CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

I shall confine the conclusion of my thesis to the following points: (i) Significance of Sikhism (ii) Assamese Sikhs in the composite Assamese Culture (iii) Philosophical Significance of Sikhism in Assam (iv) Relation of Assam Sikhism with other religions (v) Its relevance to the modern world.

The message of the Sikh Gurus does not embody static thought but dynamic activity. The Gurus have conveyed their teaching through their own lives. The Sikh Gurus clearly stated about the role of man in the world. One of the postulates of Sikh Religion is that, there is One God, the Supreme Being, who is the creator and sustainer of all, irrespective of caste, creed, sex, colour and nationality. Another basic principle is that this world is not unreal or Maya, it is a place of righteousness. Our fundamental point which distinguishes Sikhism from other religions is that by the grace of God man is able to wipe out his evil past. And through prayer, meditation and good deeds man invokes the grace of God. Sikhism believes in Jivanmukti, i.e. liberation in this very life of ours, and not hereafter. Gopal Singh comments that “it is only as a human person that one can realise God by loving and serving His creation.”

Communal identity is one of the most distinctive features of Sikhism. Communal identity saved Sikhism from becoming submerged within the culture of Hinduism. For this identity, Sikhism is the same in every part of India and abroad. But due to the influence of different customs and traditions of Assamese people, Sikhism in Assam has acquired some folk beliefs and practices. For this reason elements of both Hinduism and indigenous folk cultural beliefs and practices have appreciable influence on the religious life of Assamese Sikhs.

Different races have contributed their racial elements to make a composite culture. Assamese people are very sympathetic in nature. Since time immemorial different migrating clans made Assam their own homeland. In the medieval period,
Ahoms and Muslims came to Assam and made this land their homeland. Likewise after the battle of Hadirachaki, the remaining Sikh soldiers with wife of Chaitanya Singh commonly known as 'Mataji' or 'Maiji' had to go upstream through the mighty Brahmaputra and permanently settled in Chaparmukh and made Assam their homeland. From that time a bond of friendship ensured between local Assamese people and Sikhs. And this bond of friendship has remained untouched till present time. In this context K.C. Majumdar writes, "this bond of friendship between the two powerful nationalities grow from strength to strength and remain ever deep and abiding with the blessings and sacred memory of great Guru Tegh Bahadur in our times to come." Most of the Sikhs who stayed back in Assam married local girls and settled in Chaparmukh and gradually shifted to Borkola, Hatipara and Lanka in the Nowgong district of Assam. Among the Assamese Sikhs, some of them are immigrated Sikhs who came to Assam either for service or business purpose. Assamese Sikhs stand on the same footing with Sikhs of Punjab. But cultural traits among Assamese Sikhs differ from Sikhs of Punjab.

No village of Assam consists of a single unit of a homogeneous caste group. For example, Assamese Sikh village Borkola, in Nowgong district Assam has rural inhabitants comprising distinct caste groups such as Sikh, Koch, Kolita, Keot etc. But by studying the socio-cultural picture of the village, I found that the admixture of different castes in the Assamese Sikh village has softened the social structure of Assamese Sikh society. The social systems of Assamese Sikh villages are less conservative and orthodox because they are free from the rigidity of castes. In this sense, by rejecting the rigidity of castes in society, Assamese Sikhs are in tune with the main tenet of Sikhism.

Second chapter dealt with the historical development of Sikhism in Assam and its resemblances with and differences from parent Sikhism. This chapter shows how the Sikhs in Assam assimilate themselves with the local Assamese Hindu people and at the same time they also retain their Sikh religious principles. It may be mentioned here that the position of the Assamese Sikhs may be compared with the 'Sikhs of Dalake', a small village situated at a distance of nearly eight Km from Tarn Taran in Amritsar.
Chapter three dealt with the philosophical significance of Sikhism in Assam comprehending ethico-social concepts and aesthetic significance. This chapter clarifies that the philosophical significance of Sikhism in Assam is basically the same as that of Sikhism in general.

Sikhism in Assam, is a religion of God as spirit and not as a substance. In Sikhism, God is both indeterminate Being (Nirguna) and determinate Spirit (Karta Purakh). God of Assam Sikhism is one, indivisible, self-existent, incomprehensible, timeless, all-pervading indescribable, adorable and lovely in nature. According to Sikhism in Assam, the One God is the Creator of plurality of forms. God is both immanent and transcendent to the world. Immanent character of God is operative in the world. God cannot be comprehended by our rational thought. Daljeet Singh writes, "logic and laws governing the becoming world of man are inapplicable to a Being who is 'wholly other."\(^3\)

According to Sikhism in Assam, the soul of man, in its natural state is sinless. The ultimate One comprises both Spirit and matter. Man does sinful activities under the influence of Maya or delusion. The prime cause of human bondage according to Sikhism in Assam is haumai. By working in accordance with God's will and by repeating the Name of God one can eliminate haumai and make the path of liberation accessible to all.

Assam Sikhism is the religion of the householder. Therefore it stresses more on personal ethics. Personal ethics depends upon control of impulses and passions of the individual, development of inner personality of the individual which develops only in society and not in isolation. And another important factor of personal ethics is the application of the developed personality to the service of humanity. In Sikhism, members of the holy congregation which is known as Sadh Sangat live in the society in accordance with Guru's advice. Sikhism recommends the followers to work according to the guidance of Guru and at the same time it also recommend physical labour for becoming healthy member of society. The common kitchen, i.e. Langar in Sikhism provides food not only for the needy people, but also for all, which arouses a sense of equality among the members
of Sikhism in Assam. The sitting arrangement in the Langar, is the same for all ranks of
people which according to S.S. Kohli, "created confidence among the workers of all
types regarding the respect of their profession." Sikhism in Assam, regards woman as
equal with man. Woman is regarded as a strength for man and she helps him in critical
moments of life. In short, it may be said that the ethical ideas of Sikhism in Assam have
saved society from several moral and physical evils.

The ultimate goal of Sikhism in Assam, is the unity of the soul with Supreme
Being, i.e. God. The soul after release from bondage merges in the Higher soul. Bondage
of the soul is due to the viscous Karmas of man. Sikhism in Assam holds the view that
one who lives in this world and perform his duty of a householder and constantly keeps
in mind the Name of God is nearer to God, than one who renounces the world and lives
like a Yogi. Sikhism in Assam believes in Jivan-mukti, i.e. liberation in this life and not af­
ner death. This state is termed as Sahaj in Sikhism. In order to attain the state of Sahaj, the
individual soul is blended together with the universal soul. But the most important fact of
the ethics of Sikhism in Assam is its greater emphasis on this worldly life. In Sikhism
according to D.S. Dhillon, even a "Jivan-mukta lived the worldly life and became the
source of inspiration for the other social- beings." Because of its emphasis on worldly
life, Sikh ethics is more appealing for ordinary people. In Assam Sikhism, for reaching the
state of 'Sahaj', one has to pass through five spiritual stages, i.e. Dharam Khand, Gian
Khand, Saram Khand, Karam Khand and Sach Khand. Of these five Khandas, the last
one, i.e. Sach Khand is the supreme state. It is the ultimate goal of truth.

But the spiritual urge of man is higher than the moral urge. By spiritual urge
man sees clearly the meaning of all morality in the well-being of his fellow beings. By at­
taining the status of spiritual height, man is able to overcome "The conflict of ordinary
morality of customs and manners; of laws and injunctions, melt away in the superior light
of spiritual wisdom." Western Scholars like Juergensmeyer and N.K. Barrier comment upon Indian
culture as "influence of religion upon Indian society has made India other worldly and
caste-ridden." But Sikhism in Assam is free from these criticisms because of its rejection of caste distinction in society.

Religion is essentially a yearning for God. This yearning for God is satisfied by communion with Him. In Assam Sikhism, it is possible through Nam Simran, i.e. repeating the Name of God.

Fourth Chapter dealt with the relation of Sikhism in Assam with other living religions of the world. This chapter focussed on the importance of inter-relations of different religions in modern world. Though the first Sikh Guru Nanak propogated his views long ago, yet his thoughts exhibit novelty even to the people of modern age. The message of Sikhism can be applied by members of all world religions. In the words of Cole and Sambhi, "Sikhism in both theory and practice, has a long history of accepting the authenticity of other religions." By comparing Sikhism in Assam with different living religions of the world, I found that Sikhism in Assam is a very tolerant religion. Its outlook is liberal towards the followers of other religions. Lack of tolerance is the source of conflict among the different religions of the world. In an Assamese Sikh village, followers of Hinduism, Sikhism and members of other communities live peacefully without any collision. Even the founder of Sikhism, Nanak showed the acceptance of other faiths by visiting Assam with Mardana, a musician who was a Muslim by birth. The doors of the gurdwaras of Sikh people living in Assam are open for the members of all communities. Assamese Sikhs deliberately participate in the religious functions of Assamese Vaishnava community. The holy scripture of Sikhs Guru Granth Sahib contains the hymns not only of the Sikhs but also of Hindu and Muslim saints. 

When we compare the different religions of the world, we find that spiritual life is the ultimate goal of all the religions. In the words of Radhakrishnan, "They do not differ in their aim, but only in the extent of the progress which they are able to make with the aid of their varying lights." The different religions differ only in their religious practices and not in their aim. Sikhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism etc affirm that man is confronted by something greater than himself, which is the Absolute Reality. This Abso-
lute Reality may be termed differently by different religions. But their ultimate aim is the same. Urging for the co-operation of different religions, Radhakrishnan says, if religion is to gain the dynamic power which it once possessed of shaping society, rivalries of religions should give place to co-operation among them.¹⁰

Fifth chapter dealt with the relevance of Assam Sikhism in the modern world. Nanak, the founder of Sikhism revolutionized the modes of thought and gave new content to the existing categories. At first, by supporting democratic ideals Sikhism in Assam becomes more relevant to the modern age. The democratic ideals of Sikhism in Assam are: (a) rejection of Casteism, (b) earning by doing hard labour, and (c) sharing one's income with others, contribution of one-tenth of one's income to the common fund for social welfare and religious purposes brought Sikhism in Assam nearer to the common people. Democracy always serves the purpose of the society as a whole and not of any particular class.

In the context of democratic ideal, Sikhism in Assam is comparable to the Vaishnavism of Assam. Vaishnavism of Assam fights against casteism in society and endeavours to provide equal status to all ranks of people. Sikhism in Assam is more relevant to the modern world because of its emphasis on 'sewā' i.e. 'self-less service.' 'Universalism' accompanied by Catholicity is another most important element of Sikhism in Assam. It is also mentioned earlier that as an example of universalism and catholicity, in the Assamese Sikh village, of different castes and religions live together as their kith and kins. Renunciation of the world is never considered to be ideal in Sikhism. Hence it proves to be more relevant to the modern people. J.S. Ahluwalia remarks, "Guru Nanak, purging mysticism of its otherworldly undertones, transformed it into a positive philosophy of life which no more remained the privilege or monopoly of the recluse, but came within the reach of a householder."¹¹ Diversity of the theological beliefs had deviated the people from the true path of reality. Against the polytheistics beliefs, Sikhism in Assam made a revolutionary effect on the minds of common people. Sikhism in Assam aimed at establishing a pluralistic society ensuring equally freedom of religious beliefs and practice.
for all individuals.

One of the most important tenets of modern civilization is reconstruction of society on equalitarian basis. Sikhism in Assam fulfills the aim of modern civilization by rejecting the concept of hierarchical fixity and restructuring society on equalitarian basis.

By bestowing distinctive sovereignty on the Holy Book of the Sikhs 'Guru Granth Sahib' and 'The Khalsa' (the Panth) in their operation of distinctive fields, Sikhism ensured a positive basis for secularism, which is the most important tenet of modern civilization.

Another most important contribution of Sikhism in Assam is that like many other religious faiths, Sikhism does not claim to be final revelation of God. Sikhism believes that God reveals Himself to man in accordance with man's urge and in terms of faculties of the human mind. This idea of Sikhism is more acceptable for common people than the final revelation of God.

Science and technology are neutral regarding the sentiments like love, compassion etc. Only religion can give us the ideals of non-violence, self-sacrifice, love, compassion etc. 'Only through the belief in One God and His compassion and mercy; one can find quietude of the mind and soul; the body gets meaning fully fulfilled, and one cares for the others as one's own being the children of the same God, the Father of us all.'

Reference:
