CHAPTER V.

MYSTICAL CONCEPTS OF GURU NANAK - 1.

THE MYSTIC GROUND\(^1\) OR GOD - MYSTICISM.

Mysticism, paradoxically speaking, is universal as well as empirical, egalitarian as well as elective.

As Eckhart, the great Christian mystic, remarks in purely mystical language: "The more God is in all things the more He is outside them. The more he is within, the more without."\(^2\) The meaning underlying the paradox in this statement seems to be that the divine penetration into the objects of the physical world is proportionate to a corresponding transcendentalism outside the visible phenomenon; inversely speaking, the unfathomable divine Ground has a corresponding outer reality which may be called, in the words of T.S. Eliot, an "objective correlative."\(^3\)

Otto observes in this context: "The resting unity is the raison d'être of the moving multiplicity and it is by reason of the oneness of these two that the Godhead is \textit{divus par se}."\(^4\)

The Ground constitutes the Divine Being, and His manifestation which is 'becoming' or change; and both form

\(^1\) The term as used by Aldous Huxley in \textit{Perennial Philosophy}, Chap.II. Cf. Gopal Singh, \textit{Religion of the Sikhs}, p.30. "God is the All-ground."


\(^3\) Eliot, of course, has used this term in a different sense, \textit{Selected Essays}, p.145.

the one, unitive Reality of Mysticism. Plato conceived the physical world as a shadow of the eternal reality, which Isaac benington calls "a true shadow in its own place." Thus the inner (mystical) and the outer (objective) aspects of Reality, intellectually understandable on the plane of realityality, ultimately form the one Unknowable Ground.

It is, therefore, necessary to accept Reality in both its aspects and to discuss the Mystic Ground as well as its objective correlative, which latter we shall study in the next chapter under the title 'The Mystic Path'. The ineffable mystical experience, when put to intellectual scrutiny and analysis in human language, lends itself to the study of mystical content or thought as well as the mystical method or way, i.e. the ultimate goal as well as the immediate, tangible path. Most of the recondite mystical concepts, concerned with Godhead, and its manifestative qualities, are covered by the term Mystic Ground, as adapted and used by us.

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

Mysticism is not merely feeling nor mere cognition but a higher synthesis of both. It is thus the combined essence

of religion and philosophy. Guru Nanak's mysticism is essentially of this representative type for which the word 'Contemplation' may be the most appropriate one. 6

The mystical concepts as such are properly not objects of knowledge at all, according to a curious doctrine of Immanuel Kant. Therefore, our perceptions of "God", "Soul", and 'immortality' are without any significance unless they become objects of faith and belief which lead to moral and spiritual elevation in the actual lives of those who thus mystically believe. 7

NIRGUN BRAHM OR GODHEAD.

God-mysticism deals both with Godhead and God which are actually not two but one. The concept of Godhead, as distinct from the concept of God, is however, our first mystical concern. Godhead is that absolute entity which may be called the highest conception of the Divine Being. It is the same Absolute Brahma or the Impersonal God of the Hindu Vedanta Mysticism. In the words of Aldous Huxley: "The divine Ground of all existence is a spiritual Absolute, ineffable in terms of discursive thought, but (in certain circumstances)

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

susceptible of being directly experienced and realized by the human being. This Absolute is the God-without-form of Hindu and Christian mystical phraseology.\(^8\)

Godhead is the Nirankar, or the Nirgun Brah\(m\) of Guru Nanak (which means the Formless, Attributeless God) and the Al-Haqq (the Real) of the Sufi mysticism, implying the 'abyss of Godhead'\(^9\) as distinct from the personal Allah. It is the Yonder of Plotinus who formulates Divinity into three aspects (a sort of spiritual Trinity) viz. (1) The Absolute Godhead (2) The Nous or The Spirit and (3) The Psyche or the Soul -- the causal life of our physical universe. These three are corresponding to the Vedanta Trinity, Brahm Ishvar and Atman.

Plotinus describes the Godhead as the 'atmosphere breathed by beautified souls' or 'the sphere of solid, unchanging reality.'\(^12\)

Eckhart says: 'The Godhead gave all things up to God. The Godhead is poor, naked and empty as though it were not; it has not, wills not, wants not, works not, gets not. It is God who has the treasure and the bride in him, the Godhead is as void as though it were not.'\(^13\) Again: "God and


\(9\). Ibid., p. 30

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

\(11\). Cf. Marquette, *op. cit.*, p.120.

\(12\). Inge, *op. cit.*, pp.117 f.

Godhead are as distinct as heaven and earth. Heaven stands a thousand miles above the earth and even so the Godhead is above God. God becomes and disbecomes ..."\(^4\)

One has to pass over to this highest state of divinity i.e. Godhead in order to reach the highest truth or reality. Otto observes: "The seer has to pass beyond God into the silent void of the Godhead itself. This is the highest vision and whoever still has 'a God' has not yet reached to the highest and the last."\(^5\) "It is the nirum which even in the terms of greatest exaltation one cannot embrace on account of its absolute 'otherness'. Like Brahman it is neither conscious, nor self-conscious. It is beyond the contrast of subject and object, known and knower."\(^6\)

This Godhead is the pure Tauhid of Sufi mysticism or the Monism (Advaita) of Shankaracharya, the Sunvata of Buddhism\(^7\) and the Sunn-Samadhi\(^8\) of Guru Nanak's Sikh mysticism. The Upanishadictum of "the one without a second," and

\(^4\) Ibid., p. 38.
\(^5\) Otto, op. cit., p. 8.
\(^6\) Loc. Cit.
\(^7\) Cf. Suzuki, Mysticism, Christian and Buddhist, p. 28, quoted in Stace, Mysticism and Philosophy, p. 109. He says: "In Buddhist Emptiness (Sunvata) there is no time, no space, no becoming, nothingness."
\(^8\) Guru Arjan, Sukhmani, 21, AG, 290. (Sargun nirgun nirankar Sunn samadhi ap).
the *neti neti* (not this, not this), are clearly indicative of Godhead. "The divine one is a negation of negation",
says Eckhart, "something to which nothing is to be added -- Every creature contains a negation: one denies that it is the other ... but God contains the denial of denials." 19

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

Guru Nanak's version of this Vedantic concept of Aham bram asmi or an-al-Haq ("I am God") may be aptly expressed in the words of Henry Suso: "In the merging of itself in God, the spirit passes away and yet not wholly; for it receives indeed some attributes of Godhead, but it does not become God in nature ... It is still a something which has been created out of nothing and continues to


20. Cf. Siri, AG., 23. "He Himself is the beautiful, Himself the (aesthetic) taste and also one who enjoys." (Ape rasia ap ras ape rawanhar ... ), the whole hymn.
be everlastingly."

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

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


23. Ibid., p.181.
Addressing Godhead directly as *Nirgun Brahm*, Guru Nanak repeatedly affirms the eternal oneness which does not accept any change or duality with the Godhead assuming attributes. In one hymn he repeats five times the basic dictum: "True is the One, none else exists. Thou art one, Thou art one."  

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

These mystical niceties of course become real only on the plane of intellectual gnosis; actually speaking, the mystical state of unity or union is unknowable and ineffable. It is only a subject of realization or contemplation. All human bonds and shackles are snapped at this supra-sensuous stage, for union with God is salvation. In the words of Dionysius of Athens: "It is in the supreme part of the soul that the mystical operation takes place. To that

24. *Var Nahin*, AG., 143. (*Sada sad tu ik hai tuch duja khel rachaia*).

25. *Ibid.*, AG., 144. (*Asat ek digar kui, ek tui, ek tui*).

portion of the soul which no passion can reach, is to be assigned the contemplation of the pure and profound virtues.

Guru Nanak's exalted position in the whole mystical literature, as affirmed by Taran Singh, is primarily due to his emphasis on and strict adherence to the basic mystic concept of the transcendental oneness and absoluteness of Godhead expressed by him, time and again, in the more or less original terms, nirankar, nirgun, alakh, abhe, agam, agochar, anath, ajuni, akath, nirbheu, nirvair, akal-murat, apar, aparman, agadh, adrisht, abhub, trigun-atit, achal, adol and so on, whose negativeness is the truest affirmation of the beyondness of Godhead. All these negative appellations of Godhead signify the same fundamental truth of the inscrutability, infinitude, invisibility and ineffability of Godhead, Guru Nanak has most emphatically and frequently referred to the veracity of the extreme inability of human language to express the inexpressible reality of Godhead. Like other great mystics, the ancient Rishis, the Buddha, Plotinus, Eckhart, Al-Ghazali, Hujwiri and so on, Guru Nanak prefers the mystic language of symbols to express what cannot be rendered in ordinary human language, however,

27. Marquette, op.cit., p.147.
articulate and developed it may be. In his own words:

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

Again:

"God is as great as He wishes to be;
Nanak, He the truthful One alone knows about himsel
If one bespeaks something out of limit or propriety,
He will certainly be dubbed as the most foolish
and vulgar among men." 32

The ineffable Godhead, or the Absolute Being, who
has no form or external manifestation whatsoever which may be
called his real self or image and all whose visible, tangible
'emanations'33 are only symbolical, is only perceived and
realized, intuitively and mystically, in the soul itself,
directly as well as empirically. "Incommunicableness", says
William James, "of the transport is the keynote of all
mysticism. Mystical truth exists for the individual who has
the transport, but for no one else. In this, it resembles
the knowledge given to us in sensation more than that given
by conceptual thought." 34 Guru Arjan says:

uchha thao, uche upar ucha nao, Svad ucha bovai koe, this uche ko japai sog).
32. Ibid., p. 139 (Jeyad bhavai tayed hoes. Nanak jenai sache soe.
je ko akhai bol vigarh, Ta likhiai sir gavara gavar.).
33. For the well-known mystical theory of 'Emanation' propounded
by Plotinus, see Inge. Mysticism in Religion, p. 115.
34. Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 318.
"The treasure of bliss is the ambrosial God's Name. It rests in the mind of the bhagats or true devotees. But Guru Nanak has not denoted Godhead merely by negations. He has also given expressions of positive affirmation. In the mystical prologue to the Adi Granth (called mul-mantar in Sikh parlance) the very first term used for Godhead, by Guru Nanak, is EK-OANKAR, which means "The One-All-Pervading" i.e. the Absolute One who has nevertheless infinite extension and expansion. The second denotive term he has used is SAT-NAM, ("His Name is true"), which implies that "the only eternal or abiding being is He" (signifying thereby that all manifestation is in itself transient and contingent while only Godhead is everlasting). The third positive affirmation in the mul-mantar is KARTA-PURKH which means the "Creator-Immanent One" after which term the negational signification begins, and, again, the last word in the mul-mantar is positive, viz. GUR-PRAASAD which means "by the grace of the Guru He is known". The ingress of the grace of the Guru, it may be pointed out, is always a mystical process, and the Guru as Logos works as an

35. Sukhmani, l., AG., 252. (Sukhmani sukhit amrit prabh nam. Bhagat jana kai man baisram.)


37. Cf. "Eternal Truth is His Name", SSWS, 28.

intercessional medium between Godhead and the individual soul, about which elaborate discussion has been done under the caption "The Guru and Sabad". 

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

"God was True in the beginning, True in the various Ages. True He is, says Nanak, and True He will ever be." 

Many other positive names of God can be easily gathered and cited from the *Adi Granth*, e.g. *kirpal*, *dayal*, *karim*, *rahir*, *datar*, *karter*, *sachcha*, *parvardin*, *kadar*, *miharvan*, *khasam*, *malik*, *sahib*, *din-dayal*, *sultan*, *mir*, *dukhabara*, *ichha-pura*, *antaryami*, *samrath* and so on, which collectively imply the attributes of divine grace, compassion, bounty, creative power, omnipotence and almightiness. 

The concept of Godhead, though in itself indicative of pure absolutism, simultaneously connotes its other inevitable aspect of the personal God (often called by the simple names of

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39. Cf. Guru Arjan, *Var Ram'ali*, Slok AG., 957. "As I had heard, I have found the Guru. He joins the separated ones to God, as he is an advocate in God's Court." (*Jaisa Satgur Sunida taiso hi mai dith. Vichharia mele prabhu har dargah ke basith*).

40. See *Infra*. Chap.VI

41. Dewan Singh, *op. cit.*., p.108. (*Adi sach, jugadi sach, hai bhi sach, Nanak hos i bhi sach*).

God, Prabhu, Allah, Khuda, Ram, Hari, Madho, Kesho, Murari and Gobind, some of which have been borrowed from the Hindu and Muslim religious usage in order to induce a psychological appeal inherent in the traditional and racial character called "collective unconscious" so much so that it is not always possible to distinguish one from the other. In Sikhism, both the Nirgun and Sargun aspects of Brahm are presented as one entity, which is probably the truest appreciation of this paradoxical belief. Guru Arjan has described the bifurcated nature of Godhead in most lucent terms:

"The Formless One is both Sargun as well as Nirgun Brahm and He is eternally in Sunn-Samad condition. He created the universe out of Himself, says Nanak, and then remembered Himself." 44

Teja Singh has rendered this Slok as under: 45

PROLOGUE

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

Since Guru Nanak conceived these uncanny truths in deeply mystical realization and purely intuitive contemplation, he has made many prophetic revelations in his Word or Gurbani

43. See James Dr ever, A Dictionary of Psychology, p. 43. It is a term used to a considerable extent by Jung to signify those elements in the individual unconscious derived from the experiences of the race.


45. Psalm of Peace, p. 103.
which is replete with poetic expressions of the highest mystical value. A recent writer has referred to this aspect of Guru Nanak's contribution to world religion: 46

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

The basis of Guru Nanak's thought being essentially that of a mystic, as another writer affirms, his strict belief in divine unity need not destroy the idea of 'duality' but to 'swallow it up' in the rapture of divine love. The creation in itself is not only expressive of the creator behind it but serves as a symbol which points to the Reality that lies beyond it. "The ultimate essence of God is beyond all human categories, far transcending all powers of human expression. Only in experience can He be truly known. Man must indeed seek to give human expression to this mystical experience and Guru Nanak's works are directed to this very end, but the human expression can communicate no more than a glimpse of the ultimate reality."

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

"Where ever I see, I find the generous Lord.

The benign God neither comes nor goes.


He has cleverly entered the hearts of all beings.
The world is the shadow of one who has neither sire nor mother.
Neither has He any sister, nor brother.
He has no birth or death, family or caste:
Such an eternal one is after my heart. 48
Epithets like Atit (beyond) and Nehkewal (pure) used by the Guru clearly refer to the absolute Godhead:
"The Transcendent One abides as Pure Being,
with whom the Guru joins being with being." 49
Guru Nanak has no dearth of words to express the Absolute Godhead. He calls Him Apramap and Niralam i.e. (Beyond of the Beyond):
"The Absolute one has assumed the state of void.
He Himself is Beyond of the Beyond.
After creating the Cosmos He sees it - a void-like creation made out of mere void." 50
This void (Sunn or sunyata) is the Primal State of Godhead. The Guru has beautifully described this state of endless chaos (dhundhukara) in full sixteen stanzas of a hymn called Maru Solha, the first Stanza being:
"For countless Ages there was chaos and chaos.
There was no Ether or Earth -- only God's infinite will prevailed.
There was neither day nor night, nor moon nor sun:
The Primal Being was in Sunn-samadh condition." 51

49. Maru Solha, AG., 1040.
50. Ibid., AG., 1037.
51. Ibid., AG., 1035-36.
The Sunn-samadh condition or state of Godhead is truly mystical and ineffable. It is only realizable in the Fourth state (Turva) by the favoured, Reality-perceiving soul. This state has been called the "deep and more than deep" (atigambhira) by Shankara in his commentary on Gita. The Mandukya upanishad calls it 'unfathomable ocean (dushparveshvam). It is the Upanishadic Eternal Being called sat or atisaya (the quite transcendent one).

Examples expressive of Godhead can be easily multiplied. In fact, Adi Granth is full of such mystical expressions of the inexpressible one, and this is one of the most favourite subjects of the poets included in this scripture, beside Guru Nanak. Hence we pass on to the next stage of Godhead known as God or Ishavara, in the technical sense.

SARGUN BRAHM: CREATOR-GOD.

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

Actually speaking, Godhead and God are just one-entity, equally eternal and immortal to the ordinary human being. There can be no idea of duality between them. The one is the Higher state, the other Lower which is a relative difference, not real. All spiritual ascent is from relative to absolute, from personal to impersonal, from particular to

universal. "Mysticism", says Keyserling, "always ends in an impersonal immortality."\textsuperscript{53}

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

"My Lord is one, He is One, my brother, He is One."\textsuperscript{54}

Again:

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

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

"There is but One giver of all beings, whom I may never forget."\textsuperscript{56}

The very first Credal Statement in the Adi Granth, so succintly enunciated by Guru Nanak, called mul-mantar, begins with the affirmation of One God, who is everlasting

\textsuperscript{53} Inge., op.cit., p.162.
\textsuperscript{54} \textit{Asa}, AG., 350 (\textit{Sahib mera eko hai. Eko hai bhai eko hai}).
\textsuperscript{55} \textit{Patti} (ASA), 2, AG., 433. (\textit{Eko leva! eko devai avar na duje mai sunia}).
\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Japji}, 5, AG. (\textit{Gura ik deh bujhai sabhna jia ka it data so mai visar na jai}).
Name, who is the Creator and so on: "God is one, All-prevading (EK-OANKAR), Everlasting Name (Sat-Nam), The Creator Being (Karta Purakh) ..." 57

But it is with the Lower, Sargun Brahm i.e. the Creator-God (Ishavar) that all theism in religion begins. The monistic Godhead becomes the monotheistic God, by assuming the three gunas or attributes. 58

According to Moled: "It is in this Saguna aspect that man can know God and accordingly it is this aspect which is the object of Guru Nanak's meditation and of his expository utterances." 59

The Sargun Brahm of Guru Nanak is the Creator, Sustainer and Destroyer, according to the assumption by Him of the threefold (trigun or tribidh) principle of Maya. The One Mother (Mai) produces three children i.e. the three controlling deities, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, who are the efficient causes of creation, preservation and dissolution of the universe. 60

With the transformation of Nirgun Brahm into its Sargun aspect, the transcendental and absolute Being turns into an immanent Reality and with this comes the basic pantheistic tendency in all Hindu mysticism, in fact, in all

57. Japji, Prologue (Mul-mantar), Ag.,1.


60. Japji, 30, Ag., 7.
types of mysticism. Sikh mysticism is no exception but there is this peculiarity or special merit in Sikhism that it strikes a remarkable synthesis between strict monotheism and a necessary, almost a bare pantheism, so that the basic unity of Godhead is not abrogated.

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

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

"He is Himself the Tablet, the Pen and the writing thereof.

61. "The doctrine that all things are within the being of God who is yet merely the whole of actual things." Gaynor, Dictionary of Mysticism.
Let us say He is the only One, why think of a second?" 62

Again:

"By creating two aspects, the One remained One. By infusing divine knowledge inside man, He created a 'dialectic' (Vad).

Participation and seclusion are the two polarities, between which the religion is to mediate." 63

The concept of the 'Primordial monism' becoming 'creative dualism' and still retaining its pristine unitive truth, is the hallmark of Guru Nanak's mysticism and has been most explicitly and forcefully expressed by him in the three Vars or 'heroic odes' written by him in Ragas, Majh, Asa and Malar. whereas the Sloks added to the Pauris (i.e. stanzas) later on, by Guru Arjan, the compiler of the Adi Granth, selecting and choosing preferably from the same Guru-poet who had written the Pauris of the particular Var, express religious ideas in a general tone and manner, the pauris in a Var present a well-knit sequential train of ideas


63. V. Ibid., Pauri, 5, AG, 1280.

64. A Raga or Rag is a musical note which serves as the particular rhythm in the poetical compositions of the Sikh Gurus, such as Siri Rag, Asa Rag, Maru Rag etc. All the poetry included in the Adi Granth has not been arranged poet-wise but according to the Ragas, which are 31 in all, beginning with Siri Rag which is the chief or primal Raga. Cf. MK. 769.

65. Originally the Vars in Adi Granth comprised only the Pauris or Stanzas which were numbered (and each number coming after each stanza) the addition of Sloks was an editorial innovation undertaken by Guru Arjan in order to illustrate and augment the thought in a Pauri by adding one or more sloks with it. Cf. MK., 817.
specially in praise of the Nirgun-cum-Sargun Prabhu (i.e. God) or the saviour Nam-giving Guru (who again is identical with the primal Brahm) and also in eulogy of the Guru-faced man or Sikh (called Gurmukh), who has his opposite or rival in the self-faced or self-engrossed man of the world (called Manmukh).

SRIKITI (CREATION) AND MAYA.

By far the most significant thought expressed in these vars of Guru Nanak and for that matter, in the vars composed by the other Gurus), however, is the elucidation of the mystical process involved in the 'creativity' assumed or undertaken by the Nirgun-Brahm in the form of the Ishvara, the Creator-God (the Karta-Purkh) with the help of the magical creative-agency called Maya.

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

"Only God Himself knows when He creates the world."


67. Loc. Cit., (Ja Karta sirthhi ko saja ape janai soi).
The absolute truth cannot be known or stated by discursive reason. The Pandits, Yogis and the Qazis tried to guess about it in vain. Guru Nanak wisely desists from making any attempt to probe the unplumbable.

But his poetic genius has come very handy in describing the cosmogenic truth of the creation of the world in very vivid metaphors and expressions in the said *vars*. In *Var Majh*, the first and second stanzas (Pauris), in fact almost all the Stanzas, touch the cosmogenic subject. The *var* proper begins with:

"You are the Inscrutable creator Lord, who created the world. You produced the many-hued and multi-phased universe."

Again in Stanza two, the divine poet says:

"You created the world and gave people vocations to do By transposing the element of beguilement, you distracted the world." 69.

The *Var Asa*, similarly, begins with:

"He Himself became the Creator Being and then created the *Nam* (or Logos); Then He created an *alter self* as creation and was pleased to see this new receptacle." 70

The opening lines in the *Var Malar* are even more explicitly metaphorical:

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68. A Qazi is an Islamic Jurist or Judge, also religious scholar. Cf. *MK*, 237.


"He created Himself and thus took His own cognizance.

By separating heaven from earth, He spread a canopy.

By raising heavens without any support, He signified Sabad (Logos).

By creating the sun and the moon, He permeated as light.

He made the night and the day — a prodigious wonder." 71

Though silent about the unknowable time of the beginning of creation, Guru Nanak has mystically divined and expressed the possible manner or process of creation. As we have seen in the lines quoted above from his vars, God created the universe (sansar) out of Himself by a mysterious cause, in order to know or see Himself, as if in a mirror in which He could see His own image — a metaphor used by the Sufis and also found in the Sikh theology. 72 The Divine will (Hukam) may be said to be the hidden cause behind creation. This Hukam, as we shall discuss in detail further on in this chapter, created the Ishavara - Maya complex, with the three Gunas to form the efficient causes and thus the whole cosmic play began. In the words of Guru Nanak:

"From the true Lord emanated air and from air came into being water.

From water He created the three worlds 73 and everywhere He infused His inner light." 74

71. Var Malar, Pauri,1, AG., 1279.

72. "By Holding mirror in His hand He sees Himself." (Apanre hath arsi ane hi dekhe). Bhai Gurdas, Var 2,1.

73. i.e. tribhayan, or trilok, (Surg, prithavi and patal- heaven earth and the nether world), see MK, 455.

74. Siri AG, 19.
Again:

"Water is the first Being which infused life in all objects." 75

The whole creation came out of void and chaos (Sunn) by some involutionary and evolutionary process of Emanation 76 or divine manifestation. Guru Nanak has at many places touched this subject in his usual mystical manner:

"From chaos He created Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. From chaos emanated all the cosmic Ages. ... ... From chaos came out the sun, the moon and the heavens. His own light is pervading in the three worlds. In the Void Infinite, the Invisible and Transcendent Lord sits in contemplation. From chaos He created earth and heavenly spheres; He fixed them up in space without any support, by some divine mechanism. By creating three worlds and the encompassing maya He creates and destroys everything Himself." 77

Again:

"For countless aeons there was nothing but chaos. The Infinite One remained in pure contemplation. In that chaos the Absolute Lord sat Himself alone, and there was no creative expansion." 78

75. *Var Asa, Salok, AG, 473.*

76. *Obvious reference is to the well-known theory of Emanation propounded by Plotinus, Cf. Inge, Mysticism in Religion, p.114 f. See also Gaynor, Dictionary of Mysticism. This doctrine means that nothing can be evolved without first being involved.*

77. *Muru, AG., 1037.*

78. *Ibid., AG., 1026.*
For Guru Nanak the bewitching, magical *maya*, which forms the causal basis of creation, is not unreal or without substance, though its role is that of beguilement, deception and treachery. The metaphors of *fly* (*makhi*), *she-serpent* (*sarpangi*), the beltlike rope (*maikhali*), the 'one-Mother' (*eka Mai*), the chameleon-coloured (*suha-rang*), the shadowlike (*chhaya maya*), the evil mother-in-law (*sas buri*) used by Guru Nanak to denote the baffling *maya*, are very significant as they clearly signify its true nature, full of duplicity and illusoriness. So are the meaningful phrases used by him to describe its deceiving function meant to distract the ignorant and gullible human beings, e.g., *maya-moh* or *maya mambta mohini* (the attractive *maya*), *trikuti* (the three-pronged *maya*, having three *gunas*), *tribidh* (the three-phased), *maya rachna dhoh* (the undeceivable deceiver) and so on.

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79. Var Malar, Slok, AG., 1286.
80. Malar, AG., 1274, See also Sri, AG., 63.
81. Maru, AG., 1037.
82. Janji, 30, AG., 7.
83. Gauri, AG., 221.
84. Ibid., AG., 228.
86. Ibid., AG., 25. Cf. Shankar calls *maya* *indefinitem* (*anirvachaniya*), see Jodh Singh, art. "Guru Nanak Dev ate Vedant", Guru Nanak: Jiwan, Darshan ate Kav Kala, ed. S.S. Kohli, p.79.
From these phrases the paradoxical nature of *maya* becomes quite clear. The term *Sarpāṇi* (which is also called *kundalini* in the esoteric tantric terminology) is probably the most cogent and representative symbol used for *maya*, not only by Guru Nanak but also by Kabir and other Bhagats.

As to the question whether the creation is real or unreal, Guru Nanak has followed Ramanuja in rejecting the monistic concept of an illusory universe postulated by Shankara (i.e. the rope appearing as a snake in darkness) and, instead, regards the *maya* and the universe (*Jagat*) as something substantial and real, and not a mere supposition or superimposition. He has gone even farther than Ramanuja to invest the creation with the venerable sanctity reserved for the supra-creation spiritual universe. His positive dictum regarding this problem is that the world is real and sacred like a temple (*dharamsal*) because it is the creation of the Truthful Lord. How can the world created by the Real Being be unreal? But when the Real Being is forgotten by the deceived and engrossed human beings, for them the world is certainly unreal and, in fact, a sure place of destruction.

So, according to Guru Nanak, there are two different planes


90. Cf. *Var. Asa, Salok* (*Pauri*, 2): "True are the regions and the worlds created by you ..." *AG*, 463. and *slok* (*Pauri*, 10): "False is the king and false the populace; false is all the world." *AG*, 468. The original text, respectively: "*Sache tere khand sache brahmand*" and "*Kur raja kur par ja kur sabh sansar*."
on which the world is real and unreal in consonance with the redeemed and unregenerate conditions of man respectively.

NATURE MYSTICISM OR VISMAKA

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

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

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

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

"You have bewitching eyes and ravishing teeth.
The captivating nose and lengthy tresses.
O your golden physique with your golden shield." 92

Guru Nanak's two mystical rhapsodies of exquisite poetic felicity are reserved for the depiction and description of Nature (gudrat or prakriti) in all its cosmic and humanistic manifestations and the subtle portrayal of the exalted mystical feelings of amazement and wonder (vismad) 93 caused by imaginative contemplation of all that appeals to the human sensibility and to the inner spiritual-intuitive

91. SSWS, 61 (Sohila Arti).

92. Wadhans, AG., 567.

93. Literal meaning, "amazing, astonishing, surprising"; mystical meaning, rapture or transport or sense of wonder while enjoying the divine beauty of Nature; see MK, 645, and McLeod, Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion, pp.173, 219, 221, 226.
perception. Both these pieces are included in Guru Nanak's
well-known composition, Var Asa, the first beginning with:
"Nature is visible, Nature is audible, the fear of Nature
is the essence of bliss." and the second opening with:
"Wonderful is symphony, wonderful is knowledge."

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

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

94. This litany has the status of (almost) daily recitation
in Sikh congregational prayer in the morning, Cf. Taran
also MK, 69. and S.S.Kohli, Philosophy of Guru Nanak,p.68.

95. Var Asa, Slokh (Pauri,3) AG., 464 (Qudrat disai qudrat
suniae qudrat bhuu sukh sar).

96. Ibid., AG, 463 (Vismad pad vismad vedi).

97. For theoretical meaning of Nature-mysticism, see supra
Chap.1.

98. C.H.Loehlin, Twelve Months by Guru Nanak: Tukhari
Chhant, p.3.
Nature-mysticism has been exquisitely interfused with God-mysticism by Guru Nanak in one supreme devotional apotheosis called Prema Bhakti i.e. Living devotion. Imaginative perception of divine beauty creates the chaste passion called love in the devotee's mind and love brings devotional attachment which is termed as Bhakti. This Bhakti mysticism which is akin to the Christian 'voluntaristic' mysticism "seeks to attain unity with the Highest through coalescence by an emotional exaggeration and glow of feeling. And even the highest is thought of as responding to amorous longings." Ramanuja in the East and Luther in the West are Guru Nanak's precursors in this erotic and emotional mysticism.

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

The beautiful, however, is not merely beautiful, but also true and good, as Plato conceived. In the


100. Ibid., p.75.

ultimate analysis the sat, chit, and anand are just three facets of one Reality and are always inseparable from each other. The satyam, shivam and sundram of Indian mystical philosophy are just one ensemble. The firmament above and the moral law inside the man, which so deeply impressed Kant, are just corresponding realities or verities. Of similar import is Albert Schweitzer's remark about God. "In the world He appears to me as mysterious, marvellous creative force, within me He reveals Himself as ethical will."¹⁰²

Since the universe deeply reflects the Creator who is immanent, it cannot just be a place full of evil and misery as most pessimists make it to be. The divine truth is very much here, as nature mystics so strongly and imaginatively perceive. Plotinus rightly says that "all things that are Yonder are also Here below."¹⁰³

The whole Truth whether transcendent or immanent is just one. Unless we perceive this unity, there can be no concrete basis for the sublime feelings of wonder, love, devotion, worship, compassion, humility, charity and so on. In fact, all ethos begins with the inevitable perception of unity in diversity. Truth, Beauty and Good are ONE, as Keats declared. Inge also affirms this ubiquitous fact:

¹⁰² Charles Hartshorne, Philosophers Speak of God, p.298., quoted in Avatar Singh, Ethics of the Sikhs, p.32.
¹⁰³ Inge, Outspoken Essays, p.278.
¹⁰⁴ "Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty, that is all, Ye know on earth and all ye need to know." (Ode on a Grecian Urn).
"The Goal of Truth as an absolute value is unity, which in the outer world means harmony; in the intercourse of spirit with spirit, love; and in the inner world, peace or happiness. The goal of Goodness as an absolute value is the realisation of the ought-to-be in victorious moral effort. Beauty is the self-recognition of creative spirit in its own works; it is the expression of Nature's own deepest character. Beauty gives neither information nor advice; but it satisfies a part of our nature which is not less divine than that which pays homage to Truth and Goodness." 105

Beauty has the deepest and the widest impact on human beings who are directly and empirically affected by it, at all places and at all times, because it has the power to excite and enliven the imagination. Coleridge so aptly remarks that imagination is the capacity to see similarity in dissimilars or the power of combining the many in the one.106 This imaginative perception of beauty that unites and binds even the dissimilars, is the true basis of all Nature-mysticism.

Guru Nanak is probably at his highest when he imaginatively perceives divine beauty in all the universe and then expresses his rapturous feelings in fascinating poetry. He gets so much lost in his mystical sense of wonder (vismed) and his complete 'identity' with Nature, that he can only utter "Wonderful",107 or "Wonderful Lord"


107. His favourites words were "Wah" "bal bal" and "Balihari" (meaning 'wonderful'). See MK, for their connotation. Cf. Var Asa, Slok (Pauri 12), AG., 469, for the word 'Balihari'.
In one small poem so bewitching for its magical poetic effect, he wants to be personified in Nature as a she-deer, a she-cuckoo, a she-fish and a she-serpent (all feminine metaphors, because in Indian mysticism man is symbolized as a 'bride' who has to find and meet her divine 'spouse', so that he may in ecstatic union with Nature meet the creator Lord.

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

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108. The most sanctified and popular Name for God used in Sikhism since the time of Guru Nanak and other Gurus. At first it was a secret mystic Name disclosed by the Guru to the deserving Sikh only but later it was declared as 'manifest'. In the Adi Granth it was not used by the Gurus themselves, who used traditional Names of God such as Ram, Hari, Prabhu and so on, but by the Bhattas whose panegyrics of the first five Gurus were included in the Adi Granth by Guru Arjan. After Bhattas, Bhai Gurdas used this sacred Name for God in his Wars and also by the authors, of the Janam Sakhis, See MK, 814. for 'Wah' and 'Wahiguru' Cf. S.S.Kohli, Philosophy of Guru Nanak, p.68.


110. Inge, Outspoken Essays, p.278.

The universe has a macrocosmic or outer aspect which attracts and invites the loving attention of the perceiving man, and also a microcosmic or inner aspect which is the soul of the universe -- a matter for mystical apprehension. Shelley says that "it is impossible not to believe in the soul of the universe."  It is equally impossible for a true mystic poet not to express his pantheistic emotion in the poetry of Nature-mysticism.

Guru Nanak has used unnumberable metaphors symbolising his variegated perceptions of Nature with its myriad moods and tones, phases and nuances.

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

Guru Nanak says:

"Nanak the True Lord is the Supreme Giver and in Nature alone is He recognized." 113

COSMO-MYSTICAL REGIONS 114

Nowhere is Guru Nanak so deeply mystical and sublime as when he describes the five cosmo-mystical Regions i.e.


113. Var Nahi, Pauri 8, AG, 141. (Nanak sah datar sanakhat qudarti). For Carlyle's view of Nature as a divine symbol, see Sartor Resartus, p.280. "The universe is but one vast symbol of God."

Khanda, Dharman (Law), Gyan (Knowledge), Saram (Honour),
Karam (Divine Grace) and Sachch (Truth), towards the end of
his most famous composition called Japji, Japji is decidedly
his magnum opus and has been given the primal place in the
whole of Adi Granth, while the five khands constitute the
mystical climax of the whole piece.

The vertical evolutionary apothesis of these Regions
has been regarded by Mcleod as (mystical) Ascent, leading
from Dharam Khand (Region of Law or duty) upward to the last,
Sachch Khand which "is the ultimate climax of the search for
truth, for it is here that there is perfect and absolute
accord with the Divine Order (Hukam)." 117

Though one can conceive an apparent similarity
between these mystical regions and the Sufi magamet or
spiritual stages as has been suggested by Tara Chand, S.S.
Kohli and Taran Singh, for instance, yet, as Mcleod opines,
the analogy does not hold good because the parallel is just
conjectured and not based on any evidence. Sufis have

115. Cf. My treatment of these Regions in Guru Nanak's Message
in Japji, pp.90-104 (Chap. "The Five Regions"), in which
I have given my original interpretation of the Saram
Khand and the Karam Khand. Cf. also Mcleod, Loc.Cit. and
Mohan Singh Uberoi, Sikh Mysticism, p.12 f.n.

116. Op.cit. p.221. For the phrase 'vertical evolution' see
my work, op.cit., pp.93 f.

117. Ibid., p.223.

118. Cf. Influence of Islam on Indian Culture, p.176; A Critical
Study of the Adi Granth, p.367, and Guru Nanak Chintan
ta Kala (Panjabi), 2nd ed., p.89.
postulated either four or seven mystical stages which have no cosmic reality or clear evolutionary process connecting them together, as we find in Guru Nanak.

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

Whereas the highest Region i.e. Sachch Khand, is purely mystical in as much as Guru Nanak merely affirms its infinite existence and then testifies the colossal infinitude that surrounds the Formless One (Nirankar) who is the Godhead or the Nirgun Brahmi, the second region Gyan Khand (the Region of Knowledge) is expressive of cosmological vastness to which he says, "there is no end" (Nanak ant na ant).120

What Marquette says of the Sufi stages of mystical ascent in respect of their supra-spatial genesis and reality also holds good in the case of these five Regions. He says: "These seven planes are not to be considered as localities in space but as grades of manifestations of the attributes in the manner of Plotinian hypostasis."121

Absolute vastness and infinitude are the key-notes

119. For Sufi Cosmic planes, see Marquette, Introduction to Comparative Mysticism, pp. 175-76.
120. Janji, 35. AG., 7.
of Guru Nanak's cosmogonic description as found in these Regions of which, to say anything "is as hard as steel."  

122 At another place in Japji, Guru Nanak says: "There is no end to His creation."  

123 About the cosmic causation, he says: "God created all the worlds by uttering the word. From this word flowed out millions of rivers (of life)."  

124 The description of the five Regions as a mystical system or plan to the highest level of cosmic infinitude — almost an unravelling and unfolding of the exigencies of the Divine Order (Hukam) — is perhaps Guru Nanak's deepest mystical study or sall into the unfathomable mystery of the Godhead, revealed to him in moments of contemplative rapture or intuitive inspiration. But what is most typical of Guru Nanak's mystical realization is not expression or description of what he had realized, as in the case of the delineation of the five Regions, but the candid affirmation of his inability to express the inexpressible.  

125 While implying that there is no numbering of the heavens as seven or eighteen thousand (as done by some Indian  

122 Japji, 37, AG., 8. Words within commas are McLeod's translation of the line: "Nanak kathna karara sar." op. cit. p. 224.  

123 Japji, 24, AG., 5 (Ant na japai kita akar).  

124 Japji, 16, AG., 3. (Kita pasao eko kavao. Tis te hoe lakh dariyao).  

125 For instance, Japji, 25, AG., 5. "His bounty is so much, it cannot be said." (Bahuta karam likhia na jai),
and Semitic religions and saying that the heavens and the nether regions are countless, he becomes suddenly conscious (as if, of blasphemy) and improves his statement by saying that even to say countless would be unsavoury or wrong.

Despite this idealistic tendency in Guru Nanak to affirm the impossibility of expressing the ineffable Reality and even to caution the braggarts of their folly in bragging, his fortuitous description of the Cosmo-mystical Regions is a literary reality and can be said to have a few parallels in mystical literature such as Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Iqbal's *Javaidnama* and Bhai Vir Singh's *Rana Surat Singh*. In all these divine Epics, having mystical themes and epic treatment, spiritual ascent has been imaginatively transposed with more or less mystical fecundity. But it can be safely aversed that whereas in other


127. *Japji*, 22, *AG.*, 5. "Millions are the nether regions, millions are the heavenly spheres." (*Patala patai jakh agasa agas.*)

128. *Japji*, 19, *AG.*, 4. "It is folly even to say (the word) countless." (*Asankh kahe sir bhar ho*).

129. *Japji*, 26, *AG.*, 6. "If one bespeaks something out of limit of propriety, he will certainly be dubbed as the most foolish and vulgar among men." (*Ja ko akhai bol vigar. Ta likhiai sir gavara gavari*).

130. Bhai Vir Singh's description of the cosmic planes, mystically conceived by him under the direct influence of Guru Nanak and other Sikh Gurus, comes closest to the cosmogenic vision expressed by Guru Nanak in his compositions especially in *Japji's* five cosmic Regions. See *Rana Surat Singh* (*Panjabi*), pp. 22-34.
master poets describing cosmo-mystical realms, there is more poetic flight than mystical insight, in Guru Nanak there is more of mystical insight than of poetic invention.

HUKAM: DIVINE ORDER

"By Hukam all is created (but) Hukam cannot be said", says Guru Nanak. This is a highly mystical statement. Hukam represents the ineffable and absolute Divine power, which inevitably requires submission on the part of all the creation, especially the sentient human beings. It is in this context that Guru Nanak uses the word Hukam in the very first and primal statement he has made in Japji regarding the basic spiritual problem before man as man viz-a-viz God as Hukam. He has also clearly laid down the solution of this 'spiritual problem' in submission 'Hukam rajai chalana) and continuous submission to the inexorable Will of God:

"How to be truthful and how to break the wall of falsehood?

Nanak says: By following the path of submission to the will of God as ordained in our very being."

131. Japji, 2, AG., 1.

132. After making the Credal Statement (Mul-mentar) in the beginning of Japji, Guru Nanak affirms the eternal nature of Godhead in a Slok, after which in the first Stanza (Pauri), he most cogently poses the question of the true human goal in the spiritual context, after rejecting the most prevalent means for the attainment of that goal. Then he declares, in mystical depth, his solution of the problem. It is thus his spiritual thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis.

133. Japji, 1, AG., 1.
Submission to the Will of God as a paramount human necessity is a cardinal Islamic concept. The word *Hukam* being of Arabic origin has, in its religious context, Islamic connotation, though Guru Nanak, as we shall see, has used this mystical concept in a more elaborate sense than its original Islamic meaning of "submission" to the Divine Will or *mashiat*. In Islam, the word *Islam* itself literally means 'submission' or 'the act of submission.'

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

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

"*Hukam* has usually been translated as 'Will'. This is a literal translation, but it is unsuitable in the context of Guru Nanak's usage, for it fails to convey his precise meaning and is liable to be equated with the Islamic doctrine of the Will of God. In the thought of Guru Nanak, the *Hukam* signifies the divinely instituted and maintained principle governing the existence and movement of the Universe. It is a constant principle and to the extent to which it can be comprehended it functions according to a predictable pattern. This regularity and this consistency distinguish it from the Islamic concept." 138

This systematic and orderly principle of *Hukam*, as devised by Guru Nanak, is, accordingly, a broad-based and universally-operative concept and not any sporadic or particularized submission to divine Will. Mcleod brings out this distinction in very lucid words: "In Islam the divine Will, if not actually capricious is at least 'unpledged', whereas the *Hukam* of Guru Nanak's usage is definitely pledged and dependable." 139 Again: "The divine Order, the *Hukam*, is accordingly an all-embracing principle, the sum total of all divinely-instituted laws; and it is a revelation of the nature of God." 140


139. *Loc. Cit.* , Mcleod has laid special emphasis on the creational aspect of *Hukam*, instead of the ordaining one. "According to Guru Nanak God has revealed His Truth in creation and specially in *Hukam* which orders creation." *op.cit.*, p.204.

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

Hukam, thus considered, is no ordinary religious doctrine or theological concept in Guru Nanak. It has the deepest mystical ramifications, equating its recondite meaning with the divine mystery itself. It is the very cornerstone of Sikh mysticism. "The concept of Hukam" says J. S. Grewal "is basic to the thought of Guru Nanak."  

Hukam is fundamentally denotive of the transcendence, infinitude and absoluteness of God, as Bhai Vir Singh, the famed Sikh divine, says: "All creatures are within measure, the Ordainer of the Hukam is measureless. As the creatures are bound in the limits of Time and Space, their orders are accordingly limited. The True Being is beyond Time, Space and Causation and, thus, His Order is also absolute. The Hukam is identical with the True Being (Satva-Sarup) Himself." He has further explained Hukam to mean that "it is that eternal state of Divine consciousness from which the creation and preservation of the universe take place. This Hukam can

141. Outlines of Sikh Thought, p. 56.
142. Guru Nanak in History, p. 245.
be variously translated as 'Will, Law or Sabad (i.e. Logos)
but whatever it is, it has no correspondence or relationship
with the will, law, sabad or order of the ordinary human
connotation."  

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

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

"According to Sufi teaching", says Subhan, "the
entire creation belongs either to the Alam-i-Amr, the World
of Command or the Alam-i-Khalq, the World of creation." 

144. Ibid., p.51.
145. S.S.Kohli, op.cit.,56, Cf. J.S.Grewal, Guru Nanak in
History, p.245 f.
147. Cf. G.S.Talib, op.cit., p.144. Guru Nanak: Var Aca, Slok,
AG., 463. "True Your Hukam, true Furman". (Sacha tera
hukam sacha furman).
148. Sikh Mysticism, p.15.
Guru Nanak's concept of Hukam, in its highly developed meaning, seems to combine both these Sufi worlds and even goes beyond to the mystical realms of the inscrutable Divine mystery. The word Amr has also been used by Guru Nanak to denote Divine power and command: "True Your command (Amr) true Your court (diban)".

Guru Nanak's concept of Hukam, in the sense of submission and resignation (i.e. Hukam-Raza-Amr-Bhana complex) also implies the willing acceptance of suffering (dukh) affliction, even martyrdom (shahadat or shahidi) for the sake of conformity to the Divine Will. The basic principle involved in this idea of supreme human sacrifice or martyrdom, for the sake of Benevolent God (who is dreadful or Qahir -- in Islam the words used are Qahar and Jabar -- only when there is utter non-conformance of His Hukam) is the all-saving mystic faith that all that God ordains or does is good and acceptable. This is not mere stoicism or vairag (state of dispassion) but a positive, heroic feeling of living and dying absolutely within God. The willing acceptance of Bhana (Divine pleasure) is typically embodied in Guru Arjan's affirmative lines:

"Sweet is thy Ordinance:
Nanak begs only for the wealth of the Name."  

Guru Nanak strongly inculcates the acceptance of

150. Var Asa, slok, AG., 463. (Sacha tera amar sacha diban).
152. Ibid., p.146.
153. Asa, AG., 394. (Tera Bhana mithha lagai, Har Nam padarath Nanak magai).
all suffering out of love for the True Name:

"Let there be hunger for the True Name, in our soul. In that hunger or craving, let us bear all suffering." 154

Has he not laid down, as the greatest mystic principle of spiritual life, the dictum viz. to remember God is to live, to forget Him is to die? In his own words: When I utter His Name, I live, when I forget it, I die." 155 From this inexorable dependence upon God and His Name stems the logicality of the postulate of Hukam.

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

"There is no other place of refuge accept you 0,Lord. Whatever happens is all your (sweet) will." 156

The Absolute God necessarily works through his manifestatively-tangible principle of Hukam -- this is his Divine-mystical arrangement:

"The Lord of the Hukam directs the whole path with the help of His Hukam

Nanak says, He, the Disdainful, is ever in the state of bliss." 157

155. Loc.Cit.
156. Gauri, AG., 151. (Tudh bin duji nahi jai. Jo kichh vartai sabh teri rajai).
To understand this Hukam is to learn humility. One who understand or realizes Hukam cannot be vain. The Guru concludes in the same hymn:

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

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

Hukam in its comprehensive conceptual meaning encompasses the whole gamut of divine manifestation in the form of cosmogonic creation and its organisational control and dispensation. Guru Nanak has explicitly referred to this ubiquitous nature of Hukam in one of his exquisite hymns: 158

"The true gain is rarely given to a man. Only the perfect Guru can make this happen. If one be Guru-oriented, he will understand Hukam and by accepting it will get immersed in it. By Hukam this created universe is visible. By Hukam, are (created) the heavens, the earth and the underworld and by Hukam these are placed in order. By Hukam the mythical ox carries the earth on its head. By Hukam are (created) the air, the water and the space. By Hukam the spirit lives in the house of maya and by

158. Maru Solhe, Ag., 1036-37.
Hukam the universe is in play. By Hukam the firmament has been spread. By Hukam the oceans, the land and the three worlds are made. By Hukam is the breath of life and the sustaining food; and by Hukam the world is visibly perceived. By Hukam the ten avatars were created. Besides these, countless categories of angels and demons were created. One who accepts the Hukam, is honoured in God's portal and God immerses such a man in His True abode. By Hukam thirty six aeons passed (in chaos). By Hukam the Siddhas and the ascetics attained contemplation. Lord is the Master and all are under His control; those whom He blesses, get salvation."

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

"He does what pleases Him — and who can question His doings?

That Lord who is the king of kings, is the Master; Nanak, let us remain in his Raza (Will)." 159

**NAM: DIVINE NAME**

There is so much emphasis on Nam in the Adi Granth or in Sikhism and, for that matter, in the mystical philosophy of Guru Nanak, that it can safely be averred that Guru Nanak's

159. *Japji*, 27, *Ag. 6.* (Jo kichh bhavai soi karsi hukam na karna jai. So patsah saha patsahib Nanak rahan raij).
mysticism is the 'Mysticism of Nam.' It is not only the chief instrument or method for the attainment of salvation, but also the paramount mystic ground upon which Guru Nanak's theological edifice stands.

A recent study of Guru Nanak affirms that "constant reflection upon the Divine Name, like that upon the Word, is the most competent and popular means in the mysticism of Guru Nanak." 160

Another notable writer on Sikhism remarks: "Three things stand out pre-eminently (in the message of Guru Nanak): The One True Lord, the Guru and the Name. Salvation lay in the Word of God and the Word could only be known under the Guru's instruction." 161

Nam is the "spiritual discipline" that leads to ultimate Mukti or salvation; it is the "Yoga of the Name" (or "Nam Yoga"). Mohan Singh Uberoi calls it "Nama Simran Yoga" which he has defined as "unification of the seeker with God through a repetition of a Name or Names of Him." 162 He adds: "The repeated Utterance of the Names of God is the only approach available to us to contact Him, who is unknowable and invisible. A name is a pointer to certain qualities


161. I.Banerjee, Evolution of the Khalsa, p.112. (words within the parentheses have been added).

162. Gopal Singh, Religion of the Sikhs, p.54.

inherent and operant in the one named ... Recitation of His names and singing of His praises become more effective if executed in a congregation and performed with the accompaniment of music."  

Nam, so far as it characterizes God and provides means or "mystic discipline" for His attainment, is thus the most significant concept in Guru Nanak. "The Nam of God is the immediate certainty of security, continuity, completeness, fearlessness, which together constitute the privileges of the status of full loving."  

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

Guru Nanak himself did not derive the concept of Nam from the scriptures of earlier religions of their religious

164. Ibid., p.6.  
165. Ibid., p.20.  
166. Ibid., p.15.  
167. Ibid., p.53.  
thought, but directly imbibed it in his own mystical experience as a most fundamental truth revealed to him "Instead of drawing authority and inspiration", says A.C. Banerjee, "from any revealed scripture, he (Guru Nanak) depends upon his own mystical experience to explain the nature of truth and the 'true way' which leads to salvation." 170

Bhai Gurdas, who knew Guru Nanak at the closest spiritual quarters, says that Guru Nanak received directly from God Almighty who called him to His presence in the Sachch Khand (the Highest Heaven), 171 two special gifts as divine Grace, viz. Nam and Garibi (humility):

"The venerable Guru was honoured in God's True Abode (Sachch Khand) and received the priceless Name and Humility." 172

Etymologically derived from Sanskrit, the word Nam 173 literally means 'to remember', 'to tend to', and 'to address to'. The word Nam also belongs identically to Persian, with the same connotation. 174 In common usage it means 'a word constituting the distinctive designation of a person or a thing' and also 'spiritual nature or essence'. 175

170. Guru Nanak and His Times, p. 149.
172. Var. 1, 24. (Baba paicha sachch khand nauniddh nam garibi pai).
174. Mk. 522, In Bible, Nam has its equivalent in Word.
In technical religious parlance, based on *Gurbani* (i.e. *Adi Granth*), "Nam is a spiritual principle which beginning with the quest of a seeker after God, and comprising the initial recitative process (*Janj*), leads on to the ultimate union with God." 176

The Name is not, however, a mere word or a group of letters; 'it is a vital force'. It aids immensely in the spiritual progress of a disciple. "It aids the understanding of the Divine Reality. It enjoins self-analysis and self-control." 178

Sher Singh remarks that Nam is not mere reflection or meditation. It means the moulding of the whole personality. It affects all activities of our life. 179 He even associates the principle of aesthetic perception with Name: "In short Nam is the sympathetic and aesthetic communion of man with man and environments. Love and aesthetic appreciation form its basis." 180

Nam, according to Bhai Jodh Singh, denotes "a universal power which becoming immanent infuses all sensient beings." 181

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180. Ibid., p.294.

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

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

J.S. Grewal remarks while discussing the relative position of Nam and Sabad: "More clearly than the Name, the


183. Op.cit.,p.196. Mcleod concludes thus: "The Name is the total expression of all that God is and this is Truth. Sati Nam -- His Name is Truth Meditate on this and you will be save." (Loc.Cit.)

184. Guru Nanak in History, p. 239.
Word is the vehicle of God's revelation:

He has no form, colour or material sign;

He is revealed through the true śabd. 185

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

The greatest thought, says a writer, in Guru Nanak's works is the concept of Nam, which is not mere utterance and repetition of a holy name, but is truthful actualization of living in the Name. "Nam", says Taran Singh, "is the sublimest image of God, by reciting which one can find Him. Nam is the meditation of God." 187

Recitation of Nam has many ways and forms, viz. reciting with tongue, reciting in the mind, unuttered, and reciting in the sub-conscious mind, which last is called ajapa-jap or 'effortless recitation'. This is the highest form of meditation of the Name. 188 There comes an advanced stage when "the Name is uttered by every pore of the body." 189

Addressing the Siddhas, Guru Nanak says: 'The Guru-faced one

189. S. S. Kohli, Outlines of Sikh Thought, p.98.
remembers God through every pore of his body."

In Guru Nanak's own words, *Nam* has manifold religious manifestations specially in its soul-elevating and ethical aspects. To cite the relevant lines from *Japji*, his best work:"

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

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190. *Siddh Gosht*, 27, AG., 941. (*Gurumukh rom rom har dhiavai*).
A few more examples from Guru Nanak’s other compositions may be added:

"The world is fire, God’s Name is soothing." 192

... ...

"He alone is educated and a wise pundit, who followed the path of the Name." 193

"Nanak, without True Name all honour is lost." 194

... ...

"Half a grain is the sparrow’s feed; it goes up to skies wailing.

"That sparrow is good and liked by the Lord, if it utters Lord, Lord." 195

... ...

"Nanak, without True Name, no body’s hunger is appeased." 196

... ...

"O Creator! Thou art my benefactor -- Only one gift I ask of thee; Give me thy Name." 197

... ...

"Nanak, without True Name, all is futile." 198

... ...

192. Var Malar, Slok, AG., 1291. (Atas duniya kunak nam khudaia).
193. Ibid., AG., 1288 (So paria so pandit hina dini kamana nao).
194. Ibid., AG., 1287. (Nanak sache nam bin sir khur pat pati).
196. Loc. Cit. (Nanak sache nam bin kisai na lathhi bhukh).
197. Parbhati, AG., 1329. (Karta tu mera jaism. Ik dakhna hau tai pah magau deh anna nam).
198. Var Majh, AG., 142. (Nanak sache nam bin sabhe tol vinas).
"Nanak, True Name’s praise cannot be said." 199

... ...

"Without Name, life is a curse." 200

... ...

"Sorrow is poison, its remedy God’s Name." 201

... ...

"Renounce hypocrisy (O Brahman!). Recite the Name and you will be saved." 202

... ...

"Thine Name is Formless One, by reciting Thy Name we will not go to hell." 203

... ...

"Defaults and faults are assessed in Thine court. How can one be good without Name." 204

... ...

"In the house of Nanak, there is only Name." 205

... ...

Summing up we can say that Guru Nanak’s concept of Nam, in its cosmogenic and creational aspect, is synonymous with Hukam and thus represents the Divine purpose and scheme of things in putting forth the universe. All that is created is

199. Ibid., AG., 148. (Nanak sache nam ki keti purhha puchh).
200. Ibid., AG., 148. (Bin navai dhirig vas phit so jivia).
201. Malal, AG., 1257. (Dukhh mauhra maran har nam).
203. Ibid., AG., 465. (Nao tera nirankar hai, nai laivai narak na jai).
204. Parbhati, AG., 1330. (Bhul chak terai darbar. Nam bina kaise achar).
205. Guru Arjan, Bhairo, AG., 1136. (Nanak ke ghar keval nam).
within the power of Nam. In Guru Nanak, this view is quite manifest:

"Whatever He has created, is (the manifestation of) His Name.

There is no place or object, where His Name is not."

Cf. Guru Arjan, Sukhmani, 16, AG., 284. "By Name are created all the beings. By Name are created the worlds and the whole universe." (Nam ke dhare sagale jant, Nam ke dhare khand brahmand). Cf. Jairam Mishr, Guru Nanak Dev Jiwan Aur Darshan (Hindi), p. 294.