

AG: The Adi Granth/Guru Granth Sahib
EB: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. XV. (Chicago), 1969
IPH: Radhakrishnan, S., Indian Philosophy, Vol. II.
MK: Kahn Singh Nabha, Mahan Kosh: Gur Shabad Ratnakar (Punjabi), IIInd ed. Patiala, 1960
RSW: Religious Systems of the World
SSWS: Trilochan Singh and others, Selections from the Sacred Writings of the Sikhs.
Preface

This book on Mysticism of Guru Nanak is a specialized study based on advanced research. So far this recondite subject has remained almost neglected in the field of Sikh studies. I have spent long years of sustained work in probing and finalizing my findings of the subject. But Guru Nanak’s mystical thought is so deeply esoteric and beyond human grasp (owing to its divine inspiration and dispensation) that no finality or certainty can possibly be claimed about it. Hence it is at best a tentative and humble contribution on my part. Actually speaking, mysticism involves intuition and realization.

I have tried my best to tap and utilize all the important primary and secondary sources available on the subject. For illustration of thought content I have copiously used Guru Nanak Bāni for the reference purpose. Some important abbreviations have been used, as indicated in the list given in the beginning of the book. A Bibliography has also been appended.

Broadly speaking, Guru Nanak’s mystical thought has been treated in two parts, the first six chapters dealing with the basic principles of Sikh mysticism, based in Guru Nanak’s person and thought and the remaining six chapters bringing forth the mystical path envisaged and postulated by the great Guru.

In the end, I am indebted to Dr. S.S. Kohli, the well-known writer on Sikh thought and philosophy, for some useful consultations and also to the publishers for their careful handling of its publication process.

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Dewan Singh
Chapter 1

GURU NANAK: THE MYSTIC

Mysticism is based on the mystical experiences of the few great mystics of the world. It is, therefore, essential to discern the nature of a true mystic, whose experience is so important.

Though difficult to define a mystic, he may be called a Perfect Man or a God-man. To use Carlyle’s terminology, he is the ‘original man’, ‘a kind of Hero’, ‘a Sincere man’, ‘a Great man’, ‘a Teacher and Captain of soul and of body’.

Such a man is what we call an original man: he comes to us at first hand. A messenger he, sent from the Infinite Unknown with tidings to us. We may call him Poet, Prophet, God;—in one way or other, we all feel that the words he utters are as no other man’s words. Direct from the Inner Fact of things;—he lives, and has to live, in daily communion with that.

The mystic has the blazing and dazzling quality as that of lightning:

The great man, with his free force direct out of God’s own hand, is the lightning. His word is the wise healing word which all can believe in. All blazes round him now, when he has once struck on it, into fire like his own.

Perhaps no trait of a mystic is greater than sincerity—not in the ordinary sense, but rather “a deep great, genuine sincerity”.

Such a God-inspired person must be regarded as an awe-inspiring personality—a lightning that consumes the fuel of all evil and falsehood—a dazzling effulgence that floods with piercing light the darkest corners within and
without all men.

Ghalib, the mystic poet, so aptly says:

"The world remained peopled for want of dynamic-souled persons.
In proportion as we find the cups and the goblet filled, the tavern
is empty to the same ratio."

Countless stars make way for the appearance of the orient sun. Similarly, innumerable men live in vain and die in disgrace, so that a mystic may be born to save them.

The mystic has no concern or eye for the passing show or the fleeting pageant of life. He goes to the inner fact, to the real basis or the substratum, to the very bottom of things.

"A Hero, as I repeat", says Carlyle, "has this first distinction which indeed we may call first and last, the Alpha and Omega of his whole Heroism. That he looks through the show of things into things."

The mystic simultaneously remains immersed in God as well as projected and fixed as an individualised objective reality. Younghusband says:

A mystic may be enthralled by the spirit of the universe and yet retain his individuality. He may be possessed by the Spirit and yet be himself.

Guru Nanak as a mystic clearly possessed this dual quality, this paradoxical reality, of being a self and a non-self and of embodying divinity as well as humanity, in the same breath. He abundantly represented, in his divine person, the rarest traits of a mystic personality such as originality, honesty, humility, sacrifice, self-effacement and compassion. He is, in fact, a hero at all points; a hero, first and last. He is a mystic genius in his own right.

His advent to the sphere of the phenomenal world, (the ephemeral world of 'name and form') was certainly like a sudden revelation or a prodigious transfiguration. In the luminous words of Carlyle:

Innumerable men had passed by across the universe, with a dumb vague wonder, till the great thinker came, the original man, the seer; whose shaped spoken Thought awakes the slumbering
capability of all into Thought. It is ever the way with the Thinker, the spiritual Hero. What he says, all men were not far from saying, were longing to say. The Thoughts of all start up, as from painful enchanted sleep, round his Thought; answering to it, Yes, even so.\footnote{11}

The genuine poet, the real genius—these are the epithets which fully signify and symbolize Guru Nanak’s mystic person.

Radhakrishnan, speaking of the mystical inwardness of religion, remarks: "Religion does not consist so much in prayers and rites as in those silent hours of self-communion which will help us to control our character and build up our personality. By it we cleanse our thoughts, purify our emotions and let the seed of spirit grow."\footnote{12} Again: "Religion is not only life-transcending, but also life-transforming. True worship is in the service of suffering humanity."\footnote{13}

It is this inward, mystical element i.e. "the inner processes", according to R.T. Jones, "by which one reaches new interior levels of being and *liberates* in inmost depths of the soul, currents of influences which connect directly with the environing life of God,"\footnote{14}—Which is the *sine qua non* of Guru Nanak’s unique personality. In the sphere of religion as well as history, Guru Nanak has been described by various names and epithets such as ‘Perfect Man’,\footnote{15} ‘Fakīr’, ‘Bābā’, ‘Sat-Gurū’, ‘Saint’, ‘Gurmukh’, ‘Wāli’, ‘Prophet’, ‘God-Man’, ‘Avtār’, ‘Sacchā Pādshāh’, ‘Nanak Shāh’ and so on. All these epithets connote or imply a mystical person.

**Guru Nanak: The Person**

We may consider, in the first instance, that Guru Nanak as a mystic implies a person\footnote{16} or a personality.\footnote{17} Whereas in Hinduism the common word for a mystic is *sādhu* or *yogi* and in Islam and Sūfism, *derwesh* or *sūfī*, in Sikhism the current word for a mystic is *saint* (the 'saint' of Christianity) or *guru*. *Saint* (and for that matter, *guru*) is an enlightened being, and enlightener, a preceptor—a person who has himself attained perfection and can make others perfect.\footnote{18}

Aldous Huxley provides a remarkable definition of a saint:
The saint is one who knows that every moment of our human life is a moment of crisis, for at every moment we are called upon to make an all-important decision to choose between the way that leads to death and spiritual darkness and the way that leads towards light and life; between interests exclusively temporal and the eternal order; between our personal will, or the will of some projection of our personality and the will of God.\textsuperscript{19}

Similarly, the word 'guru' connotes (besides identification with God Himself)\textsuperscript{20} the 'sabad', or the 'word'. Guru Nanak himself in reply to a question put by Siddhas on the Sumer Parbat as to who was his Guru, said: "Sabad is the Guru and the continuity of attention is the disciple."

For Guru Nanak, however, there is also a third meaning of the word 'Guru', as suggested by McLeod, who says:

For Guru Nanak the Guru or Saiguru represented the inner voice, the mystical movement of God in the depths of the individual being, the light of God shed abroad in the inmost recesses of the human soul. The Guru remains the vital link, the essential mediator of divine truth, but no longer a human link.\textsuperscript{22}

Teja Singh offers a simple definition of 'guru' by saying that the guru is a particular personality, a creative and perfect personality who stands as guide and exemplar.\textsuperscript{23}

It is not very common to discuss Guru Nanak as a mystic because writers on Guru Nanak, Sikh and non-Sikh, foreign and Indian, with a few notable exceptions, have simply ignored or, at the most, scantily noticed this important fact about the great Guru. The old Sikh writers beginning with Bhāi Gurdās\textsuperscript{24} and the obscure Janam-Sākhi authors\textsuperscript{25} could not have any clear understanding or conception of what we call 'mystic' or 'mysticism' (terms which we have borrowed from the study of western religious Literature). They have, however, in their own inimitable way, implied in their narrations and exegesis, certain meanings of a mystical nature, while describing the esoteric experiences and dramatic deeds of the Master.

The foreign writers like Malcolm\textsuperscript{26}, Cunningham\textsuperscript{27} and Macauliffe\textsuperscript{28}, though full of insight and dedication to the end they pursued, confined themselves to a general historical
survey and narration of the Sikh Movement, from Guru Nanak up to the end of the Sikh rule, and naturally, could not undertake intensive and original study of Guru Nanak's life and works.  

Some Indian writers, Sikh and non-Sikh, in the recent times have made useful attempts at studying some undiscovered aspects of Sikh theology and the scriptures, but their main thrust has been to trace the religious and social development of the Sikh movement. Some of them have chosen the historical and the political field for their specialized study.

W. H. McLeod, with his singular insight into the meaning and message of Sikhism as revealed by Guru Nanak, in his well-known study on the subject, says: "In his own way Guru Nanak was also a mystic and, as with Kabir, the climax of his thought is to be found in an effable union with God, the Formless One." Writing about the awakening of Spiritual perception in man, he says: "The prerequisite perception is awakened in man by the Guru, by the Voice of God mystically uttered within."  

This is certainly a new language and a new way of treatment of the Sikh thought so far attempted. To give one more example of this new study and treatment of this recondite subject: "The basis of Guru Nanak's thought is best understood, if approached, as the thought of one who was essentially a mystic. 'Duality' is to be destroyed, but it is to be swallowing up in mystical union."  

**Guru Nanak About Himself**

We may now examine and assess his real character on his own authority, for the best authority on Guru Nanak is he himself, in his own spoken word.

Guru Nanak calls himself (i) a bard (dhādi), (ii) a poet (sāir), (iii) A mad man of God (dewānā sāḥ kā, baurānā) (iv) a slave (lālā), (v) a dervesh or fakir, rather 'the dust of the feet of thine servants' (tere chākrān pākhāk), (vi) the love-infatuated one, 'the mad dog of His court', (Sag Nanak
dīhān mastānā),⁴⁰ (vii) the trumpeter of God or truth (talβāy i.e. nagārchi),⁴¹ (viii) a he-slave (dās), a she-slave (dāsī),⁴² (ix) the ignorant fool (mūrtha),⁴³ (x) the humblest slave (dāsan-dās),⁴⁴ (xi) the helpless, the humble (garīb, vechārā, aṅdhlā nīch jāt pardesi, bīno-nīch)⁴⁵ and so on.

All these self-applied appellations of Guru Nanak denote his extreme sense of humility and complete absorption in God. He lauded humility (and sweetness) as the quintessential basis of all ethical virtues known to man:

Sweetness and humility, O Nanak, are the essence of all virtues and good actions.⁴⁶

Humility wins great merit in this world and the next. It pleases all men as nothing else does. The mystic when he bows so low, by so doing attains the highest merit in the eyes of the Creator. Guru Nanak says: "when we weigh in the scale (of values) the one who bows down is the weighty man."

References and Notes

1. For a detailed study of mysticism and mystic experience, see F.C. Happald, Mysticism and Evelyn Underhill, Essentials of Mysticism. See also Dewan Singh, What is Mysticism.
2. Thomas Carlyle, Heroes and Hero-Worship, passim.
3. Ibid., p. 61
4. Ibid., p. 17
5. Ibid., p. 60
6. Diwān-i-İrdu, Radif yā.
7. F. Younghusband, Modern Mystics, p. 19 (Introduction): "for all things in the end become what they at bottom are".
12. East and West in Religion, p. 96 f.
13. Ibid., p. 69.
15. See Mohammad Iqbal, Bāng-i-Darā (Urdu), poem 'Nanak' in which
he calls Guru Nanak 'Mand-i-Kāmil', i.e., Perfect Man (God-man).
16. cf. W. H. McLeod, Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion, Chap. vi (The
person), p. 227 f. Here the writer discusses the individual activities
and the personal traits of Guru Nanak's Character.
17. cf. Inge: "Personality is a teleological fact; it is here in the making,
elsewhere in fact and power". Outspoken Essays, p. 275. cf. also
"Personality, we are constantly being assured, is the highest form
of reality with which we are acquainted." Aldous Huxley, Perennial
Philosophy, p. 45.
18. cf. Gurbachan Singh Talib, Guru Nanak: His Personality and Vision,
Introduction xxix f. and p. 141 f.; Jodh Singh, Gurmat Nirnai
(Panjabi), 9th ed. n. d., p. 106 f.
21. Sīdhī Gosītī, 43, AG, 942. Unless otherwise stated, all English
translations of Gurbānī are by the author himself.
23. Sikhism: Its Ideals and Institutions, pp. 17-18. cf. S.S. Kohli,
Philosophy of Guru Nanak (Chap. 'Mysticism of Guru Nanak') pp.
63-65. See also MK, 311-314.
24. Vārs (39 in number—Vär being a specimen and variant of heroic
poetry), written during the spiritual reign of Guru Arjan, the fifth
Guru.
25. The Janam-Sākhi tradition includes many variations and recensions
but three of them are more prominent viz. Purātan janam Sākhi,
Bābā janam Sākhi and Mebarbān janam Sākhi.
26. Sketch of the Sikhs, 1812.
27. History of the Sikhs, 1849.
28. Sikh Religion, 6 Vols., 1909
29. J.C. Oman, Mystics, Ascetics and Saints of India; F. Younghusband
Modern Mystics; and J.N. Farquhar, Modern Religious Movements in
India, have made useful studies in Indian religion but mostly about
Hinduism and very little about Sikhism.
30. More remarkable among these being G.C. Narang, Transformation
of Sikhism; Puran Singh, Spirit Born People; Teja Singh, Essays in
Sikhism; Tara Chand, Influence of Islam on Indian Culture (Chap.
Guru Nanak); I. Bannerjee, Evolution of the Khalsa, Sher Singh
Philosophy of Sikhism; Duncan Greenlees, Gospel of Guru Granth
Sāhib, G.S. Talib, Guru Nanak: Personality and Vision, Pritam
Singh, Doctrine of Guru Nanak, S.S. Kohli, Philosophy of Guru
Nanak, J.S. Grewal, Guru Nanak in History and Gopal Singh,
Religion of the Sikhs. In Panjabi, Bhāi Vir Singh (Bābā Nauhdh Singh,
Guru Nanak Chamatkār, Guru Kalqiābar Chamatkār, Asbī Guru
Chamatkār, Rānā Sūrat Singh); Bhai Jodh Singh (Gurmat Nirnai,
Sikhi Ki Hai) and Balbir Singh (Kalam di Karāmāt, Lommi Nadar, Shudh Sarūp) have evinced in their works cited above, much religious and mystical insight while explaining the inner meaning of Gurbānī or Sikhism as a whole.

32. Ibid., p. 150. cf. Tara Chand: "He (Guru Nanak) was a mystic in the sense that he had a lively realization of the presence of God..."
   Influence of Islam on Indian Culture, p. 169. cf. also Duncan Greenlees, Gospel of Guru Granth Sahib, p. CLXXIII. "But he taught what he had received from 'God' through direct experience of the truth."
33. McLeod, Loc. cit.
34. Ibid., p. 165.
35. Vār Mājī, 27, AG, 149.
37. Mārū Chaupade, AG, 991, cf. Plato regards 'this divine madness' as "the source of the chiefest blessing granted to man."
   Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy (IPH) Vol., I. p. 368.
38. Mārū, AG, 1011.
39. Tilang, AG, 698.
40. Vār Malār, Slok, AG, 1291.
41. Vār Mājī, AG, 142, cf. J.S. Grewal, Guru Nanak in History, p. 282. He has used the word 'herald' to denote 'labalbāj'.
42. Sūbi, AG, 729.
43. Sūbi, AG, 731.
44. Bilāwal, Chaupade, AG, 795.
45. Basant, Chaupade dutke, AG, 1168; Also, Sūbi, AG, 731; Sūbi Cbharit, AG, 767. cf. also, Sirī, AG, 23.
46. Vār Asā, Slok, AG, 470.
47. Loc. cit. cf. also Jesus, quoted in Radhakrishnan, East and West in Religion, p. 107. viz. "The meek shall inherit the earth." "I shall exalt him that is low and abase him that is high."
Chapter II

THE CONCEPT OF GODHEAD

Mysticism, paradoxically speaking, is universal as well as empirical, egalitarian as well as elective. But it is all God-centred. We, therefore, initiate our study with the Mystic Ground.¹

Eckhart, the great Christian mystic, says in purely mystical language: "The more God is in all things, the more He is outside them. The more He is within, the more without."² The meaning underlying the paradox in this statement seems to be that the divine penetration into the objects of the physical world is proportionate to a corresponding transcendentalism outside the visible phenomenon; inversely speaking, the unfathomable divine Ground has a corresponding outer reality which may be called, in the words of T.S. Eliot, an 'objective correlative.'³

Otto observes in this context: "The resting unity is the raison d'etre of the moving multiplicity and it is by reason of the oneness of these two that the Godhead is divus per se."⁴

The Ground constitutes the Divine Being, and also His manifestation which is 'becoming' or change; and both form the one, unitive Reality of Mysticism. Plato conceived the physical world as a shadow of the eternal Reality, which Isaac Penington calls "a true shadow in its own place."⁵ Thus the inner (mystical) and the outer (objective) aspects of Reality, intellectually understandable on the plane of relativity, ultimately form the one Unknowable Ground.

It is, therefore, necessary to accept Reality in both its
aspects and to discuss the Mystical Ground as well as its objective correlative, which later we shall study in the chapter under the title, 'The Mystic Path'.

As a whole, mysticism being considered as higher thought and higher emotion (rather, the highest), the proper word, denoting the rational as well as emotive apotheosis, would be 'Contemplation' which was often used in Europe to signify Christian mysticism.

Mysticism is not merely feeling nor mere cognition but a higher synthesis of both. It is thus the combined essence of religion and philosophy. Guru Nanak's mysticism is essentially of this composite type for which the word 'Contemplation' may be the most appropriate one.  

The mystical concepts as such are properly not objects of knowledge at all. Therefore, our perceptions of 'God', 'Soul' and 'Immortality' are without any significance unless they become objects of faith and belief which lead to moral and spiritual elevation in the actual lives of those who thus mystically believe.

Nirgun Brahmk

God-mysticism deals both with Godhead and God, which are actually not two but one. The concept of Godhead, as distinct from the concept of God, is, however, our first mystical concern. Godhead is that absolute entity which may be called the highest conception of the Divine Being. It is the same Absolute Brahman or the Impersonal God of the Hindu Vedanta Mysticism. In the words of Aldous Huxley:

The divine Ground of all existence is a spiritual Absolute, ineffable in terms of discursive thought, but (in certain circumstances) susceptible of being directly experienced and realized by the human being. This Absolute is the God-without-form of Hindu and Christian mystical phraseology.

Godhead is Nirankār, or the Nirgun Brahmk of Guru Nanak (which means the Formless, Attributeless God) and the Al-Haqq (the Real) of the Sufi mysticism, implying the
'abyss of Godhead' as distinct from the personal Allah. It is Yonder of Plotinus who formulates Divinity into three aspects (a sort of spiritual Trinity) viz. (1) The Absolute Godhead, (2) The Nous or the Spirit, and (3) The Psyche or the Soul—the causal life of our physical universe. These three are corresponding to the Vedanta Trinity, Brahman, Ishvar and Atman.

Plotinus describes the Godhead as the 'atmosphere breathed by beautified souls' or 'the sphere of solid, unchanging reality.'

Eckhart says:

The Godhead gave all things up to God. The Godhead is poor, naked and empty as though it were not; it has not, wills not, wants not, works not, gets not. It is God who has the treasure and the bride in him, the Godhead is as void as though it were not.

Again:

God and Godhead are as distinct as heaven and earth. Heaven stands a thousand miles above the earth and even so the Godhead is above God. God becomes and disbecomes...

One has to pass over to this highest state of divinity i.e. Godhead in order to reach the highest truth or reality. Otto observes:

The seer has to pass beyond God into the silent void of the Godhead itself. This is the highest vision and whoever still has 'a God' has not yet reached to the highest and the last. It is the mirum which even in the terms of greatest exaltation one cannot embrace on account of its absolute 'otherness'. Like Brahman it is neither conscious, nor self-conscious. It is beyond the contrast of subject and object, known and knower.

This Godhead is the pure Taubah of Sufi mysticism or the Monism (Advaita) of Shankracharya, the Sunyata of Buddhism and the Sunn-Samadhi of Guru Nanak's Sikh mysticism. The Upanishadic dictum of 'The one without a second' and the 'neti neti' (not this, not this), are clearly indicative of Godhead. "The divine one is a negation of negation," says Eckhart, "Something to which nothing is to be added...Every creature contains a negation: one denies
that it is the other...but God contains the denial of denials."19

This concept of Godhead somehow gets linked up with the concept of human or spiritual 'identity with God' which Eckhart emphasized and which the great Sufi mystic Mansür so boldly exemplified in his person as well as thought. Sufism most probably derived this concept of Identification of man with the Divine Being from the Vedāntā mysticism. Though references to this concept can be traced in Guru Nanak's expressions on this subject,20 yet has so much reinterpreted or recast it that it has become almost a new concept in his mystical philosophy.

Guru Nanak's version of this Vedāntic concept of *Aham brahman asmi* or *an-al-Haq* ('I am God') may be aptly expressed in the words of Henry Suso:

In the merging of itself in God, the spirit passes away and yet not wholly; for it receives indeed some attributes of Godhead, but it does not become God in nature...It is still a something which has been created out of nothing and continues to be everlastingly.21

When a soul (*atmān*) becomes one with the Primal-soul (*Param-atmān*) i.e. with Godhead or what Eckhart calls 'the ground of the soul' and what Materlinck calls 'temple enseveli',22 it is certainly a unity or unionification between two separated entities (after a contingent separation, of course, but not real) as between fire and fuel, or between ocean and a drop, (many other such metaphors have been used by the mystics); and though this merger or blend can apparently be taken to mean a complete identity, actually it is only a unionification as between cause and effect or between a seed and its germination. Only a mystic like Mansūr or Shamas Tabrez, in a flush of mystical exaltation and pride (which in modern terminology has been called *Faustian urge*)23 and in some unguarded moment, claims complete oneness or identity with Godhead—a position which is difficult to support or defend in terms of rational or non-mystical ratiocination. Guru Nanak, therefore, has taken a more tenable and rational stand when he lays emphasis on the dictum of *tat-tvam-āstī* ('That art thou').
instead of *aham-brahm-asmi* ('I am God') or *Sohang* ('I am that'). He says:

> Thou art the Eternal one, Thou created the universe as Thine play in otherness.\(^4\)

Addressing Godhead directly as *Nirgun Brahmn*, Guru Nanak repeatedly affirms the eternal oneness which does not accept any change or duality, with the Godhead assuming attributes. In one hymn he repeats five times the basic dictum: "True is the One, none else exists. Thou art one, Thou art one."\(^5\)

Guru Nanak steers his thought clear of the two extreme polarities of *advaita* (monism) as well as *dvaita* (duality) and, in agreement with Ramanuja, he decides in favour of the *vishishtadvaita* (qualified Monism) concept of Godhead. It is a strictly-conceived principle of absolute monotheism which accepts duality only as a working principle.\(^6\)

The mystical state of unity or union is unknowable and ineffable. It is only a subject of realization or contemplation. All human bonds and shackles are snapped at this suprasensuous stage, for union with God is the final salvation. In the words of Dionysius of Athens: "It is in the supreme part of the soul that the mystical operation takes place. To that portion of the soul which no passion can reach, is to be assigned the contemplation of the pure and profound verities."\(^7\)

Guru Nanak, as affirmed by Taran Singh,\(^8\) emphasises on and strict adherence to the basic mystic concept of the transcendental oneness and absoluteness of Godhead\(^9\) expressed by him, time and again, in the more or less original terms, *nirarikār, nirgun, alakh, abhev, agam, agochar, anāth, ajūni, akath, nirbhau, nirvair, akāl-mūrat, apār, aparampār, agādh, adrisht, abhul, trigun-atit, achar, adol* and so on, which is the truest affirmation of the beyondness of Godhead.\(^10\) All these appellations of Godhead signify the same fundamental truth of the inscrutability, infinitude indivisibility and ineffability of Godhead, Guru Nanak has most emphatically and frequently referred to the extreme inability of human language to
express the inexpressible reality of Godhead. Like other
great mystics, the ancient Rishis, the Buddha, Plotinus,
Eckhart, Al-Ghazâlî, Hujwîrî and so on, Guru Nanak prefers
the mystic language of symbols to express what cannot be
rendered in ordinary human language. In his own words:

Great is the Lord and lofty His abode.
Still more lofty is His Holy Name.
If one rises so high as that,
He may (perhaps) know such a lofty one.\(^{31}\)

Again:

God is as great as He wishes to be;
Nanak, He the truthful one alone knows about himself.
If one bespeaks something out of limit or propriety,
He will certainly be dubbed as the most foolish and vulgar among
men.\(^{32}\)

The ineffable Godhead, or the Absolute Being, who has
no form or external manifestation whatsoever, which may
be called his real self or image (all His visible, tangible
emanations\(^{33}\) being only symbolical) is only realized
intuitively and mystically, in the soul itself, as a direct
experience. 'Incommunicableness', says William James, "of
the transport is the keynote of all mysticism. Mystical truth
exists for individual who has the transport, but for no one
else. In this, it resembles the knowledge given to us in
sensation more than that given by conceptual thought."\(^{34}\)

Guru Arjan says:

The treasure of bliss is the ambrosial God's Name.
It rests in the mind of the bhagats or true devotees.\(^{35}\)

But Guru Nanak has not denoted Godhead merely by
negations. He has also given expressions of positive
affirmation. In the mystical prologue to the Ādi Guru Granth
(called mul-mantar in Sikh parlance) the very first term used
for Godhead, by Guru Nanak, is EX-OANKĀR, which means
'The one-All-Pervading' i.e. the Absolute one who has
nevertheless infinite extension and expansion.\(^{36}\) The second
denotive term he has used is SAT-NĀM, ('His Name is true'),\(^{37}\)
which implies that "the only eternal or abiding being is He".
The third positive affirmation in the *mūl-mantar* is *KARTĀ-PURKH* which means the 'Creator-Immanent One' after which term the negational signification begins, and, again, the last word in the *mūl-mantar* is positive, viz. *GUR-PRASĀD* which means "by the grace of the Guru He is known." The ingress of the grace of the Guru is always a mystical process, and the Guru as logos works as an intercessional medium between Godhead and the individual soul, about which elaborate discussion has been done under the caption 'The Guru and Sabad'.

The *Salok* (or epigram) immediately following the *mūl-mantar* also significantly expresses the eternal aspect of Godhead:

God was True in the beginning, True in the various Ages.

True He is, says Nanak, and True He will ever be. Many other positive names of God can be easily gathered and cited from the *Ādi Granth*, e.g. *kīrpal, dayāl, karim, dātār, kartār, sachbha, parvardgār, kādir, mihanvān, khasam, mālik, sāhib, din-dayāl, sultān, mir, dukh-barta, icchā-pūrak, antaryāmi, samrath* and so on, which collectively imply the attributes of divine grace, compassion, bounty, creative power, omnipotence and almightiness.

The concept of Godhead, though in itself indicative of pure absolutism, simultaneously connotes its other inevitable aspect of the personal God, often called by the simple names of God, *Prabhū, Allāh, Khudā, Rām, Hari, Madho, Kesho, Murāri* and *Gobind*, some of which have been borrowed from the Hindu and Muslim religious usage in order to induce a psychological appeal inherent in the cultural and racial character called 'Collective unconscious'. In Sikhism, both the *Nirgun* and *Sargun* aspects of *Brahm* are presented as one entity, which is probably the truest appreciation of this paradoxical belief. Guru Arjan has described the bifurcated nature of Godhead in his lucient words:

The Formless One is both *Sargun* as well as *Nirgun Brahmb* and He is eternally in *Sunn-Samādb* condition. He created the universe out of Himself, says Nanak, and then remembered Himself.
Teja Singh has rendered this Salok as under.\(^4^5\)

**PROLOGUE**

The Formless One is both Absolute and Related; He Himself was in the Primordial trance,
And Himself stirred the Divine energy into the creation, through which He contemplates Himself.

Guru Nanak's conceptual thought is replete with poetic expressions of the highest spiritual value. A recent writer has referred to this aspect of Guru Nanak's contribution to world religion\(^4^6\):

The faith which the Guru preached to mankind through his word, is a clearly apprehended set of ideal concepts, mutually consistent and proceeding from the vision which must have come to him at the time the mantle of prophecy fell on him.

Dr. McLeod rightly points out: "The ultimate essence of God is beyond all human categories, far transcending all powers of human expression...Guru Nanak's works are directed to this very end, but the human expression can communicate no more than a glimpse of the ultimate reality."\(^4^7\)

Guru Nanak has laid great emphasis on the contemplation of the Attributeless (*Nirgun*), Formless (*Nirankar*), Immaculate (*Niranjan*) Godhead:

Wherever I see, I find the generous Lord.
The benign God neither comes nor goes.
He has cleverly entered the hearts of all beings.
The world is the shadow of one who has neither sire nor mother.
Neither has He any sister, nor brother.
He has no birth or death, family or caste:
Such an eternal one is after my heart.\(^4^8\)

Epithets like *Atit* (beyond) and *Nehkewal* (pure) used by the Guru clearly refer to the absolute Godhead:

The Transcendent One abides as Pure Being, with whom the Guru joins being with being.\(^4^9\)

Guru Nanak has no dearth of words to express the
Absolute Godhead. He calls Him *Aprampār* and *Nirālam* i.e. (Beyond of the Beyond):

The Absolute one has assumed the state of *void*. He Himself is Beyond of the Beyond. After creating the Cosmos He sees it—a *void-like* creation made out of mere *void*.  

This *void* (*Sunn* or *sunyata*) is the Primal State of Godhead. The Guru has beautifully described this state of endless chaos (*dhubundukāra*) in full sixteen stanzas of a hymn called *Māru Solbe*, the first Stanza being:

For countless Ages there was chaos and chaos. There was no Ether or Earth—only God’s infinite will prevailed. There was neither day nor night, nor moon nor sun: The Primal Being was in *Sunn-Samādh* condition.

The *Sunn-Samādh* condition or state of Godhead is truly mystical and ineffable. It is only realizable in the Fourth state (*Turiya*) by the favoured, Reality-perceiving soul. This state has been called the 'deep and more than deep' (*atigambhiras* by *Shanakra* in his commentary on *Gītā*. The *Māndūkya Upanishad* calls it ‘unfathomable ocean’ (*dushparveshvam*). It is the Upanishadic Eternal Being called *Sat* or *atīsaya* (the quite transcendent one.).

**SARGUN BRAHM**

From impersonal Reality, we come to the personal, from primal to the emergent. Here the One appears as Many, and this is what provides illusion to the outward-perceiving mind.

Actually speaking, Godhead and God are just one-entity, equally eternal and immortal. There can be no idea of duality between them. The one is the Higher state, the other lower which is a relative difference, not real. All spiritual ascent is from relative to absolute, from personal to impersonal, from particular to universal. ‘Mysticism’, says Keyserling, "always ends in an impersonal immortality."  

The *Nirgun* God turns into *Sargun* and yet remains *Nirgun*—this is the essential truth about Godhead and God.
Guru Nanak takes the twofold Reality as one. According to him, the basic unity of God always remains indivisible and unsplit, though it appears to have acquired a seeming duality. In Guru Nanak, there is all along a strong affirmation of unity—the transcendent and the immanent aspects of Godhead are always unitive:

My Lord is one, He is One, my brother, He is one.54

Again:

The One Lord takes away and gives (everything, to all beings):
I have not heard of any one else beside Him.55

The underlying spiritual principle is the one Lord; there is none else who can exist beside or without Him. The whole creation lies within the existence of the one Lord:

There is but One giver of all beings, whom I may never forget.56

But it is the Sargun Brahī i.e. the Creator-God (Ishavār) that all theism in religion begins. The monistic Godhead becomes the monotheistic God, by assuming the three gunās or attributes.57

According to McLeod: "It is in this Saguna aspect that man can know God and accordingly it is this aspect which is the object of Guru Nanak’s meditation and of his expository utterances."58

The Sargun Brahī of Guru Nanak is the Creator, Sustainer and Destroyer, according to the assumption by Him of the threefold (trīguṇ or triśabdha) principle of Māyā. The One mother (Māi) produces three children i.e. the three controlling deities, Brahma, Vishnu and Shivā, who are the efficient cause of creation, preservation and dissolution of the universe.59

With the transformation of Nirguṇ Brahī into its Sargun aspect, the transcendental and absolute Being turns into an immanent Reality and with this comes the basic pantheistic tendency in all Hindu mysticism. In fact, in all types of mysticism, Sikh mysticism is no exception but there is this peculiarity or special merit in Sikhism that it strikes a remarkable synthesis between a strict monotheism and a
necessary, almost a bare pantheism, so that the basic unity of Godhead is not abrogated.

The Hindu Vedānta mysticism, leaning always towards monism, and the medieval Hindu Bhakti mysticism slanting towards too much pantheism in the form of idol-worship, could not maintain this necessary balance which Sikhism could. Similarly the Sufi mystic development, though basically nourished by Islamic Monotheism of a strict type, ultimately ended in the proliferation of the Vedantic idea of monistic 'identification' and the Bhakti emotional pantheism. In Guru Nanak we find this unique combination of pure-monotheism with a 'creative immanence', which is not exactly pantheism but 'panentheism'.

The One God, by His own infinite, ineffable Will (Hukam), has infinitely multiplied and diversified Himself into an expansive universe which, though limited and conditioned in time-space-continuum and cause-effect-contingency, is truly representative of the infinitude inherent in the Creator-God. To cite a few examples from Guru Nanak:

He is Himself the Tablet, the Pen and the writing thereof.
Let us say He is the only one, why think of a second.

Again:

By creating two aspects, the One remained One.
By infusing divine knowledge inside man, He created a 'dialectic' (Vād).
Participation and seclusion are the two polarities, between which the religion is to mediate.

The concept of the 'Primordial monism' becoming 'creative dualism' and still retaining its pristine unitive truth, is the hallmark of Guru Nanak's mysticism and has been most explicitly and forcefully expressed by him in the three Vārs or 'heroic odes' written by him in Rāgās, Mājh, Āsā and Malār.

References and Notes

1. The term as used by Aldous Huxley in Perennial Philosophy,
Chap. II. cf. Gopal Singh, Religion of the Sikhs, p. 30. "God is the All-ground."


3. Eliot, of course, has used this term in a different sense, Selected Essays, p. 145.


6. cf. According to Dionysius of Athens, 'the abstract Reason' (or Logos) which implies mystical contemplation, is the only way that leads to God. "Contemplation is a gift of God but it can be prepared by prayer and purification." Quoted in Marquette, Introduction to Comparative Mysticism, p. 146 f.

7. cf. William James, Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 60. Also see Carlyle: "Without a spiritual belief in a Divine Being, in the knowledge of whom, and obedience to whom, mortal welfare alone consists, the human race must degenerate." Quoted in Paul Bruton, Inner Reality, p. 15.

8. Perennial Philosophy, p. 29.


10. cf. Sura of Qurān: "Your God is the one true God, there is no other God beside Him. He is the kind and merciful one." (II, 163), quoted in Marquette, Introduction to Comparative Mysticism, p. 159.

11. cf. Marquette, Op. cit., p. 120.


16. Loc. cit.

17. cf. Suzuki, Mysticism, Christian and Buddhist, p. 28, quoted in Stace, Mysticism and Philosophy, p. 109. He says: "In Buddhist Emptiness (Sunnātā) there is no time, no space, no becoming, nothingness."

18. Guru Arjan, Sukhmani, 21, AG, 290. (Sargun nirgun nirankār sunn samādhī āp).


20. cf. Siri, AG, 23. "He Himself is the beautiful, Himself the (aesthetic) taste and also one who enjoys." (Āpe rasta āp ras āpe rāwanhār...), the whole hymn.

21. Quoted in Stace, Op. cit., p. 223. cf. H.D. Lewis, Our Experience of God, p. 222. "No one, saint or mystic or any other, can ever be literally at one with God and have all veils torn apart, however, perfect or final the union may be in all other regards."


23. Ibid., p. 181.

24. Vār Māj, AG, 139. (Sadā sadā tu ik hau tuh dujā khel rachāiā).
Unless otherwise stated, all English translation of Gurbānī are by the author himself.

25. Ibid., AG, 144. (Asai ek digar kui, ek tui, ek tui).
29. cf. also Guru Gobind Singh, Jāp, passim.
33. For the well-known mystical theory of 'Emanation' propounded by Plotinus, see Inge, Mysticism in Religion, p. 115.
34. Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 318.
37. cf. 'Eternal Truth is His Name', SSWS, 28.
38. cf. 'Maker of all things', Loc. cit.
39. cf. Guru Arjan, Vār Rāmkāli, Salok AG, 957. "As I had heard, I have found the Guru. He joins the separated ones to God as he is an advocate in God's Court." (Jaisā satgur suṁidā taiso bi mai diūh. Vibhārāi mele prabhū bar dargāb kā basāb).
40. See Infra. Chap. VIII
43. See James Drever, A Dictionary of Psychology, p. 43. It is a term used to a considerable extent by Jung to signify those elements in the individual unconsciously derived from the experience of the race.
44. Sukhmāni, 21, AG, 290 (Sargun nirgun nirankār suvn-smādhi āp. Apan kiā Nānakā āpe bi phir jāp), cf. Jairam Mishr, art. 'Guru Nanak Dwārā Nirūpat Brahman ate Ji', Guru Nanak Jiwan Darshan ate Kav Kala, p. 110 f. He has devised three aspects of Brahman, Nirgun, Sargun and Nirgun-Sargun-Complex.
45. Psalm of Peace, p. 103.
47. McLeod, Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion, p. 165, cf. J.S Grewal,
Guru Nanak: Some of His Key Concepts, p. 5 ff.

49. Mārū Solbe, AG, 1040.
50. Ibid., AG, 1037.
51. Ibid., AG, 1035-36.
54. Āsā, AG, 350 (Sāhib merā eko hai. Eko hai bhāi eko hai).
55. Patti (Āsā, 2, AG, 433. (Eko lovai eko devai avar na dūjā mai suniā).
56. Japī, 5, AG, (Gurā ik deh bujbāi sabhīā fīā kā ik dāūā so mai visar na jāī).
60. "The doctrine that all things are within the being of God who is yet merely the whole of actual things." Gaynor, Dictionary of Mysticism.
62. Ibid., Pauṇī, 5, AG, 1280.
63. A Rāga or Rāg is a musical note which serves as the particular rhythm in the poetical compositions of the Sikh Gurus, such as Sīrī Rāg, Āsā Rāg, Mārū Rāg etc. All the poetry included in the Ādi Granth has not been arranged poet-wise but according to the Rāgas, which are 31 in all, beginning with Sīrī Rāg which is the chief or primal Rāga. cf. MK., 769.
Chapter III

THE CONCEPT OF MAYA

By far the most significant thought expressed in the *vārs* of Guru Nanak (and for that matter, in the *vārs* composed by the successor Gurus) is the expression of the 'creativity' assumed or undertaken by the *Nirgun-Brahm* in the form of the *Īshvara*—the Creator-God (the *Kartā-Purkh*) with the help of the magical creative-agency called *Māyā*.

How the Absolute One created this manifold, multiple universe, is a great mystery, indeed. No one knows how and when it all happened. Guru Nanak has, in one stroke, rejected the cosmogenic theories of Judaism, Christianity, Hindūism, Buddhism and Islām, by uttering the mystical truth, viz. when God created this world, none existed except God and hence no one can know about it or say anything about it.¹ His own considered view about this matter is that of non-committal. He simply avers that the unknown cannot be known:

*Only God Himself knows when He creates the world.*²

The absolute truth cannot be known or stated by discursive reason. The *Pandits, Yogīs* and the *Qāzīs* tried to guess about it in vain. Guru Nanak wisely desists from making any attempt to probe the unknowable.

But his poetic genius has come very handy in describing the cosmogenic truth of the creation of the world in very vivid metaphors and expressions in the said *Vārs*. In *Vār Mājb*, the first and second stanzas (pauris), touch the cosmogenic subject. The *Vār* begins with:
Thou are the Inscrutable Creator Lord, who created the world. Thou produced the many-hued and multi-phased universe.

Again in stanza two, he says:

Thou created the world and gave people vocations to do.
By transposing the element of beguilement, Thou distracted the world.⁴

The Vār Āsā, similarly, begins with:

He first became manifest Himself and then created the Nām (or Logos);
Then He created an alter self as creation and was pleased to see this new ensemble.⁵

The opening lines in the Vār Malār are even more explicitly metaphorical:

He created Himself and thus took His own cognizance.
By separating heaven from earth, He spread a canopy.
By raising heavens without any support, He signified sabad.
By creating the sun and the moon, He permeated (the universe) as light.
He made the night and the day a prodigious wonder.⁶

Though silent about the unknowable time of the beginning of creation, Guru Nanak has mystically divined and expressed the possible manner or process of creation. As we have seen in the lines quoted above from his vārs, God created the universe (sansār) out of Himself by a mysterious cause, in order to know or see Himself, as if in a mirror in which He could see His own image—a metaphor used by the Sūfis and also found in the Sikh theology.⁷ The Divine Will (Hukam) may be said to be the hidden cause behind creation. This Hukam, as we shall discuss in detail further on in this chapter, created the Īshavāra and the Māyā complex (a sort of magical play) with the three Gunās to act as efficient causes and thus the whole cosmic play began. In the words of Guru Nanak:

From the true Lord emanated air and from air came into being water.
From water He created the three worlds⁸ and everywhere He infused His inner light.⁹
Again:

Water is the first Being which infused life in all objects.\(^{10}\)

The whole creation came out of void and chaos (\textit{Sunn})
by some involutionary and evolutionary process of
Emanation\(^{11}\) or divine manifestation. Guru Nanak has at
many places touched this subject:

From chaos He created Brahmā, Vishnū and Shiva.
From chaos emanated all the cosmic Ages.

\begin{itemize}
\item From chaos came out the sun, the moon and the heavens.
\item His own light is pervading in the three worlds.
\item In the Void Infinite, the Invisible and Transcendent Lord sits in
contemplation.
\item From chaos He created earth and heavenly spheres;
\item He fixed them up in space without any support, by some divine
mechanism.
\item By creating three worlds and the encompassing māyā He creates
and destroys everything Himself.\(^{12}\)
\end{itemize}

Again:

For countless aeons there was nothing but chaos.
The Infinite One remained in pure contemplation.
In that chaos the Absolute Lord sat Himself alone, and there was
no creative expansion.\(^{13}\)

For Guru Nanak the bewitching, magical māyā, which
forms the causal basis of creation, is not unreal or without
substance, though its role is that of beguilement, deception
and treachery. The metaphors of fly (\textit{makhi})\(^{14}\) she-serpent
(sarpanī),\(^{15}\) the beltlike rope (\textit{maikhali}),\(^{16}\) the 'one-Mother'
(ekā māī),\(^{17}\) the chameleon-coloured (sūhā-rang),\(^{18}\) the
shadow-like (\textit{cbhāyā māyā}),\(^{19}\) the evil mother-in-law (sās
buri),\(^{20}\) used by Guru Nanak to denote the baffling nature of
māyā, are very significant as they clearly signify its true
character, full of duplicity and illusoriness. So are the
meaningful phrases used by him to describe its deceiving
function meant to distract the ignorant and gullible human
beings, e.g. māyā-moh or, māyā mamtā mohini (the
attractive māyā), 
\textit{trikuti} (the three-pronged māyā, having
three \textit{gunās}), \textit{tridāh} (the three-phased), māyā račnā dhob
(the undeceivable deceiver)\textsuperscript{21} and so on.

From these phrases the paradoxical nature of \textit{māyā} becomes quite clear. The term \textit{sarpānī} (which is also called \textit{kundalini} in the esoteric āntric terminology)\textsuperscript{22} is probably the most cogent and representative symbol used for \textit{māyā}, not only by Guru Nanak but also by Kabīr and other Bhagats.

As to the question whether the creation is real or unreal, Guru Nanak concurs with Ramanuja in rejecting the monistic concept of an illusory universe postulated by Shankara (i.e. the rope appearing as a snake in darkness) and, instead, regards the \textit{māyā} and the universe (\textit{jagat}) as something substantial and real, and not a mere supposition or superimposition.\textsuperscript{23} He has gone even farther than Ramanuja to invest the creation with the venerable sanctity reserved for the supra-creation with the venerable sanctity reserved for the supra-creational spiritual universe. His positive dictum regarding this problem is that the world is real and sacred like a temple (dharamsal)\textsuperscript{24} because it is the creation of the True Lord. How can the world created by the Real Being be unreal? But when the Real Being is forgotten by the deceived and engrossed human beings, for them the world is certainly unreal and, in fact, a sure place of destruction. So, according to Guru Nanak, there are two different planes on which the world is real and unreal in consonance with the state of redeemed or unredeemed souls respectively.

\textbf{References and Notes}

2. \textit{Loc. cit., (jā kartā sirbhī ko sāje āpe janāt sol)}.
3. A Qāzi is an Islamic Jurist or Judge, also religious scholar. cf. \textit{MK}, 237.
7. "By Holding mirror in His hand He sees Himself." (\textit{Āpanre bath ārsī āpe bi dekke}). Bhai Gurdas, \textit{Vār} 2, 1.
8. i.e. \textit{tribhavān}, or \textit{trilok}, (\textit{surg, prithvī and pātul}—heaven, earth and
the nether world), see MK, 455.

9. Śri, AG, 19.
10. Vār Āsā, Salok, AG, 473.
11. cf. the well-known theory of Emanation propounded by Plotinus, cf. Inge, Mysticism in Religion, p. 114 f. See also Gaynor, Dictionary of Mysticism. This doctrine means that nothing can be evolved without first being involved.

12. Mārū, AG, 1037.
13. Ibid., AG, 1026.
15. Malār, AG, 1274. See also Śri, AG, 63.
16. Mārū, AG, 1037.
17. Japī, 30, AG, 7.
18. Gaurī, AG, 221.
19. Ibid., AG, 228.
20. Āsā, AG, 355.
25. cf. Vār Āsā, Salok (Paurī, 2): "True are the regions and the worlds created by you..."AG, 463 and Salok (Paurī, 10): "False is the king and false the populace; false is all the world." AG, 468. The original text, respectively: 'Sache tere khand sache brahmānd' and 'Kūr rājā kūr pari jā kūr sabh sansār.'
Chapter IV

NATURE MYSTICISM

Guru Nanak, after accepting creation as something real and beautiful (because it reflects the Divine Beauty to which he always remains attached and united in true bonds of love), expresses a great sense of wonder (vismād) when face to face with the cosmic phenomena. This is the essence of his great and exuberant Nature mysticism. He falls into divine rapture when he conceives of the vast, endless and infinite Universe. When he expresses his deep sense of wonder, it is simply sublime.

The supreme example of this divine ecstatic perception of cosmic beauty is his famous piece in which he thinks of heaven as salver, sun and moon as lamps, stars as pearls and so on, all conjoining to form the cosmic invocation to the Supreme Being, called Ārti, which retains its grandeur even in translation:

The firmament is Thy salver,
The sun and moon Thy lamps;
The galaxy of stars are the pearls scattered,
The woods of sandal are Thine incense.
The breezes blow Thy royal fan;
The flowers of the forest
Lie as offering at Thy feet.
What wonderful worship with lamps is this
O Thou destroyer of fear;
Unstruck Music is the sound of Thy temple drums.¹

He has even gone so far as to personify his Formless God (Nirankār) in human terms and human language in order to describe His ineffable beauty. It is, of course, a
unique attempt at poetic symbolism and not a mere expression of anthropomorphism or pantheism, in which both, the strict monotheistic Guru Nanak did not believe. Only his unbounded love for his divine Beloved or Spouse inspires him to write such sublime and mystical poetry. The Sargun Brahmand who is Almighty, Omniscient, Omnipresent, extremely Compassionate and Charitable, Benign and Benevolent, is also exceedingly Beautiful:

Thou have bewitching eyes and ravishing teeth.
The captivating nose and lengthy tresses.
O Thine golden physique with your golden shield.

Guru Nanak's two mystical rhapsodies of exquisite poetic felicity are reserved for the depiction and description of Nature (quadrat or prakriti) in all its cosmic and humanistic manifestations and the subtle portrayal of the exalted mystical feelings of amazement and wonder called vismād. This is indicative of his imaginative contemplation of all that appeals to the human sensibility and to the inner spiritual-intuitive perception. Both these pieces are included in Guru Nanak’s well-known composition, Vār Āsā, the first beginning with: “Nature is visible, Nature is audible, the awe of Nature is the essence of bliss”; and the second opening with: “Wonderful is symphony, wonderful is knowledge.”

In the sphere of Nature mysticism, perhaps few poems in all mystical literature compare with the ‘Seasonal’ poem of Guru Nanak called the Calender (Barāmāh Tukhārī Chhant) about which Loehlin remarks: “The changing seasons are the setting for picturing the vicissitudes of the soul’s search for God...Guru Nanak is close to nature and abounds in pithy earth metaphors. Burden of (his) song is ‘Thy will must prevail’. One should not moan but reside in His will.”

This sense of wonder (vismād), which Sufi mystics call hairat, is the highest mystical state in which the beholder is completely lost in the bewitching sight (mushāhidā) and what remains is only seeing (shahūd).

Nature-mysticism has been exquisitely interfused with
God-mysticism by Guru Nanak in one supreme devotional apotheosis called Premā Bhakti i.e. loving devotion. Imaginative perception of divine beauty creates the chaste passion called love in the devotee's mind and love brings devotional attachment which is termed as Bhakti. This Bhakti mysticism which is akin to the Christian 'voluntaristic' mysticism "seeks to attain unity with the Highest through coalescence by an emotional exaggeration and glow of feeling. And even the highest is thought of as responding to amorous longings." Ramanuja in the East and Luther in the West are Guru Nanak's precursors in this erotic and emotional mysticism.

Personal devotion in the form of love relationship inevitably presupposes a responsive and personal God whose tangible manifestation called 'Nature' attracts and inspires the devotee at all levels of consciousness. It is in this meaning that William James calls Nature-mysticism as 'Expansions.' It is a sublimated naturalism even at its highest and most abstract form and therefore, easily passes into the fervour of erotic mysticism. Nature-mysticism and Love-mysticism are generally co-expressive.

The beautiful, however, is not merely beautiful, but also true and good, as Plato conceived. In the ultimate analysis the sat, chit and anand are just three facets of one Reality and are always inseparable from each other. The satyam, shivam and sundram of Indian philosophy are just one ensemble. The firmament above and the moral law inside the man, which so deeply impressed Kant, are just corresponding realities or verities. Of similar import is Albert Schweitzer's remark about God. "In the World He appears to me as mysterious, marvellous creative force, within me, He reveals Himself as ethical will."

Since the universe deeply reflects the Creator who is immanent, it cannot just be a place full of evil and misery as most pessimists make it to be. The divine truth is very much here, as mystics so strongly and imaginatively perceive. Plotinus rightly says that "all things that are Yonder are also Here below."
The whole Truth whether transcendent or immanent is just one. Unless we perceive this unity, there can be no concrete basis for the sublime feelings of wonder, love, devotion, worship, compassion, humility, charity and so on. In fact, all ethos begins with the inevitable perception of unity in diversity. Truth, Beauty and Good are ONE, as Keats declared. Inge also affirms this ubiquitous fact:

The Goal of Truth as an absolute value is unity, which in the outer world means harmony; in the intercourse of spirit with spirit, love; and in the inner world, peace or happiness. The goal of Goodness as an absolute value is the realization of the ought-to-be in victorious moral effort. Beauty is the self-recognition of creative spirit in its own works; it is the expression of Nature's own deepest character. Beauty gives neither information nor advice; but it satisfies a part of our nature which is not less divine than that which pays homage to Truth and Goodness.

Beauty has the deepest and the widest impact on human beings who are directly and empirically affected by it, at all places and at all times, because it has the power to excite and enliven the imagination. Coleridge so aptly remarks that "Imagination is the capacity to see similarity in dissimilar, or the power of combining the many in the one." This imaginative perception of beauty that unites and binds even the dissimilars, is the true basis of all Nature-mysticism.

Guru Nanak is probably at his highest when he imaginatively perceives divine beauty in all the universe and then expresses his rapturous feelings in fascinating poetry. He gets so much lost in his mystical sense of wonder (vismād) and his complete 'identity' with Nature, that he can only utter 'Wonderful', or 'Wonderful Lord' (Wahegurū). In one small poem so bewitching for its magical poetic effect, he likes to be personified in Nature as a she-deer, a she-cuckoo, a she-fish and a she-serpent (all feminine metaphors, because in Indian mysticism man is symbolized as a 'bride' who has to find and meet her divine 'spouse', so that he may, in ecstatic union with Nature, meet the creator Lord).

Love, with its infinite expansiveness, is the basis of all
Nature-mysticism, as it is of Bhakti-mysticism (which is also called Love-mysticism). Love which is the realization in experience of spiritual existence, has an unique value as a hierophant of the highest mystics.20 For man it is inevitable, for he has to reach out to whatever is beautiful in the vast expanse of Nature. The whole cosmos is a standing challenge to man's loving capability. "Love, says Tolstoy, is the inherent quality of a man's soul; he loves because he cannot help loving."21

The universe has a macrocosmic or outer aspect which attracts and invites the loving attention of the perceiving man, and also a microcosmic or inner aspect which is the soul of the universe—a matter for mystical apprehension. Shelley says that "It is impossible not to believe in the soul of the universe."22 It is impossible for a true mystic poet not to express his pantheistic emotion in the poetry of Nature-mysticism. Guru Nanak has used innumerable metaphors symbolising his variegated perceptions of Nature with its myriad moods and tones, phases and nuances.

Like the mystic Carlyle, Guru Nanak regards Nature as a vast symbol of God. It is only in Nature, with all its beauty and mystery, that God can be truly recognized.

Guru Nanak says:

Nanak the True Lord is the Supreme Giver and in Nature alone is He recognized.23

COSMO-MYSTICAL REGIONS24

Nowhere is Guru Nanak so deeply mystical and sublime as when he describes the five cosmo-mystical Regions i.e. Khands, (i) Dharam (Law), (ii) Gyan (Knowledge), Sucram (Honour), (iv) Karam (Divine Grace), and (v) Sach (Truth),25 towards the end of his famous composition called Japji. Japji is decidedly his magnum opus and has been given the primal place in the whole of Adi Granth, while the five khandas constitute the mystical climax of the whole piece.

The vertical evolutionary apophesis of these Regions has
been regarded by McLeod as (mystical) Ascent, leading from Dharam Khand (Region of Law or duty) upward to the last, Sach Khand which "is the ultimate climax of the search for truth, for it is here that there is perfect and absolute accord with the Divine Will (Hukam)."

Though one can conceive an apparent similarity between these mystical regions and the Sufi maqamat or spiritual stages as has been suggested by Tara Chand, S.S. Kohli and Taran Singh, for instance, yet, as McLeod opines, the analogy does not hold good because the parallel is just tentative and not cogent. Sufis have postulated either four or seven mystical stages which have no cosmic reality or clear evolutionary process connecting them together, as we find in Guru Nanak.

The cosmic vision as expressed by Guru Nanak in strictly mystical terms and manner, is all his own. There is no exact or near parallel to it in all mystical literature. It is a part of his grandiose Nature-mysticism.

Whereas the highest Region i.e. Sach Khand, is purely mystical in as much as Guru Nanak merely affirms its infinite existence and then testifies the colossal infinitude that surrounds the Formless one (Nirankar) who is the Godhead or the Nirgun Brah, the second region Gyan Khand (the Region of Knowledge) is expressive of cosmological vastness to which he says, "there is no end" (Nanak aní na aní).

What Marquette says of the Sufi stages of mystical ascent in respect of their supra-spatial genesis and reality also holds good in the case of these five Regions. He says:

These seven planes are not to be considered as localities in space but as grades of manifestations of the attributes in the manner of Plotinian hypostasis.

Absolute vastness and infinitude are the key-notes of Guru Nanak's cosmogonic description as found in these Regions of which, to say any thing "is as hard as steel." At another place in Japji, Guru Nanak says: "There is no end to His creation." About the cosmic causation, he says: "God
created all the worlds by uttering the word. From this word flowed out millions of rivers (of life)."34

The description of the five Regions as a mystical system or plan is perhaps Guru Nanak's deepest mystical study into the unfathomable mystery of the Godhead, revealed to him in moments of contemplative rapture. But what is typical of Guru Nanak's mystical realization is not expression or description of what he had realized, or the delineation of the five Regions, but the candid affirmation of his inability to express the inexpressible.35

While implying that there is no numbering of the heavens as seven or eighteen thousand as done by some Indian and Semitic religions, and saying instead that the heavens and the nether regions are countless,37 he goes further to affirm that even to say countless (asankh) would be fallacious.38

Despite this tendency in Guru Nanak to affirm the impossibility of expressing the ineffable Reality and even to caution the braggarts against making over-statements,39 his description of the Cosmo-mystical Regions is a literary reality and can be said to have some parallels in mystical literature, such as Dante's Divine Comedy, Milton's Paradise Lost, Iqbal's Jaividnāma and Bhai Vir Singh's Rānā Sūrat Singh. But it can be safely averred that whereas in other poets describing cosmo-mystical realms, there is more poetic flight than mystical insight, in Guru Nanak there is more of mystical insight than of poetic invention.

REFERENCES AND NOTES

1. SSWS, 61 (Sohila Ant).
2. Wadhans, AG, 567.
3. Literal meaning, "amazing, astonishing, surprising"; mystical meaning, rapture or transport or sense of wonder while enjoying the divine beauty of Nature; see MK, 645. and McLeod. Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion, pp. 173, 219, 221, 226.
4. This litany has the status of daily recitation in Sikh congregational prayer in the morning. cf. Taran Singh, Guru Nanak Chintan te Kalā (Panjabi), p. 127; cf. also MK, 69 and S.S. Kohli, Philosophy of Guru Nanak, p. 68.
5. Vār Āsā, Salok (Paurī, 3) AG, 464 (Quatrains disai quatrains suntai quatrains bhai sukh sār).

6. Ibid., AG 463 (Vismād nād vismād ved).

7. For the realistic meaning of Nature-mysticism, see supra Chap. 1.


14. "Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty, that is all,
Ye know on earth and all ye need to know."

(Ode on a Grecian Urn).


17. His favourite words were 'Wāh' 'bāl bāl' and 'Balībāri' (meaning 'wonderful'). See MK for their connotation. cf. Vār Āsā, Salok (Paurī 12), AG, 469, for the word 'Balībāri'.

18. This is the most sanctified and popular Name for God used in Sikhism since the time of Guru Nanak and other Gurus. At first it was a secret mystic Name disclosed by the Guru to the deserving Sikh only but later it was declared as 'manifest'. In the Adi Granth it was not used by the Gurus themselves, who used traditional Names of God such as Rām, Hari, Prabhū and so on, but by the Bhattīs whose panegyrics of the first five Gurus were included in the Adi Granth by Guru Arjan. After Bhattīs, Bālī Gurdās used this sacred Name for God in his Vārs and also by the authors of the Janam Sakhīs. See MK, 814, for 'Wāhī' and 'Wahīgūrū', cf. S.S. Kohli, Philosophy of Guru Nanak, p. 68.


23. Vār Mūjb, Paurī, 8, AG, 141. (Nanak such dātar sanākhat gudārī).
For Carlyle's view of Nature as divine symbol, see Sartor Resartus, p. 260. "The universe is but one vast symbol of God."


25. cf. My treatment of these Regions in Guru Nanak's Message in Japji,
pp. 58-67 (Chap. 'The Five Regions'), in which I have given my
original interpretation of the Saram Khand and the Karam Khand.
cf. also McLeod, Loc. cit. and Mohan Singh Uhero, Sikh Mysticism,
p. 12 f. n.
26. Op. cit., p. 221. For the phrase 'vertical evolution' see my work,
Op., cit., p. 60
27. Ibid., p. 223.
28. cf. respectively Influence of Islam on Indian Culture, p. 176; A
te Kala (Panjabi), 2nd ed., p. 89.
29. For Sufi Cosmic planes, see Marquette, Introduction to Comparative
Mysticism, pp. 175-76.
32. Jātṛ, 37. AG, 8. Words within commas are McLeod's translation of
33. Jātṛ, 24, AG, 5 (Ant na jāpaj kītā ākār).
34. Jātṛ, 16, AG, 3. (Kītā pasāo ekā kawāo. Tis te hoē lākh dāriyāo).
35. For instance, Jātṛ, 25, AG, 5. "His bounty is so much, it cannot
be said." (Bahutā karam likhia na jāi).
36. For the seven cosmic planes of the Sufis, see Encyclopaedia of Islam.
37. Jātṛ, 22, AG, 5. "Millions are the nether regions, millions are the
heavenly spheres." (Pātāla pātāl lākh agasā agas).
38. Jātṛ, 19, AG, 4. "It is folly even to say (the word) countless
(asankh)." (Asankh kabe sir bāh hō).
39. Jātṛ, 26, AG, 6. "If one bespeaks something out of limit or propriety,
he will certainly be dubbed as the most foolish and vulgar among
men." (Je ko ākhā bol vigār. Tā likhīat sir gavārā gavār).
40. These are more or less imaginative perceptions and flights of the
supernatural realms, described in poetical language.
Chapter V

HUKAM OR THE DIVINE ORDER

"By Hukam all is created (but) Hukam cannot be said," says Guru Nanak.¹ This is a highly mystical statement.

Hukam represents the absolute Divine power, which inevitably requires submission on the part of all the creation. It is in this context that Guru Nanak in the beginning of Japji² has not only posed the basic spiritual question facing man but has also laid down his solution to this 'spiritual problem' in the form of submission to Hukam or Will of God.

How to be truthful and how to break the wall of falsehood? Nanak says: By following the path of submission³ to the Will of God as ordained in our very being.

Submission to the Will of God is also a cardinal Islamic concept. The word Hukam being of Arabic origin⁴ has, in its religious context, an Islamic connotation, though Guru Nanak, as we shall see, has used this mystical concept in a more elaborate sense than its original Islamic meaning of 'submission' to the Divine Will or mashiat. In Islam, the word 'Islam' itself literally means 'submission' or 'the act of submission.'⁵

Guru Nanak has further developed his concept of Hukam to mean, a Divine Order⁶ or System (nizām) ordained for cosmogenical needs and processes of Divine Will, ultimately purporting to imply the Omnipotent Divinity itself. It is as if the Absolute Being has converted Himself into an operative or creative principle, which being representative of Divine Will and Power, has been
appropriately designated as *Hukam*. Nothing is outside the purview of this *Hukam*, as nothing is beyond the power or domain of God Almighty. Guru Nanak says: "Every body is under the sway of Divine order; no one is out of its domain."\(^7\)

Clarifying the meaning of the concept of *Hukam* as postulated by Guru Nanak, McLeod says:

*Hukam* has usually been translated as 'Will'. This is a literal translation, but it is unsuitable in the context of Guru Nanak's usage, for it fails to convey his precise meaning and is liable to be equated with the Islamic doctrine of the Will of God. In the thought of Guru Nanak, the *Hukam* signifies the divinely instituted and maintained principle governing the existence and movement of the Universe. It is a constant principle and to the extent to which it can be comprehended it functions according to a predictable pattern. This regularity and this consistency distinguish it from the Islamic concept.\(^8\)

This systematic and orderly principle of *Hukam*, as devised by Guru Nanak, is, accordingly, a broad-based and universally-operative concept and not any sporadic or particularized submission to divine Will. McLeod brings out this distinction in very lucid words: "In Islam the divine Will, if not actually capricious, is at least 'unpledged', whereas the *Hukam* of Guru Nanak's usage is definitely pledged and dependable."\(^9\) Again: "The divine Order, the *Hukam*, is accordingly an all-embracing principle, the sum total of all divinely-instituted laws; and it is a revelation of the nature of God."\(^10\)

Similarly, S.S. Kohli remarks: "This *Hukam* is an overall Order of the Lord. This Order is a set of commandments or a set of the Laws of God. These laws are true for all times and work in all the three fields i.e. physical, moral and spiritual."\(^11\)

*Hukam* thus considered, is no ordinary religious doctrine in Guru Nanak. It has in a deep mystical sense, a clear reference to the *divine mystery* itself. It is the very cornerstone of Sikh mysticism. "The concept of *Hukam*," says J.S. Grewal, "is basic to the thought of Guru Nanak."\(^12\)
Hukam is fundamentally denotive of the transcendence, infinitude and absoluteness of God, as Bhai Vir Singh, the famed Sikh divine, says: "All creatures are within measure, the Ordainer of the Hukam is measureless. As the creatures are bound in the limits of Time and Space their orders are accordingly limited. The True Being is beyond Time, Space and Causation and, thus, His Order is also absolute. The Hukam is identical, with the True Being (satya Sarūp) Himself."13 He has further explained Hukam to mean that "it is that eternal state of Divine consciousness from which the creation and preservation of the universe take place. This Hukam can be variously translated as Will, Law or Sabad (i.e. Logos) but whatever it is, it has no correspondence or relationship with the will, law, sabad or order of the ordinary human connotation.14"

In Guru Nanak, Hukam has also been called Bhānā, which term is nearer to the meaning of Hukam as conceived in Islam, i.e. the divine Will.15 The Word raza (or the Panjabi form rajā, as used by Guru Nanak) has also been synonymously used with Hukam but it has a slightly different meaning, in the sense of 'what pleases God'.16 Another Persian equivalent of Hukam, i.e Furmān, has also been frequently used by the Gurus.17

Mohan Singh Dewana, a mystic himself, includes Hukam Yogā among the Seven-fold-yogā of Sikh Mysticism conceived by him. He defines Hukam Yogā as: "Uniting with the Lord through acceptance of whatsoever happens under His Order-Will (hukam-razā)."18

"According to Sūfi teaching," says Subhān, "the entire creation belongs either to the Ālam-i-Amr, the World of Command or the Ālam-i-Khalg, the world of creation."19

Guru Nanak's concept of Hukam, in its highly developed meaning, seems to combine both these above-said Sūfi worlds and even goes beyond to the mystical realms of the inscrutable Divine mystery. The word Amr has also been used by Guru Nanak to denote Divine power and command: "True Your command (Amr), true Your court (dībān)."20
Guru Nanak's concept of *Hukam*, in the sense of submission and resignation (i.e. *Hukam-Razã-Amr-Bhãnã* complex) also implies the willing acceptance of suffering affliction (*dukh*), even martyrdom (*shahãdat* or *shahãdã*) for the sake of conformity to the Divine Will. The basic principle involved in this idea of supreme human sacrifice or martyrdom, for the sake of the Benevolent God (who is dreadful—in Islam the words used are *Qabãr* and *Jabãr*—only when there is utter defiance of His *Hukam*) is the all-saving mystic faith that all that God ordains or does is good and acceptable. This is not mere stoicism or *vairãg* (state of dispassion) but a positive, heroic feeling of living and dying absolutely within God. The willing acceptance of *Bhãnã* (Divine pleasure) is typically embodied in Guru Arjan's affirmative lines:

Sweet is Thy ordinance:

Nanak begs only for the wealth of thy Name.

Guru Nanak strongly inculcates the acceptance of all suffering out of love for the True Name:

Let there be hunger for the True Name, in our soul.
In that hunger or craving, let us bear all suffering.

He has laid down, as the greatest mystic principle of spiritual life, the dictum viz. to remember God is to live, to forget Him is to die. In his own words: "When I utter His Name, I live, when I forget it, I die." From this inexorable dependence upon God and His Name, stems the logicality of the postulate of *Hukam*.

Manifestation of *Hukam* in Guru Nanak's thought has thus many facets and implications, which are predominantly of a mystical nature. To him there is no alternative but to accept *Hukam-Razã*.

There is no other place of refuge accept you O, Lord.
Whatever happens is all your (sweet) Will.

The Absolute God necessarily works through his manifestatively-tangible principle of *Hukam*—this is his Divine-mystical arrangement:
The Lord of the Hukam directs the whole path with the help of His Hukam.
Nanak says, He the Disdainful, is ever in the state of bliss.\textsuperscript{27}

To understand this Hukam is to learn humility. One who understands or realizes Hukam cannot be vain. The Guru concludes in the same hymn:

Nanak, if one understands the Divine Order, then he will not utter (the words of) vanity or selfhood.

Elimination of selfhood (Haumai) is the foremost condition for the disciple (Sikh) to adopt and observe and this is possible only if he accepts the Hukam. In fact, according to Guru Nanak no Sikh becomes a sikh until and unless he accepts Hukam by shunning his love of self (haumai). Both cannot go together. If there is God's Hukam there is no human self and vice-versa. Human personality in Guru Nanak's view, can only develop, in the true sense, within the purview and operative acceptance of Hukam.

Hukam in its comprehensive conceptual meaning encompasses the whole gamut of divine manifestation in the form of cosmogonic creation and its organisational control and dispensation. Guru Nanak has explicitly referred to this all-pervading nature of Hukam in one of his exquisite hymns\textsuperscript{24}:

The true gain is rarely given to a man, only the perfect Guru can make this happen.
If one be Guru-oriented, he will understand Hukam and by accepting it will get immersed in it.
By Hukam this created universe is visible.
By Hukam, are (created) the heavens, the earth and the underworld and by Hukam these are placed in order.
By Hukam the mythical ox carries the earth on its head. By Hukam are (created) the air, the water and the space.
By Hukam the spirit lives in the house of māyā and by Hukam the universe is in play.
By Hukam the firmament has been spread.
By Hukam the oceans, the land and the three worlds are made.
By Hukam is the breath of life and the sustaining food; and by Hukam the world is visibly perceived.
By Hukam the ten avatars were created.
Besides these, countless categories of angels and demons were created.
One who accepts the Hukam, is honoured in God's portal and God
immerses such a man in His True abode.
By Hukam thirty six aeons passed (in chaos).
By Hukam the Siddhās and the ascetics attained contemplation.
Lord is the Master and all are under His control; those whom He
blesses, get salvation.

To sum up, the concept of Hukam has two levels on
which it is properly understood. On the Divine level it is
manifestation of Divine Omnipotence expressed in terms of
Divine Order or Will, while on the human level it is the
submissive acceptance and humble resignation to this
Inscrutable-Ineffable Divine providence. A necessary corre-
lation and synthesis is needed for the ultimate under-
standing of Hukam. But the Guru requires more than that.
He requires actual conformity in action and practice to this
basic spiritual principle. He says, as his final preaching:

He does what pleases Him—and who can question His doings?
That Lord who is the king of kings, is the Master; Nanak, let us
remain in his raza (Will).19

REFERENCES AND NOTES

1. Jāpī, 2, AG, 1.
2. After making the Credal Statement (Mūl-mantar) in the beginning
of Jāpī, Guru Nanak affirms the eternal nature of Godhead in a
Salok, after which in the first stanza (Paurī), he most cogently poses
the question of the true human goal in the spiritual context, after
rejecting the most prevalent means for the attainment of that goal.
Then he declares his solution to the problem.
3. Jāpī, 1, AG, 1. (Ku sachārā boīye kuī kūre tuī pāī. Hukam rajāī
chālnā Nanak īkhsā na)
Kohli, Outlines of Sikh Thought, p. 56; and G.S. Talib, Guru Nanak:
His Personality and Vision, p. 144. cf. also Kala Singh Bedi, Guru
Nanak Nirankār, Appendix 4, p. 114.
5. cf. Schuon, Understanding Islam, p. 15 and Encyclopaedia of Islam.
Grewal, Guru Nanak to Maharaja Ranjit Singh, p. 3, have translated
Hukam as Divine Order. G.S. Talib calls it Ordinance in the mystical
sense: Op cit. p. 144. n. cf. Kala Singh Bedi, Guru Nanak Nirankār,
Appendix 4, p. 114. He calls *Hukam*, Divine constitution (*ishavari vidbān*).


11. *Outlines of Sikh Thought*, p. 56.


20. *Vār Asā, Salok*, AG, 463. (*Sachā terā amr sachā dibān*).


25. *Loc. cit.* (*Ākhān jiwan visre mar jāon*).


29. *Jāpī, 27, AG*, 6. (Jo ṭīs bhāvāi soī karsi hukam na karnā jāī. So pāṭshāb sābā pāṭsāhib Nanak rabān rājāī*).
Chapter VI

THE CONCEPT OF NĀM

There is so much emphasis on Nām in the Ādi Granth and in Sikhism as a whole, that it can safely be averred that Guru Nanak's mysticism is the 'Mysticism of Nām. It is not only the chief instrument or method for the attainment of salvation, but also the paramount mystic ground upon which Guru Nanak's theological edifice stands.

A recent study of Guru Nanak affirms that "constant reflection upon the Divine Name, like that upon the Word, is the most competent and popular means in the mysticism of Guru Nanak."

Another notable writer on Sikhism remarks: "Three things stand out pre-eminently (in the message of Guru Nanak): The one True Lord, the Guru and the Name, Salvation lay in the Word of God and the Word could only be known under the Guru's instruction."

Nām is the 'spiritual discipline' that leads to ultimate Muktī or salvation; it is the 'Yogā of the Name' (or 'Nām Yoga'). Mohan Singh Ubboi calls it 'Nāma Simran Yogā' which he has defined as "unification of the seeker with God through a repetition of a Name or Names of Him." He further writes:

The repeated Utterance of the Names of God is the only approach available to us to contact Him, who is unknowable and invisible. A name is a pointer to certain qualities inherent and operant in the one named.....Recitation of His names and singing of His praises become more effective if executed in a congregation and performed with the accompaniment of music."
Nam, so far as it characterizes God and provides means or 'mystic discipline' for His attainment, is thus the most significant concept in Guru Nanak. "The Name of God is the immediate certainty of security, continuity, completeness, fearlessness, which together constitute the privileges of the status of full loving."  

Nam is not just mechanical, parrot-like repetition of a particular name of God, however exalted and sacred it may be; it is, in fact, "the realization of God's essence within the core of one's being: it is self-consciousness merging imperceptibly and effortlessly into the state of the Superconscious (Sahaj-Samādhī)." 19 It is, thus, the very principle of Divine Truth revealed in the inmost (mystical) self of a man. "The Name indeed is God's revelation through which He can be known." 10  

Guru Nanak himself did not derive the concept of Nam from the scriptures of earlier religions or their religious thought, but directly imbibed it in his own mystical experience as a most fundamental truth revealed to him. "Instead of drawing authority and inspiration," says A.C. Banerjee, "from any revealed scripture, he (Guru Nanak) depends upon his own mystical experience to explain the nature of truth and the 'true way' which leads to salvation."

Bhai Gurdas, who knew Guru Nanak from the closest spiritual quarters, says that Guru Nanak received directly from God Almighty who called him to His presence in the Sach Khand (the Highest Heaven), 12 two special gifts as divine Grace, viz. Nam and Gaṛībī (humility):

The venerable Guru was honoured in God's True Abode (Sach Khand) and received the priceless Name and Humility. 15

Etymologically derived from Sanskrit, the word Nam literally means 'to remember', 'to tend to', and 'to address to.' 14 The word Nam also belongs identically to Persian, with the same connotation. 15 In common usage it means 'a word constituting the distinctive designation of a person or a thing' and also 'spiritual nature or essence.' 16
In technical religious parlance, based on Gurbānī (i.e. Ādi Granth), "Nām is a spiritual principle which beginning with the quest of a seeker after God, and comprising the initial recitative process (Jāp), leads on to the ultimate union with God."17

The Name is not, however, a mere word or a group of letters; 'It is a vital force'.18 It aids immensely in the spiritual progress of a disciple. 'It aids the understanding of the Divine Reality. It enjoins self-analysis and self-control.'19

Sher Singh remarks that Nām is not mere reflection or meditation. It means the moulding of the whole personality. It affects all activities of our life.20 He even associates the principle of aesthetic perception with Nām: "In short, Nām is the sympathetic and aesthetic communion of man with man and environments. Love and aesthetic appreciation form its basis."21

Nām, according to Bhai Jodh Singh, denotes "a universal power which becoming immanent, infuses all sensient beings."22

Since the concept of Nām has infinite ramifications, it is nearly impossible to define Nām; it is as comprehensive and unlimited as God Himself who created Nām and Shabad (Word) with Guru as the manifest agent, in order to save and uplift the ignorant and māyā-engrossed humanity. In this sense, Nām is the fulfilment of the Divine Will as revealed and manifested in Guru Nanak's concept of Hukam.

The Name and the Word (i.e. Nām and Shabad) are most often used as synonyms in Guru Nanak's works (in fact, in all Ādi-Granth). It is hard to distinguish between them. McLeod says that whereas "the Word appears as the medium of communication", the Name appears "as the object of communication."23 Again: "Almost invariably Truth as mediated by the Guru is referred to as the Word, whereas Truth as received and mediated on by the believer, tends to be expressed in terms of the Name."24

J.S Grewal25 remarks while discussing the relative position of Nām and Shabad: "More clearly than the Name,
the Word is the vehicle of God's revelation:

"He has no form, colour or material sign;
He is revealed through the true Sabad."²⁵

Actually speaking, the Word is the manifest form of the Name. Word is something concrete and tangible, either spoken or written, in terms of meaningful language, while Name is conceptual, subject of contemplation and meditation. Both are the outer and the inner aspects of the same mystical divine Truth.

"The greatest thought", says a writer,²⁷ "in Guru Nanak's works is the concept of Nām, which is not mere utterance and repetition of a holy name, but is truthful actualization of living in the Name." "Nām", says Taran Singh, "is the sublimest image of God, by reciting which one can find Him. Nām is the meditation of God."²⁸

Recitation of Nām has many ways and forms, viz. reciting with tongue, reciting in the mind, unuttered, and reciting in the sub-conscious mind, which last is called ajapā-jāp or 'effortless recitation'. This is the highest form of meditation of the Name.²⁹ There comes an advanced stage when "the Name is uttered by every pore of the body."³⁰ Addressing the Siddhas, Guru Nanak says: "The Guru-faced one remembers God through every pore of his body."³¹

In Guru Nanak's own words, Nām has manifold religious manifestations specially in its soul-elevating and ethical aspects. To cite the relevant lines from japī, his best-known work³²:

1. "His Name is True". (Mul-Mantar).
2. "The True Lord with True Name". (Stanza 4).
3. "In the ambrosial early morning hours, ponder on the true Name and its greatness." (Stanza 5).
4. "By hearing the Name of God and His praise....." (Stanzas 8-11).
5. "Such is the (power of the) immaculate Name, if only one knows it in his heart of heart." (Stanzas 12-15).
6. "Through language is the Name and the Praise of God." (Stanza 19).
7. "There is no place where His Name is not." (Stanza 19).
8. "If the reason is corrupted by the force of sins, it can be cleaned by constant recitation of the Name." (Stanza 20).
9. "Great is the Lord, great His Name, all creation is His." (Stanza 21).
10. "Great is the Lord and lofty His abode; still more lofty is His Holy Name." (Stanza 24.)
11. "Those who remembered His Name, got their efforts rewarded." (Epilogue).

A few more examples from Guru Nanak's other compositions may be added:

The world is like fire. God's Name is soothing.

He alone is educated and a wise pundit, who followed the path of the Name.

Nanak, without True Name all honour is lost.

Half a grain is the sparrow's feed; it goes up to skies wailing. That sparrow is good and liked by the Lord, if it utters Lord, Lord.

Nanak, without True Name, no body's hunger is appeased.

O Creator! Thou art my benefactor—Only one gift I ask of thee, Give me thy Name.

Nanak, without True Name, all is futile.

Nanak, True Name's praise cannot be said.

Without Name, life is a curse.

Sorrow is poison, its remedy God's Name.

Renounce hypocrisy (O Brahman!). Recite the Name and you will be saved.

This Name is Formless One, by reciting Thy Name we will not go to hell.
Defaults and faults are assessed in Thine court. Without Name how can there be good conduct.45

...  ...  ...

In the house of Nanak, there is only Name.

Summing up we can say that Guru Nanak’s concept of Nām, in its cosmogenic and creational aspect, is synonymous with Hukam and thus represents the Divine purpose and scheme of things in putting forth the universe. All that is created is within the power of Nām. In Guru Nanak, this view is quite manifest:

Whatever He has created, is (the manifestation of) His Name.
There is no place or object, where His Name is not.47

Besides, Nām is the only and most efficacious source and agent for the redemption and salvation of the sinful and self-engrossed mankind.

References and Notes

2. I. Banerjree, Evolution of the Khalsa, p. 112. (words within the parentheses have been added).
5. Ibid., p. 6.
6. Ibid., p. 20.
7. Ibid., p. 15.
8. Ibid., p. 53.
15. MK. 522, In Bible, Nām has its equivalent in Word.
17. Bhai Vir Singh, Santīā Pothī I, p. 15; cf. Teja Singh, Essays in
Sikhism, p. 43 n. He compares this term to logos of Greek Mystical Philosophy.
18. S.S. Kohli, Philosophy of Guru Nanak, p. 68.
20. Philosophy of Sikhism, p. 287.
22. Gurmat Nirmai, p. 177.
24. Op. cit., p. 196. McLeod concludes thus: "The Name is the total expression of all that God is and this is Truth. Sati Nām—His Name is Truth, Meditate on this and you will be saved." (Loc. cit.).
25. Guru Nanak in History, p. 239.
30. S.S. Kohli, Outlines of Sikh Thought, p. 98.
31. Siddh Goshti, 27, AG, 941. (Gurmukh rom rom har dūvai).
33. Vār Malār, Salok, AG, 1291. (Ātā dusniyā khunak nām kbūdāī).
34. Ibid., AG, 1288. (So partā so pandit binā jīni kamāna nāo).
35. Ibid., AG, 1287. (Nanak sāche nām bin sīr kbūr pātā).
37. Loc. cit. (Nanak sāche nām bin ksiāi na laubbi bbūk).
38. Parbhātī, AG, 1329. (Kartā tū merā jajmān. Ik dakhnā bau hai pah māgau doh apnā nām).
39. Vār Mājā, AG, 142. (Nanak sāche nām bin sabbe tol vinās).
40. Ibid., AG 148. (Nanak sāche nām ki kēti puchhā puchh).
41. Ibid., AG 148. (Bin nāvī dhring vās phīt so ḍvīā).
42. Malār, AG, 1257. (Dūkkh mūhrā māran har nām).
43. Vār Āsā, AG, 471. (Chhodūle pākbāndā nām lāiyā jāi tarandā).
44. Ibid., AG 455. (Nāo terā nirankār hai, nāi lāiyā nārak nā jāiāi).
46. Guru Arjan, Bhairo, AG, 1136. (Nanak kai ghar kēval nām).
Chapter VII

THE MYSTIC PATH

The mystic process is to convert into action, what one has learnt of truth in his higher feeling and thought. It is not mere contemplation. It is, rather, a projection of the spiritual element inherent in man.

Sikh mysticism is specially rich in this synthesizing of inner and outer aspects of religion. It includes both the mystic ground and the mystic path as essential features of its highest development.

An eminent writer defining Sikh mysticism says:

(Sikh) Mysticism is the indispensable whole-man, whole-time adventure in identity, in the recovery (in purified, infinitely extended awareness) of the Absolute Unity of God's Person, which awareness is exclusive of all sense of duality, diversity, of every idea, even, which is non-God.¹

The mystic ground has thus to be correlated with the Mystic path. The human soul cries out for identity with the divine soul, as 'deep calls unto deep.'² The 'path' is as important as the goal itself because it provides a meeting-point between God as such and man as such.³

The process of self-discipline is called the 'way'. It is the Chinese 'Tao', the Buddhistic 'Dhyana' and the 'Tariqa' of the 'Sūfis'. In Sikh mysticism it is all-important because Sikhism means 'discipleship' or discipline itself.

The common mystic method, similar in the mystics of all races and all faiths and as systematized by Christian authors, following Greek philosophic thought, is as under:

1. The Purgative way.
2. The Illuminative.
3. The contemplative.

The first is purification of sensual propensities; the second is the enlightenment of consciousness; and the third denotes "the union between the mystic subject and the divine object of his quest."4

In order that human soul be rid of its impurities and evil propensities, a way of inner discipline has to be discovered and followed. The term Yoga is commonly used in Indian mysticism for such mystic discipline which may lead to union with the Supreme Being. Plato says:

There will always be evil in this nether world; but one effort is imperative; as quickly as possible to forsake this lower world for the higher. This evasion is achieved by assimilating oneself to God in the measure of the possible and assimilation is attained by becoming just and holy in the charity of the spirit.6

"The human mind," wherein such inner discipline has to take place "is the meeting place of the Nous and the Psyche, while the apex of the soul is in Nous, its lowest part is in Psyche, directed towards separation and objectivity."6

Knowledge of the Self, in the form of 'methodical cultivation' (a term used by William James to denote via-mystica), is a paramount necessity in order to reach and assimilate divine consciousness. As mentioned earlier, Yoga which has many variations and types, comes very handy as a way of spiritual discipline. "In India, training in mystical insight has been known from time immemorial under the name of Yoga. Yoga means the experimental union of the individual with the divine."8

Sikh mysticism has been variously named as Nām Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Shabad-Surat Yoga and Sahaj Yoga.9 A writer has gone even further to call it 'Sevenfold Yoga'.10 These terms to denote Guru Nanak's mystical path have been only recently discovered and applied to his way of realization; he himself did not adopt any form of Yoga from among the traditional types, to match his mystical teaching, though he adopted yogic terminology in order to clarify the true meaning underlying the concept of Yoga.
Guru Nanak did not need any traditional archetypes from Indian mysticism to fit in with his own original mystical realization, because he inculcated original ways and measures to attain the truth originally conceived.

An eminent scholar expatiating on Guru Nanak's originality of teaching and message, recently observed:

Guru Nanak was not a reformer. We know he was not a Hindu who appealed to the Hindu scriptures in order to reform Hindu society. We know he was not a Muslim trying to eradicate evils in Muslim society by appealing to the Quran. I do not find in his teachings any attempt at a reconciliation of Hinduism and Islam, any combination of existing patterns of beliefs to constitute a new and more pleasing pattern. In fact, he set both Hinduism and Islam aside to get to the religion itself. He was an originator, a founder.¹¹

Guru Nanak being a mystic, devised his original 'method' or 'path' of attaining Reality. A writer points out that Sikhism is not primarily a philosophical system.¹² Guru Nanak in his religious perception attached no value to "pedantic philosophy", as Teja Singh observes,¹³ and went direct to the mystical sources of religious impulse as well as to the true empirical ways of approach to truth.

Guru Nanak's path, in its final meaning and analysis, is the path of love and may be appropriately called Love Mysticism. As Love requires first purging of all that is anti-love and then adopting all that is conducive to love, Guru Nanak begins with restraint in the form of submission to the divine order or Hukam. These are the two basic principles simultaneously operative in Guru Nanak's mysticism.

Goethe says: "Thou shalt renounce, renounce. This is the eternal song which every hour hoarsely sings." About love, Fichte remarks: "Man can will nothing but what he loves, his love is the sole, and at the same time the infallible spring, of his volition and of all his life's striving and movement."¹⁵

Guru Angad (the second Sikh Guru) reveals this universal truth of purging followed by assimilation in cryptic language: "A thing will go into another, if the other is emptied of what is inside it."¹⁶ It implies that the inception
of God's reality in the human heart would depend upon the purging from it of all that is non-God.

Guru Nanak uses the apt metaphors of 'milk' and the 'utensil': "First wash the utensil and carefully purge it of all infected smell, then only think of pouring milk into it."\textsuperscript{17} The clear connotation of this statement would be to clean the mind before receiving God's Name into it.

Perhaps there is no clearer statement in Guru Nanak's works on the subject of determining the true 'path' that will lead to the realization of truth than the following \textit{Salok} in \textit{Āsā-di-Vār}:

Truth will be known if the True Lord \textit{lives} in the heart.
By removing the dirt of falsehood, it will wash all impurity from the body.
Truth will be known if one loves the Truth.
By hearing the Name, the mind becomes enthused and thus emancipated.
Truth will be known if one knows the true way of life.
Preparing the field of self, the seed of the creator is sown in it.
Truth will be known if one receives the true instruction;
And if one shows mercy to all living beings and is charitable to the needy.
Truth will be known if one stays at the sanctuary of the spirit.
And by getting instruction from the Guru, he lives in peace.
Truth is the remedy for all men who can wash out all evil with its help.
Nanak says, true are those who possess Truth in their hearts.\textsuperscript{18}

In Guru Nanak's mysticism, the place of the Guru is primal and paramount. One who has reached the goal, can show the path. The Guru is thus indispensable. Many profess to know the truth but few actually know it, because it is only through the grace of the Guru (\textit{Gur-prasād}) that God is realized.\textsuperscript{19}

The mystic path or discipline (\textit{Sādhanā}) which is totally dependent on the agency of the Guru, involves, thus, the certain need of the Guru and the Sabad which he mediates in his grace and charity, and then the insight which flows from his instruction leading ultimately to union with God. The highest mystical state is called \textit{Sabaj}, in which the
individual soul or self is absorbed into the all-embracing beatitude of divine presence.

But the Guru is not merely a path-finder or a guide in the ordinary sense. He is a Perfect Being and always reminds in his holy person, the ultimate goal eternally posited before man. This goal should never be lost sight of because the path is only an indication or a symbolical motivation. The mystic poet Ghalib says:

Our cherished goal is beyond the domain of comprehension.
Men of insight regard the Qibla (i.e. religious symbol) as only indicative of the ’Qibla’ (i.e. the goal).

The goal, according to Guru Nanak, is the mystical rapport with God. As a writer on Guru Nanak observes: "Mysticism of Guru Nanak strives to gain the direct realization of the oneness of all the things and ultimately to merge into the one Supreme Reality."32

References and Notes

1. Mohan Singh Uberoi, Sikh Mysticism, p. 43.
5. Ibid., Marquette, p. 118.
6. Ibid., p. 121. The Nous stands for 'spirit' and Psycho for 'mind'.
8. Loc. cit
10. Mohan Singh Uberoi, Sikh Mysticism, pp. 3, 4 and 15. According to Uberoi the Sevenfold Yoga of Sikh Mysticism comprises:
17. Sūbī, AG, 728.
18. Vār Āsā, Salok, AG, 468.
21. Diwān-i-Urdu : "Hai parv sarbad-ī-īdrak se apha masjud. Qiblā ko able nazar qiblā-numa kahle hain."
Chapter VIII

THE GURU AND SABAD

The Guru is fundamentally a mystic and the path he shows is the mystic path. 'Sikhism', it has been said, 'cannot be understood as a system of philosophy, but as a way of life, as a mystic rather than a metaphysical path.' The Guru keeps strictly to the fundamental aspects of life and truth leaving out the unnecessary details. This was specially true of Guru Nanak.

Three things stand out pre-eminently in Sikhism, as a writer has pointed out, viz. The one True Lord, the Guru, and the Name. And it may be added very pertinently that the Guru combines all the three in his mystic person. The True Lord and the Guru are, ultimately speaking, one spiritual entity and the Name flows out of this mystical fount as an act of grace.

Guru is the pivotal figure in Guru Nanak's mysticism. His whole teaching revolves round the Guru's mystical person. A very recent study has shown that 'Even in Guru Nanak's time, a mystical and impersonal character was attached to the Guruship. The circumstances connected with the nomination of Guru Angad as his successor brought into clear prominence the idea that the Guru constituted a single personality, succession implying only a change of the mortal image but not of the spirit.' This masterly and final act of Guru Nanak's mystical transfiguration, in the form of a perpetuated Guruship, has been called the 'key-event' of his life.

The concept of the Guru is not merely a theoretical one,
but forms an active, dynamic principle which has worked effectively for five centuries in the development of Sikh mysticism and theism. Guru Nanak himself in his own person, epitomized the whole concept of the Guru. This active principle may be compared to the "catholic doctrine of the church as Christ's Mystical Body, perpetually guided by the Holy Spirit."6 Guru Granth and the Panth Khalsa ultimately assumed the pontifical role Guru Nanak had entrusted to his successor, Guru Angad and the succeeding eight Gurus.7

Defining the meaning of the term Guru, as Guru Nanak conceived it and then personified it himself, McLeod so aptly remarks:

For Nanak the Guru was the voice of God within the human heart, but with his own coming the function passed to the man himself. The function was vested in a particular man, Nanak, who by means of his own exalted perception was qualified to instruct others. It was in this light that his followers understood his life and teachings and appended the title Guru to his name.6

The role of the Guru in Sikhism is sufficiently akin to that of Murshad and Pir in Sufism. Without a perfect and personal meditation, spiritual dissemination is not possible. Tara Chand says: "Like all Sufis, Nanak taught that in the Soul's Journey towards God it was necessary to be guided by a Guru."9

The Guru's role and function, being of utmost difficulty and hazard, have been described in the mystic phrase, "to bear the unbearable."10 Not all, but very few could bear this prophetic burden. Guru Nanak himself put his closest disciples to the hardest possible test in order to judge their spiritual mettle, because Guruship did not go abegging; it had to be earned with sweat and blood. A Sikh writer says: "The Guru, in whom the flame of God burnt at its brightest and who was no worldling, decided to pass his sons over in the matter of succession to him. He did not wish to make the Divine Ministry a hereditary office, but must confer it on him who by devotion and purity, would prove the fittest."11
This highest example and ideal set forth by Guru Nanak and his successor-Gurus became the solid spiritual bed-rock for the Sikhs in succeeding generations of trial and strife to stand upon, and history shows that the fittest among them gladly met the challenge of the gruesome trials by shedding their blood in courageous martyrdom. In matters of spirit, merit and quality, count not favour and kinship. Divine Grace dawns only on those who deserve. This is what Guru Nanak as Guru taught in practice as well as preaching.\textsuperscript{12}

A brief discussion about the origin and tradition of the term Guru\textsuperscript{13} may be useful for the understanding of the stages of development through which this concept must have passed before it reached the final meaning in Guru Nanak's thought.

The term Guru has been in vogue since time immemorial. In ancient India the Guru was originally a school teacher. Max Weber says:

These ancient cultivated Vedic gurus of whom the law books still speak, were employed as house chaplains by kings and nobles and as tutors of their sons.\textsuperscript{14}

The term, however, developed into its present meaning of spiritual ministership in early medieval times. The same author further remarks:

The place of the Guru with respect to the believers was, in general, most widely extended in the Hindu community since the Brahmanical restoration. The position of the Guru was modeled after the original absolute authority of the distinguished teacher of the Vedas (guru) over the scholar (brahmacharin).\textsuperscript{15}

Basically a school teacher, the Guru gradually assumed the role of a spiritual preceptor, specially with the dominance of the devotional impulse as a form of worship assigned to the Bhakti Movement by Ramanuja in the South and Ramanand in the North. McLeod writes:

The significance of the Guru in the bhakti the tradition is well known...within this tradition the ancient respect for one's spiritual teacher had been magnified to the point where the guru had become an object of devotion and his voice accepted as the veritable voice of God.\textsuperscript{16}
The veneration for the teacher or the master was equally strong in the Buddhist tantric tradition and the Nath-Yogi cult. But the concept of the Guru, as McLeod suggests, received major modification in the Sant tradition to which Guru Nanak belonged. The new meaning attached to this term came to imply that "the Guru or Satguru represented the inner voice, the mystical movement of God in the inmost recesses of the human soul. The Guru remains the vital link, the essential mediator of divine Truth, but no longer a human link."

The Guru, in this context, may be said to have acquired such recondite mystical authority that, as in the case of Kabir, Guru Nanak did not have the need for a human Guru and received direct dispensation from the Divine source. The function and authority of the Guru was, thus, so much apotheosized that he became not only an object of worship but an inevitable mediator between God and man. He actually became the absolute saviour of humanity.

Having been identified with Sabad or logos, the Guru became the virtual God of the universe. "The Guru accordingly is God; the Guru is the voice of God; and the Guru is the Word, the Truth of God."

In this sense of Guru-God-identification, Guru Nanak has often been equated with God in the mystical connotation of one who as Sabad (Word) totally identifies with the Divine reality immanent in the universe. Guru Arjan says:

Guru Nanak is God Himself known as Nanak.

Again:

Guru Nanak is the embodiment of God.

This is a clear proof of the fact that according to Guru Nanak, the Guru was no human being but God Himself made manifest in Sabad and that in Sabad alone could God or Guru be identified or realized and from no other source could He be known. Thus, the Sikh Gurus were 'divine beings' whose human form was no corporeality but divine
manifestation and in this sense can they be really understood, because their true reality which is Sabad or Logos was ultimately restored and eternally fixed in the form of Guru Granth which is another name for revealed Sabad.\textsuperscript{22}

This permanent metamorphosis of the Guru into Sabad also interposes another important implication that besides Guru Nanak who mystically transformed himself into nine successor-Gurus and ultimately into the form of Guru Granth Sahib, there can be no other human Guru in the same sense or position that Guru Nanak and the Sabad are called Guru and that the later innovations of establishing cults\textsuperscript{23} around some 'living' or 'deh-dhāri' (corporeal) gurus are, according to Guru Nanak's teaching, quite untenable. This point constitutes and has been historically established to be an important cardinal belief in Sikhism.\textsuperscript{24}

In Sikhism which is 'all mysticism',\textsuperscript{25} the purely mystical role of the Guru invariably works through the medium of Sabad which is not ordinary language or speech, but a revealed Word, coming directly from God, through the eternally-appointed Guru, in the form of Guru Nanak, his nine incarnations and his spoken word called Sabad and Gurbānī. No other Guru possesses this exalted authority reserved for Guru Nanak and his Sabad and hence the strict adherence in Sikhism to the worship of Guru Granth along with the rejection of all further 'living' Guruship or Gurudom which at best can be a cheap hero-worship or a superstitious worship of a self-deceiving coterie.

The divine dispensation of the Guru having emanated from God Himself in the form of Sabad (revealed Word) or Brāhm Gyān (esoteric knowledge) gradually evolved into a tangible, effective personality of Guru Nanak which in the historical and social context, proliferated into Sādh-Sangat, and a continuous Guruship in the form of Guru Granth and later into a developed religious society called Khalsa or Panth.\textsuperscript{26} All this was a great mystical principle come true as a historical truth in due course of time. Undoubtedly the Guru's role was the key-role in the phenomenal development of Sikhism into a Sikh Nation.
Bearing this all-important truth in mind, a modern writer observes that in Sikhism "the greatest emphasis is laid on the role of the Guru and on the disciple's right approach to the Guru. There is only one Guru viz. God." 27

Writing about the place of Guru in Sikhism, and calling him a definite spiritual model, Teja Singh highlights the personality of the Guru in the following words:

The personality of the Guru is at all times operative in the career of the disciple, commanding his whole being and shaping his life to its diviner issues. Without such a personality, there would be no cohesion, no direction in the moral forces of society and in spite of a thousand kinds of knowledge, there would still be utter darkness. 28

In the final analysis about the greatest importance attached to the position of the Guru in Sikhism, it can safely be averred that all spiritual authority, all institutional strength and all temporal prowess that Sikhism acquired in the two centuries after the religious pontification of the ten Gurus (which was actually one-Guruship), emanated from one mystical source named Guru Nanak. J.S. Grewal observes in this context:

If we were to choose one key-idea which lends unity to all these developments (that Sikhism came to acquire in history) it is surely the concept of the Guru which at once reconciled the uniqueness of Guru Nanak's position to the authority vested in his successors through that office, and which, at a different level, brought the bānī and the panth into parallel prominence with the personal Guru. 29

Reverting to the meaning of the Sabad in its original regenerative role of saving the seething humanity, we must first make distinction between the two vital concepts of Nām and Sabad, before we take cognizance of Sabad as conceived and posited by Guru Nanak in his works.

Basically speaking, Nām and Sabad are 'interchangeable' terms, as J.S. Grewal suggests 30 but whereas Nām is purely a numinous and mystical term with ineffable connotations like Hukam, Sabad is a more tangible and cognisable term, in the sense that Sabad is something revealed or made manifest in order to kindle the light of true knowledge in
the Human mind, because knowledge is emancipation, according to vedanta mysticism.\textsuperscript{31}

J.S. Grewal making a significant study of this issue, says:

To make a categorical distinction between the Word and the Name is not easy but the Name appears to refer to the object of communication and the word appears to refer to the medium of communication. The Word therefore, embraces all that embraces God's nature, the laws governing the universe as well as the inner mystical experience.\textsuperscript{32}

Sabad, as a medium of communication (in humanly comprehensible language and thought which implies articulation) between God and man, is probably the only understandable link that binds the two unequal categories—(i.e. the spiritual and the corporeal) which Sūfis call Latāfāt and Kasāfāt.\textsuperscript{33} To quote McLeod again: "God Himself is, in His fullness, a mystery far exceeding the comprehension of man but in His Word He expresses Himself in terms which may be understood and followed."\textsuperscript{34}

The basic and essential character of Sabad may be judged from the fact that the religious foundation of Sikhism was laid on two things, as Teja Singh points out, viz. the holy Word (sabad) and the organized Fellowship (Sangat).\textsuperscript{35} This Fellowship was originally congregation or Sangat but when it was later developed and its strength multiplied, it came to be known as Panth Khalsa i.e. Sikh nation. So Sabad is the most vital principle in Sikhism (as revealed and personified in the Guru), which in its disseminal expansion created great impact on the society around and ultimately fructified into a theistic Brotherhood known as Khalsa (the pure) in the hands of Guru Gobind Singh.

It would, therefore, be useful to study the most important mystical aspects of Sabad as postulated by Guru Nanak.

1. Sabad is the supratemporal, supraspatial, transcedental reality of Godhead, called Sunn-Sabad (the Void-logos) by Guru Nanak.\textsuperscript{36} The Uncreate, Unmanifest Sabad is not only beyond all categories of being and not-being, but eternally immanent in all that is created and manifested. It
is thus extremely paradoxical like the term Nām which is Sat as well as Krit (i.e. Nīt-Eternal, as well as Anīt-ephemeral). Thus it is that all those who are devoted to or absorbed in Sabad are perfect transcendent beings (bairāgī).

2. Sabad is knowable or perceivable only in human consciousness (surat) and nowhere else. Hence the well-known concept of Sabad-Surat so commonly used to denote Sikh Yoga or Sikh mysticism. Guru Nanak categorically declares in Siddh-Gosht:

As the lotus flower
Does not drown in the pool
As the duck swims,
So with the mind, intent
Upon the word of the Guru,
One can safely cross
The great sea of life.
Repeating the Holy Name.49

Again, answering the question posed by the Siddhās as to who was his Guru, Guru Nanak said:

Sabad is my Guru and the continuity of attention is the disciple.

Here Guru Nanak implies that as Guru himself he was Sabad and this Sabad was his Guru in the sense of being a mystical principle revealed to him by God who was the Primal Guru.40

3. Sabad is the only saviour or saving factor in the universe. No body ever became God-conscious unless the Sabad or Logos quickened his consciousness. This may mean a mystical transformation inside the heart and not an outward mechanical action or intellectual understanding. Guru Nanak says:

A Brahman may read the religious text thrice a day and also discuss its grammar.
(But) without Guru's Sabad no one can ever be saved and without God's Nām the man will die distraught.41

The outward contact with the Guru or ritualistic uttering of the Sabad or Nām cannot be effective, as they cut no
ground in the spirit itself, where alone the ingress of the
divine principle can take place. This is how Guru Amar Dass
(the third Guru) clarifies this point:

All the people in the world turn up to see the Guru. But by mere
seeing they cannot be saved unless they ponder over the Sabad.
Their egoistic impurity cannot be removed unless they get to love
the Nām.  

"Without virtuous action", says Guru Nanak, "no one can
worship God." And, how can virtuous action or moral
character be acquired? The Guru clearly formulates:

None ever acquired high character without (acquiring) the Word
(Sabad). 

In another lucid statement, the Guru avers:

Why should we wander when it is Truth that ennobles and purifies?
Without true Sabad there is no salvation. 

To take one more example out of many that can be
cited:

To have one's mind firmly engrossed in the Sabad is the
quintessence of all virtues. 

4. Sabad is often equated with Anhad Sabad in Ādi
Granth, but actually these are separate terms and cannot be
used for each other. This wider use of the word Sabad can
be linked with its origin from the Nāth source, through Sant
channels, as McLeod suggests. Whereas anhad sabad is
purely a mystical experience relating to the hearing of the
'soundless sound' or 'unstruck music', the Sabad itself is
the revealed word made manifest through the Guru, who
is basically an embodiment of the Divine Truth or God
Himself mystically metamorphosed into human agency.
Inversely speaking, God is manifest only in Sabad, as Guru
Nanak says:

He has neither form, colour nor material sign, but He is revealed
through the true word (Sabad). 

Guru Nanak has the highest word of praise for the man
who is immersed in the Sabad which is the greatest spiritual
principle in the whole universe:

Nanak is ever full of praise for those who were absorbed in one Sabad.50

5. Only the Guru is given the divine power to reveal or create the Sabad in human language for the benefit of humanity, for which Guru Nanak has used the metaphor of 'minting the Word'. Just as true or intrinsic coins are minted by the royal authority only and not by any counterfeit means, so the Guru is the only Perfect Being on earth who can vouchsafe the Sabad, with the divine grace at his back. There is however, a definite spiritual-ethical criterion of human perfection as a precondition for deserving the incidence of Sabad-bestowing Grace. Guru Nanak in the last Stanza of Japji says:

Let continence be the (goldsmith's) workshop and patience be the goldsmith.
Let reason be the anvil and knowledge be the instrument.
Let fear be the bellows and penance be the fire.
Let love be the utensil in which the holy nectar be poured.
In this manner, the Guru's Word (Sabad) can be minted in the true mint.
Those who are blessed in His eyes, win His favour. Nanak, it is only Divine Grace that saves man.

The Sabad is thus closely integrated with idea of the Divine Grace.

REFERENCES AND NOTES

2. cf. I. Banerjee, Evolution of the Khalsa, p. 147.
3. Ibid., p. 112.
6. Duncan Greenlees, Gospel of Guru Granth Sahib, p. CLXVII.

13. For literal meaning see Bhai Vir Singh, *Santhia Pothi* I, 31. Derived from Sanskrit roots, the word Guru implies 'the bestower of Sabad', person of spiritual importance (guruatk), and 'one who dispels darkness with light'. Hence the prevalent meaning of 'preceptor' and 'the giver of Gur-mantra' (the secret, mystical formula). cf. also *MK.*, 311, and Rattan Singh Jaggi, *Guru Nanak di Vichardhara*, p. 320.


19. *Ibid.*, p. 199. The Writer refers to *Siddh Gosti*, 43. AG, 942 and to *Bilaval*, 3, 795 to prove his point that since God is word and Guru is also word, there is virtual identification between them, as far as the universe is concerned. For Logos, see Marquette, *Introduction to Comparative Mysticism*, p. 146.

20. See Bhai Vir Singh, *Santhia Pothi*, I, 32. These lines are from Ragas Gond and Basant respectively. cf. Bhai Gurdas: "Guru Nanak Dev is Pährbrâm (Godhead) and the Perfect God." *Vâr*, 13, 25. (Pährbrâm pûran brâhm Gur Nanak dev).

21. For discussion of this point, see *Supra*, Chap. IV. (*Guru Nanak: The Mystic*). cf. also Bhai Gurdas: *Vâr*, 32, 2. "The image of the Guru is the Sabad of the Guru which is equally acceptable to the Sikhs and the Sangat" (Gur mûral gur sâbad bai sâdh sangat sansâr parvâna).

22. In 1708 A.D. the tenth and the last human Guru (Guru Gobind Singh) at the time of his passing away in the physical sense at Nanded (Sri Hazur Sahib) relegated the role of the Guru for all time to Guru Granth. See J.S. Grewal and S.S. Bal, *Guru Gobind Singh*, p. 156.

23. Such as *Namdhari, Radhâswâmi* and *Nirankâri* sects. For detailed information see Teja Singh, *Essays in Sikhsim*, p. 120 ff.


29. Guru Nanak in History, p. 313. The words within the parentheses have been added (not being in the original quotation) in order to complete the sense of the text.

30. Ibid., p. 238.

31. cf. Paul Deussen, Outline of the Vedanta, p. 40. "From knowledge comes emancipation." cf. also Guru Nanak's special emphasis on gyān (i.e. divine knowledge). Vār Asū, Salok, AG, 469. "As the pitcher holds water and without water it cannot be made, so the mind is contained by gyān and without Guru, gyān is not possible." This pithy statement is typically mystical.


33. cf. Ghalib: "The Subtlety cannot manifest itself without corporeality" (Lātāfai be kasāfai jālwā pāidā kar nahi sakrī). Diwān-i-Urdu.


35. Essays in Sikhism, p. 56. cf. Bhai Gurdas, Vār 1, 42. "Without Guru's Word (Bāṇī) and Fellowship (sangat) there is no other basis." This Guru Nanak said in reply to the Siddhas at Achal Vatala, when during discussion, they asked him to show some miracle in support of his claim for spiritual authority.


37. Ibid., 59, AG, 944. "That Sabad lives eternally (as something) invisible: wherever we see, it is there." (Su sabad hau nirantar vās alakbang jeb dekō bīj so).


40. cf. Sodhā, AG, 12 SSWS, 61, "Six the systems, Six their teachers and Six their different teachings: The Lord (Guru) of them all is the One Lord."

41. Bhairo, AG, 1127.

42. Vār Wadhans M. 3, AG, 594.

43. Japī, 21, AG, 4 (Vin gun kī hagat nā boe).

44. Vār Malār, 16, AG, 1285 (Bin sabade aṁbat nā kinī bītā).

45. Siddh Gosht, 2 AG, 938 (Kīā bhanīa sāch sūchā boe. Sāch Sabad bin mukt nā boe).

46. Ramkali, AG, 908. (Manuā asītār sabade rātā ebā karnī sārī).

47. Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion, p. 191. For the meaning of Anbad Sabad, See MK., 43.


50. Ramkali, AG, 879 (Nanak tin ke sad balhārī jīn ek sabad liv lāī).
Chapter IX

GRACE AND FREE WILL

The question of inter-relationship between 'divine grace' and 'free will' (Jabr and Ikhtiyār of Sufi mysticism) is indeed baffling. The controversy as to which of these two is relatively more important and determinative in the matter of human salvation, has been raging among theologians of all the great world religions since time immemorial.

According to Guru Nanak, however, 'grace' (which has been expressed in the Adi Granth by various terms such as nadar, kirpā, mehar, karam, prasād, bakhshīsh, raham, taras, bakhsbindgi, anugreb, bhānā, dāt, and so on)¹ is the determinant factor which 'must decide the issue.'²

In fact, Guru Nanak has laid so much emphasis on the imperative need of free will as well as human initiative and action (Karma)³ that sometimes one is liable to underrate the importance of naDar-karam (grace), but Guru Nanak has resolved the issue by clearly stating in Japji that by good actions in the previous births one gets human life and by grace one attains salvation.⁴

This mystical solution of the problem offered by the Guru provides a clear reference in itself to the dual quality of human nature which has both immediate and ultimate areas of operation and contact with divine Reality. Man must immediately act as best as he can (which is the essence of all karma i.e. to act selflessly and without caring for the result)⁵ but ultimately speaking he must wait for and depend upon the divine 'favour' and 'choice'⁶ i.e. for the grace that saves and liberates human beings irrespective of their merits.
in action and free will. Though grace can be and is often linked with meritorious and virtuous action, yet in ultimate analysis grace is transcendental and absolute and not dependent on any human prerequisites.\(^7\)

The concept of nadar in Guru Nanak is closely interlinked (in fact, it is coequal) with the concept of Hukam and is thus symbolic of divine mystery and, as J.S. Grewal says, "God's inscrutable omnipotence".\(^8\) Guru Nanak has said that "God's Bounty is as great as He Himself is"\(^9\) which means that the Divine Being, His Hukam and His grace (which is another expression for His Bounty) are almost synonymous terms. The Guru again remarks that "those who receive His gracious nadar, are on the right path."\(^10\) J.S. Grewal cites another example for the absolute nature of nadar, reflecting as it does the Absoluteness of God and His Hukam:

Through his dayā a mere heron is transformed into a swan.\(^11\)

If God is karan-karan (i.e. Absolute Creator or the Primal Cause of all creation), then His nadar is also absolutely absolute.\(^12\) In this matter Guru Nanak's thought is quite positive and non-compromising, inasmuch as he says that if God chooses to punish somebody by granting him everlasting sorrow and hunger, it is still His Bounty and Favour.\(^13\) An exactly similar example occurs in Guru Nanak with regard to Divine order (Hukam):

By Divine order some are blessed and favoured, while others are eternally discarded.\(^14\)

A man's effort is utterly meaningless and futile if God does not favour him with His nadar. Guru Nanak declares:

Nanak, those who are deprived of His Grace can neither resort to charity nor devote to the Name.\(^15\)

It is, thus, evident that Nadar and Hukam are, like Nam and Sabad, purely mystical concepts, because no human reason or rationality can possibly be brought forward and advanced to their explanation and justification. There are hundreds of such expressions in Guru Nanak and the other
Gurus and Bhagats included in the Ādi Granth which clearly highlight the Absoluteness and Omnipotence of God. To cite a brilliant passage from Guru Nanak:

He makes tigers, hawks and other birds of prey (charagās and kubis) to eat grass:
While those who eat grass are made to eat flesh; this is the way of His Will.
He may show mounds of earth in the rivers and convert a desert into an ocean.
He may exalt a worm into kingship and raze to ashes a great army. All created beings keep alive by breathing but if He wants He can keep them alive without breathing.
Nanak says, just as it pleases the True Lord, He sustains all accordingly.16

Again:

Every body is under His care and He keeps them all busy within His sight.
He Himself gives them honourable positions and causes them to do (virtuous) acts.
He is the greatest Lord who created His vast universe and keeps all the creatures.
If He looks askance, the kings get ruined;
And if they beg for alms, they get not anything.17

Since the one God has no second or rival and since none exists beside Him and all His creation is just His manifestation or emanation, there can be no doubt or question about His Absoluteness and Almightyness. His grace and His anger make all the difference to the created beings; the former is enough to save while the latter is sure to lead to perdition. There is no other course or alternative left for man but to obey and understand His Hukam (bukam manai or bukam bujhai) and to seek His nadar, bhāna and karam (i.e. His Grace). All else is futile. Guru Nanak is extremely sanguine on this point:

There is one Throne and one King.
He is the Disdainful Lord, pervading everywhere.
The whole universe is His creation.
He is the One Creator (Ekankār), the Unknowable, Absolute one.18
J.S. Grewal has clinched the issue of 'grace' vis-a-vis 'free will' in very lucid words:

There is a point beyond which human understanding cannot proceed and there, it is the bestowing or withholding of God's grace that decides the issue of salvation. Thus Guru Nanak's idea of God's grace repudiates all presumption to salvation by mere effort.19

The Divine Grace comes to man if he is totally dedicated and single-mindedly devoted, in heart and soul, to the Lord of the Grace. Guru Nanak says:

The grace of the master is on those who meditated on Him with single mind and they have found favour in His heart.20

The whole course of man's effort and initiative, in the true sense, is not directed towards any other goal but to please the Lord and deserve His grace. This is the true meaning that lies at the source of all human worship and meditation, as well as all action and will.

The perfect man (for which the most appropriate metaphor of the Subāgan i.e. 'faithful bride'21 is commonly used in the Sikh parlance is one whom the Master (Khasam) has chosen for His favour. Guru Nanak says:

That day is blessed when the Divine Husband looks upon the human bride with favour and she thus acquires all the treasures (in the world).

That bride is the 'accepted one' (subāgan) who is loved by her husband; Nanak says, she is the 'chosen lady'.22

All human action, in this meaning of the total dependence upon divine grace, is, thus, dedicative and transformative and not becoming in itself any cherished goal, always remains real as a means to the end. Aldous Huxley says:

Deliverance is out of time into eternity, and is achieved by obedience and docility to the eternal Nature of Things. We have been given free will, in order that we may will our self-will out of existence and so come to live continuously in a 'state of grace'. All our actions must be directed in the last analysis, to make ourselves passive in relation to the activity and the being of divine Reality.23
Mystically speaking, the free will itself has to be converted and trained into a controlled and subservient will, so that it does not remain refractory and obtrusive. In technical language, it should become *voluntas communis* (i.e. a will that is shared and is the will common to man and God) and not *voluntas propria* which is acquisitive and thus the root of all sin.24 The will is not to be negated but to be adjusted so that it becomes acceptable to grace. Actually both are co-existent on the human level, though grace is ultimately speaking absolute, as discussed earlier, St. Bernard says: "Grace is necessary to salvation, free will equally so—but grace in order to give salvation, free will in order to receive it."25

Emphasising the importance of will at human level, William Law remarks:26

The will is that which has all power; it makes heaven and it makes hell; for there is no hell but where the will of the creatures is turned from God, nor any heaven but where the will of the creature worketh with God.

Similarly Eckhart27 observes:

God expects but one thing of you, and that is that you should come out of yourself in so far as you are a created being and let God be God in you.

The so-called 'free-will' (it is not so free a will as is often thought)28 and the human effort as such, have a useful role to play in making it possible for the divine grace to 'act' or 'come into play'. As Marquette remarks, the idea of grace does not preclude the human aspiration to gain salvation as it is ingrained in every heart. But he further remarks that Hindu mysticism does not accept the 'restrictive Calvinistic idea of predetermination', because man must be lifted above individual limitations 'by a spark from the Infinite.29

"The supreme perfection," says St. Teresa, "... consists in reducing our will to such conformity to that of God that as soon as we understand that a thing is willed by Him, we attach ourselves with all our will power; finally to receive with an equal delight that which is sweet and that which
is bitter."

The concept of Grace (Nadar) ultimately merges into the concept of Hukam, in Guru Nanak's thought, with the probable distinction that whereas Nadar operates purely on the divine level, and is thus inscrutable, Hukam has its operative relevance on the human level and is thus understandable. Nadar is all prayer, while Hukam is all obedience. Guru Nanak holds that mortals are helpless before the absolute power of Hukam and should only seek divine grace (which Sufis call Fazle as compared to human effort which is connected with Adl i.e. judgement). He says:

All come into being through Hukam and do whatever Hukam ordains.

By Hukam they are subject to death and by Hukam they can merge into Truth.

Nanak, whatever pleases God, that happens and these created beings have no power whatsoever.

Only dedicated effort is justifiable, because self-willed effort goes waste. Guru Nanak says that 'All make their full effort but what God ordains only that happens.'

Grace has also a wider meaning, as a modern Sikh writer suggests and in this sense, it is 'for every one,' which implies that all human beings are equal and their ultimate salvation is the result of a creating and saving divine grace. The same writer defining grace says, "It is perpetual inspiration..."

In Guru Nanak the idea of divine grace is also applicable to the 'grace of the Guru.' It occurs in the very first Credal statement (Mūl-Maniār) enunciated by Guru Nanak, in the form of Gur-prasād which means that God can only be known or realized 'with the grace of the Guru'. God saves the universe through the agency of the Saviour—Guru and since God and Guru are one, it is all Divine Grace. The Guru is God Himself become manifest to the Universe. He is the spiritually and humanly operative aspect of Godhead. Gopal Singh says:

Thus identifying the Guru with the only eternal verity which is God, whose essence within us is the soul, Sikhism has made the laws
of God and Soul universally applicable and valid. Redemption is for every one who awakens his within. The Guru, like the God, is for every one, every age and every clime.\(^7\)

Guru Nanak has devoted one full hymn to expressing the saving kindness and grace of the Guru which is indispensable:

- If sat-Guru is kind, then faith is complete.
- If sat-Guru is kind, there is no repentence.
- If sat-Guru is kind, no sorrow is felt.
- If sat-Guru is kind, divine love is tasted.
- If sat-Guru is kind, there is no fear of death.
- If sat-Guru is kind, there is eternal bliss.
- If sat-Guru is kind, we obtain all precious things.
- If sat-Guru is kind, we get merged into Truth.\(^8\)

To sum up, the Divine grace and the Guru's grace (which are actually one and the same) are given to the 'blessed' soul in mystical experience as a beautiful gift of inspiration, with which the life of such a recipient and experienc soul is all transformed and become at once holy and sublime.

Mohan Singh Uberoi writes:

The Mystic after his mystic experiences returns to life much richer, much more powerful, much more effectively co-operative, much more generous; liberal, much more loving-serving and much more sympathetic and knowing.\(^9\)

REFERENCES AND NOTES


2. McLeod, \textit{Loc. cit.}

3. The more typical word used by the Sikh Gurus for \textit{karma} is \textit{karni}. cf. e.g. Sārang (Vār M. 4) Guru Nanak, \textit{Sālok}, AG, 1238; Siri. AG, 25; Vār Mājbu. 7, AG. 141. and \textit{Vār Mājbu}. 12, AG, 143. cf. The imperative need for human action in order to deserve Grace, Paul Brunton, \textit{Inner Reality}, pp. 56, 164.

4. \textit{Japji}, 4, AG, 2 "By actions one gets human body and by grace finds the way to salvation." (\textit{Karmi avai kapra nadari mokh duar}).
5. cf. Guru Arjan, Gauri Sukhmani, 9, AG, 274. (Karam karat bovai nebkarm. Tis balsar kā nirmal dharam). cf. The great emphasis
on selfless and dedicated action in Gita as discussed by Paul
Brunton, Inner Reality, p. 182.
7. cf. Sirī, AG, 61. "If we get His grace, we can find Him; with our
own effort we cannot know Him." (Karam mīlai ta pātai apnā lata
jāī). See also Loc. cit., "There is no one true or false, only those
whom you like are good." (Jo tuddh bhāve se bhale khotā kharā
na koe).
p. 256.
11. Loc. cit. with reference to Basanti Hindol, AG, 1171. (Bagalai tat
phirun hansalā bovai jai tu karai dayalā).
12. cf. Guru Arjan, Gauri Sukhmani, 11, Salok, AG, 276 (Karan kāran
prabh ek hai dusar nābi koe. Nanak tis balbārne jai ibal mahīal soe).
15. Sirī, AG, 15 (Nanak nadari bābare rācbēb dān nā nai).
16. Vār Mājī, Salok, AG, 144.
17. Vār Āsā, 16, AG, 472.
18. Basani, AG, 1188.
19. Guru Nanak in History, p. 257. cf. The inevitability of Grace as
the final saving factor as discussed in the context of Bhagavad Gītā
by Paul Brunton, Inner Reality, pp. 35, 184-85
pasinde jīni kār eb dhūtā).
21. cf. Aldous Huxley, Perennial Philosophy, p. 190. "In every
exposition of the Perennial Philosophy the human soul is regarded
as feminine in relation to the Godhead, the Personal God and even
the Order of Nature. Hubris, which is the original sin, consists in
regarding the personal ego as self-sufficiently masculine in relation
to the Spirit within and to Nature without, and in behaving
accordingly."
22. Tilang, AG, 722. (Saub nadar kar dekhe so din lekhe kaman
naunidh pāi. Amē kani piārī så subāgan Nanak så sahbrāī).
Parasharprasna or Baisakhi of Guru Gobind Singh, p. 374. f.
"The lower ego (haumāl) is a deep malady but its remedy also lies
in itself." (Haumai diragh rog bai, dārī bhi is māheb).
28. cf. Sufi poet Ghalib: "The analogy for my effort is this much, as if a caged bird may be trying to gather straws to make his nest while he is confined in the cage." *Dīwān-e-Urdu, Radīf Ya.* cf. also Mir Taqi Mir (the celebrated Urdu poet): "The odium of free will has been laid undeservedly on us. The divine being ordains whatever He likes and we mortals have been 'defamed' for nothing." *Dīwān-e-Urdu, Radīf Alīf.*
29. *Introduction to Comparative Mysticism,* p. 35.
30. *Ibid.,* p. 151. cf. Mohammad Iqbal: "Raise your self to such an extent that God, when He wills anything, may ask His slave in your person, as to what is your will?" *Bāng-e-Dara.*
32. *Siri. AG.* 55.
33. *Vār Āsā, Salok* (Paurī 11), *AG,* 469. *(Sabbni Chhālā māriā karī kare so boe).*
36. cf. C.H. Loehlin, *Sikhs and their Scriptures,* p. 49. "...God's grace is mediated through the Guru." Again: 'Prāsād' is found over 636 times in the *Ādi Granth.*
Chapter X

THE CONCEPT OF HAUMAI (EGO)

Haumai is an original term used by Guru Nanak to express the 'unregenerate' condition of human soul, for which no English equivalent is fully suitable. The term 'ego' has psychological ramifications, but it has a workable and popular usage and may serve the purpose. The 'unregenerate' man who is engrossed in baumai is one "who ignores God and follows instead the dictates of baumai" and is, as such, a 'diseased' person (rogi).

Haumai, in Sikh thought, is the greatest cause of human degeneration, distraction and corruption and is, thus, the surest passport to disaster and perdition.

For Guru Nanak it is baumai which controls the man of unregenerate man and so determines pattern of his life. The results are disastrous, for instead of leading a man to release and salvation his baumai will invariably stimulate affections which can only bind him more firmly to the wheel of transmigration.

Haumai may be defined as the unsettled, confused state of mind of a man who cannot distinguish between the Real and the Unreal, because he has been distracted by the effect of māyā towards perceiving the phenomenal world as something real. This wrong perception inevitably leads to a 'dual perception' of seeing the world in its contradictoriness of good and bad, high and low, day and night, heaven and hell, chastity and sin, richness and poverty, attachment and detachment, love and hatred, and so on. This 'dual perception' is called, in Guru Nanak's terminology, dubidhā, which is a close concomitant of baumai.
While *haumai* is the root-cause of this human waywardness and distance from 'godliness', *dubidhā* is the result of this inner distraction caused by *māyā* and is basically a psychological problem, because in *dubidhā* a man is so inwardly confused and unsettled that he cannot make correct decision about any thing or find the right course of life which may lead to eternal happiness. He is thus suffering from *schizophrenia*\(^5\) or what is called a 'split' personality.

*Haumai* (ego) is the *avidyā* (i.e. ignorance) of the *Upanishadic* or *Vedanta* mysticism and is so basic and fundamental that it is not mere mental distraction or 'disease'\(^6\) but it is the chief instrument in the hands of *māyā* not only for creating the transient, flux-ridden and mirage-like universe, but also maintaining it in the same unregenerate or degenerate condition and ultimately destroying it by the weapon of its own original destructibility. The Sūfī poet Ghalib says:\(^7\)

> In my construction itself an element of destruction is hidden.  
> The hot blood of the peasant is (in fact) a leaven of the lightning  
> that destroys the harvest of grain.

Guru Nanak has discussed the nature of *haumai* in a revealing passage included in his famous composition *Āsā-dī-Vār*, which may be cited in toto:

> In *haumai* one comes and in *haumai* goes.  
> In *haumai* is he born and in *haumai* dies.  
> In *haumai* he gives and in *haumai* takes.  
> In *haumai* is one truthful and in *haumai* false.  
> In *haumai* he thinks of evil and of virtue.  
> In *haumai* he lands himself into hell and into heaven.  
> In *haumai* he laughs and in *haumai* he weeps.  
> In *haumai* he is polluted and in *haumai* chastened.  
> In *haumai* he loses his caste and his species.  
> In *haumai* is he foolish and also wise and in *haumai* he remains  
> totally forgetful of salvation.  
> In *haumai* is there *māyā* and in *haumai* is superstition (*chbāyā*).  
> By producing *haumai*, the world was created.  
> If one understands *haumai*, he will find the door of salvation.  
> Without true knowledge, the man tires himself by too much talking.
Nanak says, by *Hukam* are recorded the signs of fate.
Just as God makes you see, you see, you may perceive.\(^8\)

In the same composition another exquisite passage by Guru Angad on the subject of *haumai* is worth quoting:

*Haumai* has this quality that in *haumai* man indulges in action.
In *haumai* this is the condition that it causes repeated rebirth.
From where comes this *haumai* and how can it be discarded?
*Haumai* is the same *Hukam* which causes preconditioned avocations.

*Haumai* is a deep malady and the remedy also lies in itself.
If it pleases God, then one contemplates the *Sabad*.
Nanak says, listen O' Friend, in this way, the sorrow is removed.\(^9\)

*Haumai* is basically speaking 'the pride of selfhood' or the 'vanity of life'. A vain feeling of self-existence and the transient human powers added to it, create in the ordinary man a sense of false capability and a false security which make him totally oblivious of an uncertain future and a disastrous end. But if a man overcomes this spurious complacency and abasement and instead takes refuge in the worship of God and the Guru, he is saved. When there is no self-pride, there is no chance of self-abasement, in fact, of any entanglement or involvement whatsoever. Guru Nanak says:

One who thinks he is, says Nanak, will be grabbed (by death).
(While) I have no *haumai* and hence no chance of getting into rebirth.\(^10\)

The ruinous *haumai* which separates men from their Creator has ruined myriads of beings, who lost their lives in mere indulgence:

Forgetting the Lord, they enjoyed sensual acts.
By so doing many diseases crept up in their bodies.\(^11\)

Guru Nanak has vividly described the wretched condition of those who have no good qualities in them yet they are so vain and arrogant:

There are those who possess neither awareness, nor reason, nor wisdom and have no understanding of the mysteries of the world.
Nanak, such people are pure dunces who display vanity without having any virtue in them.\(^12\)
The maladies caused by baumai, says the Guru, are represhensible; every where it is baumai that causes sorrow and only the Guru’s word (sabad) can save the humanity.\(^\text{15}\)

In Guru Nanak’s thought the whole world is a fictitious expansion caused by the magical power of māyā which works through the agency of self-caused ignorance called baumai. The Guru calls the world, in this sense, ‘a house of smoke.’\(^\text{14}\) The world thus contaminated by baumai and caught in the meshes of duality (dubidbā) is nothing but ‘diseased’ (rogi) and Guru Nanak includes the whole ‘phenomena’ in this ‘contaminated’ state:

The air, the water, the fire are ‘diseased’ and the whole earth is ‘diseased’.

So are mother, father, the māyā and the body ‘diseased’ and also families and relations thereof.

Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva are ‘diseased’: in fact, the whole world is ‘diseased’...\(^\text{15}\)

By the term ‘diseased’ the Guru implies the impure state of ‘contamination’ caused by māyā and baumai. Separation from divine truth and ignorance caused by self-hood is generally expressed in terms of ‘dirt’ and ‘filth’ (mail, rog) in Guru Nanak’s mystical thought. Perhaps the best word to express the nature of māyā is impurity (anjan). The worst form of baumai is dubidbā: “The ‘disease’ of duality (dubidbā) is the greatest malady, in which man becomes a slave of māyā.”\(^\text{16}\)

In duality (dubidbā) there is utter distraction. Unless it is removed, the right path cannot be found. Guru Nanak says:

By removing dubidbā, recognize the Sabad.
Perceive the One Reality in your ownself and outside.
Such wisdom is the essence of the Sabad.
In dubidbā one gets odium as his fate.\(^\text{17}\)

By discarding or shunning duality one becomes unitive, i.e. the votary of the Formless One. In other words from māyādbāri (māyā-engrossed) and dubidbā-chari (duality-ridden) he becomes Nirankāri. Guru Nanak has often been
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named in Janam-Sākhīs and other Sikh Writings as 'Nanak Nirankār'. He himself says:

The thoughtful person chooses his course carefully.
By shunning ābūdā he becomes one with the Nirankār (Formless God).²⁸

The haumai-engrossed (i.e. the ego-centric) man, who is also simultaneously duality-ridden (ābūdā-grast) is called manmukh in Sikh terminology. The manmukh is the opposite of Gurmukh, just as manmat or durmat is the opposite of Gurmat. All Sikh Mysticism lies in the adoption of Gurmat (i.e. Guru's Wisdom) and abnegation of durmat or haumai. They are diametrically opposite to each other:

Haumai is the opposite of Nām, both cannot live in one place.²⁹

So haumai and ābūdā have locus standi in Guru Nanak's mysticism. They must at all costs be negated and abjured. The self or man in itself is something spiritually untenable. It leads to perdiction until and unless it is infused with the Word (Sabad), or the divine Name (Nām). The mind must be controlled or restrained and thus conquered. Guru Nanak has used the latter term in Japī, Stanza 28, whose concluding line is:

Let 'sympathy with all beings' be your great yogic sect and (thus) by conquering the mind, you conquer the world.³⁰

Man's own effort to control the mind cannot succeed as the mind is too restless (chanchal) and stubborn (batbīlā) and has no effect against itself, just as dirt cannot clean the dirt. For cleaning some impurity, we need the principle or element of purity. This is exactly what Guru Nanak calls Sabad or Nām:

If the reason is putrified by the force of sins, it can be cleaned by the love of Name.³¹

The metaphor used in Sikhism (Gurmat) for the negation of haumai, is 'burning';³² that is, the efficacious sabad 'burns' the haumai, by its mystical power of changing and transforming all that comes into contact with it. It
chastens all the human impurities, viz. haumai, dubidbā, manmat, durmat and māyā—all that binds human life to the shackles of ignorance and avidyā.

Though in all matters of spiritual regeneration, according to Guru Nanak, the first step always is the Guru's grace without which nothing is possible, yet on another level of thought, the Guru inspires the seeker after 'true path' (Sachā Mārag) to take maximum initiative possible for him towards achieving the goal, because for the greatest aspirations only supreme effort and supreme sacrifice can avail. So Guru Nanak strongly enjoins upon the Sikh (disciple) to do his utmost effort, with extreme 'single-mindedness', to resist evil and to restrain the mind, of course with the help and grace of the Guru. The Guru avers:

One should remember the one Lord, with his mind unruffled and should stop the mind from going astray.

Again:

Restrain the running mind within yourself; this instruction has been received from the Guru himself.

In exceedingly trenchant thought, the Guru enlightens the votary:

You cannot keep your own house protected from deception, then why are you keen to pilfer another's house?
One can protect his own door and house, if he enjoys the bliss (of Nām); this is possible only for the servant of God who acts through the grace of the Guru.

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1. McLeod has suggested many terms such as 'pride' (originally used by Macauliffe in Sikh Religion), garab, banūr, sin (of Christian connotation), 'self' and 'self-centredness' and has concluded 'ego' to be the nearest usable term. Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion p. 182 f. see James Drever, A Dictionary of Psychology, p. 79, for the psychological meaning of the term 'ego'
2. Ibid., p. 187.
3. cf. Guru Arjan, Bhāi Ro, AG, 1140 "whoever is visible (in this world) is diseased; only my true Guru is diseaseless." (Jo jo dīse so so rogi. Rog rabat merā salgur joti).
5. cf. James Drever, *A Dictionary of Psychology*, p. 258. "Schizophrenia: A type of mental disorder... characterized by dissociation, particularly between the intellectual processes and the affective, the latter being also to a great extent disorganized."
6. cf. Guru Angad, Vār Āsā, Salok, AG, 466. "Haumai is a deep malady..." (Haumai diragh rog hai...)
7. *Diwan-i-Urdu.*
8. Vār Āsā, Salok (Paurī 7), AG, 466.
9. Vār Āsā, Salok (Guru Angad), AG, 466.
10. Vār Mālār, Salok, AG, 1289. (Hondā phariag Nanak jān. Nā bau nā mai jūnī jān.)
11. Mālār, AG, 1256. (Khasam visār kīa ras bhog. Ta ian uthbh khaloai rog).
12. Sārang, AG, 1246. (Iknā suddh na buddh na akal sar akhar kā bheo na labant. Nanak se nar asal khar ji bin gun garab karant.)
13. Bhairō, AG, 1153. (Nanak haumai rog būre. Je dekān tab ekā bedān āpe baksai sabad dhure.).
15. Bhairō, AG, 1246.
22. cf. Guru Amar Das, Sāhī, AG, 768: "He is the servant of God (Bhagat) and is Guru-faced (Gurmukh), whose baumai has been 'burnt' by Sabad". (So bhagat jo gurmukh hovai baumai sabad jālī rām).
Chapter XI

LOVE MYSTICISM

In Guru Nanak's mysticism, a divine-human relationship of devotional love (bhakti) became the most dominant expression for describing the intimate mystical union between God and man. Mukerjee says:

In the Guru Granth of the Sikhs we find the intimacy of spiritual love expressed also in terms of the earthly bride's wedding with the transcendental Lord.¹

Guru Nanak's mystic symbolism mainly revolves round this all-important human metaphor of sex-relationship, first as conceived and perfected between man and woman (as husband and wife) and, by analogous correspondence, applied to the spiritual relationship between God and man. McLeod observes in this context:

There is in his works the characteristic Vaishnava emphasis upon the absolute necessity of love in the bhakti sense, commonly expressed in the figure of the bride yearning for her Beloved, the divine Bridegroom.²

The mystical impulse in love consists in the appreciation and perception of beauty at its highest level of manifest divinity, and this mystical contact between love and beauty, with emphasis on suggestive contemplation rather than on realistic perception, is the basis of all symbolism in mystical literature.³ Guru Nanak's symbolism can also be appropriately related to this fundamental idea.

Dean Inge has emphatically pleaded the cause of love vis-a-vis ethos, saying that Christianity prefers love to
goodness, because, as de Burgh says, when we say God is love, it is not true merely 'analogically' but directly. St. Clement remarks that faith leads to knowledge and knowledge to love.\textsuperscript{4} St. Bernard says:

The perfect correspondence of wills makes of two one spirit...love knows not reverence. Love is the great reality. It is the only affection of the soul in which the creature is able to respond to the Creator.\textsuperscript{5}

Similarly, Origen avers: "The Father Himself is not impassable; He has the passion of love."\textsuperscript{6}

The use of mystical symbols is an inevitable necessity. As Inge says: "even when we have to interpret the absolute values, we cannot dispense with symbols."\textsuperscript{7}

In the Bhakti mysticism, which is akin to the Christian 'Voluntaristic mysticism', as Otto remarks, "even the Highest is thought of as responding to amorous longings."\textsuperscript{8} This is the true mystical concept underlying all Vaishnava Bhakti and also Guru Nanak’s love mysticism.\textsuperscript{9}

Love is a giving out of one's inner self to the world abroad. It is thus basically ethical in nature and truth. Eckhart says: "What we have gathered in contemplation, we give out in love."\textsuperscript{10}

Quoting Guru Nanak viz."Altruism is the essence of all knowledge",\textsuperscript{11} A modern Sikh writer says: "It is the complete socialization of the person, indicated through his love and concern for others."\textsuperscript{12}

The true essence of love-mysticism seems to be the complete unification of the divine will and the individualistic human will. Fichte remarks on this issue:

No longer two wills but one and the same will is all in all. So long as man desires to be something himself, God does not come to him, for no man (qua man and creature) can become God. But soon as he destroys his own self purely and wholly and to the very root, God alone remains and is all in all.\textsuperscript{13}

This luminous statement is the crux not only of Guru Nanak's love-mysticism, but of his whole mysticism, because he has enunciated as the very first principle of his thought in Japji (Stanza one) the universal truth of abnegating human
will to the supreme divine will. This constitutes his most important and profound concept of *Hukam*.

Guru Nanak has laid down that only those who will obey the Lord and have fear in their hearts, will acquire love for the Divine Being.\(^{14}\) He has devoted, besides other references, one full drawn-out hymn (with exquisite poetic beauty to match it,) in *Rāg Tilang*, to clarify his well-known thesis, so richly couched in love-symbolism of Bride and Bridegroom (*subāgan* and *sauh*), that complete submission and dedication to Divine will is the only course open to man to seek and achieve union with the Lord. The hymn opens with the colourful imagery: "The Lord is near at hand (within you), foolish bride, why seek Him without?\(^{15}\) and the whole thought culminates in the following beautiful lines:

'Fix your mind on His feet (cleave to Him), through whose love the priceless treasure is obtained. Do whatever He says. Anoint yourself with the perfume of total surrender to Him.' Thus replies the bride, 'O sister, by this means the Lord is found.'\(^{16}\)

Guru Nanak's basic difference with traditional *bhakti* is on two points viz. his "explicit rejection of *avatārs*" (as McLeod says) and addressing his devotion to the non-incarnated, supreme God Himself, and secondly, his "understanding of practical expression on love," through the constant meditation of *nām simran* and *nām japa*.

Guru Nanak's love mysticism is the most explicit and positive postulation of his whole religious thought. All the negative postulates of *māyā, duḥṣa bhāv* (otherness), *dubidhā* (duality), *haumai* (ego or self-centredness), *sanskā* or *sehsā* (doubt), *bharam* (superstition) and *bhulekha* (fallacy), *vishe vikār* (sensual desires or the five low impulses), *durmāt* (low sensibility) *baīr birodh* (garrulousness, friction), *jam kā tarās* (fear of death) and so on, at once fade into nothingness before the refulgent illumination of devotional love practically apotheosized in the form of *Nām* and *Sabad*. When there is sun of truth shining at its zenith, how can any darkness remain even for a moment?
REFERENCES AND NOTES


3. cf. Inge, *Mysticism in Religion*, Chap. 'Symbolism and Myth,' Defining a 'symbol', he says: "A symbol is a representation of some moral or spiritual truth under the form of natural things. Its object is suggestion or insight; it is a kind of language. Images are taken from natural relations and used to express more universal or ideal relations. The symbol is the indirect presentation of a concept which cannot be presented directly.'


7. *Ibid.*, p. 76 cf. Dewan Singh, *Farīd Darbān*, (1967 ed.) p. 139. Ghalib's verse quoted: "However mystically we may have to talk about divine experience itself, we cannot do without using the symbols of wine and the cup."


Chapter XII

SAHAJ AND ANHAD

(ESOTERIC MYSTICISM)

The concept of Sahaj is central and pivotal in Guru Nanak's mystical thought. It relates to the highest spiritual state humanly attainable and has thus deepest connotations attached to it.

Though outcome of a most advanced and recondite experience within the innermost sanctuary of the soul, the ordinary meaning of Sahaj is 'just what it should be' or 'just normal! In other words, a simple human proposition: that a man should become a man par excellence, a real man; no adhesions, no defaults, no accretions, no deviations. But this paradoxical word Sahaj does not go with mere 'saying' or verbal expression. It is an actuality, a real human state, a tangible workable human achievement.

Bearing in mind the baffling nature of this term, it can safely be said that the concept of Sahaj belongs to the realm of 'Esoteric-mysticism', inasmuch as the meaning of Sahaj is invariably associated with the manifestative aspect or its expressive quality which, in figurative terms, we call Anhad Sabad. Thus both the mystical content and its configuration are essentially linked together in our ubiquitous reality.

It is only the experient who can apprehend these two unitive states within his soul, without being able to express them because these are entirely ineffable realizations. Guru Nanak himself, having experienced directly the blissful union with God and the concomitant divine manifestations...
attending such Beatitude, has mystically expressed these visions in symbolical language, incorporating and using esoteric terms already current in Vedanta or Yoga mysticism and in higher Buddhism,³ investing them with new meanings.

As Niharranjan Ray says:

...in whichever manner one seeks to describe the Sabaj experience, its real nature must elude understanding in humanly communicable language. The articulation of an experience which was essentially a mystical one and hence, according to Guru Nanak himself, was incapable of being translated in communicable terms, was indeed beyond human expression, had necessarily to be in traditional mystical terms made current and somewhat understandable by his predecessors belonging to various mystic orders of sants and sadhus and in well-known traditional symbols and images that had some meaning, howsoever vague and generalized, to those whom his words were addressed to.⁴

In order to consider the concept of Sabaj in its mystical connotation, it would be useful first to study its etymological meaning. Sabaj is originally a Sanskrit word which means 'having been born together' (just as human 'twins'),⁵ and thus something inwardly perceived or intuitied along with one’s birth as a human being—a sort of indwelling mystical principle of divine perception given to man as his birthright and, therefore, a natural and effortless heritage of divinity ingrained in humanity.⁶

Properly speaking, Sabaj is the very 'mysticality' (to use a new term) of religion. It is the acceptance of inwardness and 'intuitionism' as the true basis of religion, to the negation of all ritualistic externalities.⁷

In Guru Nanak's thought, Sabaj comes to imply the acceptance of Hukam as the first cardinal principle of Sikhism.⁸ Sabaj in this meaning would be the mystical state of a man who has accepted the divine will (Hukam, Bhānā, Razā). Sabaj, thus, is the highest spiritual state attainable in Sikhism. It is the highest bliss.

Another writer on Guru Nanak defining Sabaj says:

The word Sabaj means natural fulfilment. Just as vegetables cooked over a slow fire retain their flavour, in the same way gradual and
voluntary discipline of the mind and body will bring out the essential goodness inherent in the individual.⁹

In the meaning expressed above Sahaj connotes a natural slowness and steadiness required for perfect action. Haste makes waste, has been truly said, Sahaj is the opposite of inordinate haste. Sahaj is compactness and self-sufficiency, while haste is flippancy and inner weakness. A sure man is the 'poised' man. In this anthropomorphic sense (as distinct from the mystical one, discussed earlier), Sahaj would mean equipoise, equanimity and equilibrium. It may be called 'balanced perspicacity' or sambuddhāvā; in the psychological sense.¹⁰

All true balance and true action (which may be called Sahaj-karam, as distinct from the self-willed action) engender aesthetic as well as spiritual pleasure, while spiritual fulfilment produces infinite bliss.

Sahaj, which is "the state of enlightenment achieved through self-discipline"¹¹ has been generally accepted to be "the ultimate goal which the religious and spiritual discipline laid down by Guru Nanak was supposed to lead to".¹² Hence this term has been used to denote the ineffable union with God. Various expressions have been current as synonymous with Sahaj, such as Sunn-samādī, turiā avasthā,¹³ chaubhā pad, amar pad, param pad, mahā-sukh, param anand, dasam dūr, anbad nād, sach khand, jiwan-mukti and so on.¹⁴ The term Sahaj-samādhi has also been used by Kabīr and the Sikh Gurus.¹⁵

All this terminology connected with Sahaj was commonly used by all the Nirgung-sampradāya saints, Kabīr, Nāmadev, Dādū and others, along with Guru Nanak, having borrowed it from the sahajayāmi Buddhists (who in their turn inherited it from the earlier Mahāyāna-vajrāyāna Buddhist tradition) and also from Tantric Hathayoga and the Nathpanthī-Kanphatā yogis with whom Guru Nanak came into direct and close contact. The Sahajīya Vaishnavas and Bauls of Bengal also adopted this esoteric terminology.¹⁶

The common meaning of Sahaj has been the abnegation of duality and the perception of unity in God as well as
the creation. This unitive state or the Sunn state which means Vacuity or Devoidness, is also the primordial state of the Nirgun Brahm Himself. Mohan Singh Uberoi describes the Sikh Sabaja Yoga as "unification with Self through cultivation of a state of natural, easy self-hood self-rest". Again: "Sunn is a state in which there is no movement, in the receptacle, of any type, no sound, no wind, no object or objectivity, the subject, God, is there as the container, the presence. Guru Nanak has copiously used esoteric terms and expressions such as sunn, anbad, shri-sbakti, trikuti, unman, sas-ghar-sur, bajar-kapāt, irā-pinglá-sukhamā, ajāpā jāp, dasam duār, dhundhukār-nirālam, sache amarāpur, sachi nagari, bij-mandar, sunn-kalā, sat-sar, panch-sabad, akul nirangan, purakh-atī, gagnantar dhanakb, sunn-samādh, bīs-ikis, dūb mūevin pānī, surat-dhum, nīgghar, guptībani, anhat sunn and surat sabad, in all his compositions, specially in Rāgās, Rāmkali and Mārū. These are purely mystical terms common to all Indian religions.

As Niharranjan Ray observes, Guru Nanak's use of these tāntric and Yogic terms does not logically follow that he actually practised or inculcated their practice among His followers, because he has used them only as figures of speech or technical esoteric terms which were current and handy for use and were generally understood among advanced mystical orders of his time. He had had actually many discussions during his travels and at Kartarpur with Yogis, Sādhūs and ascetics of various mystical cults and denominations.

Guru Nanak, in fact, had his own mystical message to convey to humanity and it was original with him and had no conceptual reference to the mystical philosophies of Sāvitās, Vaishnavites, Yogis and even to Kabir, Dadu, Namdev and others, though many of them were accepted as allied co-mystics and their compositions included in the Ādi-Granth, more with a view to illustration and elaboration than to identification and syncretism.
The achievement of *Sahaj-avasthā* in the form of *mahā-sukha* or *jiwan-mukti*, which was the ultimate goal of all the mystical cults using esoteric terms concurrently during Guru Nanak's times, was to Guru Nanak a matter of inner discipline and direct experiential contact with divine Reality. More esoteric niceties or intricacies, specially of *Tantric Yoga* were quite alien to his mystic temperament which was fundamentally *dynamic*, ethical and synthetic.

N. Ray remarks in this context:

> God-experience is an inner experience; one must therefore, cleanse and purify one's inner being. How does one do it? Guru Nanak's clear answer is, by loving devotion and adoration of God and by endless repetition and remembering of His Name, *Nām Simran*.²⁰

**Summing up, this eminent scholar says:**

Guru Nanak's position and statements are precise, clear and unequivocal and their ethical import and socio-religious significance deep and wide.²¹

Guru Nanak's mystic thought is easily distinguishable from the *Naitha-panthi* and *Kampatā* yogi cults, as also from *Tantrism*, *Vaishnavism* and *Shaitism*, though a general fallacy exists to equate or identify it with Kabir's mysticism. But as McLeod has lucidly discussed, much of Kabir's mystical jargon remains obscure and personal whereas Guru Nanak's postulation especially of the mystic path and discipline is clearer and more cogent than that of Kabir.²²

Concluding his analysis of Guru Nanak's mystical contribution to Indian religious thought as represented by Sant Tradition (i.e. *Nirgun-sampardāya*-tradition), McLeod says:²³

> The system developed by Guru Nanak is essentially a reworking of the *Sant* pattern, a reinterpretation which compounded experience and profound insight with a quality of coherence and a power of effective expression.

There is much inconsistency and incoherence in Kabir's thought, as Ray observes, from which Guru Nanak's mysticism is absolutely free, with the result that whereas it is difficult if not impossible to construct a theology out of
what Kabir says, it is not so with Guru Nanak. "He was also a mystic, but his mysticism was limited to the final goal of Sabaj experience which at the ultimate analysis was a mystical, ineffable, un analysable, inexpressible experience".24

Another eminent writer observes:

The Sabaja Yoga, according to the Guru, consists in subduing the mind through the grace of the Guru and in the extinction of all troubles and ills in the company of the Guru and the saints. This is the Bhakti Yoga of the Guru.25

Among the more technical esoteric (Tântric) terms may be included the 'Chhat-chakra' or the six nerve-plexuses, the kundalini, the sabansar-dal kanwal, the sas-sūr-complex, the dasam-duär, the opening of bajar-kapāt or trikuti. These are the well-known yogic terms which Guru Nanak adopted and reinterpreted to suit his own mystic realization. They are, thus, of illustrative value.

The idea of the immersion of 'sun' in the house of 'moon' (sas ghar sūr samauna)26 is typically mystical and has been adopted by Guru Nanak to express the subservience of the creative energy (called shakti—the female symbol) to the spiritual element (called shiva—the male symbol). The sun and moon also stand for the right and left nerve channels (called irā and pinglā, respectively) of the Hathayoga.

Connecting the allied states of Sabaj and Anbad, N. Ray says:

Apart from the characteristics of peace and tranquility, of wonderment and bliss and of ineffable radiance by which one recognized the sabaj state of being, Guru Nanak recognized another, that of anbad sabad an unstruck sound which he used to experience within himself at that ultimate state of being.28

While Sabaj is the highest blissful state attainable by man as a result of mystic discipline and realization, anbad is the mystical expression of that radiant state in terms of divine music esoterically heard within the soul and which the experient only knows in his own experience and cannot describe in human language.
Guru Nanak has treated the concept of Sahaj in its varied aspects, as is evident from the following references from his poetry:

About Sahaj:
1. "We came by Sahaj and left by Hukam: Nanak, there is eternal obedience (to God)."\(^{29}\)
2. "By hearing the Name one attains Sahaj contemplation."\(^{30}\)
3. "By hearing Guru's word, one attains Sahaj contemplation."\(^{31}\)
4. "Those who apprehended Him, they recognized the Sahaj. When I pondered over this, my mind was appeased."\(^{32}\)
5. "One who met the Lord in Sahaj, was accepted. He has neither death nor rebirth."\(^{33}\)
6. "In fear one found the Fearless. Then he entered the house of Sahaj."\(^{34}\)
7. "To see Nature, to hear Gurbani, and to utter your true Name. Thus the treasure of honour was filled and we got Sahaj contemplation."\(^{35}\)
8. "O Yogi, consider the essence with Sahaj. In this way you will not be reborn in this world."\(^{36}\)

About Anhad:
1. "If one bears the unbearable, it means closing the nine doors. By controlling vital organs, the body becomes eternal."\(^{37}\)
2. "Mind is not purified in the tenth Door. The fool thus, is born again and again in superstition."\(^{38}\)
3. "The true and contented sabad is extremely cool and in sabaj the attention got fixed. The Lord created three gunas and Himself lived in the Fourth State. He made birth and death as one mouthful. The refulgent light of the Life-of-All Lord (sarah jag jiwan) was manifested by Guru as anbad sabad."\(^{39}\)
4. "The Maker has made the nine doors. In the Tenth (door) lives the Unseen-Beyond Lord."\(^{40}\)
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1. For *Anbād*, see Mohan Singh, *Sikh Mysticism*, p. 47.
4. *Sikh Gurus and the Sikh Society*, p. 120.
5. See *MK*, 103. Bhai Kahn Singh has given thirteen meanings of the term, but the import which dominantly emerges is that of "something natural, indwelling, spontaneous and inborn".
8. cf. Guru Nanak, *Jātī 1, AG*, 1. "To walk in the umbrage of Divine will, is, says Nanak, ordained in the spirit itself." (*Hukam rajāt chalanā Nanak ikbīā nāh*).
17. "The Supreme ultimate Devoidness (*Mahāsumm*) which is the fifth sunn of Tibetan mystics and *Sunyatta* of the *sattvik*." Mohan Singh Uberoi, *Sikh Mysticism*, p. 20. cf. Paul Brunton calls it 'the void' or 'the Supernal Empty'. *Spiritual Crisis of Man*, p. 132.


32. *Gaurī Guārēri*, *AG*, 221.


34. *Sorath*, *AG*, 599.


38. *Basant*, *AG*, 1188.


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