Chapter 2
Sikhism and the Philosophy of Spinoza

2.0 Introduction

The present chapter compares Sikhism and the philosophy of Spinoza and analyses the similarities. In this study, the concept of God is referred as an ultimate reference point. Both Sikhism and the philosophy of Spinoza perceive the philosophical problem of dichotomy and open the way to overcome these problems.

The present study discusses five ideas of Sikhism and the philosophy of Spinoza in a comparative perspective, namely, (1) The idea of Manifestation and Modification, (2) The concept of Hukam and Divine law, (3) The nature of human freedom in Sikhism and in the philosophy of Spinoza, (4) The problem of One and Many and (5) The essence of man which includes the problem of mind and body.

2.1 The Idea of Manifestation and Modification

It is a philosophical enquiry into the origin of the universe and the status of the objects of the universe. As the philosophies of Sikhism and Spinoza are theistic in nature, the answer to the enquiry leads to the idea of God. The religious belief is that God created the universe. Sikhism and the philosophy of Spinoza conceive that the creation of the world is only through the idea of God. Sikhism calls the creation as manifestation and Spinoza calls it as modification.
2.1.1 The Idea of Manifestation in Sikhism

The idea of manifestation proposed by Sikhism is to explain the origin of the universe. The term manifestation is used to express the meaning of the all-pervasive nature of the concept of God in its creations. Theistic philosophies hold that the universe is a created one and still the creation continues. It is because of this reason that we experience change and plurality as reality of existence in the world. In that sense it can be said that the world is in the process of becoming and the creation is not yet over. So manifestation is a continuous process.

Human is not rational enough to unfold the mystery regarding the origin and development of the universe and the way it evolved. Sikhism gives attention to this mystery. Sikhism attempts to answer this mystery with the idea of God. Sikhism identifies the idea of God as the creator of the universe and as the knower of the mystery of creation.

Sikhism perceives the idea of God as the basis of all manifestations, and its pervasiveness in all the creations. Regarding the idea of God and its manifestations, the status of God before its manifestations and the nature of the idea of God within the manifestations are to be examined. The study of philosophy often uses the terms, transcendence and immanence as the nature of God. The transcendental nature of the idea of God is said to be above all creations and it is to be understood as unrelated to the objects of the world. This conceptual nature of the transcendental nature of the idea of God is unrelated to the manifested existences. On the other hand, the immanent nature of the idea of God stands for its manifestations in the plurality of the world of objects and it is said to be in relation with the manifested existences. Sikhism
conceives that the concept of God is both transcendent and immanent. The term transcendence is used in Sikhism to denote the nature of God before manifestation. Sikhism says:

“God, who created all creatures, but has himself into each;
Yet He is apart from all.”

This idea points out the transcendental nature of the concept of God which is beyond all creations. Nature is unconscious because God never acts upon creation but stands as a transcendental concept. Sikhism accepts the transcendent nature of God. In that sense God is inactive because the creative process is unrelated to the transcendental nature of the concept of God. In this position how the world becomes true and in what way it is created and whether the creation of the world and its objects is real or unreal is the problematic that are to be discussed.

By definition, the transcendental God is beyond the created world. However, this separation of God from the world is immediately amended with the immanence of God in the world. Here Sikhism introduces the immanent nature of the idea of God which manifests itself in the world of objects. So Sikhism holds the view that God is both transcendent and immanent.

Sikhism admits the origin of the world from the immanent nature of God and the aspect of manifestation is an ever-active process. On the other hand, the transcendental nature of the idea of God stands as a universal concept which is unconscious in nature because it never participates in the creative process. Sikhism considers that, before the creation, God was in deep meditation and when manifestation began God expressed himself

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in his works, in his creations and in his manifestations. “It was the metaphor of the lotus which satisfied the Guru in reconciling the transcendence and immanence of the same being. A lotus is in water and still out of it”.30 That means God is within and out of his creations. Guru Granth Sahib says,

“All that is created is His manifestation

No place is of His manifestation devoid”.31

That means, Sikhism justifies the world of multiplicities and one cannot experience any object devoid of God’s manifestation. This idea gives a holistic character to the idea of manifestation but each and every part is within the idea of manifestation. Sikhism holds the view that

“Thou the ocean, we are like fishes

disporting in Thee”.32

That means fishes have no existence apart from the ocean. So the part or the objects of the world are in the whole, which shows that the world is in God.

“The creator is in the creation, in creation is He,

He pervades the universe”.33

The idea of manifestation in Sikhism represents the holistic view in which God stands as the idea of whole and the world of objects as parts. The world is not independent of God nor the world is mere appearance, but it is considered as real.

30 Sher Singh, *Philosophy of Sikhism*, p.150.
When the creator is in the creation, it may be questioned that whether the idea of God is world itself or whether it is identical with the world. It may also be doubted that the idea of manifestation exhibits the idea of pantheism. Sikhism holds that, the immanence of God does not mean pantheism. Pantheism totally equates God and the World. But immanence means the existence of God in the world as its underlying principle. Transcendence as the other side too avoids pantheism.

When the idea of God itself manifests as world, then it can be said that God is world. But we cannot argue that the world is God because only the immanent nature of the idea of God alone manifests itself in the world of objects while the transcendental nature of the idea of God still unrelated to the world of objects. This reason justifies the idea that God is in the world and beyond it and that even while the idea of God manifests itself in the world, the world cannot be equated with that of the idea of God.

We experience physical phenomena and mental phenomena in the universe, because we perceive or discuss the reality of mind and matter or the process of thinking and extension. Thus manifestation of the idea of God is either through the extension or thinking through or through both. In the process of creation, the presence of thinking and extension can be witnessed in the manifestations of the idea of God. In manifestations, the material world is extended and the man is both extended and cognitive. These two phenomena are different in nature but they function together because both are the manifested elements of the idea of God, also they come together, for the existence of man. Sikhism accepts the idea with the view that nothing is devoid of God’s manifestation.
The Sikh perception of reality is the unity of hierarchy of elements because the elements are the manifestation of God. So a unity is possible through the essence of God. In that sense the idea of manifestation has importance in Sikhism.

2.1.2 The Idea of Modification in the Philosophy Spinoza

Spinoza’s entire metaphysics is said to be the explication or the gradual unfolding of one idea that is the idea of substance which he calls God and he considers God as nature. In Spinoza’s philosophy the idea of modification is an important concept and this concept can be compared with the idea of manifestation in Sikhism.

Spinoza begins his philosophical enquiry from the idea of God. He considers the idea of God to be clear and distinct. He conceives the idea of God with the idea of substance and considers it as the cause of the universe. Spinoza says “I understand substance to be which is in itself and is conceived through itself; I mean that the conception of which does not depend on the conception of another thing from which it must be formed”.34 Spinoza identifies substance with the idea of God because it is absolutely independent and it is conceived through itself that means a finite object cannot perceive the entire structure of a substance.

Spinoza’s substance is essentially active. It is not a static one but a dynamic being. For him reality is not immovable but essentially creative. Activism is at the very root of Spinoza’s philosophy. So Spinoza considers the idea of God as an essentially creative and active power.

34 Andrew Boyle, Tr., Spinoza’s Ethics, p.1.
As it was seen in the philosophy of Sikhism that God is both transcedent and immanent, Spinoza also holds that the idea of God has two natures, they are *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*. Spinoza says “By *natura naturans* we are to understand that which is in itself and is conceived through itself. But by *natura naturata* I understand everything which follows from the necessity of the nature of God, or any one of Gods. Attributes in so far as they are considered as things which are in God, and which without God can neither be nor can be conceived”.35 There are two distinct aspects; *natura naturans* stands to mean the position of purely transcendental and unaffected by the nature and at the same time it is a universal concept and it keeps the potency to act. Whereas, *natura naturata* is in action and it means the position of immanence. So both are identical and in their nature they are distinct. “The cause is immanent in its effect, and as such they are identical. But in so far as causation implies a process, the cause and the effect are distinct, their relation being asymmetrical. The process is from essence to existence, from potency to actuality. This, of course, does not and need not mean any temporal succession, but only logical and real sequence. *Natura naturans* and *natura naturata* are these both identical and distinct”.36

Spinoza experiences the idea of modification in the idea of *natura naturata* because it stands to mean the immanent nature of God. Spinoza uses the term mode to express the idea of modification. He says “By mode I understood the modification of a substance or that which is in something else through which it may

36 Sanat Kumar Sen, *A study of the metaphysics of Spinoza*, p.100.
be conceived”.37 The modification of substance here means the modification of the idea of God modifies it as modes and the modes are perceivable only through the idea of God. The modes are the objects of the world because the idea of *natura naturata* shows the immanent aspect of the idea of God. The modes are the dependent parts of the idea of God. So the parts can be conceived only through God.

The idea of modification propounded by Spinoza reflects the character of holism in the sense that the idea of God stands as a whole which includes the worldly phenomena, in the perception of Spinoza. The modes cannot be conceived without the idea of God. The modes are the modifications of substance. So substance turns itself into modes. That is why Spinoza’s idea of substance is called as an active power. In a holistic view, Spinoza conceives that nothing is beyond the idea of God. He says “whatever is, is in God, and nothing can exist or be conceived without God”.38 In this regard he views that the idea of God and nature are one and same, because *natura naturata* is in the process of modification as the worldly objects and no object can be perceived beyond this idea in the universe. This is a pantheistic position.

The question of mind and body is unified in the idea of God though they are distinct in nature. So in the worldly objects, we can experience this unity. Spinoza perceives the thought and extension as the attributes of the idea of God but he holds that, they get united for the effective functioning of human being in the presence of God. So the physical and mental faculties are not the separate entities in God.


38 Ibid., p.11.
The idea of manifestation and the idea of modification have similarities with regard to the idea of God and the World. These ideas conceive that the ideas of God and the world related to form a holistic perspective.

2.2 The Concept of Hukam and Divine

Order is a condition in which every part is in its right place and that order makes the movement of the system concerned in a coherent way. Man is always guided by norms, customs, beliefs, laws or other forms of orderliness from the beginning of origin of the human species. Established religions have a sort of orderliness within their systems according to their conceptions of God and the historical epoch from which they emerged. Religious thoughts confer divine sanction to their system of orderliness. So religiously speaking, the divine orders are considered to be the direct revelations of the idea of God. Sikhism and the philosophy of Spinoza conceive that there is an order in the world and Sikhism names it as Hukam and Spinoza terms it as Divine.

2.2.1 Concept of Hukam

Sikh philosophy holds that reality is dynamic which is directed by the principle called Hukam. That means Hukam is the guiding principle of reality. Hukam means the divine ordinance by which God shapes the reality.

“By divine ordinance are all forms manifested
Inexpressible is the ordinance
By divine ordinance are beings created”.\textsuperscript{39}

The word Hukam can be translated as the Divine will. It is at the command of God that the world is created and sustained. Sikhism propounds the necessity of order among the multiple elements of reality through its idea of Hukam. The idea of God operates the reality with the Divine will.

“God by His Will made the world,
God at His Will controls it;
He beholds all things set under His Will.”

The idea of Hukam directly influences every object of reality. That means, the Physical phenomena are necessarily related to the divine ordinance. So there exists unity between the multiple elements of reality and the idea of God. The unity here means that a divine connection prevails over the universe through the idea of Hukam. Due to the divine ordinance, the objects of reality are said to be in order. It means that there is unity among the multiple objects of reality.

Darshan Singh, an eminent Sikh scholar explains the concept of Hukam in the following words: “Hukam neither means the order of the kind to his subjects nor only that of God to his people. In Japuji Sahib, order means a system which operates in the most perfect manner to sustain the universal set up... Each organ of this universe is functioning in a well co-coordinated perfect system. This objectively operating system given by God to the total universal set up is spoken as Hukam in Japuji Sahib... Order hence means a creative and an objective reality and a universal order or a course given by God Himself”.

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40 Ibid., p.1293.
Sikhism accepts the existence of an ever active reality unlike the world negating philosophies of Indian tradition. Though, Sikhism accepts the hierarchy of elements and the diversity of reality, it admits the web of relationship among them, through the idea of Hukam.

Nirbhai Singh says “In the context of Sikhism a coherent system is one in which all the related elements of dynamic structure are free from inner contradictions and are regulated by one cosmic principle (Hukam) in other words the manifested world is a cosmos and not a chaos because it is regulated by one dynamic law. It is the efficient cause of the insentient and sentient element”.  

Sikhism identifies hukam as the idea of unity and harmony of the multiple entities of reality. Though the manifestations of the idea of God are hierarchical in nature, the hierarchy of elements of reality is governed by the principle of Hukam. Here we experience the importance of the Sikh idea of Hukam which unites and relates the diverse nature of reality. Nirbhai Singh says “The structure is a unity in which the elements are subordinated to the cosmic law (Lukamai andari) and no element exists in isolation (bahari) from one another. In Sikhism the elements are isolated from the primordial IK, it shall be an appearance owing to duality. In this sense Sikhism upholds a concept of perfect harmonious continuity of the essence ‘IK’ and the internal relations are conceived in terms of the creative divine principle”.

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The Sikh concept of Hukam always acts upon the movements of the elements of the hierarchical structure. Hukam does not just watch over the reality but it acts upon the diverse moments of reality to produce harmonious relations among them through the idea of God. The purpose of divine ordinance is a message to the humanity for making a better and ever creative reality. Here, the idea of Hukam does not only operate through the idea of God to realize the relatedness of various elements of reality, but it also postulates the ever-changing existential reality.

2.2.2 The Concept of Divine Law in the Philosophy of Spinoza

Spinoza propounds the existence of a divine law, in the world of objects which arranges worldly things in an order. Spinoza understands and interprets every aspect of reality with the idea of God and moreover he enunciates that God is nature. For him, the divine laws are the ordinances of the idea of God, and they operate on nature. Here, nature means all the objects and beings of the reality. Spinoza perceives two types of laws; they are human law and divine law. He says “By human law I mean a plan of living which serves only to render life and the state secure. By divine law I mean that which only regards the highest good in other words, the true knowledge of God and love”. Here Spinoza unites the divine law with the understanding of the idea of God and says that divine law can be identified with the knowledge of God. It can be said that when one realizes the knowledge of God, then only he/she can realize the divine law. Spinoza postulates that God is nature. If the idea of God is equated with nature, then the necessary corollary that follows from it is that true knowledge of nature would be the realization of divine law. The statement of Spinoza, regarding the

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equation of God with nature, presupposes that the non-understanding of nature is lack of understanding of the idea of God. In other words, realization of the nature is the way to realize the knowledge of the idea of God. The understanding of divine law is based on understanding of nature and so the lack of knowledge of the idea of God will make one skeptical about nature too. Spinoza says “Now since all our knowledge and the certainty which removes every doubt, depend solely on the knowledge of God; firstly, because without God nothing can exist or be conceived, secondly, because so long as we have no clear and distinct idea of God we may remain in universal doubt. It follows that our highest good and perfection also depends solely on the knowledge of God. Further without God nothing can exist or be conceived, it is evident that all natural phenomena involve and express the conception of God”.

Spinoza relates the divine law with the natural order through the idea of God. The deficiency of the understanding of the idea of God, leads to universal doubt. As a consequence, there will be a tendency to negate either the natural phenomena or the idea of God as a secondary concept. So, universal doubt prevents the actuality of the idea of God and the multiplicity of its manifestation in nature. But the highest reward of the divine law is to know God and to love Him with our free choice.

Spinoza keeps in mind the multiplicity of elements of the natural phenomena, when he explains the divine law. So the intention of Spinoza is to find a unity among them and their unity with the idea of God with the help of divine law. As Stuart

45 Ibid., p.56.
46 Ibid., p.59
Hampshire says “Spinoza’s philosophy has had a curious double history which is a true reflection of his originality for to some he has appeared primarily as a man obsessed with God, a pantheist who interprets every natural phenomenon as a revelation of an immanent and impersonal God”.\textsuperscript{47} Spinoza is a pantheist, who sees every aspect of reality as a reflection of God. In that sense, Spinoza considers God as nature and such a nature has a divine law. Spinoza says “So that to say that everything happens according to natural laws and to say that everything is ordained by the decree and ordinance of God, is the same thing. Now since the power in nature is identified with the power of God, by which alone all things happen and are determined. It follows that what so ever man, as a part of nature provides him with, to aid and preserve his existence, or nature affords him without his help, is given to him solely by the divine power acting either through human nature or through external circumstances. So whatever human nature can furnish itself with by its own efforts to preserve its existence may be fitly called the inward aid of God, whereas whatever else occurs to man’s profit from outward causes may be called the external aid of God. We can easily understand what is meant by selection of God for since no one can do anything save by the predetermined order of nature, that is by God’s eternal ordinance and decree, it follows that no one can choose a plan of life for himself or accomplish any work save by Gods vocation choosing him for the work or the play of life in question, rather than any other. Lastly by fortune I mean the ordinance of God in so far as it directs human life through external and unexpected means”.\textsuperscript{48}

\textsuperscript{47} Stuart Hampshire \textit{, Spinoza}, p.27.

\textsuperscript{48} R.H.M. Elwis\textit{, Tr., Op.cit.}, p.45.
These words of Spinoza clarify the nature of divine law, that is, the purpose and movement of nature is predetermined. The idea of God acts either through the external or internal aid upon nature. Spinoza says “I freely admit that all things are determined by universal natural laws to exist and operate in a given, fixed and definite manner”.49

Spinoza examines the Old Testament and its influence is visible in his book ‘Tractatus Theologico Politicus’. The concept of divine law has been elaborated in that book. In the Old Testament, there are some ordinances which are directly given by God to the prophet such as Ten Commandments. Such kinds of direct interference of the idea of God in the affairs of the world have influenced Spinoza to think over the law of divine.

The idea of Spinoza, concerning divine law, is not similar to the perceptions of a mystic. Mysticism regards such prophetic sayings as revelations from God and such revelations are considered as supra-natural. But Spinoza derives the concept of divine law after experiencing the unethical nature of man. For him, Divine laws are essential to protect the human beings and nature. So he tries to apply the divine, together with the concept of God, against the exploitation of nature. The highest good, the knowledge of God and Love are the three aspects which are considered as the base of divine law. Here the highest good spreads the rays in order to realize the latter. Spinoza says, “Hither, then our highest good and our highest blessedness aim – namely to the knowledge and love of God; therefore the means demanded by this aim of all human actions, that is, by God in so far as the idea of him is in us, may be called the commands of God, because they proceed as it

49 Ibid., p.57.
were, from God Himself, in as much. He exists in our minds, and the plan of life which has regard to this aim may be fitly called the law of God”.50 Here the highest good is perceived to be the cornerstone for the super-structures namely the knowledge of the idea of God and Love.

Sikhism and the philosophy of Spinoza identify the existence of Divine ordinance and Divine law respectively together with the all pervasive nature of the idea of God in the objects of reality. By the divine law, an order is maintained in the world of objects. So Sikhism and Spinoza’s philosophy perceive the importance of divine command and their idea of the divine law are similar in nature. The divine ordinance or the divine law is operated through the idea of God upon the world of objects. Realization of the immanence of the divine law in the plural objects of the reality is the way to understand the unity of nature. Sikhism and the philosophy of Spinoza view this problem uniformly.

Regarding the idea of divine law, a doubt can be raised about the freedom of choice of humans. If everything is predetermined by divine ordinance then the human will have no freedom to think and act on their own. If it is so, the place of humans in the holistic philosophies of Sikhism and Spinoza has to be discussed.

2.3 Nature of Freedom in Sikhism and in the Philosophy of Spinoza

Mostly, Religious trends emphasise pure spiritualism and they do not offer space for the freedom of thought for humans in the sense that such trends consider reality as pre-determined and fatal. Generally such ideas are sanctioned with the help of divinity.

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50 Ibid., p.60.
If everything is said to be pre-determined in terms of the limits of a religion and if such predetermination is said to be enough to protect the value of freedom, then how it can be a violation of freedom or how the supreme element, God, violates the freedom of humans? Before trying to answer this question, one has to analyze the true nature of freedom and what the freedom means to be for the humans.

A definition which is given by the Dictionary of Philosophy states that “Most idealists regard freedom as free will, as the possibility to act in accordance with a violation which is not determined by external cause. They hold that the idea of determinism which asserts that human actions are decreed by necessity fully relieves man of responsibility and makes impossible the moral evaluation of these actions. According to them it is only unrestricted and unconditional freedom that can be the basis of human responsibility”.

In this definition, idealism negates the influence of external cause, such as the social problems, and it unites freedom with individual responsibility. Responsibility arises as response to the diversities arising out of the relatedness of the individual to the other beings. So responsibility arises from the interrelatedness. On the other hand, if freedom is not justified by the external forces, such as ethics, laws, etc., then control over freedom will be impossible. The absolute unfettering may lead to the alienation of humans from the society concerned.

The idea of mechanistic determination on freedom is that “Mechanistic determinism, denies free will, maintaining that mans

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actions are always determined by external circumstances over which he has no control". If a person has no control or responsibility or influence over external circumstances, then the idea of freedom cannot exist. Such an idea at least leads to fatalism.

The concept of freedom is liable to change from system to system. It can be said that freedom is accompanied by responsibility because man is a social being. If freedom means liberty to act according to the free will, then such freedom may distort the social order. So freedom has to be regulated for maintaining the social order. If individual’s freedom is regulated for maintaining social order, a question may arise as to whether such regulation of freedom of slaves by their masters during the ancient period is said to be slavery. But, with the emergence of democracy and constitutionalism, during the modern period, the regulation of freedom of an individual through the laws, norms or customs of a society is not said to be slavery but as an aspect of democracy. So regulation of freedom cannot be equated with slavery, but such a regulation is a tool to safeguard the interests of others while allowing an individual to enjoy his/her freedom.

Freedom can be regulated in two ways, namely, by law and by ethics. Law is a common code which allows individual freedom without interference to the others freedom and it aims at the unity of society by maintaining equality and justice among its subjects. Here the freedom is regulated in the sense that violation of laws by an individual means to be the violation of the freedom of others. For example, if a person is killed by his neighbor, what happens here is the killer violates the freedom of life of the person who is

52 Ibid., pp.149-150.
killed. As the act of murdering is regulated as a crime by law, the freedom of the other is also safeguarded here. In this sense, freedom necessarily accompanies responsibility of an individual as a social being and such responsibility is said to be the need for the societal well-being.

Ethics is a form of social consciousness which relates the individual with the society. In the sphere of moral consciousness; it cultivates the attitudes of an individual towards himself and towards others, from the standpoint of good and evil. Ethics is the product of social, historical, cultural and religious processes. From the religious point of view, the ethics of a system is said to be sanctioned by the idea of God as divine. Thus, the individual’s freedom is regulated here ethically through the bipolar elements, namely good and bad/evil or right and wrong. Such ethical relations presuppose the responsibility of an individual to act according to its principles for the welfare of the greater whole.

It may be argued that individual freedom is not possible within the realm of religion. But religious philosophies enunciate individual freedom, according to its socio-historical and political necessities, through ethics for the common good of the social concerned.

2.3.1 Nature of Freedom in Sikhism

Sikhism propounds the idea of Hukam which stands to mean the regulation of the world of objects through predetermined commands and says such commands regulate the world of objects. In order to understand the nature of freedom granted to individuals, they have to realize the idea of God through which the command operates. According to Sikhism God is that ordainer.
J.S. Neki, a renowned Sikh scholar, in his article ‘Prayer and Divine Grace’ \(^{53}\) interprets the concept of Hukam as the concept of grace. He calls it as the central theme of Sikh ideology. The divine grace as interpreted by him is operative at all levels of the material world and the creation of the world of objects and its sustenance is due to it. Thus it becomes the ground of all existence and it explains the immanent nature of the idea of God in the creation. The immanence of the idea of God in the beings through the idea of Grace becomes the source of human freedom. Here, Neki substantiates that Hukam is the source of human freedom.

Sikhism emphasizes not only the spiritualism but also social responsibilities of an individual. In Sikhism, Reality is the unity of spirituality and worldliness. Human freedom has no independent status apart from the society. Human Freedom, according Sikhism is possible only through the intermingling of the spirituality and the society.

Sikhism believes in spiritualism and its idea of freedom is not like that of the Hindu belief, which postulates the theory of Karma. According to the theory of Karma, the predetermined actions of life are the source of cyclic rebirth. The individual freedom according to the theory of Karma is possible only through his release from the chain of rebirths and such a release from cyclic rebirths is only through ritualism. Ritualism does not take the problems of society into consideration and it presupposes that the answer to the individual freedom does not lie in societal realm. The four asramas namely they are Bharmachary, Garhastye, Vanaprasta, and Samnyasa take only the individual responsibility for consideration from cyclic rebirths. In the hierarchical society of varnas, the

asramas alone do not hold the key to human freedom from the bondage of cyclic rebirths. In that sense, the Vedic religion believes in fatalism.

Sikhism moves contrary to the above idea of karma and believes in action aiming at the well being of the society. The reality is conceived by the Sikh Gurus as a whole structure in which no part is inimical to the other. Here, the individual freedom is related to the social realm unlike Hindu dharma which relates the individual freedom with fate. Guru Arjun says

“All beings by the air of breath,
has he bound together.
Fire to wood is joined,
Water and earth in one spot has he placed.
Neither inimical to the other”\textsuperscript{54}

Sikh idea of freedom is that it is not absolutely individualized but it is to be understood in a holistic way.

“Should brass, gold or iron be broken,
The smith first fuses it together”\textsuperscript{55}

According to Sikhism, that shows the unity and human freedom is possible only in relation to the unity. Human freedom is guided by the idea of Hukam through the idea of God. Hukam is not fatalistic, as Hinduism says, but it regulates the world of objects to realize in the mundane world through action.

According to Sikhism, the nature of freedom is neither deterministic nor fatalistic. The idea of freedom is associated with

\textsuperscript{55} \textit{Ibid.}, p.143.
dynamism as the freedom is enjoyed in the mundane world itself. Thus, in Sikhism, the idea of freedom is combined with creative spirit. The moment of freedom is implanted in humans as the idea of God is immanent in them. Guru Granth Sahib says,

“The creator takes no bounds,
So are we not bound;
He takes no impurity,
Nor are we made impure.
As is He pure,
So are we like Him”56

Human freedom exists through the immanence of the idea of God in the beings. Through the idea of immanence of God in humans, they feel the essence of the idea of God within them. “The idea of immanence of God in world and in man is the expression of continuity of Hukam as principle of dynamism in world and in man. So consequently, there is no need to counterpose Hukam and human freedom. Hukam is not a barrier to action but it essentially involves in the production of the latter. Hukam enables man to act, makes him free to act.”57 Here the similarity exists in the immanent nature of God in Sikhism and in the philosophy of Spinoza regarding the concept of freedom.

2.3.2 The Idea of Human Freedom in the Philosophy of Spinoza

The question of freedom, in the philosophy of Spinoza, arises when we discuss the idea of divine law. A divine law is always unaffected by the external causes because it is rooted in the transcendental realm, but one can witness its implications in the

56 Ibid., p.391.
worldly affairs. Divine law makes its influence in the world of objects. In the same vein, humans and their actions are also influenced by the divine law. Here the doubt arises as to whether human freedom can be justified by the external cause or by a divine law.

In order to understand the idea of freedom in the philosophy of Spinoza, it is essential to analyze as to how the idea of God is related with the Divine law and the humans. Regarding the idea of God, Spinoza says, “God I understand to be a being absolutely infinite that is, a substance consisting of infinite attributes, each of which expresses eternal and infinite essence”. Spinoza perceives the idea of God to be absolutely infinite.

Absolutely infinite means that the idea of God is totally free of finitudes and that its conception is essentially beyond the limits. So we can say that God is absolutely free. He says “Things are said to be free which exist by the mere necessity of its own nature and is determined in its actions by itself alone”. Here also the nature of the idea of God is said to be absolute, infinite and free.

An object, if it is absolutely infinite and absolutely free from any external cause, naturally the other objects including human beings will be finite and would be attached to the absolute infinite God. The relation between the God and other objects is defined by Spinoza that is “Whatever is, is in God and nothing can exist or be conceived without God”.

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An object, if it is the manifestation of another object, will have the qualities of the other object. For example, if an object is manifested from Gold, the manifested object cannot show any difference from Gold in its essence. In the same manner, if a being is said to be the manifestation of the idea of God, naturally the dependent being concerned will exhibit the essence of the idea of God. In that sense, if the idea of God is said to be absolutely free, then humans, as the manifestations of the idea of God would be consequently free even though they are finite in nature. Spinoza says, “Every idea of every body or individual thing actually existing necessary involves the eternal and infinite essence of God”.  

For Spinoza, human actions are pre-determined. The origin of the divine law is from the idea God or it can be said that the divine law is governed by the idea of God. It was stated earlier that God is everything and “God is the indulging and not the transient cause of all things”. If the idea of God is said to be the regulator of a law, then the relation between humans and the idea of God exists only through the acceptance of this law by the humans. The human perception regarding the idea of God and its activities is possible only through this law. “God acts merely according to his own laws and is compelled by no one”. That is, the divine law is free from deterministic forces. In that sense, divine law is neither pre-determined nor fatal but gives humans the absolute freedom to fulfill their desires.

Spinoza says, that “By divine law I mean that which only regards the highest good in other words, the true knowledge of God

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61 Ibid., p.72.
63 Ibid., p15.
and love”.\textsuperscript{64} So, divine law does not pertain to the predetermined. But it simply gives an explanation that it is only related with true knowledge of God and with the highest good. Humans realize that they are completely free as they are related to the idea of God which is absolutely free. After the realization, humans try to relate this knowledge with the highest good. “The highest reward of the divine law is the law itself, namely to know God and to love Him of our free choice”.\textsuperscript{65}

Spinoza explains that humans are free to choose their way as they are related to the idea of God which has freedom as one of its attributes. Spinoza admits that “The human mind has an adequate knowledge of the eternal and infinite essence of God”.\textsuperscript{66} Humans doubt about their freedom, as they could not understand the true nature of the divine law and as they are influenced by the sensual experience.

Humans are situated in a complex existential circumstances in which they often succumb to emotions. Spinoza says “By emotion I understand the modifications of the body by which the power of action in the body is increased or diminished aided or restrained”.\textsuperscript{67} That means the activism and passivism of human are related with his/her emotions. Spinoza has given another explanation to emotion. He says “An emotion which is a passion ceases to be a passion as soon as we form a clear and distinct idea of it”.\textsuperscript{68} Again he says “If we remove disturbance of the mind or

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{64} R.H.M. Elwis, Tr., \textit{Op.cit.}, p.54.
\item \textsuperscript{65} \textit{Ibid.}, p.59.
\item \textsuperscript{66} Andrew Boyle, Tr., \textit{Op.cit.}, p.73.
\item \textsuperscript{67} \textit{Ibid.}, p.85.
\item \textsuperscript{68} \textit{Ibid.}, p.203.
\end{itemize}
emotion from the thought of an external cause and unite it to other thoughts, then love or hatred towards the external cause, as well as wavering of the mind which arise from these emotions, are destroyed”.

The problem of emotion here is that it is related with inadequacy. “God is free from passions, nor is he affected with any emotion of pleasure or pain”. If the idea of God is said to be free from emotions then the humans, in whom the idea of God is immanent, can also be free from emotions. Thus emotion is juxtaposed to the true knowledge of the idea of God and humans cannot be free without the true knowledge of the idea of God. Spinoza further says “The emotions which are contrary to our nature that is, which are evil, are evil in so far as they prevent the mind from understanding”.

Spinoza says that the way to get rid of the emotions lies in the love of the idea of God. “This love towards God cannot be polluted by an emotion either of envy or jealously, but it is cherished the more, the more we imagine men to be bound to God by this bond of love”. The idea of God, according to Spinoza, is impartial towards the beings and accordingly Spinoza says, “God to speak strictly, loves no one nor hate anyone”. The love towards God is nothing but the voluntary commitment to the authority of God, and thus it is the acceptance of His Divine law.

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71 Ibid., p.207.
72 Ibid., p.211.
The Human freedom, in the philosophy of Spinoza is related with the eternal love. Love is the nature of the idea of God, according to Spinoza but it has no partiality towards the individual beings. So when a human begins to be in touch with God, he/she realizes the true nature of the idea of God and he/she is totally free. When the human begins to distance himself/herself from the idea of God, then emotions rule over him consequently the humans begin to doubt the nature of their freedom. Spinoza says “Hence it follows that God, in so far as he loves himself, loves men, and consequently that the love of God for men and he minds intellectual love towards God is one and the same thing. From this we clearly understand in what consists our salvation, blessedness or liberty namely in the constant and eternal love for God, or in the love of God for men”.\textsuperscript{74}

Spinoza relates the aspects of perfection with activism and so he holds the active and perfect being to be more real. “The more perfection anything has, the more active and the less passive it is; and contrariwise, the more active it is, the more perfect it becomes. The more perfect anything is, the more reality it has”.\textsuperscript{75}

In the discussion on the nature of human freedom, Sikhism and the philosophy of Spinoza advance the view that humans are absolutely free. Both the philosophical perspectives argue that the idea of God is absolutely free and so humans are the manifestations of the idea of God, are also essentially free in nature. Even though the nature of humans is finite, one of the attributes of God, that is, freedom, is also there in their nature, due

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., p.215.

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., p.218.
to the immanence of the idea of God within them. In that sense humans are also free and they are supposed to enjoy freedom.

2.4 **The Essence of Man in Sikhism and in the Philosophy of Spinoza**

In philosophy, exact affirmation is not possible when difference of opinion exists on a single idea. Diversity of opinion is one of the characteristics of philosophy where many ‘isms’ hold sway. Different schools of philosophy function under different banners; they propose a variety of solutions towards the existing problems according to their standpoints. Among such problems the problem of essence of man is an interesting one. The existence and the essence of man pose as a great problem to human mind. Though generalized solution is not possible on this issue, because the problem of existence and essence of human beings addressed differently by different philosophical traditions.

The theistic philosophical schools, which consider the idea of God as the ultimate reality, correlate the essence of human with the idea of God. Here the essence of humans is said to be originating from the idea of God. Sikhism and the philosophy of Spinoza consider God as the prime mover. So the essence of man according to them resembles the idea of God.

2.4.1 **The Essence of Man in Sikhism**

The Sikh philosophy evolves out of the socio-religious necessities that prevailed in the late medieval period, particularly; it emerged as a reaction to the caste system, despotism, tyranny and so on. Subsequently, in Sikh philosophy, man is determined on the basis of the idea of God and on the basis of social reality of that particular epoch in which it emerged. Sikhism, as a religious
philosophy, views the idea of God as the supreme reality. The opening lines of Japuji justify the supreme nature of the idea of God.

“God is one,
His name is true,
He is the creator”.

That means all the objects of reality are said to be the creations of the idea of God. The objects of reality include the living beings. Accordingly, Sikhism evaluates the essence of human beings and considers them as equals. This is a sociological understanding of Sikhism regarding the essence of human beings.

Philosophically, Sikhism deals the question of the essence of human beings as a problem of mind and body. Like Spinoza, Sikhism also equates the duality of worldliness and spirituality with that of body and mind in the individualized realm. In order to understand the nature of mind and body and that of spirituality and worldliness, nature of the idea of God in Sikhism is to be analysed.

Nirbhai Singh, an eminent Sikh scholar says “In the context of Sikhism it considers atman (Spiritual element) and body (material element) as inseparable aspects of a single cosmic spiritual continuum. It has continuity and immanence in every element of the microcosm and macrocosm”. Here, Nirbhai Singh substantiates matter and spirit as inseparable twins of the cosmos. Though they are inseparably united for the effective functioning of the cosmos, they are different entities by their nature. Inspite of

76, Harbansingh Doabia, Sacred-Nitnam, p.3.
their differences they exhibit their inseparable nature due to the immanence of the idea of God in them.

2.4.1.1 The Nature of Miri-Piri Idea in Sikhism

The Sikh conception of reality is a dynamic unity. Sikhism condemns the metaphysical exclusivism in doctrine and asceticism in practice. So Sikhism very consciously poses itself as a religion which unifies spiritual and material life. The word Miri-Piri stands to mean worldliness and spirituality. These two aspects occupy equal status in Sikh philosophy and the dynamic unity of these two aspects forms the reality in Sikhism. Spinoza’s conception of extension and thought seems to be related to the idea of Miri-Piri in Sikhism. That is, the idea of extension has no existence apart from the body and the world is the universalized nature of body in which extension reflects the two forms namely motion and rest. In the same way, the idea of Miri represents the idea of worldliness, which is the macrocosm of the body. The idea of Piri represents the idea of spirituality which is consciousness that exists through the mind. So spirituality has not any existence apart from the worldliness and the idea of extension and thought according to Spinoza, seems to be closely similar to Miri- Piri of Sikhism.

2.4.1.1.1 The Concept of God and the Idea of Miri

As the creator, the idea of God is pervasive in all the elements of reality, namely, material as well as nonmaterial elements. The materialistic nature is witnessed in the body and the world is said to be the macrocosm of the body. This materialistic point of view is known as Miri in Sikhism and that justifies the reality of the world. The Sikh world view is that the world is real and not an illusion or mithya.
“The entire universe created from that one light
The creator is in the creation; in creation is He.
He pervades the universe.
From one clay in various forms
Has he made all the creation”.78

The characteristics of reality can be known by its dynamic as well as its static natures. That means, the reality is in motion as well as at rest. The reality seems to be the conjunction of the two aspects and these two aspects are not different from the idea of extension. As Sikhism holds that the creator is in the creation, it means that the idea of God imbibes the attribute of extension in to the world. Though the material reality is usually ascribed with the attribute of extension, the idea of God is also immanent in the extended being, according to Sikhism. If the creator is manifested in the creations, then the question as to what is the difference between creation and the creator naturally arises. Daljeet Singh, a Sikh scholar, says that “The very concept of a creator-God implies the universe as the creation of God. It is not a part of Him. The universe is in time and space. It is changing and becoming. The creator is different from the creation which is limited and conditioned. God is uncreated and unlimited”.79 The extended objects have limitations, but the limitation does not affect quality of the object in so far as it is derived from the absoluteness. For example, brightness is a quality of Gold and this quality can be witnessed in all the ornaments, which are made of Gold. In such a way, even though extension has limitations, it is the fact that the

79 ,Daljeet Singh, Sikhism, p.186.
limitations of the object do not affect the manifestation of the idea of God.

Daljeet Singh says “Universe is the creation of God and not His Emanation or Extension”\textsuperscript{80} That means though the idea if God does not have the concept of extension in itself, the process of extension of the idea of God engulfs the world of objects in the form manifestation. The idea of manifestation could be perceived as the extension of the idea of God in its creations, in so far as the creations are the manifestation of the idea of God.

The matter has two types of qualities, namely, the universal and the particular. An object is the microcosmic form of matter and also the manifestation of the idea of God in it is expressed as an aspect of extension. In other words, it can be said simply that though the idea of God does not have the characteristic of extension in it, its manifestation in the objects of the world is witnessed as an extension of the objects. Spinoza uses the term extension as an attribute while Sikhism uses extension as a quality. But in the realm of praxis, the attribute or quality of extension of matter offers space for the idea of God to manifest itself in them.

2.4.1.1.2 The Idea of God and the Idea of Piri

The word Piri represents the idea of spirituality, according to Sikhism. Sikhism is a Miri-Piri system in which the two extremes, worldliness and spirituality get united. Some Sikh scholars consider the Miri-Piri system as the unification of World and God and here the word Piri represents the idea of God. On the other hand Miri-Piri is the unification of worldliness and spirituality.

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., p.196.
If spirituality and the idea of God are considered to be same, then it naturally follows that spirituality and world are different. Spirituality is an aspect of God. That means spirituality is a quality of the idea of God. As the objects of the world are considered to be the microcosms of the Miri-Piri system, the idea of God manifests itself through spirituality, in the material world. So spirituality is immaterial realization of the idea of God as well as the world of objects and it is possible only through thinking. That means spirituality exists in thought. Sikhism admits the importance of spirituality uniting with worldliness. Thinking is a process by which the unity is experienced.

Thinking and spirituality are inseparably connected. A person cannot realize the idea of God if he/she cannot think. Thus, the idea of God and the humans get related through their commonness, that is spiritually and especially through the thinking process of humans. As discussed earlier, the objects of the world are the manifestation of the idea of God. The two aspects of extension and thought could be witnessed in them and particularly in humans. Thought is a universal idea that connects the objects and the idea of God. As a particular idea, individual mind thinks to realize the idea of God. The purpose of the mind according to Sikhism is the realization of spiritual nature of the idea of God and its manifestations in the objects of the world.

2.4.1.2 Mind-Body Interaction

Most of the philosophies of Indian traditions negate interaction between mind and body for the realization of the idea of God. For example, Jainism has separated these two entities considering them as dual realities, namely Jiva and Ajiva. Advaita philosophy accepts atman but negates body. The Sikh idea of mind
and body is different from the said systems of philosophy. Sikhism perceives the unity of God, soul, mind and body and it does not tear away the various moments of man-body, soul, mind, senses, etc. in to compartmentalized parts. Nirbhai Singh says, “The mind is a dynamic energy which is to be developed into unman. Unman is a supernal state of mind in which the duality and multiplicity are absorbed”.\(^{81}\) This is the idea of mind in Sikhism. The mind cannot exist without the body. In humans, the body and mind are interacting for the realization of an action. The action is the realization of unity of spirituality and worldliness.

### 2.4.2 The Essence of Man in the Philosophy of Spinoza

Spinoza explores the essence human from the analysis of mind and body and their relations. Spinoza says “The essence of man is constituted by certain modes of attributes of God”.\(^{82}\) The essence means the attributes by which an object is constituted. Spinoza says that the absolute reality is not attributeless and the attributes are eternal. Spinoza explains that, “An attribute I understand to be that which the intellect perceives as constituting the essence of a substance”.\(^{83}\)

Humans are not eternal entities, but the essence by which a human is constituted is eternal. Humans have not directly originated from the idea of God but by the manifestations of its essence. The essence of the idea of God is constituted with the attributes without which humans cannot know it. Such attributes of the idea of God are innumerable. As limited beings, humans are


incapable of realizing the existence of innumerable attributes, but they can experience only two attributes, namely, extension and thought. Naturally, these two attributes constitute the essence of humans, according to Spinoza. “Thought is an attribute of God or God is a thinking thing”.\(^{84}\) “Extension is an attribute of God or God is an extended thing”.\(^{85}\) These two attributes represent all the objects of the universe and they constitute the essence of the universe. The attributes which are eternal in character, are present in finite beings.

Humans are the manifested beings of the idea of God in whom the essence of the idea of God exists. The attributes of the idea of God, that is, extension and thought evolve into the limited objects or the individual things. These individual things, according to Spinoza, are called as modes. But the modes are finite in nature on the basis of the idea of eternity. Modes are considered, by Spinoza, as the modifications of the idea of God. Modifications cannot exist or be conceived of without substance.

All the objects of nature are modes. A mode can exist either having the quality of extension or having the quality of thinking or having both the qualities. A mode, which is in the form of extension, can be called it as body because body extends. A mode which is always in the form of thinking can be called as mind because thought is always related with the mind. It can be said that a mode is either body or mind or both in the sense that human being is an entity of extension and thought. So mind and body are the temporal essence of humans without which they cannot exist. The nature of body and mind are different and they have nothing in

\(^{84}\) Ibid., p.38.
\(^{85}\) Ibid., p.39.
common. If they have nothing in common then the question as to how a relation is possible between them arises. In order to understand the relatedness of the unrelated, one has to analyze the nature of their difference and how the differences get related.

### 2.4.2.1 God and Body

Spinoza says “Whatever is, is in God, and nothing can exist or be conceived without God”. So body is not apart from the idea of God. Extension is the nature of body and this nature is the attribute of the idea of God. In Spinoza’s philosophy the point which substantiates the relation between the body and the idea of God is that “From God’s supreme power or infinite nature, infinite things in infinite modes, that is, all things, necessarily follow, or always follow from the same necessity”. A body is a mode and the modes are the modifications of the substance. The modifications are due to the manifestation of attributes in the substance. But the body is not eternal and motion and rest are the possible nature of the body. Spinoza says “By body I understand that mode which expresses in a certain determined manner the essence of God in so far he is considered as an extended thing”. Motion and rest are the nature of an extended thing or body. “All bodies are either moving or stationary”.

One of the attributes of the idea of God, that is, extension related to the body. Body is always related to matter because both of them have the quality of motion and rest. The size of the body or matter can be either extended or reduced. Spinoza says that “By

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86 Ibid., p.11.
87 Ibid., p.16.
88 Ibid., p.37.
89 Ibid., p.48.
individual things I understand things which are finite and have a determined existence”. Thus the body is an individual thing. So the idea concerning body is that body is a mode which is the modification of the idea of God through one of its attributes, that is, extension. So body has no existence apart from extension. Human being understands that body is the manifestation of the idea of God because its essence is constituted with the attribute of the idea of God.

### 2.4.2.2 God and Mind

According to Spinoza the idea of God is not only an extended thing but also a thinking thing, because thought is one of the infinite attributes of idea of God. Mind is an immaterial object and its function to think. The idea of mind, according to the philosophy of Spinoza is only a mode which has the eternal attribute, thinking. Mind is free from the attribute of extension because it is immaterial. Materially speaking, mind is not related to the body. Mind as an immaterial, cannot be extended but it has consciousness. Body is not related with the mind, but mind is a part of the idea of God in the sense that mind exhibits itself due to the process of thinking as thinking is an attribute of God. Mind exists where thought exists. Spinoza conceives that humans think as mind exists in them. Human is an individual thing so thought can be individual. Individual thought has no existence apart from the idea of God. “Individual thoughts or this and that thought are modes which express in certain and determined way the nature of God”

\[91\] says Spinoza. The purpose of mind, according to Spinoza, is to understand the true knowledge of the idea of God. “Human

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90 Ibid., p.38.
91 Ibid., pp.38-39.
mind is a part of the infinite intellect of God and thus when we say that human mind perceives this or that, we say nothing else than that God”. The mind is spiritualistic. Spirituality is an attribute of the idea of God and so the mind is able to perceive spiritualistic nature of the idea of God.

While discussing the idea of body and mind, one can witness their extrapolations into worldliness and spirituality respectively. They originated from the idea of God which has the eternal attributes, namely, extension and thought. Extension maintains its identity by modifying its qualities in to modes and the infinite modes constitute the nature. On the other hand, thought sensitises mind towards the realization of the idea of knowledge of God. Thus mind imbibes the knowledge of the idea of God through the idea of spirituality. By nature, the worldliness and the spirituality or the body and mind are separate entities but they originate from the idea of God, and accordingly they manifest the respective attribute of the idea of God in them.

2.4.2.3 Mind and Body Interaction

The relation between mind and body is one of the problems in philosophy. The base of the idea lies in the dualistic nature of the two entities. Descartes perceives that mind and body are opposite and have no contact with each other. In order to answer the question of functioning of the diametrically opposite entities in a unitary way, Descartes states that behind the brain, humans have an organ known as pineal gland, which relates the opposites that is body and mind. The next generation of Cartesians led by Spinoza mention that “Descartes held that the soul or mind was particularly

92 Ibid., pp.45-46.
united to a certain part of the brain called the pineal gland, by means of which it feels all the movements that take place in the body and external objects, and which the mind by the very fact that its wishes can move in various ways". Spinoza questions the Cartesian dualistic understanding of the problem of unity of mind and body, thus; “What does he understands, I ask, by the union of mind and body? What clear and distinct conception, I say, has he of thought closely united with a certain particle of quantity or extension? Truly I should like him to explain this union through its proximate cause. But he conceived the mind so distinct from the body that he could not assign a cause for this union nor for the mind itself, but he had perforce to recur to the cause of the whole universe, that is, to God".

The problem which occurs in Descartes’ philosophy is due to the inclusion of the idea of relative substance that is, mind and body apart from the idea of substance. On the other hand, Spinoza substantiates the idea of relative substance through the idea of attributes and in that way, he tries to unite the attributes calling them as the attributes of God. So in the philosophy of Spinoza mind and body interact due to the manifestation of the attributes of God in them.

2.5 The Problem of One and Many in Sikhism and in the Philosophy of Spinoza

In philosophy, the nature of reality can be classified into three types; they are Monism, Pluralism and Integrative

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93 Ibid., pp.199-200.
94 Ibid., p.201.
Monotheism. These classifications can be seen in Indian Philosophical traditions as well as in the Philosophies of the West.

From the monistic point of view, the reality is considered as one. Generally speaking, that single reality is identified as the concept of God. Those who uphold the reality as one, simply negate the reality of the world and consider it as secondary or illusion. For example, Advaita of Samkara holds that the world is unreal. Considering the world and its objects as illusion, it projects Brahman as the only reality. It rejects the existence of multiplicity of objects as illusion. “Unity alone is the highest truth and multiplicity is conjured up by false ignorance”.\(^95\)

Advaita separates Brahman from the world as it represents many beings. Sankara finds it impossible to conjoin the one with the many. Thus Sankara’s philosophy ends with the idea of One, that is, Brahman and it gives no place for the reality of the world in its system. As Muthumohan says “We find Sankara desiring to reach a doubtless, determinate and definite knowledge as it was sought by Descartes a few centuries later. Sankara wants a type of knowledge which rigorously satisfies the laws of formal logic... Advaita asserts that Brahman is the only reality without a second. It rejects every kind of multiplicity as illusion.”\(^96\)

From the pluralistic point of view, the reality is considered as many. Those who consider reality as many do not consider the relatedness of the many but they identify the many as separate and independent entities. In pluralism, the ultimate reality is more than one. The pluralism, advanced by the Vaisesika system of Indian


tradition is a classical example. It conceives the reality through various independent categories such as Dravya, Guna, Karma, Samanya, Visesa, and Samavaya. The Dravyas contain the plural elements namely, earth, water, fire, air, ether, time, space, soul and mind. This multiplicity and the independent nature of categories constitute Vaisesika as a pluralistic philosophy. Vaisesika sees the world as plural because the constituent elements of the world are separate and independent categories. This eternal constituent elements of reality are called as categories, that negate the idea of an absolute one. “The limitations of many are crystal clear. It is aimed at explaining the reality from the empirically perceived physical elements and their mechanical collections. Such an interpretation inevitably reduces the human life into physical elements and the physical world into lifeless matter (Jada)”. Vaisesika philosophy enumerates the mechanical collections of plurality of reality. On the other hand in the philosophy of monism, the mechanical collection of plural elements of reality is considered as absurdity.

The existence of human beings justifies the material realm as well as the spiritual realm. Human existence is situated in the world and the humans encounter the spiritual realm through thinking. Thus humans cannot eternally differentiate the material from the spiritual and also they cannot avoid either of the two. In order to avoid such a problem, a theory of integration has emerged in philosophy. This concept neither denies one nor many but tries to unite the one with the many. Through integrative monotheism, man realizes the relatedness of the idea of God and the idea of world.

97 Ibid., p.10.
Sikh philosophy and the philosophy of Spinoza have propagated some enthusiastic steps to such integration. The special feature of these philosophies is their acceptance of the idea of God and the world.

2.5.1 The Problem of One and Many in Sikhism

Sikh philosophy always retains the importance of society in parallel with the religious ideas. Sikhism is known as a socio-religious trend because of its emphasis on societal and religious aspects.

The dichotomic understanding of reality leads to the problem of one and many. While Sankara’s philosophy holds the monistic understanding of reality, on the other hand, the Vaisesika or the Jaina systems admit the pluralistic nature of reality. According to pluralism, the absolute Being is not possible because of the equality among the plural objects of reality.

Sikhism analyses the problem of dichotomy and unites these two extremes and the idea of God stands as the factor of unity. “In a sense, the philosophical context of Sikhism is the absolutised philosophy of one and that of many. On the other, it is the reality dichotomised by pluralism and monism from which Sikhism assumes its beginning. Sikhism intends to unite them. The Sikh mulmantra starts with the numeral one-IK, indicating and uncompromisingly stressing the oneness of reality. But the reality now comprises both one and many”.98

Sikhism uses the term IKoamkar, which occurs in the beginning of the Mulmantra. The IKoamkar is generally split up

into three aspects, namely, IK, Oam, Kar. The term IK represents the idea of one Being. Oam, the sound-form, indicates the primordial cause of the manifest world. Akara is the manifested world. The term one or IK stands for the unity of the manifest world and the primordial cause of the idea of God. Sohan Singh says “Ekoamkar thus means the oneness of the Cosmos, or the entire nature spread out in its vastness in time and space, which in all its diversity is infused with unity”.

The term IK Oamkar is used in Sikhism, for the unity of one and the many. Sikhism identifies the movements of every individual element according to the directions of the concept of God and the cosmic law works here. The acceptance of the reality of many is due to the reason that every object of reality is considered as the manifestation of the idea of God. The created world and its objects represent the idea of many in their hierarchical structure. Such a plurality originates from one Being which shows the unity of one and many in Sikhism. The important aspect of Sikh philosophy is its acceptance of the reality of the world. “Wonderful Thy creatures, wonderful their species, wonderful their colours”. Here the aspects of reality are considered as wonderful because of the ideal manifestation of God in them. All these factors attempt to relate the one with the many. Guru Amardas says,

“Holy is the Lord, ever holy
Holy all created forms”

The Sikh Gurus do not recognize two realities, namely, that mean the reality of one and of many, but they recognize the duality in a

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dynamic unity. It stands to mean the reality of multiple existences. In Sikhism, the reality of multiple existences is related to the Supreme Being. So there is mutuality between the idea of God and the world of objects in their unification; that is, on the one hand, on the one hand, the idea of God creates the world of objects and on the other hand, the realization of the idea of God is possible only through the manifest objects of the world.

Sikhism says, “Thou art the tree; All that is, is thy flourishing branches”. Here the analogy of tree and its branches portray the Sikh idea that one is united with the many as that of the parts with the whole. The different reflections of reality are connected with the idea of the whole. By connecting one and the many the Supreme reality is connected with the world of objects.

The synthesis of one and the many tries to settle the problem of dichotomy between the idea of God and world. Muthumohan explains this synthesis “Above all, the Sikh conception excludes the formally polarized and of raw manifoldness and the aloneness. The one becomes the law of many (hukam) the substratum of various modes, the one immanently and all pervading living in many, causing them to unite into a system. It presents as a concrete picture of reality with all its complexities, richness, variety and diversity and also with their underlying ruptures and unity. In this concrete and structural conception of reality, it has ably succeeded to include historical time, human action, and social changes as its inseparable moments”.

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Sikhism does not mention the word pantheism though it considers the creations as the manifestions of the idea of God, as in the case of the philosophy of Spinoza. Spinoza identifies the idea of God with nature with the advent of his theory of modification. In modifications, objects are united with the origination.

In Sikh philosophy, the idea of manifestation exists as similar to the idea of modification. That means, in Sikhism the idea of God is manifested as nature. Such idea of accepting plural elements of the world as real comes closer to pantheism advanced by Spinoza. But as a monotheistic philosophy, Sikhism stops short of pronouncing plural reality as pantheism.

2.5.1.1 Unity of Eternity and Time in Sikhism

The terms eternity and time denote different meanings. Existence by itself can be called eternal and the idea God is an eternal being, as it sustains its existence by itself. Time is identified only with the events of the reality. Sikhism discusses the idea of eternity and time in relation with the idea God and the world while maintaining their difference.

The opening lines of Japuji clarify the eternality of God.

“There is but one God
The eternal
The all-pervading
The creator
The Supreme Being
Without-fear
Without enmity
The Being beyond time
Self existent”\textsuperscript{104}

The opening lines of Japuji substantiate the eternity of the idea of God. It means that the nature of the idea God is eternal which is not constrained by the aspect of time. Sikhism identifies the idea of God as the all pervading entity which is self existent. In order to understand the meaning of eternity, the characteristics of the idea of God, such as the all-pervasiveness and self-existence are to be called as all pervasive if it is said to be beyond any limitation. If a thing is limited, it cannot be called as eternal because limitation presupposes the beginning and the end which are connected with time. Thus the idea of all pervasiveness is connected with the idea of eternity.

The idea of self-existence is also connected with eternity since in temporality nothing can be self-existent but are interdependent. That is, eternity is an important characteristic attributed to the idea of God only. That means the basis of the idea of God is different from that of the world because world is moving in time. Sher Singh quotes the verses of Guru Nanak, thus; “Nanak says in Sri Rag: The merciful alone is permanent; the whole world besides is transitory. Call Him permanent on whose head no destiny is recorded... So that first God becomes Chakardhar – one who holds the cycle of time in His own hands. But time is a finite concept of the finite mind of man. Idea of God who transcends all experience of man also transcends time in every sense. He is timeless – Akal. No time idea can be applied to Him”\textsuperscript{105}


The difference between eternity and time is same as the difference between permanence and transitory. Transitory here is used to denote the finitude of the world because the elements are limited by time and space. On the other hand eternity is to be understood as beyond time and space and in this sense, the idea of God, as the creator of time and space, is beyond them.

2.5.1.2 Unity of Perfection and Imperfection

When Sikhism holds the unity of the one and the many, it actualizes the unity of the moments of perfection and imperfection. Sikhism perceives the idea of God as perfect and from the perfect Being, the world is manifested. The world is not free from defects because of its spacio-temporal limitation. So perfection is directly related to activism as there is no limiting factor. Sikhism does not accept unreality but it accommodates the hierarchy of elements of reality. The hierarchical elements vary from supreme reality of lower reality; its other side is from perfection to imperfection. Here the term imperfection is used to mean less perfection because in every object, Sikhism sees the reflections of Idea of God, but these objects are not as perfect as Idea of God. So they are less perfect. When we consider the idea of God as perfect Being, the less perfect elements of reality move towards the absolutely perfect Being. Here, one can witness the intention of unity among the hierarchy of elements, starting from the idea of God.

Sikhism admits that reality is a dynamic unity in which the hierarchy of elements is united with the one Being. This is the idea of IK Oamkar. In reality all the elements are attracted to each other through the manifested essence of God. That means, in a dynamic system, the individual elements are placed in the hierarchical order by their nature of perfection and their essence. The special feature
of Sikhism is that, in the hierarchy of elements nothing is negated as unreal.

2.5.1.3 God as the Ultimate Reference Point in Sikhism

Sikhism admits the supremacy of the idea of God and every aspect of reality is related with it. So the idea of God is the ultimate reference point in Sikhism. Sikh philosophy is a synthesis between spirituality and temporality, eternity and time, perfection and imperfection. The process of synthesis holds the idea of God as the ultimate reference point. From the point of view of ultimate reference, that is, the idea of God, the problem of reality is discussed. In that way the idea of God is the ultimate reference point to which the less perfect elements look upto for realization of Grace from it. Also, the problem of one and many can be discussed only on the basis that the idea of God is the ultimate reference point. The absolute transcendent and eternal reality manifests itself as many. So, the many are justified from the point of reference of the one.

2.5.2 Problem of One and Many in the Philosophy of Spinoza

Spinoza has been interpreted as a God-intoxicated man because, in every aspect, he identifies the presence of God. Spinoza accepts the natural phenomena as real because he considers nature as the modification of the idea God. In order to portray this idea, he uses the term *natura naturans*. This term represents the active nature. Spinoza says “By nature active, we must understand that which is in itself and through itself is conceived or such attributes of substance as express eternal and infinite essence that is God, in so far as he is considered as a free cause”.106

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substantiates the reality of nature here. Logically it cannot be said that the nature is same as the idea of God because fundamental differences exist between them. Also Spinoza accepts only one substance that is, God, which is eternal. On the other hand, the nature has limitations because the modes are finite. It is Spinoza’s fundamental argument in part 1 of the Ethics that “There can be only one substance which is Causa Sui, and that this single substance must be identified with the universe conceived as a whole; this unique all-inclusive totality he therefore calls God or nature”.\textsuperscript{107} Spinoza realizes the problem of identity that if the nature is not accepted as reality then the idea of God cannot be called as real since both the concepts are mutually reciprocative. So nature is real and it is a platform to realize the real nature of God. The idea of God or nature does not mean one, but represents the unity and this unity is the relation of one with many. The nature as a whole is nothing but the world of unlimited individual things and these individual things reflect the idea of God. Spinoza says “The more we understand individual things the more we understand God”.\textsuperscript{108}

Thus Spinoza attempts to solve the problem of one and the many by integrating the idea of God and nature. Spinoza mentions that the nature exists only by the idea of God and it can be identified only through the realization of the individual things. So reality is possible only through the union of one and the many. Individually one cannot realize the reality but it is to be realized as a whole. Here the predetermined laws stand as the unifying factor. It is not human intentions, but the intentions of the idea of God.

As Bertrand Russell says, “Every thing according to Spinoza, is ruled by an absolute logical necessity. There is no such thing as free will in the mental sphere or chance in the physical world. Every thing that happens is a manifestation of Gods inscrutable nature”.\(^{109}\)

It is to be noted that in the unity, on the one side, eternity and perfection exist and on the other side temporality and imperfection exist. So Spinoza’s idea of unity is dynamic in nature.

The intention of Spinoza is not to make the idea of God and nature as binaries; he integrates them through the divine law. In such a unity, different aspects of the nature get united. Among these differences the eternity and time are important aspects.

### 2.5.2.1 Unity of Eternity and Time

The sense perception exists in time and in space. It can be said that, the nature which is experienced by the senses is limited by the time and the space. So the nature and the time and the space are interdependent. The time is the difference between two events. So time is realized only through events. An event has a beginning as well as an end. That is a limitation. This limitation is attributed to time also. Such a limitation of time is expressed as history. No history is possible without time. Histories are the events determined by time. Events are possible only by time and space. “Time: it is one of the fundamental categories of physical sciences. Philosophers and scientists have interpreted it in several ways... All changes in space take place in time... Thus space and time are inseparable from each other”.\(^{110}\)

\(^{109}\) Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy*, p.554.

Space is the world in which time realizes its limitation. Here it can be concluded that world has a beginning and end because it is revealed in time and space. So the aspects of time and space and their consequences are limited.

On the other hand, eternity exists. The term ‘eternity’ is used as opposite to time and space. Spinoza says “I understand eternity to be existence itself, in so far as it is conceived to follow necessarily from the definition of an eternal thing... For such existence is conceived as an eternal truth, just as the essence of a thing, and therefore cannot be explained by duration or time, although duration can be conceived as wanting beginning and end”\textsuperscript{111}

Eternity means existence in itself. That means, its existence is not determined by the other elements. If the idea of eternity is influenced by the events then it cannot be called as eternal because events are connected with the limitation of time and space. But the existence in itself means the transcendence from the realm of limitedness. A dictionary says “Eternity, infinite duration of the existence of the world resulting from the uncreatability and undestructibility of matter, and the material unity of the world. Eternity is inherent only in all matter as a whole. Every concrete formation in the world is transient in time. Eternity is not reducible to an unlimited homogeneous existence of matter in one and the same state or to an endless succession of historical cycles but presupposes constant qualitative transformations of matter and it’s assuming new states”\textsuperscript{112}

\textsuperscript{111} Andrew Boyle, Tr., \textit{Op.cit.}, p.2.
In nature, eternity is different from the idea of History. When Spinoza speaks about eternity he keeps in mind the idea of God, because for him, it is the only substance which exists by itself.

While enunciating the idea of unity of eternity and time, the limitations such as time and space reflects through eternity and the idea of eternity is identified such limitation. But it cannot be explained in its absolute nature through limitedness because the idea of God is to be identified through individual things. “Eternity cannot be explained through time”.\textsuperscript{113} It does not mean that time is not actual or real. Spinoza says “Things are conceived as actual in two ways by us either in so far as we conceive them to exist with relation to certain time and space or in so far as we conceive them to be contained in the idea of God and to follow from their necessity to divine nature”.\textsuperscript{114} So Spinoza argues that time and space are related to reality and also such reality reflects eternity as the manifestation of the idea of God in it. This eternity is the essence of the idea of God. So the essence of the idea of God reflects upon the world as God in nature, according to Spinoza. So the world and God are not binaries but can be united. “The human mind in so far as it knows itself and its body under the species of eternity, thus for it necessarily has knowledge and God, and knows that it exists in the idea of God and is conceived through God. Eternity is the essence of God in so far as this necessarily involves existence. Therefore to conceive things under the species of eternity is to conceive them in so far as they are conceived through the essence of God as real entities, or in so far as they involve existence through the essence of God. And therefore our mind, in so far as it

\textsuperscript{113} Andrew Boyle, Tr., \textit{Op.cit.}, p.216.
\textsuperscript{114} \textit{Ibid.}, p.216.
conceives itself and its body under a species of eternity, has thus for necessarily a knowledge of God and knows”.\textsuperscript{115}

To realize the unity of the eternity and the limitedness, that means the eternity and time, the knowledge of the idea of God, as divine law, serves as the medium.

\textbf{2.5.2.2 Unity of Perfection and Imperfection}

Perfection is attributed to a thing which is free from defect. So if an object is free from defect it can be called perfect. According to the degrees of defects, degrees of perfection can be enumerated. If an object is defected, it will become inactive because activism or passivism is related with the degree of defects. That means, the completely defected objects will be completely passive. On the other hand the perfect objects will be absolutely active. In nature, Spinoza perceives the less active and more active elements. At the same time the less active elements try to become more active to reach the highest degree of perfection. It can be said that there is a movement of objects towards the higher strata of perfection. As the less perfect object moves to higher perfection, its nature also becomes more real from being as less real. Such a movement is relatedness towards perfection. Spinoza says ‘The more perfection anything is, the more active and less passive it is, and contrariwise more active it is, the more perfect it becomes. The more perfect anything is, the more reality it has. Consequently, it is more active and less passive. This proof can proceed in an inverted order. From which it may follow that a thing is more perfect, the

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., pp.216-217.
more active it is”. He concludes that “Reality and perfection I understand to be one and the same thing”.

Spinoza here means the idea of God as more perfect and more real than any other reality. In a letter to his friend, Spinoza writes “If we assume that something which is only unlimited and perfect of its kind exists by its own sufficiency, then we must also admit the existence of a being that is absolutely unlimited and perfect; which being I shall call God. For if, for instance, we wish to assert that extension, or thought (which can be perfect each in its own kind, that is in a certain kind of being) exist by their own sufficiency, we shall also have to admit the existence of God, who is absolutely perfect, that is, the existence of an absolutely unlimited being.

Here, I would have you note what I have just said with regard to the word imperfection, namely, that this means that a thing lacks something which nevertheless belongs to its nature. For instance, extension can only be said to be imperfect in respect of duration, position or quantity, namely, because it does not last longer, or does not retain its position, or is not greater.”

Spinoza does not mean imperfection as unreal but less real, that is, the imperfect object occupies the lower rungs of the reality. Here the world is less perfect because of its limitations. But the perfect Being, that is the idea of God, comes down to the lower levels of reality and it is the symbol of integration. Spinoza uses the concept of unity of perfection and imperfection as an integrative

\[116\quad Ibid., p.222.\]
\[117\quad Ibid., p.38.\]
\[118\quad John Wild, Ed., Spinoza Selections, p.449.\]
process. Spinoza accepts the integration of the perfect with the imperfect as the aspect of dynamic reality.

2.5.2.3 God as the Ultimate Reference Point in the Philosophy of Spinoza

The peculiarity of Spinoza’s philosophy is that it relates the idea of God to each and every event and objects of reality. It is true that he is a God-intoxicated man, because his conceptions are logically interconnected with the idea of God. As stated earlier the problem of unity of the one and the many, the problem of unity of eternity and time and the problem of unity of perfection and imperfection are all explained through the idea of God. Each individual thing, from microcosm to macrocosm exists as modes and these modes are the modifications of the idea of God. So without the idea of God, nothing is possible, according to Spinoza. In that sense it can be said that the idea of God exists as the ultimate reference point, by which everything is justified in the philosophy of Spinoza. Spinoza identifies the nature with the idea of God through the idea of modifications. “Spinoza has been alternately abhorred and venerated as a pantheist, pantheism meaning the identification of the idea of God with nature”. 119 Here the creator and the creation are united that means “God is imagined as an artificer and nature, including man as his artifact”. 120

The pantheistic nature of the philosophy of Spinoza is due the identification of every objects of reality in relation to the idea of God. In such a system of thought, every object of reality is

considered as real and such a reality is hierarchical according to
the degree of perfection of its objects. Accordingly, the elements in
the lower levels of perfection moves towards the idea of God which
is perfect.

2.6 Conclusion

Sikhism and the philosophy of Spinoza formulate their ideas in
a holistic way; there the reality of the world is accepted with the
hierarchy of its elements. So the world is constituted of parts that
are many and the parts originate from one reality or they are the
manifestation of the idea of One. Here the one is related to the
many. So one and many are not separate but interrelated aspects
of reality. As the parts are related to the idea of one, the many are
also interrelated. In that sense, eternity and time, perfection and
imperfection and the one and many show the nature of unity. This
is the idea of holism, where the whole and the parts show a unified
reality.