CONCLUSION

Bani of Guru Nanak as contained in the Adi Granth is a valuable source for the study of social, economic, political and religious life of the 15th and early 16th centuries. From the works of Guru Nanak we learn as to what type of society existed at that time. Not only this, it also suggests as to what type of society should be evolved. Similarly, Guru Nanak Bani throws light on the political set up of his time and suggests an alternative ideal set up in different fields. And lastly, from Guru Nanak Bani we learn about the contemporary economy. There must be some code of conduct to be followed in all the spheres of life and that code of conduct is suggested by Guru Nanak in his writings.

Guru Nanak was a spiritual teacher with a difference because he believed that the world was worth living. Instead of denouncing the world as unworthy he advocated that it was possible to live pure among the impurities of world through 'a disciplined worldiness'.

"As the lotus liveth detached in water or as the duck floateth carefree on the stream, so doth one cross the sea of life by attuning himself to the world and enshrining the Lord in the heart'.

: 299:
Guru Nanak disapproved of the practice of those who were unwilling to fight the battle of life under the pretense of cultivating spirituality, shied away from worldly responsibilities. In the words of Payne, 'Guru Nanak realised that a religion if it is to be a living force must be a practical religion, one that teaches mankind not how to escape from world but how to live worthily in it, not how evil is to be avoided but how it is to be met or overcome'. After completing his five long Udasis, Guru Nanak himself settled down at Kartarpur. Here, he led a normal family life and discharged secular functions as householder for his wife and his two sons lived with him. The combination of 'piety and practical activity' exemplified in the life of Guru Nanak and his disciples. The concept of righteous living is meaningless except in the context of society. There is constant reference in his Bani to being in the world but not worldly. The ideal is to achieve saintliness as a member of society, to have a spiritual existence with the necessary material requisites - 'rajmen jog kamayo'. According to Guru Nanak, his disciples should have a longing to meet Him (God) and thus only can they abide 'pure amid the impurities of the world'. In this way, Guru Nanak enjoined upon his devotees that while living in the world, they should maintain an absolute - purity - purity of thought, word and deed.

According to Guru Nanak, the individual should
devote himself whole-heartedly to the all pervading, Omnipresent, Omnipotent and Omnicient Lord and should lead a family and social life. Emphasis was laid on the life of a householder, all the ascetic orders were decried. Asceticism exhibits defeatist mentality and passivity. It may lead to several evils and vices. One must work hard to earn one's livelihood and not to depend upon the mercy of others. Guru Nanak said, 'Those who work hard for their livelihood and give something in charity to the deserving can alone recognise the path leading towards the Lord'. The individual has not only to perform duties for self but also for his family and society. The service of humanity leads us towards the Lord. This is the social aspect of the spiritual culture of Guru Nanak Bani.

Guru Nanak was not merely a theoretical person whose task ends with his preaching for a better society in his compositions. But he was a practical person who wanted that a new society should be evolved in his own life time. His concern about the society is not only reflected in his Bani but more than that it is reflected in his life. By the early 1520s, we find Guru Nanak settled on the bank of the Ravi in the village of Kartarpur. He was more than fifty years old and the time had come for the application of the ideals which he evolved during those preceding years. However, the two decades of Guru Nanak's settled life at Kartarpur are by far the most important
period of his life in terms of his posthumous influence. Here he imparted regular instructions to his disciples.

At Kartarpur, Guru Nanak taught his tenets more by example than by precept. Guru Nanak's whole life was based on this ideal combination of ethical, spiritual and professional life. Guru Nanak had chequered career. He started life by learning the trade of buying and selling. He took the family herd to the pasture, he supervised the family farm, he accepted employment under Nawab Daulat Khan and for several years successfully managed the grain store. Whatever the vocation, he performed his duties diligently and honestly and yet there was ever present an under current of deep devotion to God. This is exactly what he taught to his disciples and this became, in course of time, the main characteristic feature of the new fraternity. This combination of work and worship came to be epitomised in a few simple words. 'Kirt karni, Wand chhakna te Nam japna', i.e., to earn one's livelihood with hard, honest work, to share with others the fruit of one's labour and to practice Nam Simran (the loving devotion to God).

Guru Nanak laid down a socio-political doctrine, which clearly defines his attitude towards authority. Though he was not a politician or a political scientist in the formal sense, his ideas on politics emerged from his attitude to life. Exploitation, in any form he detested,
because it cut at the very roots of human equality and dignity. According to Guru Nanak, authority in every sphere ultimately derives its validity from God. Like many thinkers in medieval Europe, he was of the view that the secular as well as the spiritual evolve from the same source - God. The Guru's concept is best explained by the following lines from the Zafar-Nama, which the 10th Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, wrote to Aurangzeb:

'The successors of both Baba Nanak and Babur were created by God himself. Recognize the former as a spiritual and the latter as a temporal king'.

Thus according to Guru Nanak, monarch was God ordained but the monarch exercises this power as a mandate from God and in order that he may continue to enjoy this boon, he must always act in consonance with God's dictates and the ruler must be responsible to the ruled. Kings cannot act as they like, owing no responsibility to the people placed under their rule. On the other hand, royal decisions were subject to public criticism. Guru Nanak himself criticised the rulers of his time. The right to criticise a ruler implies that if a ruler deviates from the path of justice and duty, the people are justified in rising against him. State should create conditions in which people are assured of social justice and fair play. All should be
treated as equals. The state should strive for the establishment of a casteless and classless society free from class bias. There should be no scope for exploitation of man by man.

Guru Nanak talks about the basic needs of individual, i.e., food, shelter and clothing and lays great responsibility on the state regarding their provision. The state should be democratic and should work for the well being and prosperity of individual and society as a whole. Likewise the individual should work for himself, his family and the state. The state should look after his requirements and those of his family. The head of the state should be considerate and should always think of the well being of his people. If a ruler leads a luxurious life without caring for the well being of his subject, his rule will be short lived and might create conditions for the growth of revolution in the state. Guru Nanak said:

'That king will hold the throne who has the necessary qualities of kingship and who follows the democratic ideals'.

Guru Nanak saw that the modern economic system of the world is not just. While a few live in luxury, millions are denied the primary needs of human life. Guru Nanak worked for a society in which there should be no economic inequality and economic exploitation. Guru Nanak was
against human parasites, living on the earnings of others. He preached necessity of labour for the maintenance of one's own livelihood. He set a beautiful example by earning his own living by cultivating his own land at Kartarpur during the last two decades of his life. This dignity of labour is reflected not only in his Rani, but in his life as well. Each was to get his due and none was to encroach upon what belonged to the other. 'That which belongs to another is unlawful, like the flesh of pig to the Muslims and that of a cow to the Hindus'. He expected from the rich, love, affection, care and better working conditions for the poor labourer by saying:

'Where the lowly are treated with loving care, there do Thy Mercy and Thy Grace descend'.

He propagated against exploitation of man by man. He wanted to put an end to the exploitation of all sorts. He always advocated the cause of the oppressed sections of humanity. He explained that honest earning was the sacred milk while huge wealth earned by employing dubious and unholy means was like dirty blood. He explained, 'If a cloth is strained with blood we call it dirty. How can then the mind of those who suck others blood be called chaste'.

He suggested voluntary sharing of one's earnings
with the less fortunate brethren. He gave recognition to the glaring truth that moral life can only subsist on a healthy physical and material foundation. He was foremost in paying meticulous attention to the physical and material side of life and in removing the deep rooted misunderstanding in men's mind that spiritual life consists in blindly negating and suppressing physical and material desires. He did not approve of celibacy and insisted on every capable adult man to lead a married life. He characterised the legitimate economic activities of the individual and his effort to earn livelihood for his dependents as the highest form of religious virtue and gave to mankind a system of economic and social principles for the regulation of worldly existence.

Guru Nanak preached universal brotherhood and amity among communities and nations. He advocated abolition of all distinctions based on caste and creed for he said:

'Call every one as high none is low for God, the only potter has fashioned all alike and his light pervades all creation, whom call high and whom low, when we see the same God within all'.

Guru Nanak strongly condemned caste system and proclaimed that all castes were equal. To give a practical
shape to his teachings in this regard, at Kartarpur he introduced the system of 'langar' (common kitchen) and pangat, (persons sitting together to eat formed the pangat). Here he himself dined with people of all castes and classes high or low. In the langar all dined together sitting on the ground without any distinction of caste, creed, religion or social status. Every one from a prince to a pauper was given the same treatment and was served the same food, prepared in the same kitchen and distributed in the same manner. A spirit of sacrifice, service and brotherhood was developed and the langer became a symbol of equality, fraternity and brotherhood. This is both secularism and socialism in the true sense of the word.

He declared that his preachings applied equally to people of all castes. He declared that caste and their prerogatives are not there in the next world and one can gain merit not through his birth in a particular caste but by the goodness of one's deeds. For sometime, he lived and dined with so called low caste Bhai Lalo. He, therefore, preached equality of men by saying:

'There is one father, we are all his children'.

His ideal of equality found practical expression in the common meals (langer) as well as the corporate worship (sangat) of the community at Kartarpur. His dharmaal at Kartarpur was open to all men and women irrespective of their caste or creed.
It may be safely assumed that he exhorted the visitors as well as his regular disciples at Kartarpur not to attach any importance to external forms, formalities and ritualism and laid emphasis on the adoption of ethical qualities, to discard pretence and hypocrisy and to cultivate inner devotion and a truly religious attitude by recognising the greatness of God, reflecting upon his revelation and by meditating on the Nam. Furthermore, it was at Kartarpur that a regular discipline and society was evolved for the adoration of God. Although born in a Hindu family he revolted against the principal Hindu customs and ceremonies. He rejected the rituals enjoined by the Shastras and said the real Karma is the remembrance of God. He tried his best to wean people away from all the impediments and formalities which stood in the way of purity of true religion. Ethics was regarded as the basis of all religious beliefs. He told people that spiritual awareness could not be attained without noble actions, without selfless service and without piety and truthful living. No ceremonies were performed by the Guru or his disciples at Kartarpur. On all occasions, happy or otherwise hymns from his Bani were recited and prayer was offered to the Nirankar. Shabad was of greater importance than rituals and was recited to remember God.

Guru Nanak advocated equality for women. He raised his voice to get them an equal status with men in
the domain of religion and society. The sons and daughters are all the creation of God, with the same light of God in them, says Guru Nanak. He enabled women folk to win recognition as independent social entity and laid the foundation for their educational and social development. At Kartarpur doors of his dharmshala were opened for all men and women. Women not only listened to the hymns of the Gurus but they could also sing the hymns and participated in the preparation of langer. For the first time in India, men and women of all faiths, castes and creeds could sit together and eat in the common kitchen of the Guru. Bhai Gurdas says: 'Lok Ved Gur Gyan Vichari Ardh Sariri Mokh Duari, i.e., "A woman is one half of the complete personality of man and is entitled to share his secular and spiritual knowledge equally with him. She is the gate-way to his spiritual liberation". Without her participation in social and religious activities man is incomplete and so is society.

The social world which Guru Nanak was seeking to create was one of complete understanding and equality between men and women, high and low, rich and poor - one of the realistic and positive thinking and free from rituals. The people of such a world were not to be guided by imposters, they were not supposed to cling to superstition or man made social prejudices. For them the mind was to be the only lamp that illuminates the dark path of ignorance.
and this lamp was to be kept eternally lighted. Thus his keen mind, free from all ancestral prejudices, led Guru Nanak to open a new road for the Indian society and built a new social order. Kabir and Ravidas managed to get spiritual initiation from the pious Vaishnava, Ramananda but still they could not eat in his kitchen. All superstitions and caste prejudices, however, melted like ice under the rays of Guru Nanak's wisdom. In India, religious and philosophical school which had met earlier at metaphysical and mystic heights came to mingle, now with one another on the social level.

The object of Guru Nanak was to leaven the social and religious thought of the Hindus and to improve the general tone of their moral, spiritual and social life and he was anxious that his work should continue after his death. With this object in view he appointed as his successor, Lehna by name, one of his own disciples whom he preferred to his own sons and who had shown, by his exemplary character, extra-ordinary piety and unflinching devotion, his fitness to occupy his position.

Guru Nanak lived for nearly seventy years and when he passed away in 1539 AD at Kartarpur, he had already transformed the lives of thousands of men and women who had come in personal contact with him, and by his noble life and inspiring teaching, had produced a new atmosphere in the country in which no one could breathe without being healthier
and stronger in the spirit. In the words of Gokal Chand Narang, 'Nanak left the Hindus of the Punjab immensely better than he had found them. Their belief had been ennobled, their worship purified, the rigidity of caste considerably relaxed, their minds greatly emancipated and they were now more fit to enter on the career of national progress to which Nanak's successors were destined to lead them. The seed had been sown. It had fallen on good soil, and with careful nursing it was bound to yield a plentiful crop when the time became ripe for it'.