Chapter 6
CONCLUSION

Ethics is the science of values in human conduct. We have sought to discover for ourselves and present somewhat systematically the values in human conduct as taught by the Gurus in Sikhism.

We have discovered a humanistic moral standard viewed in spiritual context. It is the realization of the ideal self, called sachiara. Wherefrom has this notion sachiara been derived? It was noted that this ideal was derived from the nature of the Absolute called Sat, Sach or Sachiar. The Absolute in Sikhism is conceived as Activity (Karta). The self-realization is patterned on the nature of the Absolute. The self, through its cognitive, affective and conative function, is to proceed to its ideal realization.

However, the moral agent proceeds with the notion and in the spirit that realization is not to be through his own conduct or effort unless it is simultaneously accompanied by grace. This provision of grace determines the whole spirit in which the activity of self realization is to be pursued. Nevertheless, the accent on moral actions as the necessary factor in self-realization brings in broad relief the stress placed in Sikhism on values in human conduct.
The objectivity of these values is ensured by grounding them in the Absolute but these are to be realized subjectively by the pursuer through their inculcation in his conduct.

Whether any and every one can carry on the effort of self-realization is an ethico-psychological question. This question is also conjoined with the requirement of spiritual realization in terms of devotion (bhakti). As in the case of the ethico-psychological question in bhakti, also, the problem is raised whether devotion is possible with an impure heart. Devotion, in a way, is a matter of attitude towards the object of devotion. Time and again the mystics have talked of the need to purify the heart for the perfection of this attitude.

The first and the second problems, namely, the ethico-psychological and the devotional both come practically to the same conclusion by stressing the need to control and conquer different passions and propensities recognised by them as immoral and harmful for the unity of the self. In Christianity one notices the recognition of this truth. We have already referred to a very comprehensive examination of different passions in their ethico-spiritual context by St. Thomas Aquinas. View is also expressed by the Stoics that each person must make his soul the regulating power of his life activities and should not cave in under the impact of gruesome forces of passion and evil propensities. Spinoza and Kant similarly appear to have been deeply influenced by the Stoicism in their ethical theories.
noteworthy distinction between action and passion made by Spinoza finds a ready parallel to some extent in the autonomy and the heteronomy of the will as visualised by Kant.

In Sikhism, also, great stress is laid on the need to overcome these passions and evil propensities for the emancipation from these oppressive evil forces and also to realize the unity of the self. This emancipation alone can ensure the autonomy of the self. The self under the sway of these passions is very frequently called mumukshu. The passions and propensities recognised generally in Sikhism are concupiscence, covetousness, delusion of attachment, anger and pride. We have already seen the grave danger to the moral agent who does not conquer them and thereby fails to ensure the steadfastness of the self. We have also referred to similar views as held by the different schools of Indian Philosophy. We may here conclude by making the observation that the Sikh ethics has a remarkably similar approach to this problem of conquering passions and propensities except for the fact that in Sikhism these are required to be sublimated, by virtues, as the springs of action rather than by physical torture or recourse to asceticism.

Is the self, relieved from the oppressive influence of these inclinations and passions, to remain vacuous? Is a person required only to overcome his passions? The answer in Sikhism to this question is in the negative. The self is to channel its actions through the virtues. The virtues
are the qualities of the self as witnessed in its conduct and accomplishments. The virtues cited generally in Sikhism are to be cultivated as permanent traits of conduct. These are comprehensive and all inclusive. The list discussed in the present dissertation includes wisdom, truthfulness, temperance, justice, courage, humility and contentment. These may be spoken of as cardinal virtues in Sikhism.

We have discovered during our examination of the virtues that great stress is laid on the conduct of the moral agent who imbibes these virtues. Again, this list of virtues in Sikhism can be seen to have some affinity with both the Western as well as the Eastern approach to the question of virtues. In this it is also pertinent to add that in terms of the application of these virtues to all persons, Sikhism is closer to the general Western notion of virtues. In the West generally these are the virtues which every one may be required to acquire and similar is the view held in Sikhism. However, in India virtue such as courage was sometimes considered to be a specialised virtue (vishesha dharma) of generally the warrior caste. These virtues are, thus identified as the imperatives for different castes. Sikhism, which breaks through this notion of the specialised virtues, is sometimes itself referred to as the warrior class created for the protection of others. We have, however, discovered here that the stress in Sikhism is laid on the need to cultivate all the virtues and Sikhism is not to be reduced to a sort
of communal or national guard. The general impression which appears to lay emphasis on the martial aspect of Sikhism thus commits a fallacy of substantiating an abstraction. Whatever are the historical or political reasons for the popularization of this one-sided image of Sikhism we can say, on the basis of our discoveries in the present dissertation, that the moral approach in Sikhism is that of all-comprehensive cultivation of virtues. At times the stress on courage in Sikhism is meant mostly to awaken the sense of authenticity in man but it would be wrong to interpret the whole of the Sikh approach to life in merely these martial terms. Our study here amply provides against such an exclusive interpretation which otherwise seems to be popularly accepted on the basis of insufficient evidence or as illicit generalization. We must reiterate that in Sikhism a person is advised to cultivate these virtues and that all persons are required to cultivate all of the virtues. Raza as the moral principle of duties envisages the performance of one's function to the best of one's creatively progressive ability and Rahit apart from relating a person to the organisation, also stress the role of moral duties.

We have also discovered that apart from treating virtues as personal moral traits, the persons are required to qualify their social acts by moral principles. The principle of equality may thus be seen to be intimately connected with the virtue of justice. We also find that the metaphysical notions of Sikhism are directly applied to social relationships. It is conceived in Sikhism that all selves are spiritually related. There is an underlying
spiritual unity which runs through all. But due to the influence of consciousness of individuation (hooman) we fail to discern this unity of all. The Gurus generally appear to prefer the use of the term hooman (I-am-mess) over avidya (ignorance) The term hooman seems to highlight the fact that the moral trouble lies in the human failure to discern this element of unity. Also the human error in mistaking the individuation as the reality is brought in broad relief. Thus men are not separated from each other in reality. It is only this consciousness of individuation which causes this wrong belief. In the social relationships of the moral agent he is required to direct his attention to the realization of this underlying spiritual unity of selves. The typical phraseology used is that of 'seeing One in all'. However, in what Sikhism may be said to differ from similar approaches, is in its stress on the need to realize this unity in terms of action.

While discussing social ethics we had occasion to point out that sometimes even those idealistic systems which are acclaimed in India as contributing to the theory of universalism in fact tacitly or openly were constrained to permit the perpetuation of practices which in conduct nearly is tantamount to the denial of this universalism. The institution of caste system in India has proved to be the acid test about the acceptance of universalism, the minimum of which may be said to be indicated through the acceptance
of equality. Sikhism fulfills the requirement of this acid test by a complete rejection of the caste system and the promulgation of equality of all men. The heavy price which it had to pay for this rejection of inequality by provoking the wrath of the privileged persons is a matter of history but may be alluded to here to cite the high esteem in which this equality is held by the Gurus, and the extent to which they were willing to go for accepting the logical implications of their universalistic approach.

But it may ask whether the social relations ought not to go beyond this mere equality. We have noted that as a minimum this equality is a necessity but the social relations are required to go beyond this mere equality. The ethics of the Sikhs requires realizing in conduct of the tenet of the universal brotherhood of mankind. Apart from the conquering of those passions and propensities which may hinder this realization we also notice the stress laid on the need to renounce enmity and slander. On the positive side altruism and disinterested social service are presented as ideals for the realization of the human brotherhood. Social conduct is a step toward the extension of the sphere of the moral and spiritual activity. It is what may be called applied spirituality.

Is social conduct not binding? Ought not a man renounce the social involvements and commitments by taking recourse to a life of seclusion? The answer of the Gurus, as we have
found, is in the negative. In Sikhism a complete embargo is placed on the renunciation of the social context of one's ethical-spiritual activity. Even worship is socialised and it is given the name of 'sat sangat' (the company of good persons). This sat sangat is not constituted of some ascetics who have left their homes for their spiritual quest. Such ascetics would be entering into a dialogue with the lay from entirely different backgrounds and thus would prove not helpful to the persons who are seeking to surge forward spiritually even while they are continuing their social function and participation. The sat sangat as envisaged in Sikhism is constituted of the social group of the good persons who sit together and reflect on the various problems along with the performance of the spiritual function of worship. In these groups the self learns to associate itself with the larger social groups and thus relieves the stress on the individuality of the self which might accrue from the egoistic approach to worship. This may also help the person in overcoming social conflicts which may arise when the persons are not willing to identify each other as spiritually related, devoid of artificial distinctions of caste or class. Thus we may discern that apart from refusing the permission to abandon the social context, the Sikh ethics also seeks to weld all together and thereby enable them to realise their spiritual-relatedness. Sat sangat also becomes a medium of the ethical-spiritual education.
In examining the concept of the supreme ideal we have discovered that Sikhism has adopted the traditional terminology of *jivan mukti*, *mokh dvar*, *nirban*, *param pad*, and *sachiaar*. It has both the negative and the positive aspects and emphasis is laid on both these aspects of realization. It is the highest good to which a self aspires or what it realizes. It marks both freedom from as well as freedom to. It is freedom from bondage to individuation. The separation and alienation of man from man and of man from God haunts the self. Fear and anxiety, born of this consciousness of alienation, dissolve in the unitive experience of the self. This unitive experience is realized though the concerted effort of the whole personality—along with grace—and the realization also is reflected through cognition, affection and conation of the self. Here the person does not cease good actions. We may say that his actions become spontaneously moral (*sehaj subhaya*).

Such persons, to whatever spatio-temporal environments they may belong, are the fervent hope and ideal of humanity. The world seers have sought to create and recreate, such an authentic man. Here is the point of convergence of the great humanistic world traditions of Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Sikhism. It is the narrowness of ego which may so incapacitate the person that he does not recognize this convergence.

Whether the Sikhs have measured up to this ideal is an open question. Much self-introspection may be required.
for an honest answer. Even an occasional authoritarian egoism is quite against the great universalistic spirit of the ideal of the Sikh ethics. Again, we may say that, dogmatism is contrary to the moral tradition which stresses the need for wisdom and also the necessity to explode the shell of superstition. An open mind and an open heart coupled with the strenuous mood in the spirit of blissful equipoise and an endless creative activity for realizing the Oneness of what appears to be the pluralistic is the great hall-mark of the ethics of the Sikhs. In this we find Sikhism attempting a synthesis of mysticism with realism in the ethico-spiritual realm of the human beings.