Chapter 7
SUPREME IDEAL

7.1: Prolegomena

Man, during his sojourn in socio-natural environments very often pauses to reflect on some of the problems which may seem to touch him very deeply. The question of any ultimate purpose of life very often appears on the horizon of such an inquisitive mind. The question may sometimes be dismissed with the characteristic refusal to go beyond just what a person has assured himself to be the truth. However, with some other person or with the same person at some other time, the inquiry may appear to be fascinating and alluring. It may invite him to open his mind to possibilities which he had not heretofore entertained. He may then launch upon the adventure of seeking an answer to the above question of supreme ideal. The nature of answers so arrived at may be seen to have given rise to a wide variety of theological and philosophical theories.

Historically, in India, to some extent, the credentials and bona fides of all the systems and theories appear to have been accepted or rejected pre-eminently in terms of the answer to the question of the ultimate goal of human life. The role of other factors, however, also may be accepted in this regard. Mention may be made of a particular
example of a system which sought either to remain non-committed in respect of this question or did not go as far as men may be tempted to go. Did this system, which we identify as Buddhism, succeed in avoiding the question forever? Was it allowed to sustain its non-committal attitude? Perhaps this earlier attitude, along with various other factors, may explain its partial eclipse in India. Again, we find that later Buddhists took up the question of the ultimate ideal with all the gusto peculiar to an Indian mind generally in such matters.

An average Indian today may feel that the question of the ultimate teleology has received too much attention in the past. Some such feelings in the near past may perhaps have been one of the conditions contributory to the fact that after Sikhism no major system has emerged in India during the last few centuries. The present ideology appears to be generally parasitical in the sense that it tacitly accepts the truths averred by the earlier systems, without risking to venture into new vistas. Some persons may point to this as meaning a lack of any strenuous mood among the average person of today. But this absence of new systems in itself may also bring to notice the inherent strength of the answers given by the earlier thinkers. A robust persistence of these solutions and truths may be cited in a way to emphasize their vitality and appeal.

Sikhism, which is the last major system to emerge in
India, appears to attempt an answer to the question of the supreme goal of life. We have already referred to it in the chapter on Moral Standard. The ideal is to be a fully realized self or to be a sachiara. We may now seek to know the spiritual realization of the sachiara, which is, in 'Japji' termed by the Guru as the realization of the 'Sach Khand'; and also by various other names in Japji as well as other compositions of the Adi Granth. Let us now proceed to examine the view about the spiritual realization or the realization of the Ideal Self as found in Sikhism.

7.2: Sikh view of spiritual realization

While discussing the moral standard we had sought to define the goodness and rightness of the acts in terms of their conduciveness to the realization of the Sachiara-hood. Negatively speaking, this was described as the complete transcendence of the ego (human). We have also attempted to see the application of this standard in terms of the unity of the self, liberation from imbalances and regulation of passions by virtues. An effort has also been made to view the role of standard in social relations, that is, liberation from 1-ness and mine-ness.

We may now take up the third important aspect of this ego-transcendence, namely, the spiritual realization. There are two aspects of this realization, (1) Jivan mukti, that is, realization in life, and (2) "Avan jan mite", "Avan jan chhute" or "chhuti", that is, cessation of coming and going
or cessation of transmigration and absorption in the Absolute (joti jot samana).

As the words suggest the first aspect of this realization refers to the self in its empirical form and the second is the stage after the cessation of the empirical mode of existence.

However, the terms mukti, mokh dvar, mokh and nirban are also used along with such other terms as param pad, sehaj awastha, turya or chautha pad to signify any one of these two aspects, namely, the realization in the life and the realization after life. Therefore, the sense in which any one of these terms is used by the Gurus can only be known by analysing the particular context in which it occurs.

Some brief reference to the second aspect will be made but the text will be generally occupied with the first, namely, jivan mukti, that is, realization in life, as this has direct bearing on our examination of the ethical theory of the Sikhs.

---


3 Ibid., Sri Rag M.3 (4-19-52), p. 34.


5 Ibid., Sri Rag M.3 (6-6-23), p. 68.
7.3: **Jivan mukti (realization in life)**

Jivan mukti is viewed from two angles in Sikhism, namely, (1) Negative, and (2) Positive. Generally speaking the same term is used for both but the differences in meaning which it carries in each usage are very clear. We shall examine both of these aspects of jivan mukti in detail.

**Negative aspect of jivan mukti**

We find that along with jivan mukti the Gurus have also used jivat marna, that is, die while alive, and other similar terms to denote usually the negative aspect of ego-transcendence.

(1) The most common and all comprehensive negative description of this aspect is in terms of the riddance of the ego or the transcendence of the consciousness of individuation. Guru Nanak says, "Call him a jivan mukta who is rid of his ego."¹ This is repeated by Guru Amardas when he says, "Jivan mukta ... is not riddled with the malady of ego."² Thus the all-inclusive characteristic is that it has no consciousness of itself as separate from others and from the underlying source of all. I-ness and mine-ness is the end result of the consciousness of individuation and separation. When this separative awareness gives way to unitive consciousness, by the expansion of consciousness, the self is said to have overcome the human.

¹Ibid., Maru M.1 (7-2), p. 1010, "Jivan mukta so jania jis vichon houman jae."

²Ibid., Maru M.3 (9-5-14), p. 1058, "Jivan mukta ... houman rog na tahaya."
(2) The jivan mukta has also dispelled ignorance and darkness (hinäs jae andhär). This, however, directly follows from the eradication of consciousness of the ego since the person under the grip of the ego is declared by the Guru to be stark ignorant and this is overcome by the jiva mukta.

(3) Apart from the above all-comprehensive characteristic of the jivan mukta there is a mention of other noteworthy features. A jivan mukta is said to have erased all vices. As Guru Nanak puts it, "and erased is the vice of one's mind ... and one becometh a jivan mukta." At another place he repeats the same when he says, "The jivan mukta is free because he has got rid of the vice and his virtues redeemeth him." Such a free one, according to the Guru, is rare. "He forsa[keth the world's evil, bitter to him they taste."

(4) The jivan mukta is also said to have complete self-control over himself. He is not effected by the disturbing imbalances.

---

1Ibid., Dhanasri M. 5 (4-2-20), p. 675.  
2Ibid., Maru M.1 (7-2), p. 1010.  
3Ibid., Ramkali M.1 (4-3), p. 904. "Durmut parhari ... jivan mukta gut anter pic."  
5Ibid., Gauri M.1 (1-11), p. 224.  
6Ibid., Prabhati M.1 (7-2), p. 1343. "Jap tap sanjam ... jivan mukta ja sabad sunaya."
(5) The ideal self-control of the jivan mukta is described in the traditional terms. He is said to have the capacity to regard "pain and pleasure, poison and nectar, honour and dishonour, king and commoner, alike."\(^1\) He can regard both shade and sunshine as the same.\(^2\) Here we should not confuse the jivan mukta with any pathological state of apathy but it characterises jivan mukta's capacity, his power of self-control and his ability to control and to regulate the seemingly powerful sway of all these attractions and repulsions. In this the jivan mukta reaches the ideal state. Thus, jivan mukta is one who looketh upon "pain and pleasure alike\(^3\) because he is more powerful than these attractive or repulsive valences. A similar view about jivan mukta is expressed by Sri Sankaracharya in his Atmabodha. He tells us, "A yogi, who is a jivamukta, after crossing the ocean of delusion and killing the monsters of passion and aversion, becomes united with Peace ... \(^4\)

(6) A jivan mukta is described as having risen above treh-gun\(^5\) (three modes) in which, according to the Sankhya


School of Indian Philosophy, the whole world is entangled and to the operation of which every one is subjected. In rising above the operation of these guns as the jivan mukta may be said to be detached from the things of the world, though the Guru tells us that he does not relinquish his social participation. It is in this sense that Guru Nanak states that he has no fear of contamination in the house as was the notion of those who renounced the household (sanyasa). Even Sankara was of the view that realization of the ideal is possible only in the fourth asrama (stage of life), namely, sanyasa. Guru Nanak, however, points out that a jivan mukta is not one who leaves the household and moves away from social participation. There is no such necessity of leaving society and taking recourse to the jungle. According to Guru Nanak such a man remains detached within the house.¹ This is a significant point of departure from the traditional division of life into four stages in the ethics of the Hindus in which the ideal could be realized only when the person completely renounces the social context and proceeds to a life away from the humdrum of life and its vicissitudes. In Sikhism while the need for a change in attitude is accepted the context of this change is required to be social. The person is expected to continue to work for his fellow beings.

(7) Such a jivan mukta is humble and has not the

¹Ibid., Bamkali M.1, Siddha Goshti (39), p. 942.
slightest vestige of pride in him. According to Bhai Gurdas, the jivan mukta has reduced himself to the dust of the feet of others and has thus died in life.¹

(8) The author of Gurpratap Surya mentions that the capacity to face events with equanimity is a sign of having overcome the sway of different valances (bhana manana mum thir keeje).² This is one of the three important stages of the mukta. The second state, namely, the removal from the mind of the consciousness of separation (tunhanta ko ride birono) has already been discussed above. The third aspect refers to the positive realization and will be dealt with when we take up the positive aspect.

Positive aspect of jivan mukti

The positive aspect of jivan mukti, that is, freedom while living in a body, may now be viewed from various aspects. This is the highest state a person can and ought to realize while in the existential state.

(1) The jivan mukta is identified as a person in whom the Gurus’s wisdom is awakened. He is said to be awake night and day which signifies the perfection of his consciousness. His intellectual apparatus is fully serviceable and reaches its zenith. All this comes through his reflection on the Guru’s word.³

¹Bhai Gurdas, Var, stanza 16, Var 18.
³Adi Granth, Ramkali M.1 (5-3+, p. 904.)
In contradistinction to the person who has lost his thinking power the jivan mukta is all reflection. This reflection, apart from intellectual function, involves reflection on the source of all consciousness and existence, namely, "Nam". The jivan mukta, according to the Guru, reflects on this universal consciousness Nam. The state of freedom while in the phenomenal body signifies this vastness of consciousness which the jivan mukta acquires by his contemplation of the Ground of all consciousness. This refers to the purification of mind as well as the ideal state of consciousness which a self is capable of, and may be described as emergence in the Absolute. It is this sense of cognitive perfection of the jivan mukta which is alluded to by Bhai Gurdas when he speaks of the jivan mukta as "wise within but innocent without." This is when he reaches the ideal state of consciousness.

The mukta is said to know himself because he knows the soul ("Atma nu atma di pahreet"). It has searched the deepest recesses within in order to know itself. The jivan mukta is wise as this "essence of the self (atma) is known

\[\text{Ibid., Maru M.1 (7-2), p. 1010.}\]
\[\text{Ibid., Malhar M.3 (3-5), p. 1259.}\]
\[\text{Ibid., Maru M.3 (9-5-14), p. 1059. "Har so wad hi rahe namai".}\]
\[\text{Bhai Gurdas, Var, stanza 17, Var 4.}\]
\[\text{Adi Granth, Shaloka M.3 (1-12), p. 87.}\]
only by the wise in the Absolute. Guru Nanak asks, "What kind is the man of wisdom?" He himself answers, "He who knoweth himself, knoweth alone." Guru Arjan Dev remarks that "millions are seekers of God and reach it in their very self and for sure meet it."

This knowledge, however, is not the knowledge of the self as an independent and autonomous entity but as the reality to be 'One' ("Ek paechata"). The highest knowledge, therefore, is the knowledge of non-duality. In this we may recognise Sikhism to have close affinity to the traditional non-dualistic traditions of India.

(2) The second aspect of this realization is the affective communion of the jivan mukta with the Absolute. This communion is identified as love (prem, prit and pyar). The Guru stresses this realization through the use of symbols. He says, "In the cage of love, the parrot uttereth the words of love, and it pecketh at Truth in the sense in which we have defined truth earlier and sucketh nectar. And when it flieth out, it cometh not back again, door of emancipation is opened unto it." He is said to "merge in

---

the Spiritual through love."

The stress on the love-realization is a very prominent feature of Sikhism. It may be traced to the devotional element in Sikhism. This love is noticed in a different ethical background by the ethicist, Nicolai Hartmann. He calls it the love of the remote, which in his scale, appears after the love of the nearest (altruism); the love of the nearest in itself having transcended the self-love (egoism). According to him the "Love of the remotest seeks a different measure of efficiency, an efficacy which will last. It is Plato's immortal virtues." In Sikhism it is not the love of the remotest as it contributes to the theory of spiritual constituent in the self, though it agrees with Hartmann when the latter considers this love to be higher than self-love (egoism).

The supreme value accorded to love as one of the fundamentals of the positive aspect of realization, is seen throughout the Adi Granth. Guru Nanak says, "Of what avail is the human birth when one loveth not devotion to one's God: Yes, fruitless are one's eats and wears if one be ridden with the sense of the other [to God]." In Christianity, in a similar vein, St. Paul proclaims, "And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge;

1Ibid., Gauri M.1 (1-11), p. 224.
2Nicolai Hartmann, op. cit., 318.
3Adi Granth, Shaloka left over from the Vars, Shaloka M.1, p. 1411.
and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountain, and have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing. The accent on love in the passages cited from the Adi Granth and the Christian Bible shows some similarity of approach in the two traditions. A similar longing and realization is expressed by a Sufi poet, Ibrahim Adam, who sings, "0 God, Thou knowest that in mine eyes the eight paradises weight no more than the wing of a gnat compared with the honour which Thou hast shown me in giving me Thy Love, or that Familiarity which Thou hast given to me by the commemoration of Thy Name, or that freedom from all else which Thou hast vouchsafed to me when I meditate on the Greatness of Thy Glory." A similar declaration by the Guru was noticed by us earlier. He reiterates it when he says, "I seek no dominion or pearls either, for I crave for nothing but the love of thy lotus-feet."
What is this love, which appears to be so intense, so overpowering, so soothing and which is shown to be of great ultimate value? The answer to this question is not easy as this love par excellence belongs essentially to the realm of experience. It is a feeling which cannot be explained by any one other than the man who has experienced it and even in his case the whole description is riddled with mystic expressions. It is a mystic experience of communion. We may say, it is 'forward looking', it is 'looking within' and 'looking up', all of which expressions, I am painfully conscious, fail miserably in communicating it. And yet, it is not doubted that it is described to be the highly valuable experience, one which ranks among the ultimate. As pointed out by a scholar of Christianity, Clement C.J. Webb, "Jesus, in the Gospel of Mark, in answer to the question as to which commandment is the first of all replied as follows, 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One; and thou shalt love the Lord, thy God with all thy mind, and with all thy strength'."¹ We have already referred to the teachings of the Gurus who place love among the ultimate, the positive aspect of those liberated while in existential life. The stress on it is seen in the views

---

of another Christian scholar who explains, "Love now becomes the superior ethos of the personal, which perfects and completes the inferior ethos of the purely real and institutional." Later, the scholar shows love to mean the same thing as "the revelation of God." Similarly the Guru says, "When I see my loved God ..., and I utter, O Love, O Love." We may notice some features of this love as under:

(1) This love, arises not out of fear, but from a sense of thankfulness. Guru Tegh Bahadur says, "You have been blest with the body and riches, thou lovest not the Giver." In a similar tone it is again said, "He who gave thee body, riches, happiness and beauteous mansions, why are you not attuned to Him?"

(2) However, this love is not for the sake of seeking rewards. It may be born out of a sense of gratitude but it is not 'for' seeking things here or hereafter. A love which is the love for gaining something is declared to be vain. Guru Nanak says, "They who make business of their love, O vain is their love."

---

1 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, op. cit., pp. 49-50.
2 Ibid., p. 50.
5 Ibid., Shaloka M.9 (8), p. 1426.
6 Ibid., Shaloka left from Vars, Shaloka M.1 (21), p. 1411.
(3) The demand of love may be strenuous. It requires persistence and continuity. A person who is discouraged and distracted is not in love. Guru Arjan Dev says, "They alone love their God who turn not away from Him ... Yes, the men of false love fall off [on the way] for they know not the love-way."¹

(4) Love would demand supreme sacrifice and there is no backing out for a person who loves in this manner. It is his commitment. Jesus Christ depicted the consummation of love by his supreme sacrifice. Guru Nanak also points out the need for being prepared to sacrifice all for this love. This involves a complete transcendence of the ego or the ego-consciousness. Guru Nanak tells us, "If thou art zealous of playing Love, then enter upon my path with thy head on thy palm. Yea, once thou settest thy foot on this way, then find not a way out, and lay down thy head."² In a different background the need for sacrifice in love is highlighted by Hartmann when he says, "It is the abandonment of the present for what is future, uncertain; the sacrifice of his life for another life, for one more valuable, but one that is not his own."³ According to the Gurus, it is abandonment of any consideration for the self of one's own.

¹Ibid., Shaloka M.5, p. 1412. Cf., also, "He, in whose heart abideth the Name, his mind is held, and night and day, he keepeth faith with his love." Ibid., Shaloka M.1 (1-14), p. 352.

²Ibid., Shalokas left over from the Vars, Shaloka M.1, p. 1411.

³Nicolai Hartmann, op. cit., pp. 314-315.
It is simply a committal towards the love of the Spiritual.

(5) The gurus say that even worship is the love-worship which is known as premabhakti, again quoting Guru Nanak, "Worship through love and burn thy sense of worldly attachment, and see only but One, for there is not another."¹

(6) The spirit in which the person in love proceeds is utter humility and the same is reflected in his love-realization. He has no pride of his achievements. He approaches the love with the conviction that he has not earned merit through them. The spirit ought to be, "I have practised not meditation, nor austerity, nor self-control, nor righteous deeds, but I have cherished in the mind thy Name, O Lord, I know not a thing, for little is my wisdom; Nanak prays to thee, O God, I lean on thee."² Such a characteristic is peculiar to Sikhism in contradistinction to certain Sufis, who under the ecstasy (wajad) give expression to a sort of frenzy. In Sikhism, while proceeding toward this love as well as while in communion with it a person radiates humility and equipoise.

(7) The expression as well as possession of equipoise is stressed throughout the Adi Granth. Guru Amardas says, "O chatrik, utter thou the word, in poise loving the true word, and thou see-est everything within thee."³ In a

¹Adi Granth, Shaloka M.1, p. 355.
³Ibid., Shaloka M.3 (56), p. 1420.
similar tone Guru Ramdas says, "True is the love of the God-conscious being, through which one attaineth one's true God, and one is ever in bliss and mergeth in equipoise." 1

(8) Love is said to make a person fearless. It is this characteristic (mirbhan) which we noticed in the second chapter as well as in the discussion of virtues. We discovered the great stress laid on the need to be fearless. Here we find that this fearlessness arises out of love. Guru Nanak says, "If love is thy feed, thy doubt and fear depart; for when the Glorious Lord standeth at thy door, no one can break into thy home." 2 This love thus dispels all anxiety and fear of being overtaken again by the failings of the finitude. The radiance of the love of the Spiritual makes a person face up to any event.

(9) This love is wismad, the aesthetic communion of self with the Spiritual. All that has been said about love is true about wismad. It has an element of wonder, the wonder inspired by the vastness of the love for the Spiritual. The Gurus, however, use interchangeably the two, love and aesthetic communion, in synonymous meanings. The Guru says that every thing iswismad and thus identifies wismad with whole of the existence. 3 While commenting on this Sher Singh says, "... then God is wismad, the world is wismad

1 Ibid., Shaloka M.4 (10), p. 1422.
2 Ibid., Shaloka M.1, p. 355.
3 Ibid., Thitti Gauri M.5 (11), p., 299. "Nanak sabh wismad."
and the self is wismad and thus all the three merge into
the state of wismad.\textsuperscript{1}

(10) We have already referred to 'Nam' as the universal consciousness. According to Sher Singh 'Nam' is the
"sympathetic and aesthetic communion of man with man and
environments." He explains further, "Love and aesthetic
appreciation form its basis."\textsuperscript{2} This may lead us to conclude
that judged from the affective aspect, love is the most
important response, if we may say so; the ultimate and the
all-comprehensive response of the jivan mukta which indicates
his aesthetic communion with the Spiritual. This communion
is expressed through 'Liv',\textsuperscript{3} which is defined by the above
author as "the continuous feeling of Unity."

Lastly, we may notice that according to the Guru love
indicates the absence of all vices. Guru Arjan Dev says,
"Yea, His love is so strong that it hath overwhelmed all my
vices."\textsuperscript{4} This would, naturally, take us to the next part of
our analysis, namely, the actions of the jivan mukta.

(3) We may now take for analysis the third aspect
of jivan mukta, that is, his realization as indicated in
his actions.

\textsuperscript{1}Sher Singh, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 239.
\textsuperscript{2}Ibid., p. 242.
\textsuperscript{3}Adi Granth, Basant M.i (6-4), p. 1189. "Aap pacchane
rahe liv lage, Janam jeet gurmut dukh bhaga."
\textsuperscript{4}Ibid., Kedara M.5 (2-1-9), p. 1121.
(a) The all-comprehensive realization in the sphere of actions, according to the Guru, is the altruistic activity of the jivan mukta. This is called his rahit (the conduct). Guru Nanak remarks, "When one dwelleth on the word, one's mind floweth out to serve the others ... Yea, on hearing Guru's word, one becometh jivan mukt. His conduct is pious (or true) and is ever in bliss." In fact the test of the spiritual realization is in the conduct of the person, and this conduct of the jivan mukta is said to be 'sacha', in terms of which we have identified the moral standard in our present thesis.

(b) Even the contemplation of the One is said to be through deeds. Guru Nanak says, "If one disciplines the mind ... and through deeds contemplates the true One, then he is ever detached." The contemplation is thus not an idler's contemplation but a contemplation of deeds. The stress on the practice is also quite prominent in the teaching of Guru Arjandras when he says, "jivan mukt is one who practiseth the word of the Guru."  

(c) According to the Guru actions are reflected through the attitude of self towards others. Among others, the actions which he calls forgiveness, are the characteristic

---

1Ibid., Prabhati M.1 (8-2), p. 1343 ("Jivan mukta ja sabad sunya, Sachi Rahit Sacha Sukh apaye").
2Ibid., Bilawal M.1 (Thitti)(10), p. 839.
3Ibid., Maru M.3 (9-5-14), p. 1058.
of a person named by the Guru as emancipated. He has no taste for vengeance. His actions, therefore, are completely free from bitterness which a person may harbour if he does not forgive others. In a similar vein Jesus Christ had said, "Forgive them for they know not." This is the broad spirit of the actions of the jivan mukta. Actions of forgiveness are the actions of ego-transcendence. A person riddled with the desire for vengeance is a person loaded with ego-consciousness. Actions of forgiveness are the same as those of charity. True charity is the response of the person which implies overlooking the faults of others even when those may appear to have a bearing on him. It is then that the actions of a jivan mukta may show their superiority over the actions of a person charged with ego-consciousness.

(d) Actions ('kar') of the realized self are, according to the Guru, in accordance with the universal will (hukm) which we had earlier described as good will or rather holy will as operating within him. At the stage of final realization actions of the self are declared to be in complete harmony with the hukm. The conduct of the mukta or the realized self, therefore, attains the highest moral perfection and goodness.

We have seen that in Sikhism there is a great stress on the moral aspect of human action. The Guru says that

---

a realized self can do no evil. We may, therefore, not agree with the author of *Premsumarag* who seems to suggest that at this stage the distinction between moral and immoral is also lost. While discussing the final stage, which he calls sehaj yoga, he says if any (koi) woman so desires the person in the sehaj awastha should not hesitate to enter into sexual consummation with her. The same is the advice of the compiler to the person himself if he is so moved by kam (sex urge). This writing is clearly un-Sikh so far as this statement is concerned. The writings of the Gurus are very clear on this point. We have already seen in the chapter on motivation that kam is regulated through married life and the excess in it, in terms of lust, is required to be overcome. The citation above, that the realized self can do no evil, is an unequivocal indicator that such a moral laxity as suggested by the author under reference is grossly against the spirit and moral teachings of Sikhism. It is perhaps for this reason that Bhai Kahan Singh has not included the last chapter of *Premsumarag* in the copy edited by him in *Gurmatsudhakar*. The possibility of this part having been interpolated at some stage cannot also be ruled out.

---


The self, or jivan mukta, is, therefore, realized from all aspects. The three aspects of his personality, namely, cognitive, affective and emotive reflect this realization.  

7.4: Jivan mukta and Bliss

We may now ask the question whether or not the jivan mukta realizes bliss. The question is necessary because we had noted earlier that he is completely detached from the feeling of pain and pleasure, and we may like to know whether he rises above even bliss which is generally distinguished from sensual pleasure and pain. In case he transcends even bliss we may conclude that the jivan mukta is ushered into a void.

However, we find that according to the Gurus the realized self is Bliss and thus jivan mukta does not inhabit any abandoned land of void and nothingness. On this point Guru Nanak says, "When the soul realizes the Absolute, it is bliss."  

1 It may be proper to add here that as all these aspects reflect the ultimate realization, and all of these participate in the highest attainment, the Gurus sometimes may refer to any one alone in terms of the highest realization. From any such reference we should not form the idea that the Gurus regard any one particular aspect, so referred to, as the only clue to the realization.

The realization of Bliss is due to the fact that the Absolute is Bliss and when the jiva realizes the Absolute, it itself is unfettered Bliss. Guru Ramdas expresses this view when he says, "Those who know the true Guru, know the God to be One alone, and see Him, the Blissful to pervade all, all over, and they know their self and attain unto supreme Bliss." Guru Ram Das also repeats, "Lord, the Embodiment of Bliss came into my heart." Similarly Guru Arjan Dev says, "When I examined myself, I revelled in felicity." All this points to the fact that according to the Gurus the Absolute is of the nature of Bliss and as the self in essence is not different from it, on realization it is Bliss too. This Bliss is also described as equipoise.

Bliss, indicates as well, the realization of the love. According to Guru Ramdas, "True is the love of the God-conscious being, through which one attaineth one's true God. And one is ever in Bliss and mergeth in equipoise." Bliss reflects the transformation of the egoitry will by the universal, good will.

2Ibid., Sorah M.4 (2-7), p.607
4Ibid., Shaloka M.5, p. 1425.
5Ibid., Shaloka M.4, p. 1422.
6Ibid., Shaloka M.5, p. 1425.
This view of Sikhism distinguishes it from Nyaya school of Indian philosophy. However, a similar view of bliss as the realization of the jivan mukta may be found in the teachings of Sankara when he says that the \"jivan mukta realizes Bliss on his realization of his true nature as Existence-Knowledge-Bliss.\"^2

7.5: **Realization after destruction of the body**

Ultimate Realization, that is, Realization unencumbered by the body, is viewed in Sikhism from two aspects. Speaking negatively, it is identified as cessation of transmigration. It is also variously described as end of coming and going, or overcoming the round. The positive aspect is called emergence of light in Light (joti jot samana or milai). It is also called union (Sanjog).

Guru Amardas says, \"The true fare is God's true love, for through the true Name one gathereth Bliss. And so being Bliss, one liveth eternally and is not cast in the womb again. And one's soul mergeth in the Oversoul of the True One.\"^3 This passage quite clearly points out to the two aspects of this realization. One is that a jiva is not born again in this world. The second and positive aspect is that it is united with God and thus realizes its supreme ideal.

---

That the realization after cessation of existential life is a continuation of liberation experienced by the jivan mukta is fortified by a declaration of Guru Amardas. He says that the one who dies while alive (jivan mukta), is blessed, because he cherisheth truth in the heart through the Guru's word. It is further said that truth is the feed of such a God-conscious being, and his life is stainless, his mind is devoid of evil. He is an ocean of virtue. Consequently, he cometh not, nor goeth and he is born not to die again.\(^1\) We may, therefore, say that the path of a person from jivan mukti to the mergence in the over Light marks a continuity. It is perhaps due to this fact that the same expression mergence of light in Light is also used by the Gurus to designate realisation even when the person is living an embodied life. Thus we find Guru Nanak declaring, "If the soul of man merges in the over Soul, and the mind is attuned to the higher mind ...,\(^2\) also, "... then one's light mergeth in the all-Light ... and one is filled with ecstasy for he hath wisdom to love ..."\(^3\) In a similar tone, Guru Amardas says, "And my light merged with the All-Light and my mind was happy."\(^4\) Now certainly in all these

---

passages, the Gurus are not referring to realization after leaving the body, because then the reference hereto wisdom and the mind being happy would simply not be understood. The only alternative interpretation is that the Gurus in these passages are referring to the realized person while embodied (jivan mukta). The above passages, however, make it clear that for the Gurus the most important characteristic is the communication or union—the same which is expressed as 'mergence of light in light'. And once the jiva realizes this communication or union, the self transcends the consciousness of ego and emerges as jivan mukta. The factor of body, then, is immaterial. And as both the aspects have this important characteristic, namely, ego-transcendence common to them, the Gurus refer to them by the same expression, of 'light merging in Light'.

We find direct reference to the realized self when it is said that, "contemplation of thy blissful God releaseth thee from the round of births and deaths." Guru Ramdas says about the same, "His light is blended with the All-Light, and attaineth to God ... and mounteth to the supreme state."

In this Sikhism may be seen to have close affinity with the traditional view in India, such as, the one expressed by Sankara. According to him also, "On destruction of the

---

1. Ibid., Sarang M.5 (2-66-89), p.1221.
2. Ibid., Asa M.4 (1-5-12), p. 446.
upadhis (conditions) he, the contemplative one, is totally absorbed in Vishnu, the All-pervading Spirit, like water in water, space in space, and light in light." In Sikhism, this ultimate light is not identified as "Vishnu" which is the name of a Hindu deity, but the Absolute is simply termed Light as in "Joti jot samara" or "milna". It may, however, be argued that Sankara did not have that particular deity in mind when he used the name "Vishnu" but that he was simply providing a familiar name for the Universal Form or Absolute. It is a tragedy of human fraility and ego that too great stress is laid on names and too little on the spirit. The moment one finds that the universal principle is being referred to by the name, as current in some other religions, the ego or separativeness surges forth accompanied by a sense of rejection of the notion so named. The Gurus, in Sikhism, therefore, appear to be anxious to avoid the arousal of this resistance and rejection by, either using the neutral terms like Light or by using names which were current in all religions, without accepting any division of gods or deities. The stress is on One Absolute, in terms of which every one is related and which every one ought to realize.

---

1Sri Sankaracharya, op. cit., p. 209. In Sikhism, also the same expression is very often used, for example, "as water mergeth with water, so doth his light mergeth with All-Light" Adi Granth, Gauri Sukhmani, M.5 (8-11), p. 278.
7.6: Path of spiritual progress: Various Khanda

It is interesting to notice the process of realization in Sikhism as described by Guru Nanak at the end of "Japji" in the Adi Granth. The process comprising of the Khanda, generally rendered as levels or stages, is very important for the understanding of ethico-spiritual progress of man. It may, however, be submitted here that it has not received the proper attention which it deserves. The scholars generally emulate each other in hurriedly referring to the Khanda, without pausing to analyse them or the spirit of their description. In recent times even the headings of these Khanda are taken for granted without examining the possibility of any other explanation. Description of the Khanda has consequently suffered at the hands of these scholars who in their hurry to arrive at some conclusion have not considered it necessary to pay any serious attention to them. The description in these Khanda, however, may in a way be explained as the broad summary of the ethical process which we have been discussing so far.

Incidentally, it may be mentioned here that in Buddhism we find the various stages of spiritual progress, namely, 'Bhumis'\(^1\) (which are four and eight, in Mahayana and Hinyana, respectively). In a way, asramadharma of the Hindus also describes the various stages of spiritual progress. The difference in this respect, however, lies in the fact that

---

in Sikhism the Khanda do not stand for 'controls' as in Buddhism, nor can they be described as 'division of life' as implied in asramadharma.

**Preliminary analysis of the Khanda**

Let us first make preliminary observations about the Khanda and then follow them by their analysis to discover their real nature.

The process of realization described in these Khanda is a five-dimensional movement. When we add to it the 'pre-dimension' movement, mentioned by Guru Nanak, in the passage preceding their description, the total dimensions appear as six. These may be counted as, (a) Pre-dimension. No specific name is given to it by Guru Nanak, but it is the most crucial one as it denotes the spirit in which the seeker is to proceed. It is somewhat on the pattern of pre-bhumi (stage) in Buddhism; (b) dharam khand—generally rendered as region of customary or conventional morality; (c) gian khand, the reflective dimension, also called knowledge dimension; (d) saram khand, the aesthetic dimension; (e) karam khand, the action dimension, and (f) Sach Khand, the integrative apex, (the Truth).

Thus we can see that the field of realization is six-dimensional.

But then it may be possible for us to discern that the first two and the last one may not be called as 'dimensions' in the sense in which the remaining three can be so named. The first, namely, the 'pre-dimensional' is a pointer
to the spirit of progress and while it may be very crucial for the progress, it is in itself not an independent dimension. Again the second, namely, dharma khand as the field of customary morality—as it is described by Sohan Singh—\(^1\) is an urgent reminder that a person must accept the duties of the situation in which he is placed, before he embarks on the voyage of Self-Realization. We shall refer to it later also but here we may only submit that it denotes the contextual requirement of the person who is to set out on the trail of spiritual progress. We must concede the great importance of this requirement also but may as well notice that in signifying the necessity of performing duties, it may not be taken as a dimension of progress. Thus while acknowledging its mention as a khand and a very important khand, it may not be necessary to regard it as a dimension of spiritual progress if it signifies only the "region of conventional morality" as referred above.

We may now elaborate the earlier remarks about the apex, namely, Sach Khand. It is the ideal which a person is to realize. It may be mentioned here that Guru Nanak does not speak of it separately but joins it with the karam khand which could be taken to mean that it is not an independent dimension but stands to represent the integration of all the three aspects, namely, the knowledge-dimension, the aesthetic dimension and the action-dimension.

\(^1\)Sohan Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 96.
The provision of this Sach Khand shows that all these are not isolatory but are integrated. The Sach Khand thus is the apex which indicates the integration and harmonisation of the three—cognitive, affective and conative dimensions of progress. As the indicator of the colligation of these all, Sach Khand stands for continuous progress. It is a sort of collet in which these three are held. In terms of context, Sach Khand is not any transcendental region but denotes our familiar field of human drama and endeavour, that is, in our own present context. In terms of perfection it is the highest since it is described as the 'abode of the Absolute' ("Vase Nirankar"). It is not a separate dimension of development but represents a unifying or integrative state, binding together, in zenith, the three-dimensional progress.

We are consequently left with three dimensions, namely, gian khand, saram khand and karam khand, which, respectively, are 'Knowledge-dimension', 'aesthetic dimension' and 'actional-dimension'. With this preliminary observations into the background, let us now examine the various khanda (dimensions) in detail.

7.7: Pre-khand stage

'Pre-khand', as noted earlier in this work, is a very important aspect of the ethico-spiritual progress in Sikhism. Guru Nanak, just before the commencement of the various khanda, lays down the attitude in which the moral agent is
to proceed. It demands a certain viewpoint or achievement from the person setting out on this journey of moral transformation. It requires the acceptance of some basic truths which may purge the moral agent’s mind of certain wrong notions and create in him a certain receptivity. This is the stage of initial mental renunciation, the renunciation of I-ness or mine-ness or the efficacy of certain things which one may have long been accustomed to.

According to Guru Nanak, the seeker ought to accept at this stage that “it is not in our power to speak nor in our power to keep silent. It is neither in our power to seek nor in our power to give. It is neither in our power to be born (or to live) nor in our power to die. It is not in our power to have consciousness, knowledge and reflection. The way to cross the sea of existence is not in our power. He (referring to the Absolute) hath the power and He does.

---

1 Adi Granth, Japji (33), p. 7.
2 Bhai Vir Singh interprets "Jis" in this stanza as the person and not God and converts the whole proposition into a challenge, “He who regards that he is power behind all these acts, let him act and see its uselessness (Santhya Guru Granth, p. 161). We may submit that a challenge at this stage seems to be against the spirit of the whole passage. The seeker is commencing the journey and when he has been asked to renounced certain false notions, he may not be asked to go back to empirically validate it. In fact the disciple here is already taken to be prepared to traverse the journey of spiritual progress and reach the apex. The term "Jis", therefore, is used here for the Absolute or Omnipotent.
None is high or low.* The Guru here requires the seeker to accept the spirit or notion that it is not within his power to do any thing. Everything is happening according to certain laws which may be called Divine grace. None is high or low for this grace. We will discuss the Sikh view of grace in karam khand. Here it suffices to say that the person undertaking this journey accepts the belief that the whole of ethico-spiritual progress which he is about to undertake is a matter of divine grace and not alone due to his own power. There is no room for pride here. The notion that I have the power is a false belief.

We find a similar requirement, in a different background—in Buddhism, for example, the seeker is required to shed this false notion in the "Pre-Bhumi" stage, that is, the stage prior to the commencement of the Spiritual Progress. A Puthujjana is defined in the Majjhima Nikaya as "one who labours under the delusion of "I-ness" and "Mine-ness". Not knowing the true law, he develops attachment to things which he should avoid."¹ Likewise, in Sikhism in the pre-khand stage, the seeker must accept his insignificance in the total scheme and realize that the whole universe is working according to the laws identified as divine grace. The renunciation is that of the efficacy of ego² or any claim to


² Cf., also "Sahib Gum tere mai nahi koi" (All the excellences are Thine, none are mine), Adi Granth, Japji (21).
an exception from the working of the law. This pre-khand stage, therefore, must be considered to be a difficult one as the seeker has to re-orientate his attitude. In spite of its great importance this stage, however, has not received the attention it deserves. This stage is, to a great extent the turning point, central and key, to the whole journey. The person who may entertain any pride, whether of secular power or spiritual power and consider himself higher and others lower, is, according to above description, a person who is not yet fit to commence even the first stage of the progress. Another thing to be noted is that the seeker may be accepting this truth at this stage on the testimony of the teacher, though in the gian khand he may see directly that every thing is working according to certain laws, which are called by us 'Divine Grace' and which laws do not permit exceptions.

We may now commence the analysis of the next dimension, namely, dharam khand.

7.8: Dharam khand

We now come to the first khand mentioned as such by Guru Nanak by the name 'dharam khand'. The term 'dharam' is derived from the root dhri which signifies 'to sustain or uphold'. Historically we see that the word is used in

\[\text{i} \text{Ibid.}, \text{Japji (34), p. 7.}\]
some passages of the *Rig Veda*. However, during the Vedic period another term *Rita* was also used and this carried some moral sense as well which appeared to be lacking in the case of the word *dharma*. *Rita* not only indicated the set and fixed course of natural events and objects like morning, evening, moon and sun but it came to acquire some moral reference also when it came to be generally accepted that any violation of *Rita* was an evil or sin. Gradually, however, the notion of *Rita* was superseded and the term *dharma* came to acquire the moral content of *Rita* also.¹

The development in the notion of *dharma* and its gradual expansion in connotation is witnessed as such in the period of *Brahmanas* and *Upanishads*.

Now when we come to *Sikhism*, *dharam* appears to signify both the meanings, namely, the laws according to which the objects of nature are working in their rhythmic uniformity, as well as performing the function as exemplified in the socially approved precepts. The common element may thus be seen as the performance of function which is given a moral context. In the stanza where *dharam khand* occurs in the *Adi Granth* (*Japji*), the background is that of various forces of nature working with regularity. *Days, nights, *

¹V.P. Varma, *Studies in Hindu Political Thought and Its Metaphysical Foundations* (Banaras: Moti Lal Banarsidass n.d.), pp. 86-87. "The moral significance that it (*Rita*) had was slowly attached to the concept of *Dharma* which by far became the more important and meaningful concept."
seasons, dates, days of the week, air, water, heat and
other regions and other events are mentioned as the con-
text in which dharti (the earth, from the same root as
dhri from which dharma is also derived) is set up for the
performance of one's duty. The Guru says that there are
many types of creatures and there are many 'ways' of these
creatures. Their names are numerous. Every one is viewed
in terms of his actions or functions. Following Sohan
Singh, we had earlier called it the region of conventional
morality. We may now slightly modify it to say that here
duties are accepted in terms of voluntarily accepted social
functions. It is a sort of a moral situation in which
every one of us normally finds himself before he makes attempt
to progress beyond the mere performance of one's socially
assigned duties. This meaning is partially conveyed also
by the notion of raza as examined earlier in Chapter 5
(supra.)

The dharam khand, therefore, may be spoken of as
the moral context in which all of us are normally residing.
In itself it is higher than the stage where a person does
not accept and fulfil his role as voluntarily elected by
him. But it is lower because here the person is merely
accepting the morality as already determined for him through
the conduct of others and he is yet to reflect upon it.
Though it may also be said that even here one would notice
an element of ego-transcendence. In so far as the person
accepts the social obligations involved in the role he has chosen to play he transcends the ego to some extent in foregoing some claim to exception.

We may ask if there are any specific duties mentioned by the Guru in connection with the dharma khand. The answer is in the negative. The Guru has not laid down any specific duties. It could perhaps be due to the simple reason that, as already demonstrated by the Guru, there are countless spatio-temporal possibilities in terms of social environments. It would, therefore, be impossible to lay down specific duties in each case. As Sikhism does not contribute to the idea of special duties of castes, etc., (such as "Vibesha Dharma"), it leaves the scope for the situational duties arising out of the peculiarities of existential situations.

Is there any moral principle laid down which may apply to all, irrespective of the situational peculiarities? — is another question which we may pose. Answer this time is in the affirmative. The cue to the most general moral principle that we find here is that one ought to perform his function to the best of one's ability, just as all the objects of nature, mentioned earlier, keep on performing their functions. Here Rite and dharma, which we referred to in the beginning of this khand, seem to fuse and produce the moral

\[1\text{We have referred to this aspect in Chapter 5 (Supra.)} \]
content or principle. But to this is appended the require-
ment of progress also. The person in dharam khand not only
performs his function to the best of his ability but has
also an eye to the progress. The pointer to this latter
requirement is given by adding "Gaya japai jae" ("he who
is going appears already to have gone"). The moral agent
not only cultivates moral virtues and performs his social
obligations, but appears also to be 'going towards' a
wider horizon. These wider horizons we shall refer to in
the next 'tri-dimensional' progress.

However, before proceeding further, we may also state
here that in the same stanza we find that those who have
performed the duties of stations, namely, 'panchak', receive
the Grace ("Madri karam pavai nisan"). This statement
affirms the belief of Sikhism that it is due to Grace that
man is able to perform his actions and proceed further.
The statement of Grace in the very first stage also demon-
strates the fact that Grace does not suddenly intervene at
some later stage of the journey, but is an accompaniment of
the moral agent right from the beginning of his effort.
In fact this determines the spirit in which the whole pro-
gress is to be made. We have already referred to this
aspect in the pre-khand stage, where the seeker accepted
the belief that he is himself power-less and now he is
again reminded of the same in the very first stage. A very
large majority of the interpreters of Sikhism, who do not
pay attention to this very important provision both in pre-khand as well as in dharam khand, look for the provision of Grace at the fourth stage, namely, karam khand taking shelter under the dubious word karam, to which we will refer in some detail when we take up its analysis. The special emphasis here on this aspect is with a view to the controverting of the interpretation of those scholars of Sikhism who appear to miss 'Nadri' (grace) here and then project it in the dimension known as karam khand, reducing the latter entirely to what they call 'Region of Grace'. We are here continuously seeking to point out the stress on the need for the spirit, implied by the notion of Grace, in which the moral agent is to proceed. Let us now take up the examination of the 'tri-dimensional' progress of the moral agent.

7.9: Second stage: 'Tri-dimensional progress'

General characteristics

In the second progressive stage the person is required to seek 'tri-dimensional' realization. These three khanda are gian khand, saram khand and karam khand, which respectively, are dimension of knowledge, aesthetic and action. All these three are to be carried to their ideal ends in an integrated manner. It is a simultaneous process of gradual realization in all respects. Action without knowledge and aesthetic feeling would be blind just as knowledge and feeling without being translated into action
would be barren sentimentalism—a painted ship on a painted screen. Knowledge and feeling are to function in harmony with action. But, in so far as the realization of the ideal of all these three is concerned, they mark a sort of 'simultaneity'.

Those interpreters who do not pause to take into consideration this very important fact of simultaneous realization from all the aspects appear to be led to a strange notion. They give the impression that the seeker on his journey through the khanda first carries the knowledge to its ideal limit, while not paying attention to the aesthetic and the action aspects of realization. This is the possible impression which may develop when, Sher Singh, a scholar of Sikhism, while referring to the gian khand, says, "The defect of the intellect makes us emotionally alive and we enter a region of happiness" (i.e., saram khand). The two words used by the learned scholar defect of intellect and enter (the next region) may be noted here. This clearly makes the journey of the seeker through the knowledge khand only negative. It also gives the impression that the seeker first finishes up knowledge and then enters the region of feelings. Let us see whether this notion can be conceded.

We may submit that this interpretation in terms of dissatisfaction with the defect of intellect makes the stanza

---

1 Sher Singh, op. cit., p. 253.
only negative. It is being suggested by the author under reference that because the seeker is dissatisfied therefore he proceeds further. The scholar dismisses gian khand, the dimension of knowledge. But the seeker cannot do without knowledge and, therefore, Sher Singh is obliged to interpret the next two dimensions also in terms of knowledge. He does so by taking support from the fact that the Guru mentions some clues to knowledge in saram khand and karam khand so as to interblend and harmonise the three aspects of realization. But let us see whether in the first instance it is necessary to declare the fruits of this dimension of Knowledge (gian), as merely negative.

In the first instance it may be submitted that this undue stress on the negative is against the whole spirit of the stanza. According to the Guru, the seeker acquires the knowledge of the various traditions and reflects upon it. ("Kete siddha'budh natha kete kete devi vesa, kete deva dansa mun kete kete ratna samunda"). This indeed is the positive gain. The negative aspect lies in the fact that this wide and deeper knowledge helps him in ego-transcendence. He will see not the defect of intellect as the scholar suggests but shall realize the futility of ego. In this realization, intellect is indeed helpful to the self. The tone is thus not predominantly negative in respect to knowledge and intellect but is pre-eminently positive.

---

1Adi Granth, Japji (35), p. 8.
It may also be asked whether the scholars would be prepared to say that a student who reads science and history of philosophy, and further developments in it, would regard, both the fact of knowledge and the act of knowledge as a defect in intellect. Would the above scholar be willing to accept that the best of education ought to be without such knowledge? Does not such knowledge involve the use of intellect? Did not Guru Nanak himself undertake journeys to various places to learn and discourse about the various traditions of learning and many further developments of these traditions? Is it not a fact that Guru Nanak himself used intellectual arguments to expose the absurdity and self-contradiction involved in many superstitious notions? Would the author be willing to maintain that it is defective and therefore requires to be superseded? Surely the scholar does not appear to accept this position. His statement, therefore, about the defect in intellect can be regarded as a reductio ad absurdum.

Let us now examine the notion that the seeker first finishes the khand of knowledge and then proceeds into the one of 'feelings' and then to the next. A somewhat similar position in this regard also appears to have been adopted by another scholar of Sikhism, Surindar Singh Kohli. We may examine the statements of these two scholars as representative of this opinion as between themselves both of them cover quite a long period of time, in terms of their
books under reference. Surinder Singh Kohli also talks of transition from one region to other. He says, "This realization takes him into the next region, i.e. the region of Effort (saram khand), wherein he beautifies and purifies his mind and intellect." The meaning of the expression "takes him into the next region" comes almost to the same position as already discussed in case of Sher Singh. In both cases the thinking is in terms of 'either-or' and not 'and-also'. Here progress is not being conceived in terms of simultaneous and gradual progress on all sides but appears to be as finishing one and then superseding it by another.

Apart from the strangeness of this position, as well as its implications, it may also be submitted that the position is not depicted in this manner by Guru Nanak himself. On the other hand it may even be argued that he has amply provided for against this fragmentational progress by showing that the ultimate is to be reached in all these aspects and not supercession of the one by the other and the self realized from all angles is represented in the apex, Sach Khand, which is already seen to be the indication of an integrated realization.

This confusion can be clarified if we view the tri-dimensional progress as 'vertical-horizontal' rather than 'linear-horizontal'. In the latter view, the impression conveyed is that one proceeds in a straight line on which

---

1Surinder Singh Kohli, op. cit., p. 368.
occur, first, one stage of knowledge, which is traversed fully and then begins the stage of aesthetic ab initio, which is also traversed fully and so on. But the expression 'vertico-horizontal' appears to be nearer the view of the Gurus by whom the self is required to progress simultaneously on all the three sides toward the ideal end which is described as 'each khand'. We may also see that the khandas described by Guru Nanak are not completely isolated but the elements of one are interwoven into the other, thus presenting a picture of an integrated progress.

In order to bring out this integrated view in broad relief and steer clear of the possible confusion in the understanding of the proper characteristics of the khandas the use of term 'dimension' has been preferred here over that of the 'stages' or 'regions' for rendering the tri-dimen-
sional progress of gian, saram and karam khand. It is also because of this possible confusion that we shall prefer to use the expression 'vertico-horizontal' to depict progress rather than employ any symbol in terms of 'linear-horizontal' progress.

With this background let us now analyse the content of the khandas in some detail.

7.10: Gian khand (dimension of knowledge)

We now come to gian khand, the dimension of knowledge. The stanza of the Adi Granth which contains the description
of this dimension, tells the seeker about the 'vastness and depth' of everything. He learns that there are many kinds of wind, water, fire. This is indicative of varieties of geographical regions with different climates etc. There are many worlds of men and many are uninhabited low lands and mountains. There are even many solar systems. ("Kete inda chanda sura kete kete mandala des").

Secondly, apart from learning about the various physical phenomena the seeker also learns about the various religious and mystical traditions. There is not one religion or one prophet or one enlightenment. There are leaders of many religious groups and many a divine form. There are also many traditions and various kinds of learning. A scholar divides this second part into two aspects. He shows that there are: "(i) the religious traditions of people with which their mythologies are so closely linked and (ii) the cultural traditions with their literary and historical aspects, which also contain their efforts in the field of learning and wisdom, i.e., science and philosophy." The scholar thus brings out all the aspects of knowledge, namely, physical, religious and cultural. The last two seem to cover the philosophy as well.

One thing which may loom very prominently in this dimension of knowledge is continuation by the Guru, of the

---

1 Adi Granth, Japji (35), p. 7.
theme of 'countless possibilities'. One may be impressed by the fact that in this stanza the term "Kete" and "Kate Kate" ('many' and 'many many') occurs eleven times! The whole impact of the stanza, right from the beginning to the end is that of 'expansive vastness'. There seems to be no end to knowledge. The gain here is two-fold. The positive gain is in terms of knowledge and wisdom, and is a very important gain. The negative gain is in terms of the person becoming aware of the futility of egoism when faced with such vastness of possibilities in respect to knowledge. There is every thing in terms of 'many many' and when the person compares himself with such a vastness the individual ego pales into insignificance. The ego as motive which led to narrow-based actions is seen directly to be based on the wrong conception that 'I' was something more important than others. The gurmukh (seeker) here knows that there is not one 'I' but countless 'I's' strung together in terms of existence. The proper ethical attitude, therefore, is not in terms of the egoistic 'I' but 'We'. The 'We' itself is not to be attached to any particular social group but is for the whole creation. The existence has inter-related vastness. The whole effort of the khand is to serve the dual purpose of removing the narrow egoism as well open up the panoramic vista of deep and wide-spread knowledge. The curtain of falsehood which obstructed from his view the scientific, cultural and spiritual efforts of diverse countries and habitations come to be respected and understood. The understanding and
acceptance of inter-relatedness gives him a sense of harmony with the socio-physical environments. He is able to see the One running through this panoramic vastness. He is then filled with "music, bliss and aesthetic enjoyment". The mention of this aesthetic realization also in the last line of the stanza shows that the ideal end reached in this dimension is intertwined with the aesthetic aspect, which is gradually and simultaneously being realized along with the realization of the ideal end in the dimension of knowledge. This joy and bliss may also be due to his adoption of a comprehensive point of view from where the individuation of the self is seen to be a falsehood ("kure pal"). Here the good of all ceases to be distinguishable in essence from the good of the self.

7.11: Saram khand (dimension of aesthetic realization)

The need for the aesthetic realization is also stressed by Guru Nanak. It is done in the stanza dealing with saram khand. This dimension has been variously interpreted depending on the language from which the scholar regard the word "saram" to have been adopted here. Those who regard it as having been taken from the Sanskrit term "shram" (meaning effort) describe it as a domain of spiritual effort.2

---

1 Adi Granth, Japji (36), p. 8. (The word "Saram" has also been used in the 28th stanza).

There are, however, some other scholars who regard it as derived from the Arabic word sharam (meaning shyness and reserve) and consider it to be a stage of "Inward Orientation." 1 Another scholar of Sikhsim, Bhai Vir Singh, renders it as a 'domain of Bliss.' 2 Perhaps he reads 'in this term the Sanskrit word 'saraman' (written as 'Sharman') which means 'shelter, joy, bliss and delight.' 3 In more recent times a scholar has called it the "Domain of surrender." 4

Let us see what light is thrown on the definition by the content of this stanza itself. Guru Nanak says, "In the saram khand the communication is in terms of form or beauty. The term 'rup' is used to mean both." 5 Here unique form is fashioned ("Gharat Gharat bahut aump"). He further says that the state of the self in saram khand cannot be described, and any one who makes this attempt, would eventually realize his error. 6

The Guru further provides the clue that the aesthetic realization is not in terms of sensibilities alone, because,

1 Sohan Singh, op. cit., pp. 79 and 98.
2 Bhai Vir Singh, Santhya, p. 164.
3 Monier Monier Williams, op. cit., p. 1085.
6 Ibid.
it is a type of realization which comes by the fashioning of the cognition, mind, reason and intuition ("Surat mut mun budh ... sura sidha ki sudh"). The allusion is also made to the mode of beauty which comes from the 'discernment of those whom people call gods and perfected persons.\(^1\) A question may be posed as to why the Guru adverts to perfection in cognition and intuition in the dimension of aesthetic realization. An answer could be that realization is a harmonious process and the reference to the fashioning of intellect and intuition in the dimension of aesthetic realization, therefore, is to bring to notice this fact of 'togetherness' in the realization of the seeker. Also, it can be argued that, but for this mention, the aesthetic realization would have appeared to be merely a matter of feeling. The dimension, as depicted by the Guru, shows it to be a fusion of the cognitive and the aesthetic aspects. The views of Guru Nanak as expressed in saram khand, thus may be taken to indicate the fusion of truth and beauty in their realization by the self. The seeker has realized not only knowledge but also the discernment of beauty, in the socio-physical environment with which he is in perfect harmony.

Which then is the correct interpretation from out of those examined in the initial stage of the khand? It may be seen that fundamentally there seems to be no serious

\(^1\)Ibid.
difference among the various interpretations. While all of them appear to agree in respect of the broad contents of this dimension variation is in terms of the title. Guru Nanak may be said to be using this word in the special sense which includes the aspects stressed in the various interpretations noted by us. The interpreters may be right and true in what they assert. The error would arise if they claim that what they have stressed is 'the' whole truth. Guru Nanak, in view of the special use of the term (and some possible confusion), defines the content of the stanza in the very first line when he says, "The medium in saram khand is 'beauty or form'." ("Saram Khand ki bani rup," "Rup" may be understood either in the term of 'form' or 'beauty'). This dimension, therefore, seems to be that of aesthetic realization.

But, it may be contended, that the seeker would be imperfectly realized without the perfection of conation and action. What about the effort or action? And this inquiry takes us to the third contemporaneous dimension, namely karam (action).

1.12: Karam khand (dimension of action)

We now come to the third dimension of this 'tri-dimensional' progress of the seeker, namely, "karam khand". This is a very important dimension in the sense that in a

1Ibid.
However, before proceeding farther, it may be mentioned here that 'Sikhologists' or the scholars of Sikhism are not agreed upon calling it a dimension of 'action'. We will examine in detail the conflicting views in this regard after first making ourselves conversant with the contents of the stanza which contains the description of this dimension.

In our analysis of the saran khand, we saw the fusion of the cognitive and the affective. The present is the completing link of this inter-linked journey of tri-dimensional progress.

According to Guru Nanak, the medium of this dimension is energy, strength, or power ("Karma khand ki bani jor".)\(^1\) Here the person is described as "brave and mighty" ("Tithai jodh mahabal sur"). He is said to be saturated with Ram. ("Tin maha ram riha bharpur"). The selection of the symbol 'Ram' is more meaningful than has hitherto been noticed. It may either mean "God" or it may seek to convey the characteristic for which Ram as a deity is known in India. The "Baghu kul Rit" characteristic is that of 'unity of conviction with action'. One may die but not abandon the resolve or word. The dimension thus indicates the self which has the courage of conviction. Nothing deters him.

\(^1\)Ibid., Japji (37), p. 8.
from what he has learnt to be 'good'. We have already noticed, in a different perspective, the stress on 'courage and bravery' in Sikhism while examining the virtue of 'courage'.

Here the seeker is realizing, simultaneous to his gradual realization in the dimension of knowledge and aesthetic, the universalism in action which he acquires in the dimension of knowledge. His action reflects that there is no distinction of 'mine' and 'others'. Spiritually too, he realizes the Absolute in terms of which all are spiritually related. This realization of universalism is reflected in his actions.

One also finds that this region is reached not only by men but is equally open to women. So we find that here "Sito Sita", is the symbol used for the ideal woman. In fact 'Sita' is always held high as the ideal woman in India. Some Sikhologists, however, interpret this line, "Tithai Sito Sita mahima mah,"¹ as "there they dwell in His glory through joy or suffering."² Thus "Sito Sita" is taken to mean "joy or suffering", which is the state of the realized self. The term 'Sita' appears to be taken in the sense of Sect (cold). This translation may have some merit of fitting in the spirit of the passage if we say that the realized self in this dimension has a sense of abandonments. However, the interpretation of "Sito-Sita" in the sense of

¹Ibid., Japji (37), p. 8.
²Sohan Singh, op. cit., p. 100.
depicting Sita as the symbol for womanhood in general has not only the merit of fitting in with the spirit of univer-

salism in this passage but it also brings out the stress on the equality of women in Sikhism even in the highest

realization, which was seen as an important aspect of the social ethics of the Sikhs. This interpretation, therefore,
could be presented as appearing to be more apt and trust-

worthy.

Technically too, the term 'Sito Sita' refers to some person here. The line which contains this reference occurs as the first line in a pair of two and the whole scheme of the passage consists of pairs of two lines each, the first of the lines referring to a subject (a person) and the second containing some additional predicate about it (him). For example, after the first pair of two lines which describes the title of the dimension the next pair declares, "There are brave and mighty" in the first line and in the second line it says, "In them is filled the essence of 'Ram'." The first line of the next pair says, "There are Sito Sita enveloped in glory" and the second line adds, "there state cannot be described." And again the first line of the next pair declares, "They die nor are cheated," and the second line adds, "In whom is the essence of God" (symbol used is Ram). And the same scheme is followed in the next pair of the last two lines.

It is, therefore, clear that in the first line in
which "Sito Sita" occurs the Guru is referring to some person and not to the condition of any person. The reference, consequently, is to 'Sita', which symbol denotes the 'ideal woman'. The use of two words 'Sito Sita' however, could possibly indicate both 'men and women'. But then, it also could merely be to emphasise the expression. However, it appears to be most cogent to say that some person is being referred to here and this conclusion is also supported by our earlier technical examination of the passage.\(^1\)

The Guru also mentions that this 'actional-realization' is accompanied by Bliss. In this way the karam khand is integrated with the dimension of the aesthetic as well as that of the knowledge. Bliss is due to the 'spiral like' harmonious progress which the seeker has made and realized the ideal. It is the self which has realized the ideal in its 'tri-dimensional' spiral-like integrated progress which is represented in the apex of human realization, namely, 'sach khand', which we are now to examine. But before we undertake the analysis of "Sach Khand" let us clear some conflicting views expressed about the nature of karam khand.\(^1\)

---

\(^1\)And for the similar reason, the interpretation by Harmand Singh of the term 'Sito Sita' as 'inextricably knit' cannot be accepted. Reference to Harmand Singh's interpretation has been made by Gopal Singh in the form of a note in his translation of the Adi Granth, p. 11.
Conflicting views about the real nature of karam khand

We had occasion earlier to refer to the fact that all the Sikhologists do not agree at calling karam khand the dimension of 'Action'.

Broadly speaking the views concerning the nature of this dimension can be divided into two groups: (i) those which take it to mean the dimension of 'action' and (ii) those which take it to mean the 'stage or domain of Grace'.

The view contained in the second group needs to be examined in some detail to see the grounds for preferring the interpretation in terms of Grace.

The cause of this confusion and controversy

The cause of this confusion and controversy is due to the use by Guru Nanak of an equivocal word 'karam'. This word can be understood in two meanings. If it is taken by the Guru as emanating from the Sanskrit word 'karam', it would mean 'action'. However, if the usage is in terms of its meaning in the Arabic language it may be called as the domain of Grace.

It may also be added here that for the most part the controversy is regarding only the title of the khand, since the contents of the stanza are almost universally interpreted in terms of 'power, strength and energy' of the realized self, such as Ram, who is known for his 'action'.
The view that karam khand is the domain of grace.

This view is expressed by Sher Singh when he says, "The fourth and the fifth stages" - by which he means, the karam khand and the sach khand - "in the development of our mental outlook have respectively the divine grace and the true divinity itself as their objects." A similar view is expressed by Sohan Singh when he writes, "Force or power is the rule of the Region of Grace." Gopal Singh in his translation of the Adi Granth, holds the same opinion when he writes, "And then is the Domain of Grace." Another scholar, Surindar Singh Kohli, also renders it in similar meaning when he remarks, "These efforts lead him into the next region i.e. 'the region of Grace'."

The view that karam khand is the dimension of 'action'.

The view has also been expressed, on the other hand, by some scholars that karam khand is to be interpreted in terms of 'action'. We find that Ernest Trumpp interprets it in this manner. His translation reads "The character of the region of works (karam khand) is power." He uses

1 Sher Singh, op. cit., p. 253.
2 Sohan Singh, op. cit., p. 100.
3 Gopal Singh, op. cit., p. 11.
4 Surindar Singh Kohli, op. cit., p. 368.
here the word "works" for action. Another scholar, Max Arthur Macauliffe, similarly says, "Force is the attribute of the realm of action." In an analogous manner, the editor of Sbhadarth views it in terms of 'action' when he renders it in Punjabi language as "Amal" and "Karni" (action).

In a way, it may be noticed here that the interpretations of karam khand, in terms of action, are rather old and in recent times it is being understood in terms of 'grace' by relatively a larger number of scholars.

Analysis of the controversy

We may, thus, notice a controversy about the correct interpretation of this dimension. However, what may intrigue any student of Sikhism is the fact that none of the scholars listed here have felt it necessary to explain why they prefer to interpret it as they do in their writings. Nevertheless, the question is crucial as a decision in this regard may determine the role of 'practice' or action in Sikhism. The question assumes greater significance from the viewpoint of ethics. We may, therefore, examine the

---

1Max Arthur Macauliffe, The Sikh Religion (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1909), Vol. I, p. 216. (In note No. 2 he appears to explain that by the realm of action he means 'the world'. But he does not elaborate this note to state any viewpoint in detail).

2Sbhadarth, op. cit., p. 8.
question of the right interpretation of karam khand in detail and see if we can arrive at some conclusion in this regard.

Let us analyse the problem from four angles: (1) examine the possible meanings of the word, especially in terms of its different usage in Sikhism; (2) adduce some technical evidence, if available, to determine its usage here; (3) advert to the spirit of the stanza to see whether it throws any light in this regard; and (4) discuss (a) whether there is any need for interpreting it in terms of grace and (b) whether this interpretation of grace would be in harmony with the general notion of grace in Sikhism.

Possible meanings of karam

A student of Sikhism would find that karam has been used in various meanings in the Adi Granth, the principal scripture of the Sikhs. Therefore, care has to be exercised when we base an interpretation on the possible meanings of this word. We must attempt to understand the sense which it occupies in any particular context. The term is used prominently in the following meanings in the Adi Granth:

1. 'karam' is used in the sense of law of retribution, for example, in "Karam dharti sarir jug anter jo bijn so khate." It is in this sense that A.C. Ewing uses it when he says, "The law of Karma is a principle of Justice

---

decreeing that all shall be rewarded and punished in proportion to their good and bad deeds.\(^1\);

(2) "karam" in the sense of works like liturgical sacrifices, ceremonials and rituals. Sometimes, the Gurus also use the compound term 'karam kand' to convey this meaning of 'rituals and sacrifices'. At some other times, however, the simple term 'karam' is employed to convey that sense of liturgical sacrifices, ceremonials and rituals. For example, "Karam kand boh kare achar\(^2\) and "Karam kand badhe ahanav",\(^3\) both, provide the sense of karam kand. "Karam" in this sense has been rejected, in Sikhism, to be of any value as seen above;

(3) 'karam' is also used to convey the sense of 'Grace' or 'Mercy'. This usage has been adopted in Sikhism and in the Adi Granth from the Arabic language, example being, "Karam hovai Satguru milai;\(^4\)

(4) there is yet another sense in which this term "Karam" is used in the Adi Granth. In this sense it stands for moral action or proper acts. The example is provided when Guru Arjan Dev, while condemning an evil person, says,

\(^{2}\text{Adi Granth, Gauri Guareri M.3 p. 162.}\)
\(^{3}\text{Ibid., Gauri Kabir ji (4-6), p. 324.}\)
\(^{4}\text{Ibid., Majh M.3, p. 109.}\)
"He has lost sight of all "Karam" (moral acts). ("Karam Dharam saglai khove"). In the same sense Guru Nanak had earlier said, "Actions and practice is the creeper, the God's Name is the fruit." ("Karam karoot bail bistari Ramnam phul hua"). Here the creeper is a symbol used to convey the 'way of climbing or reaching' because the creeper climbs a tree or a wall.

In an unequivocal manner Guru Gobind Singh had declared, "Oh Grant me that I may never avert from moral action." ("Shubh karaman te kabhoon na tarun"). In most passages, however, the Gurus do not use "Shubh" as prefix to karam to denote moral action but simply use karam to denote that meaning.

**Historical background of the tenet that rituals acts are the moral acts**

A question may be asked as to who regarded the rituals and ceremonials as moral acts and duties. Historically, out of the schools of Indian Philosophy, Purvamimamsakas, and particularly the Bhatta school of the Purvamimamsakas appear to have taken this position. This school, according to S.K. Maitra, "represent the extreme externalistic conception of morality and accept ceremonialism in all its arbitrariness." According to them "the sacrificial acts

---

2. *Ibid., Asa M.1 (1 to 3-8), p. 351.
in themselves constitute dharma.\(^1\) They use the word "karma" for these sacrifices and ceremonials.

**Rejection of this view by other schools of Indian Philosophy, as well as by Sikhism**

We find that this view is controverted and rejected by other schools of Indian Philosophy. Thus, while discussing the attitude of Sankhya and Vedanta toward karma, in the sense of 'rituals', Bal Gangadhar Tilak states, "Although the Non-Dualistic knowledge of the Brahman mentioned in the Upanisads is fundamentally different from the Dualistic philosophy, yet from the point of knowledge both these paths were equally antagonistic to the prior ritualistic path of Action.\(^2\) Here karama only in the sense of liturgical acts is not accepted as otherwise we find that the Yoga of Patanjali upholds the truth of karma in the sense of "Law of Karma, whereby one is bound to reap the consequences of one's actions in this life or in the next."\(^3\)

When we come to Buddhists, we find that they, "contest or even deny" the importance attributed to liturgical action and penances as "for them an act is essentially action that can be morally qualified.\(^4\)

---

The standpoint taken by Gurus in Sikhism seeks to deny this nexus between act and sacrifice and ritual and ceremony. The Guru says that one's ritualistic conduct is condemned. It is also said to lead to ego.¹ ("Karam kand boh kare achar bin Nave dhrig dhrig ahankar." ) Guru Arjan Dev also appears to reject this type of works when he says that the more one takes recourse to these acts, the more is one involved.² ("Karam karet jia kao janjar." ) Both these rejections are to be understood only in terms of ritualistic acts, for otherwise these would be contradictory to the view of acts as expressed in (d) above while discussing possible meanings of karam. However, Guru Gobind Singh makes it clear that one ought not to avert from moral actions as already stated ("Shubh Karman te kabhun na tarun."

important role and moral qualification of karam in Sikhism

It was generally held in India that actions bind a man in the sense that he is tied down to the world and is not able to obtain salvation. Guru Arjan Dev puts this problem in the form of a dilemma. He states, "If one doeth deeds, one is bound; if not, one is slandered; and thus one is ever attached in mind and keepeth full of care."³ What is then the solution offered by him. He hints at the

¹Adi Granth, Gauri Guareri M.3, p. 162.
²Ibid., Asa M.5, p. 385.
³Ibid., Maru M.5, p. 1019.
possible solution at the same place and it consists in, "By God's Grace, looking upon pain and pleasure alike and seeing God within every heart." One may take this to mean that the acts can be understood as binding if these are motivated by hopes, passions, fears and egoism. But these are not binding when done for righteousness to realize universality. We have already referred to the clarification given by Guru Gobind Singh that one ought not to avert from righteous acts.

Secondly, according to Guru Arjan Dev, the karam ought to be done without any desire for the fruit. He says, "And doth the deeds ("karam") but cares not for the fruit thereof, such a Vaishnava's faith is the pure faith. He seeketh no fruits for the deeds he doeth."¹ This position has similarity with the one held by Sri Krishna in the Bhagavadgita. It is said there that "desireless energy (naiskarmya) was better than total Renunciation."² We have referred to this aspect in the Chapter 6 (Supra.) It is held in Sikhism that one should perform all acts in the name of God and such acts would not bind him. Guru Arjan Dev says, "And then I surrender to Him, meditation, austerity and religious observances, and all acts of dharma, I offer to His fire and forsake my ego."³

¹Ibid., Gauri Sukhmani M.5, p. 274.
²Bal Gangadhar Tilak, op. cit., p. 779.
³Adi Granth, Asa M.5, p. 391.
And in the New Testament also, we meet a similar view when it is said, "Whether therefore you eat, or drink or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."¹ This 'doing all ...' is what we have been calling 'doing acts ... without desire for fruit', which acts ought to be done and which do not bind a man.

Thirdly, an act ought not to give rise to ego. The act which gives rise to ego leads not only to the loss of its moral significance but is a positive evil in itself. Guru Arjan Dev explains it this way, "I was devoted to the acts [karam and dharam] and was puffed up with ego [garbh] and loved not God for a moment, and all this was of no avail."² Guru Amardas similarly warns the seeker of this danger when he says, "He doeth deeds and practiseth righteousness, piety and self discipline, but within him is 'greed and vice', all this that the ego-centric practiseth availeth him not." ("Karam dharam such sanja kare anter lobb vikar ... ")³ The proper acts or moral acts, therefore, are so only when accompanied by a purity of motive.

Fourthly, a karam ought not to be performed merely to please others and obtain their goodwill or to play to the gallery to manifest ego. Guru Arjan Dev tells us, "Yea, all karam are the manifestation of ego, if one is out to

¹Bible, St. Paul, 1 Cor 10:31.
²Adi Granth, Dhanasri M.5, Ashtapadis, p. 687.
³Ibid., Var of Rag Vihagra M.3, p. 552.
show up to others, or please others, one leaveth this world sad and in sorrow.*¹ It ought to be something like left hand not knowing what the right hand does. One ought not to make a public show of one's goodness as it may be either caused by ego or may cause ego to develop.

Lastly, the Guru has also stressed the need to practise the act and not merely talk about it. Guru Arjan Dev condemns such a person when he says, "He instructeth others but practiseth not he himself, he knows not the quintessence of the word."² ("Updes kare aap na kamaye tate sabad na pachchana.") This unequivocally indicates that all that one learns to be good, ought to be practised in one's acts. And without such a practice in 'acts' other realization in terms of knowledge or aesthetic cannot be called complete. That would only be a sort of meaningless upadesh (speech).

In view of this great importance accorded to practice and action, we may be inclined to regard karam khand as the dimension of 'action'. In so interpreting it there will be no clash with the general temper and spirit of Sikhism.

Technical evidence to determine the nature of this dimension

Let us now see if any technical evidence can be found to decide the nature of this dimension. By technical evidence we understand the general scheme of titles of these

¹Ibid., Ramkali M.5, p. 380.
²Ibid., Asa M.5, p. 380.
stanzas which contain the reference to these khanda in Japji of Guru Nanak.

In this connection we see that Guru Nanak has used the titles of all the khanda ("dharam, gian, saram, karam and sach") from the Sanskrit language. It seems, therefore, most probable that karam khand which occurs in the same series in between "saram khand" and "sach khand" is also being used by Guru Nanak in the sense of its Sanskrit usage. According to this usage 'karam' means act or what Bal Gangadhar Tilak has called "energism."

Now, there seems to be no special reason for singling out karam khand to interpret it in terms of its meaning in the Arabic language, while the rest of the four are understood by the Sikhologists in terms of their usage in the Sanskrit language.

This indirect technical evidence would thus favour its interpretation in terms of the Sanskrit meanings of the term 'karam', that is, act or practice.

Evidence from the spirit of the stanza regarding the nature of this dimension

We may now refer to the general spirit as reflected by the contents of this khand to determine the question of its title and characteristics. The principle medium of karam khand is in terms of "Power or energy" ("Karam khand ki bani jor"). Now it may be said that "energism" and "karam" in the sense of 'acts' harmonise excellently. We have already referred to the rendition of karam as "energism"
(in the sense of acts) by Bal Gangadhar Tilak, while analysing the doctrine of the Bhagavadgita.

Secondly, we may also submit that one of the scholars of Sikhism, referred to earlier, who calls karam khand the "domain of grace" while analysing its contents concedes that the seekers in this khand are persons of "awakened courage and great deeds." He further admits that "when the universal spirit flows into and fills the devotee it builds in him such a strange strength, it creates such tremendous springs of energy in him, that he becomes a man of great deeds." So we may see that in so far as the spirit and the content of the khand are concerned it is interpreted in terms of deeds and acts even by those who otherwise call it the domain of grace. But if we are going to interpret its contents in terms of acts and deeds will it not be only appropriate if we also call the khand as 'dimension of acts or deeds'?

Thirdly, we notice that even the general notion of God in terms of 'Ram', mentioned in this khand, is to stress the deeds or acts since Ram is acclaimed in the Indian tradition because of acts and deeds. Ram is understood both in the sense of God as well as the socialised concept of an active and ideal man of deeds. It is generally conceded that when Ram is used to denote God it is sought to convey this latter connotation of socialised great deeds and acts.

---

1Sohan Singh, op. cit., p. 100.
2Ibid., p. 102.
It would seem correct, therefore, to interpret karam khand in terms of dimension of action or deeds.

Interpreting karam khand in terms of grace, question regarding need thereof and its coherence with the general notion of grace in Sikhism

We may now take up the twin questions regarding (a) any necessity for understanding 'karam khand' in terms of grace and, (b) whether such a view of grace would be in harmony with the general notion of grace as understood in Sikhism.

(a) Let us first take up the question of any necessity for interpreting it as 'grace'.

The protagonists of the view that karam khand is the domain of grace may argue that the principle of grace is a major belief in Sikhism and therefore it should be devoted a major stage at the end of human development. Now, in view of the fact that Divine grace is indeed a very important part of the general beliefs of Sikhism, the above argument may appear rather forceful.

We may, however, submit that nothing has been said here so far to deny the truth of the importance of grace. In fact, our whole attention was directed in the 'pre-khand' stage to aver that the devotee, in order to proceed on this journey of ethico-spiritual progress, must accept the belief that everything he is able to do is due to the grace of God. That is a fundamental assumption or postulate of the whole life in Sikhism. Again, while discussing 'dharam khand' a
Similarly, we had stressed, in the chapter on the Moral Standard, that the spirit of the whole progress lies in the awareness on the part of the person that he is humble and that, in this spirit of humility, he ought to surge forth for the realization of the Ideal Self.

Now, in view of the fact that supreme importance has been given to grace as determining the very spirit in which the devotee traverses this whole ethico-spiritual journey, there appears to be no necessity to interpret karam khand again in terms of grace. We may even say that according to the logic of the case even gian khand, saram khand and karam khand along with pre-khand and dharam khand are traversed in the same underlying spirit of humility and belief in grace. There seems to be little justification or necessity then to interpret karam khand in terms of grace.

(b) We may now ask the second question whether the interpretation of 'karam khand' in terms of grace would be in harmony with the general notion of grace in Sikhism.

The view of grace as held in Sikhism

It may be submitted here that the Gurus have made amply clear that grace,¹ as used by them, determines the

¹The terms prominently used in the Adi Granth to convey the sense of grace are nadar, surprasad or braasad, karam, mehar and kirpa.
fundamental spirit in which the whole of the progress is to be made by the devotee. Guru Nanak says, "With grace have I met the Guru." The first step then is in terms of grace. We also find that Guru Arjan Dev devotes a whole ashtapadi in "Gauri Sukhmani" to aver that all the progress and functions of the devotee ought to be done in the spirit of acknowledging the role of grace (Surprasad). Guru Nanak at yet another place completes this process and says that "Union" is also by grace. The "Sach", which is the ideal is also realized with grace. Guru Ramdas also says that the path is known by the grace. The delusion of ignorance is overcome with grace.

However, we get a very clear indication of the thinking of the Gurus on the subject when we find the description of the whole process of realization given by Guru Nanak in the closing stanza of "Japji" immediately after the description of the khand. Here he uses the analogy of a smith heating gold to turn out the final product.

---

2 Ibid., Gauri Sukhmani, (8-6), pp. 270-271.
3 Ibid., Gauri M.1 (6-3), p. 222 ("Nadar kare tan mail milei").
4 Ibid., Sri Bag M.1 (5-3), p. 55 ("Nadar kare Sach payaya").
5 Ibid., Shaloka M.4 (6), p. 1422 ("Nadar kare jis aapni so chale satguru bujhia").
7 Ibid., Japji (38), p. 8.
self in this description undergoes the whole process of fashioning and shaping. Towards the end of this description Guru Nanak makes a very important observation which may be central to our present discussion. He says that all this process of realization, however, is an act of only those who have been favoured by grace ("Jin ko nadar karam tin kar"). This is rendered by Sohan Singh as, "However, only those who receive the favour of His Grace may conduct themselves in this way."  

This shows that the tenet of grace in Sikhism, which determines the spirit in which the whole progress is carried on, ought to be understood as a sort of simultaneous concomitance of the whole progress. Each and every act from the beginning is performed with the belief that grace is a constituent of the act. It makes the act a totality. We may also name such an approach as a coeval theory or simultaneous concomitance theory of grace and action.

View of grace entailed if karam khand is interpreted as domain of grace.

Let us now see the type of theory of grace entailed if we regard karam khand as the domain of grace. The view of the Sikhologists who regard it so is that a devotee continues making progress on his own throughout the earlier khanda—that is, pre-khand, dharam khand, gian khand, saram khand—and when he reaches karam khand, grace suddenly

\[1\] Sohan Singh, op. cit., p. 103.
intervenes to reward him. Such a theory we may name as 'precipitant theory of grace' or 'sudden intervention theory of grace'. We have called it precipitant theory because by this view the individual, through his actions in earlier khand, precipitates the intervention by grace.

Such a view can be seen clearly to militate against our earlier conclusions regarding the general view of grace as held in Sikhism in terms of 'simultaneous concomitance' or 'co-eval' theory of grace.

In view of this we cannot help but conclude that an interpretation of karam khand as the domain of grace would conflict with the notion of grace held in Sikhism.

7.13: Survey of the results of the analysis of karam khand

Summing up the results of this analysis we may say that karam khand should be taken to mean the dimension of action. Its provision as a necessary dimension serves the purpose of a continuous reminder that all this progress is to be judged functionally. It expressly provides against any lack of contact with the socio-physical or the socio-moral environments. In the absence of this dimension the mystic intuition could have swung the person entirely from his socio-moral environments and lured him away from what is symbolised in Sikhism as "Grihasta" (householder). But the presence of karam khand as a necessary constituent of this realization does not permit a self to turn away from
or renounce the social situation altogether. It is rather paradoxical that those Sikhologists who regard karam khand as the region of grace argue elsewhere that the practice is the ultimate test. Bhai Jodh Singh as mentioned earlier, regards karam khand as the domain of grace and writes in an essay, "And now I come to the last point. Religion is life. It does not consist in mere beliefs and dogmas. Nobody is going to accept truth from you if he sees none of them exemplified in your life."¹ (Emphasis added.) This scholar clearly expresses his tacit acceptance of the need for the dimension of action.

Another scholar, C.H. Loehlin, in The Sikhs and their Book, appears to protest against this comingling of grace and act. He says, "It is significant to note that Guru Arjan at times breaks through the bonds of Karma and in accordance with the New Testament teaching gives grace full place as when in the Sukhmani he says 'By grace all may be saved'."² It may be submitted here what the author terms "at times breaking through" is in fact not 'at times' and, secondly, it is not "breaking through". As we have been witnessing throughout our examination the Gurus are seeking to synthesize the two essential aspects of the act. This synthesis, perhaps, is misconceived by the above scholar as "at times breaking through". The Gurus may in


certain passages stress one aspect depending on the special point under discourse but the whole doctrine has to be interpreted in terms of its general spirit and we must take into account those passages also where this general spirit is quite clearly stressed.

There is another conjecture hazarded by the same scholar in regard to the notion of grace in Sikhism where it may not be possible to agree with him. Loehlin suggests that "it is possible that Guru Arjan learned this from the New Testament teaching, as there were Christian theologians and teachers in many parts of India in 1600." Here it is clear that, while no one may question the fact of the various influences traceable in the doctrine of Sikhism in general, in itself the conjecture hazarded above may not be conceded to. Firstly, the notion of grace, as we have seen by the text of our preceding discussion, was posited by the founder of Sikhism, namely, Guru Nanak Dev, and was carried on by the succeeding Gurus. Now, Guru Arjan Dev comes as the fifth Guru in the order of temporal succession of the ten Gurus in Sikhism. Thus, Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Guru, was continuing the tenet of grace as proclaimed from the first Guru onwards. Secondly, it may be added here even the notion of prasad (as in Gurprasad) to which the above scholar refers in Sukhmani of the fifth Guru, apart from its being used by the first Guru as well.

Ibid., p. 54.
was known and proclaimed by Ramanuja (11th Century) who, according to S. Radhakrishnan, "... believes that salvation is possible not through jnana and karma but through bhakti and prasad [grace]."

Therefore, for the reasons advanced above, it would not be possible to accept the view of C.H. Loehlin that Guru Arjan learnt it in the year 1600 and introduced it into Sikhism.

Consequently we may conclude with the observation that the tenet of grace is synthesized with the necessity for the practice or act of the person himself. The two stand in contemporaneous relationship and are essential in the scheme of self-realization.

7.14: *Sach khand, the ideal*

*Sach khand* marks the apex of the integrated tri-dimensional progress of the seeker. It is the final state of the person who reaches the simultaneously integrated ideal in terms of *gian, saram and karam khand*. The self is described as having realized sach khand. He may, therefore, be described as 'sachiara'. This was the ideal which we referred to in Chapter 2 (Moral Standard, Supra.) This is the ideal of the jivan mukta and constitutes final realization.

---

We are told that the perfected self finds here the vastness of knowledge ("Tithai khand mandala varbandh, je ko kathe ta anta na ant"). He has the direct intuition of this vastness. In gian khand, also, we had found that the knowledge was described in terms of 'vastness' or 'expanse'. The devotee has learnt about his outer and inner environments. It is an impact of 'vastness'. Here in each khand the self reaches the end of this expansive knowledge and intuits an undescribable unified vastness (Tithai loa loa akar).

The adept views it, contemplates it and is filled with joy. "Kar kar vekhe mader nihal ... vekhe vigase kare vichar").¹ This may be called a mystic experience in terms of direct intuition. It is an experience of realizing "MiranKar" (the Absolute). The self has both the intuitive knowledge ("Vakha") as well as Bliss ("nihil" and "vigase").

How about the will and the act, it may be asked. According to Guru Nanak, the will and the act also simultaneously realize the ideal as there is here a perfect homogeneity of the will of the sachiara with the universal will which is good (Jiv jiv hukam tiv tiv kar"). This stress on the act may be due to the fact that the Absolute itself is described as 'dynamic', "Kar kar" (acts unabated). What else would be the characteristic of the self, which realizes it, if not this 'unabated activity' in direction and harmony with the

universal will described as good ("Jiv jiv hukam tiv tiv kar")? Yes, what else indeed, if not this absolutely perfect activity?

Guru Nanak, thus, presents the ideal of all-integrative comprehensive self-realization. The self which has realized the ideal universalism in its tri-dimensional progress ends up in the realization of comprehensive self as depicted in 'sach khand'. The description of this khand is short and terse. Guru Nanak ends by saying that to describe it is rather difficult ("Kathna karara sar"). But we have had sufficient clues to form some general notion about it. This then is the ideal depiction in the description of the different khandas.

Concluding Remarks

The discussion heretofore has shown Sikhism to be preeminently an integrated doctrine, recognizing the great importance of the perfection of will and action as the executive aspect of the 'tri-dimensional' progress of the self. The spiritual realization is included in this progress as well as in the apex. This view highlights the need for realizing in practice whatever is realized by the self as a whole. This practice ought to be continued until the last moment of existential life and thereafter the self would merge in the All Light, All Bliss and all Activity ("Jot, Anand and Karta").

\[Ibid.\]
If we are required to name such an approach we may call it "Integrative Spiritual Practicalism". But then, on second thought, it may occur to us that even the name Sikhism may serve the same purpose, if we understand it in the above context. We may, therefore, call it Sikhism in the sense of "Integrative Spiritual Practicalism". It is a progress with roots intertwined and branches interwoven.