CONCLUSION
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India has made an important contribution to the domain of philosophy. Guru Nanak inherited the rich tradition of India and having assimilated it he produced a new ideology which changed the spirituo-sociological scenario of the Indian sub-continent. His greatest contribution lies in the fact that he presented the ancient heritage in altogether a new shape, as in the views of Dr. A.C. Banerjee that "Guru Nanak used his inheritance in a manner which was his own. He transformed it, giving it new form and new content and made it an instrument for integrated development of the human personality."\(^1\)

Dr. Sher Singh also testifies by saying that when we talk about the 'NEW' in Sikhism, we do not talk of the raw material, in the shape of the brick and mortar of the structure of Sikhism which laid scattered everywhere. However, it is not the material that matters; it is the mould, and final product produced which is most important and that is all together different and of course new.\(^2\)

The concept of God occupies the pivotal place in Guru Nanak's thought. He lays repeated insistence on the unity of God and accepts only one Supreme Being who alone is regarded as the object of worship and adoration. Sikhism believes in the
formless Almighty God, who being formless, has also been assigned human qualities. As such, many attributes have been ascribed to Him and limitless praises have been showered upon Him. Sikhism emphatically rejects the idea of incarnation and subordinate deities as described in Epics and Vaishnava traditions. Sikhism regards all the deities as a part of the vast creation of God. However, their importance according to Guru Nanak, lies in their being devotees of the one Supreme Being i.e. Brahman.

The peculiar concepts of Amrit, Nam, Shabad and Guru are not only original in Sikh philosophy but they are also adopted as the medium for the unique description of one Supreme Being. The concept of Guru and Shishya were quite familiar to the existing traditions but Sikhism established them in a more vital and original form.

Guru of Sikhism is not merely any academic person but is the one who unites every separated soul with the Lord. Guruship, is not assigned to the men of higher status only. Guru and Sikh are not regarded as poles apart, rather they could form an integrated whole, as we find in the process of passing the test of Guruship by the second Guru Angad. This was a new concept adopted and practised by Sikhism where the disciple was illuminated during the life time of Guru Nanak and while offering
him Guruship, the Guru bowed his head before his own disciple. Sikhism took over the concepts of Atman, Manas, Karman, Rebirth, Liberation etc. in a different manner. The monotheistic approach of Sikhism emphasises the unity of Brahman and Atman. The ideal of Guru Nanak, regarding these two entities is higher than the discriminative attitude towards Purusha and Prakriti of Samkhya philosophy. Here both the principles are equally active. Brahman of Sikhism is the primal creator, unaffected by any illusion. The individual soul is also a part of Brahman. Their is none other than Him. Sikhism does not believe in concept of categories and substance (as in Nyaya-Vaisheshik) rather it believes in a God who is ever True, sole cause of creation, who Himself creates, sustains and destroys it. Both Atman and Brahman possess same qualities and are non-dual, remain within each other, but due to ignorance, it appears as different from Brahman.

Sikh philosophy believes in theory of Karma and rebirth, but with some modifications. Karma according to Sikhism are regarded as the principle of birth. Whatever a man does in whole of the life, he remains totally one with that object on his death bed. In Guru Granth Sahib in one of the hymn of Bhagat Trilochan, the ideology of rebirth of a person is defined, by saying - on his death bed if one has his mind totally involved in remembering
about his wealth and money, he is bound to take rebirth as a snake. Similarly, if some one's thoughts remain indulged in wife's amorous activities, he is bound to take birth of a prostitute - *Anti kali jo istri simarai, aisi chinta mahi jo mari. besva joni vali vali autarai.* The idea behind this all is, that whatever we do throughout our life repeatedly, we are bound to remember it again and again in our last time also. This premise makes us understand that we have to undertake all sorts of activities in life but while undergoing pleasures and pains, one should enjoy them in a detached manner and should not get totally engrossed and consumed by these feelings. If we undertake to do repeatedly good works which are delightful for the mind as well as soul then definitely on one's death bed we will be having no such idea, which may bring us the abominable birth and future life.

It modified the idea of performing rituals for Nitya, Naimittiya or Kamya Karmans. Good conduct and Truthful living are regarded as the only sources for the God’s grace which bestows the final emancipation to the Jiva. Sikh theology also denounces the concept of the unseen power of the God, rather here the God is beyond all categories and yet omnipresent - *beda kateb sansar habha hun bahra Nanak ka patisahu disai jahra.* Hence there is no need of proving the existence of God. He is all around present in everything on earth. The freedom from transmigration is
possible by performing good actions shedding away the veil of
duality, deleting of ego and devoting to one Supreme Being, God.

Similarly liberation is not mere separation of Purusha and
Prakriti, but the unity of individual soul with the supreme spirit
and this unity is possible only for those in whose mind, dwells
the Name of God. The existence of the body is no hinderance in
the attainment of liberation and instead, it can be obtained by
one during his life time doing egoless activities and is known as
Jivan- Mukti. God’s grace is however regarded as the greatest
means to the achievement of mukti. Remaining unaffected by
happiness and sorrows, getting free from illusion, duality and
other vicious actions and harmonising of the individual soul with
the Supreme soul are considered to be the different constituents
of the final liberation.

Sikhism regards pleasure and pain as the result of one's
own virtuous and sinful actions. Virtues are effective enough to
wash off the inner filth but these virtuous deeds are not the dead
ritualistic performances as practised earlier. Instead, self
restraint, service to others, sharing the earnings with the needy,
charity without expectation of any reward, remembrance of Name
of God etc. are enumerated as meritorious deeds in the theology
of Sikhism. Sinful actions like stealing, falsehood, violence, harsh
temperament, egotism are considered the outer signs of
ostentatious life. Virtue and sin are considered as causes of the so-called heaven and hell for men on this very earth, and not in the imagery regions known as Svarga or Naraka.

Since truthful God is the sole cause of creation and is real in nature, this creation is also real and not imaginary. It is said to be false only with regard to its transitory aspect. The world being a part of that real supreme spirit can not be an illusion. As opposite to the traditional belief of delimited creation, Guru Nanak believes in its infinity. Similarly unlike the traditional notion of four fold division (andaj, jeraj, svedaj and udbhoj) of the creation, Sikhism believes into countless divisions constituting the multifarious species. Japuji of Guru Nanak puts forth through its realm of enlightenment (Gian Khand) various denominations of life on this earth when he says: Therein are numberless forms of air, water and fire, many are the Indras, spheres of sun and moon, many the accomplished yogis... many the species of gods, demons, ascetics, the sources of creation, speeches and lives of kings. Says Nanak: All such are without end.5

Guru Nanak gives a new shape to the idea of devotion. Complete devotion to God leads to the constant and permanent union with Him. A life engaged in virtuous deeds is regarded as essential means of devotion. As in Bhagvad Gita, the triple Yoga of Karma, Bhakti and Gyan has been taught, same has been in Bani of Guru Nanak
but in a more balanced form. He laid down the three dictums for a happy and successful life. These are: work with one’s hands, continuous remembrance of the nam of God and sharing of one’s earning with the needy ones. These three aspects of life produce a balanced and healthy society. Here the meditation on God’s name, is not for the stimulation of psychic powers for meeting any selfish end instead it is the act of concentrating the mental powers which help in acquiring the analytical wisdom (the babek - the vivek).

Ethically Sikhism is opposite to any kind of special entitlement on account of birth. None being superior or inferior, everyone is capable lifting up his socio-religious position, thus to become one with the supreme. An altogether new philosophy of life was made prevalent by the Gurus who filled the gap between precept and practice. If Guru Nanak said that 'I am lowest among the lowly' he refused the invitation of Malik Bhag Chand and went to the low born carpenter to eat in his house.

All these were the philosophical departures of Sikh theology on the basis of which it chose to follow new paths, departing from the traditional paths of socio-religious realisation. The product of this theology, Sikhism not only provided an all together new and improved philosophy including all the major doctrines related to religio-spiritual life of man, it also provided a favourable atmosphere to cultivate these philosophical ideas. For example,
the ideas of unity, brotherhood, justice, equality, love, service, welfare, protection, devotion etc. are not only abstractions in Sikhism as was prevalent in the atmosphere of Medieval India. Sikh life made them all part and parcel of day to day life, as is evident in Sikh life in the 18th Century Punjab history.

India was having a long and rich tradition of various religions, where all of these traditions preach love, unity, peace, brotherhood of all at philosophical level. But in practice when we look into the society of that period, whether it belongs to Vedic thought, Shramnic traditions, Vaisvanites, Shaivites, or any other sect, the mental condition of common man at the most was fatalistic and not self-supporting.

As every religion has two aspects: one is philosophical and the other is practical. The contemporary as well as earlier traditions of Sikhism are almost poles apart on theological level. As we have understood theology as the study of the philosophical theories of any religion, it is a phenomenon through which the values, morals, guidelines of a religion percolate through actions into each and every corner of humanity to make the expected improvements in the socio-religious behaviour and uplift of the marginalised classes to further bring them into main stream of humanity.

Guru Nanak offered a New Theology in which their were provisions for the low strata of society to mingle with the upper
classes on the basis of Sikh theological formulations. This not only improved the respect of the low, rather it melted the ego of the so-called higher classes also.

Through the practice of sitting together in Sangat form was a novel experiment on Indian society which infused, the sense of equality and brotherhood among the masses and the sense of self-respect got rehabilitated in the heart and mind of the down-trodden and oppressed ones. Now they were ready to take joint stand against any cruelty in the name of high and low stratification of the society.

In the hymns of Guru Granth composed by the Gurus there are explanations of certain philosophical issues raised by their followers which throw light on clear cut path of these new theologians who combined intimately the theory and practice of their teachings. They invented a two fold system—one was the practical institutionalisation of the Sikh way of life and the other was to supply a theological and philosophical background to the institutional doctrines of the religion.

History of religious philosophy is evidence of the fact that some of the learned and well-known saints raised their voice against the compartmentalization of society and took some revolutionary steps also but due to lack of any solid institution their efforts could not bear any fruit and they remained as the one man’s voice only.
On the basis of Dharma, society got divided into castes and sub-castes. The separation became so rigid, that shadow of the so-called lower strata was sufficient to ruin the birth of the upper class. Religion at that time had not remained the cure for the maladies of the society, rather the internal divisions based on caste straitification had produced social tyrannies weakening the entire nation which could not stop the onslaughts of the outside invaders.

Sociologically, the oppressed people were forced to live life of degradation. The insulting tyrannies and inhuman treatment meted out to them had killed their self-respect to such an extent that they could never think of offering even a protest. The result of these all man made circumstances were the attacks of foreign invaders, who took full advantage of social, political and religious disintegration of this nation. All these failures were sufficient to attract even the seventeen years old young men like Mohmad Bin Kasim with a band of adventurous boys to loot and humiliate this sub-continent.

Even the so-called warrior class had forgotten their tradition of bravery and valour and started considering it an honour to give the rulers their daughters in marriage. They even started adopting the mode of social, religious and domestic life of the rulers.
Their source of inspiration, their religion had already lost its vitality and was reduced to mere forms and ceremonials. They were indulging in strife, quarrels, mutual jealousies and worshipped the sun, the moon, the earth, the water and the sky. Devotion was offered to cemeteries and cremation grounds. The study of religious literature was restricted to one class of the society only who misinterpreted the message of these scriptures according to their own selfish motives. The shudra class was strictly forbidden from the solace of spiritual inspiration. The natural right of humanity was denied to them. Their touch and shadow were considered polluting. There were some classes who were not only untouchables, but also unapproachable. If any one of them were to hear the Vedic Mantras, his ears must be locked up with molten lead and if he were to read mantras, his tongue must be cut out. This all was happening, yet people suffered all this treatment quietly as if they were made to believe that they were destined that way.

Sikh history had paid heavy prices for practising their new theology. In those cruel times agitations, appeals, were neither possible and were not having any meaning. There was no public or world opinion as we are having today, so it was not any easy task. Non-violence and suffering were only powerful instruments which can be undertaken to produce any change in the heart of
evils. These had been tried in the form of sacrifice of two of the purest souls (Guru Arjan and Guru Tegh Bahadur), yet these had not succeeded. The base of Sikhism has its roots in the philosophy of love, non-violence and truth, but the Gurus saw clearly that an exception had to be made in the larger interests of humanity. According to them a responsible human can not maintain his own purity in the phase of suffering of the society. Like good doctors, they realised that a poisoned limb had to be separated to save the whole body (humanity).

So Guru Arjan, being the embodiment of love and non-violence instructed his son, Guru Hargobind to be prepared for the struggle and maintain a force. The Idea of Non-Violence is a noble concept but it was not to be toyed with, or not to be experimented in dealing with the problems of life. The high Idealism has to be reconciled with the practical demands of daily life.

On the basis of Sikh Philosophy every Sikh's approach towards life is realistic and therefore it has proved to be the most practical religion. The virtues of humility, forgiveness, compassion, non-violence and love etc. are good but they are of no use if the humanity is suffering due to excessive use of such virtues. Humanity must have self-respect, independence, and honourable living. Earlier to Sikhism strength or power was
considered as the most valuable virtue and monarches of those
times used their power to suppress others. But according to Sikh
theology powers and duties are correlated and no one should
use power without duties attached to them. When a sovereign is
gifted with wide powers, he should not abandon his duties and
responsibilities towards the subjects over whom he wields his
authority. He should see that law and order are maintained in
the state and laws are administered equally. He should always
give priority to his official duties over his personal comforts and
needs, and to practise this type of monarchy, the monarch must
be saint by heart, because only a religious mind can have power
to change the established order built on wrong values by basing
the practice of politics on the principle of religion. Only wise,
saintly personality could be really sensitive to the sufferings of
society and take these sufferings as if they were his own. So the
concept of saint soldier is formulated and practised in Sikh
Theology. For the same purpose Akal Takht was erected in frontal
vicinity of Harimandir Sahib to combine temporality with
spirituality. Guru in Sikhism was the supreme direction giving
authority of the both (seen and unseen) worlds. After tenth master
the supreme authority of Guru was passed on to the Panth and
Granth jointly. Panth which meant the totality of the people having
faith in Sikh religion now began to exercise that authority.
During their formative period from Guru Nanak till Guru Gobind Singh, Sikhs were taught that they are the sparkling microcosm of the all pervading macrocosm. By passing physical Guruship to the Panth, the Sikhs were made more responsible and divine oriented. They became fully awakened to their inherent potentials and responsibilities and stood like rocks before any injustice and tyranny. This all resulted in the glory of 'Khalsa Raj.'

Theology is not limited only to analysis of one's own religion rather it is a phenomenon under which all the contemporary religions are also studied and compared to improve one's interpretation of a particular issue. This movement began in the form of sampardai Giani School, Nirmala School of interpretations till the Singh Sabha School of expositions. Sikhism always promoted and gave respect and regard to such theologians right from the time of the first theologian of Sikhism, - Bhai Gurdas, till the present times.

Sikh Gurus prepared well-planned new philosophy and then to make it effective formulated some very important institutions through which these very subtle feelings of unity, equality, harmony, love, acceptance, brotherhood, service, justice could be inculcated in hearts and minds of the people. The practical institutions of Guruship, Sangat, Langar, Seva, Gurdwara,
Gurmata, Sarbat Khalsa, associated with Sikhism are new formulations invented by Sikhism to bring forth an altogether new theology.

These institutions inspired Sikhs to release themselves from the bondage of their ego, and to develop cosmic awareness and divine vision. Philosophy of Sikhism taught them the path of morality as the path of conscious action and self-reliance. It provided them with the orientation of the values of human life and fortified them with the inspiration of rising above their personal interests in order to actively serve the common interests of mankind. The humanism of Gurbani is indicative of love for the Divine on the one hand and love for humanity and welfare of all, on the other.

Therefore the Sikh theology produced a New community who worked on the ground of equality, justice and brotherhood. Sikh history of 18th Century entitled as 'Darkest Period of Sikhism' is the best example of the working of this community fearlessly for the egalitarianism proving its distinct theology. In the period full of turmoils and sufferings Sikhs emerged victorious on the basis of a fresh, flexible, improved, and all together NEW THEOLOGY.
References

3. Guru Granth Sahib, p.526

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