CHAPTER XI
THE CONCEPT OF RULER IN SIKHISM

We have no authentic information as to how the State first began. Through inferences and generalization regarding the dim past on the basis of the slender evidence at our disposal, we can deduce that State existed in some form or the other wherever human beings lived together in large numbers. Various theories regarding its origin have been propounded from time to time such as (1) The Divine Origin Theory, (2) The Social Contract Theory, (3) The Force Theory, (4) The Patriarchal Theory and (5) The Matriarchal Theory.

The oldest theory is the Divine Origin theory. According to it the State is established and governed by God Himself or through His special representatives. The chief exponents of this theory in early times were the
Jews. In the Old Testament there are many references supporting this fact. The Greeks and Romans regarded the State as only indirectly divine. This very theory later on made the rulers dictators. Man had to suffer much at their hands. However, all these theories are speculative in nature.

Almost the first type of State which emerged from primitive conditions was the Imperial State. The plateaus of Mexico and Peru produced the earliest form of the State. Then arose many more vast empires such as the Sumerian, the Assyrian, the Persian, the Egyptian, the Chinese etc. For the most part these were merely tax-collecting and recruit-raising agencies. As soon as the ruling dynasty became weak, the powerful rivals established the authority. No individual liberty or true political progress was possible.

The second important stage was reached in Greece in the form of city-states. The Sparta city-state alone remained conservative and maintained a steady tradition of unbroken continuity in its government. In the other city-states the normal political evolution was from monarchy to aristocracy, from aristocracy to
tyranny and from tyranny to democracy. It was in Greece where Plato, the great political philosopher took birth in 427 BC. He was the first to have prescribed some qualifications for the rulers of those city-states. He did not think everyone to be fit to rule. For Plato the individual mind is divided into three elements - Reason, Spirit and Appetite. The lowest is 'Appetite' and the highest is 'Reason'. Reason is the rational element with its main function 'to think and to know'. For him the ruler must be from this category of mind. Plato was the first person to dream of the Philosopher King. According to Plato the foremost task of such a king was to deliver justice. He must be above the selfish interests. He must have the capacity to think reasonably and take right decisions. For this he must be properly educated.

In ancient India also such qualifications and duties of the ruler existed in some form or the other. Several terms like Raja-dharma, Rajyasastra, Gomaditi, Mitigastra etc. indicate this. The terms like Raja-dharma used by Manu, 'Duties of the Kings' and Rajyasastra, 'Science of the State' require no
explanation. Monarchy was the normal form of government. The term *Dandaniti* is also self-explanatory. These terms have occurred in the epic, *Mahabharata*. Manu goes to the extent of declaring that it is *Danda* who is the real king, the real leader and the real protector.¹ The rules about the functions and duties of the king and welfare of the state were therefore naturally called *Dandaniti*. In *Arthasastra* of Kautilya it is written that the king must regard his own happiness as indissolubly connected with that of his subjects.² Just as an expectant mother sacrifices her own desires and pleasures, lest they should be harmful to the child to be born, the king must sacrifice his own conveniences, inclinations and pleasures in order to be of the maximum help and service to his people.³ The body of the king is not meant for enjoyment and pleasures; he has to put up with great troubles and worries while carrying out the royal duty of protecting the subject and fulfilling the dharma.⁴ Happiness, it was believed, depended upon virtue and piety, and these could prosper only if the king himself set a proper example and standard. Under a good king prosperity will prevail.⁵

From time to time in almost all the parts of the world various scholars and spiritual leaders put forward many valuable theories so that the State can become truly a welfare state. But very often the state power has been misused by the rulers. The rulers in the history have often forgot all such teachings of our great scholars and leaders.
While giving the ideas on Politics the Sikh Gurus had welfare state in their mind. They did not command any particular form of the state unlike other political philosophers. They were more concerned with the qualifications and duties of the ruler. They took ruler as a general term for the premier of a state. They were not concerned with the prevailing forms such as monarchy, aristocracy or democracy etc. At the most what the Sikh Gurus talked of is the Ideocracy which is called Hola Makarai by the fifth Guru. Keeping the Ideocracy in their mind the Gurus prescribed certain qualifications and duties of the rulers.

In Sikhism the main goal of the human being is to one with the Supreme Being. The fifth Guru says:

Thou hast obtained from God a human's body
Now alone is the time to Attain to thy Lord.

Each and every action of man should be such which should take him more and more nearer to this Goal. He should not do anything which may lead him astray. The principal means to achieve this Goal is Nam-Simran, and good actions. The Fifth Guru says in Sukhasan:

Of all religions, this one is the purest,
That one Meditates on the Lord's Name and does what
is Holy.

So the ruler, in Sikhism, should be one who creates such conditions for his subject as well as for himself so that this goal is achieved easily. Not only that he should not become an obstacle
in the path but also he should be helpful by creating a good and peaceful atmosphere in his kingdom so that his subjects find it easier to achieve their goal.

Only such a person who has become one with God, who has conquered all weaknesses can be able to lead his subjects to the Goal. Only such a person is fit to be the ruler and deserves the respect from the subjects because he automatically, will be the just ruler. Guru Nanak himself prescribes such qualifications:

- Only he should sit on the throne who is worthy of it
- And who has realised the Guru’s Word and Silenced the five desires.

Such a king gets full respect everywhere. Nanak again writes:

To such throne everyone pays his obeisance, night and day.

This is the true glory that one earns, by attuning to the Guru’s Word.

The third Guru also says:

- That king alone must sit on the throne, who is worthy of it,
- Yes, he, who Realises the (God’s) Truth, he(alone) is the worthy king.

In Adi Granth 'Janak' has been used as a simile to an ideal ruler. 'Janak' means Jnani, one who has the true
knowledge, as Bhatt Kal has explained in Adi Granth:

He alone is Janaka, who hitches the chariot (of his mind) to the state of Ever blessedness,
And gathers he Contentant, and fills the empty Vessel (of the heart).

Unutterable is the Story of the 'Eternal Abode'
and he alone is Blessed with it whom God Blesses.

Blessed Guru Nanak Das such a kingship, like Janaka's,
becomes only thee. 11

According to Sahibkosh (the Sikh encyclopedia) written by Kahan Singh Sahib, Janak was the king of Mithila. He was son of 'Mith', who in turn was son of 'Nim'. From this Janak, this name has been given to the descendant genealogy. The name of father-in-law of Lord Rama was Sirdhuaj who was the twentieth descendant of Raja Janak. According to Valmik 12 Raja Janak was a great king. Raja Sirdhuaj, the twenty-first Janak, was a great saint-king. It is this Janak referred to in the Adi Granth. The fourth Guru says about Janak:

Janaka too was attuned to the Lord’s Name, Blessed by the Guru. 13

Both these dualities of Janak are a rare combination. It is because of these two dualities (of being saint and king) he is used as a model for an ideal king. Bhatt Kal Sahar writes in the Adi Granth while addressing to the Fourth Guru:

Through Thee, the benign rule of Janaka has again come to the world the age of truth has dawned. 14
The fourth Guru writes about Janak:

And Janaka, seated on his kingly throne, anointed his forehead with the Dust of the Fast of nine years.\(^{15}\)

Keeping this idea of an ideal ruler in mind, some qualifications and duties of the ruler can be deduced from Gurbani. The foremost quality of a ruler is that he/she should be a realised soul. Guru Nanak writes about it:

Only he should sit on the throne who is worthy of it. And who has realised the Guru’s word and silenced the five desires.\(^{8}\)

Further:

They should sit on the throne who contemplate the Guru’s word;

And find the Essence of God, O, such is the True Glory of those who are associated with the Name of God.\(^{16}\)

The third Guru writes:

That king alone must sit on the throne, who is worthy of it. Yea, he, who Realises the (God’s) Truth, he(alone) is the worthy king.\(^{10}\)

According to the Sikh Gurus, only such a person who has realised the Truth is qualified to be a ruler. He must have conquered the five evils lust, anger, greed, attachment and ego. Only such a ruler can become selfless. Only a realised soul can truly understand the meaning of 'fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man'. For this he has to renounce worldly passions.

"The king should first subdue himself, and then seek to subdue his foes. How should a king, who has not been able to conquer himself should conquer his foes? The conquest of these, viz.,
the aggregate of five is regarded as the conquest of self. The king who has succeeded in subduing his senses is competent to resist his foe. Only the person who has realised the Soul can be truly just.

The third Guru says:

Who himself is true, his Throne is True, delivered
the True Justice.

In Sikhism, great stress is laid on Raj-yoga. Only a true Yogi can become a true ruler. Here Yogi means the person who has realised God through Nam Simran and good actions. In the Adi Granth the poet (Bhatt) Kal Sahar describes the three personalities Lord Bawan, Lord Rama and Lord Krishna as Raj-Yogis. After that he gives this title to Guru Nanak. To quote him:

In the Satyuga too, you enjoyed the state of Rajyoga,
when you deceived Bali, becoming a dwarf, whose form pleased you.

And in the Trata age too, when you were called Rama
of the Raghu clan,

And in the Dwapar age too as Krishna you
Emancipated Kanasa,

And blest Ugrasena with a kingdom and thy Devotees
with the state of fearlessness,

In the Kali age you are called Nanak, and Angad and
Aardas.

Yea, eternal and unmoveless is thy rule, 0 Guru, for
such was the command of the Prineval Lord.

For the fourth Guru he wrote that the third Guru has passed the
throne of *Raj-Yoga* to Guru Ramdas. To quote him:

_Throne of Raj-Yoga, he passed on to Guru Ramdas._

So both the terms *Raj-Yoga* and *Janak-Raj* are synonymous in the *Adi Granth*. And these are explained also in the same meaning by poet Kal Sahar on page 1389 in the *Adi Granth*. Both the terms indicate that the ruler must have attained union with God. The person who has not conquered the weaknesses of common man is not at all fit to sit on the throne. The person who has conquered his weaknesses can never be defeated in any sphere. The ruler should consider himself as a servant to the Master and not master himself. He should take it for granted that he has to answer for his weaknesses to his Master. Guru Nanak writes:

> From his mind he forsakes covetousness, avarice and evil
> In his fortress he proclaims the victory of his Monarch
> and returns not vanquished ever.

He who calls himself the Lord's servant and replies to Him in defiance,

He loses his wages and he is not seated on the throne.

The ruler must be full of virtues. He should transcend greed, illusion and sin. He should practise chastity, charity and self-control. He must be manned by Truth. He should always be contended. Guru Nanak indicates all these qualities when he takes his body as fortress and mind as a king. He says:

_In the strong fortress of the body with beauteous doors, abides the mind king with his special assistants._

Whosoever is engrossed in falsehood and avarice, he
obtains not an abode in the Lord-Home.

Through greed and sin one regrets,
If the mortal seeks the Lord's protection, then in this body village of king come and abide the power-
ful truth, contentment, chastity, charity and self-control.

Nanak, through the Guru's word one easily meets with Lord, the Life of the world and honour.

At one place Saint Kabir hints at some other qualities which the ruler should possess while fighting the battle with the evil. He has put duality and the three qualities of Maya (illusion), love and want, worldly love, evil understanding, covetousness in the category of evil forces and the Divine love, Naa Simran (meditation), poise, truth, contentment, company of saints and grace of Lord as the forces of Godliness or Truth. Kabir has asked his king (mind) to use the forces of Godliness against the forces of evil and he will surely be victorious.

The ruler should follow the path of Truth and Compassion. This was said by Namdev when he was tortured by the ruler of his time and when the latter came to know about his saintliness, begged for his pardon. To quote Namdev:

And the test there of is, That hereafter, you (king) will tread the path of Truth and Compassion.

Kabir asks the ruler to inculcate wisdom or Jnan and detachment
or Vairag and he should stop his outgoing mind through meditation. He can inculcate such virtues only through Nam-Simran. Only such a person deserves to be a ruler. To quote Kauri:

He alone is a Sultan, the king, who aims with the two arrows (of wisdom and Detachment),
And stops the out-goings of his mind,
And gathers the hosts (of virtue) abiding in the (mind's) Sky, yea, the Tenth Door,
0, that Sultan alone is canopied (by God). 25

The ruler must consider himself as the servant to his subjects because God dwells in the subjects as well as in the ruler. Doing all his duties he must not forget the love of the Lord. While enjoying the facilities, which he gets due to his status, it is tendency of the man to forget His Name. In such a case all these enjoyments will take him to serpent's birth. He will have to pay for his indulgence, as the first Guru says:

Dominion over other, vast estates, and overlordship and enjoyments of myriad kinds,
And beautiful gardens and the proud command that runs,
And indulgence in various kinds of colourful shows;
(all these are vain).
For, if one remembers not the Lord in the heart, one gets the life of a serpent. 26

He must not at all indulge in enjoying the riches which he gets,
It is of no use to amass riches and live in luxury. If by the use of force one becomes the ruler and issues decrees and while indulging in all these he forgets His Name, all these things and riches are worthless. He must be careful that while enjoying all these gifts of God he does not forget the Name of the Lord. Guru Nanak elaborates this in the very first hymn of Siri Raag in the Adi Granth. He says:

If my palace were raised of jewels and inlaid with rubies,
And pleasantly plastered with musk and saffron, and sandal paste,
Would then I lose myself and forget the Lord's Name?

Even if I wore a crown, a gatherer of armies, and my seat were on a throne,
And I commanded people about and about,
And that would be vain,
If I forget thee, O my Loved Lord!

DUTIES OF A RULER:

(1) JUSTICE

According to Sikhism every one has to realize God sooner or later. One can only realize Him by adopting His qualities. As He is just God so the man has also to become just, especially the man who is ruling over others. He has to become as just as God, only then he can find place nearer Him. So dispensing justice becomes the foremost duty of a ruler. If a ruler wants
to purify himself he can't do so with water. For a ruler it is
justice which makes him pure as Guru Nanak says:

For the monarch through justice and for the learned by
dwelling on Truth (that the mind is cleansed). 28

The ruler should not become a thorn in the eyes of his subjects.
His Ram-Simran also is acceptable only when he delivers justice
to the subjects. Like this he can become a true ruler. The
third Guru says:

Enjoy thou a griefless kingdom by practising
Truth, through the Guru's grace,
While sitting on the throne of Truth administer
justice and this will unite thou with the True
One. 29

Such a ruler who delivers full justice to his people need not
depend upon others for help. He become self-dependent. The
fifth Guru says:

In whose court justice is ever administered
He is self-dependent and last on none. 30

Only the government of such a just ruler is stable and he is
respected everywhere and lives in history. Says Guru Nanak:
The sovereignty of the truthful king is known in
many ages to come,
Only he, whoever, obeys such law becomes a noble
in his court. 31
But if any ruler becomes corrupt in delivering justice to his subjects, he loses his right to be a ruler. Guru Nanak even goes to the extent to say that if the subjects obey the orders of such corrupt ruler, who has failed to deliver justice or who takes bribe for delivering justice, it is the fault more of the subjects than that of the ruler. It is just like the habit of a dog who obeys the just or unjust orders of his master only for a piece of bread. The Guru says:

If the King administers justice only when his palm is greased,

Only in the name of God, none obeys,

Nanak says such men are men only in shape and name,
In dence they are dogs, waiting for command of his (ruler's) nose.32

Guru Nanak vehemently condemned corruption in the judicial system of his time. He equally condemned the corruption in this department in the name of God or scriptures, which was in practice in those days. The priests of Islam (Kazi) used to get bribe and do injustice. If any person objected they used to quote the verses from the holy scriptures and interpreted those to suit their own interests. Guru Nanak writes:

Becoming a judge the Kazi sits to administer justice,
He tells the rosary and mutters God's Name;
Taking bribe, he does injustice.
If someone asks him, then he quotes and reads out some aphorism.33
So it is the duty of the ruler to ensure that there is no corruption in his department of judiciary. He himself should rise above such corrupt practices and deliver justice to his people.

It is also his duty to punish the guilty persons. The persons who are going astray must be checked. Even God also punishes the "Manmukh" - the persons who go astray. The fourth Guru says:

He Himself Adjudicates and Drives off the false.
He Grants Honour to the Truthful; True, True is His justice.

In the western school of thought Thomas Hill Green is also of the view to punish the offenders. "In order to maintain conditions and remove obstacles, the state must positively interfere.... It must use force to repel a force which is opposed to freedom. The criminal's will which is anti-social, constitutes a force opposed to freedom. Punishment in order to be effectually preventative must be a reformation of the will, or rather a shock which makes possible the criminal's reformation of his own will."

Plato first of all talked of justice in the state. For him, "Society is to be concerned as a system of services in which every member both gives and receives. Justice is the bond which holds a society together, a harmonious union of individuals, each of whom has found his life-work in accordance
In Mahabharata Bhisma told Yudhisthira about the latter's duty to deliver justice to his subjects, while telling him his overall duties. He said, "If the king fails to administer justice, he can neither have heaven nor fame." "A king should, without doubt, look upon his subjects as his own children. In determining their disputes, however, he should not show compassion. For hearing the complaints and answers of disputants in judicial suits he should always appoint persons possessed of wisdom and knowledge of the affairs of the world, for the state really rests upon a proper administration of justice." 37

In the Vedic literature justice is one of the fundamental aims of the state. "The king or the head of the state was to be like god Varuna, the upholder of the law and order (dhrityavrata); he was to punish the wicked and help the virtuous. Religion was to be promoted, morality was to be encouraged and education was to be patronised." 38

"Unhappiness, misery and pestilence among the subjects were attributed to failure in duty on the part of the king. 'When kings are unjust' says one writer, 'even sugar and salt lose their flavour.' 39 The popular notion on this subject is well illustrated by the Jatakas. The ox of a ploughman is struck accidentally by his plough-share; for this the king is to blame;
a milkman is killed by a vicious cow, the blame is assigned to the same quarter; even a frog does not spare the king when it is bitten by hungry crows. Happiness, it was believed, depended upon virtue and piety, and these could prosper only if the king set a proper example and standard.  

(2) DUTY TO PROTECT THE SUBJECTS:  

In the Mahabharta Bhishma is said to have told King Yudhishthira, "Regarding those that are desirous of kingdom, there is no other eternal duty more obligatory than the protection of subjects. The protection the king grants to his subjects uphold the world. "Manu the son of Prachetas sang these two verses respecting the duties of king. Listen to them with attention. 'These six persons should be avoided like a leaky boat on the sea, viz., a preceptor that does not speak, a priest that has not studied the scriptures, a king that does not grant protection, a wife that utters untruth in disagreeable, a cow-herd that likes to rove the village and a barber that is desirous of going to the wood'. Protection of the subjects, O Yudhishthira, is the very choise of kingly duties. A divine Kavi Usan of austere penances, the thousand eyed Indra, the Manu, the son of Prachetas, the divine Bharadunja and the sage Gaurasivas, all devoted to Brahmanand, have composed Treatises on the duties of kings. All of them praise the duty to protection in respect of kings."  

Vijnavalkya Smriti supports the above view.
regards the taxation as the king's pay for the protection of his people. No one ever makes a payment, says Aparars, without expecting a return; the taxes therefore, are paid only as a return for the protection expected from the king.  

In the western school of thought Bertrand Russell suggests the idea of a modified state. The state, according to him, should perform the essential functions of preserving internal law and order and affording protection against foreign aggression and some other minor functions such as education, sanitation, public hygiene, and prevention of infectious disease.

In Sikhism also it is the holy duty of the ruler to protect his subjects. It is his duty to keep the opposite elements together without harming each other. The fifth Guru illustrates with the examples of water and earth, fire and wood which are kept together and due to the Ruler's control these do not harm each other. To quote him:

He has stringed the whole world with breath and has kept the fire along with the wood.

He has kept the water and the earth together and no one bears enmity with (or harms) each other.

Similarly the fourth Guru illustrates:

(In His kingdom) The earth and water abide in one place and the fire is locked in wood.
The sheep and the lion, the Lord has kept in one place.
O man contemplate thou on God and shake thy doubt and dread.46

Guru Nanak says that under His rule no enemy or suffering can ever harm us. To quote him:

Thy Rule is eternal it goes never
Yea, ever-lasting is Thy Rule it stays for ever.

No adversary, no pain, can touch him, nor sin him contaminates.47

As the servant of the Master has not to be afraid of anyone, similarly the subjects should not be afraid of any one. It is the ruler who has to ensure the security of his subjects. The fifth Guru says:

To whom can Thy servant now pay obeisance
When Thou, the king, Preservest his Honour.48

In an ideal state described by the fifth Guru, none can harm others because of the protection provided to everyone by the ruler. Everyone lives in perfect peace and enjoys life. All over there is courtesy, modesty and humbleness. He says:

The Merciful Master has now given the command,
No one now domineer and annoys another.
All abide in peace and this now has become a benign regime.49
The tenth Guru says that if the ruler protects his subjects then the latter need not worry about their protection, just as if anyone gets the shelter of a lion, one does not then need to be afraid of goats etc. Guru Gobind Singh writes in the Zafarnama, the epistle of victory, addressed to Aurangzeb:

And when the lion brave and hold
Both shelter one from the nasty foe,
The timid goat, buffalo, deer sleep
can never near his sojourn dare go.

(3) DUTY TO PROTECT HIS SUBJECTS FROM EXPLOITATION.

It is a common tendency among men to exploit others at any opportune time. It is the rich who always exploit the poor. It is the duty of the ruler to protect his people from such exploitation. Guru Nanak called the rulers of his times, who exploited their subjects, as blood sucking kings and ferocious tigers who lick up the blood of the poor subjects and his courtiers dogs. When they will be called for settlement of their accounts, such rulers will be dishonoured for it. In a very scathing attack he writes:

The kings are like whores, the courtiers like dogs;
For they awaken those that sleep in God's peace.
The king's servants tear (the docile subjects) with their nails,
And, like curs, lick up all the blood that they spill.
But, hark, where men are to be judged (at the Lord's Court)
Their noses will be chopped off, for, God will trust
them not.51

Amassing wealth by exploiting the subjects is bitterly
condemned by the fifth Guru also. He says that such wealth
will be given away by God to someone else one day. Such
wealth takes the man astray. To quote him:

Becoming a king, one has dominion over all,
And through oppression, one gathers riches
Gathers he the bagful, bit by bit,
But God, (in His Justice) snatches it away and gives
it to another.52.

Sikhism condemns the exploitation of the subjects through
heavy taxation. Kabir condemns such rulers who realise more
tax than is due. He says that at least he will not pay such
undue tax. He says that the officials who come to collect
the tax, measure the land unlawfully and try to extract even
more. But when he reports the matter to the higher authorities
and checks his accounts then there stands nothing due. So
he condemns the realisation as well as payment of undue taxes.
To quote him:

In the fortress, the five are like the king's officials,
who make ever a fresh demand for Revenue.
But I am the Tenant of no one, then why am I asked to pay?
O Saints, the Tax-gatherers torture me each day;
And so I raise my hands to God and lo, He saves me.
The nine Assessors and the ten Judges leave no one in peace;
For they measure not the farms honestly, and want their palms to be greased.

It behoves the ruler not to appoint such officials who realise the amount of tax which is not due to the concerned person. Ravidas indicates about the ideal State in his verses. In such a State, he says, there is no pain or worry because there is no such tax, there is no awe, none commits error etc. He writes:

'Griefless' is the name of my state
where abide not either pain or care
No anguish there of tax on goods,
Neither fear, nor error, nor dread, nor decline.

Guru Nanak says that if any clothe is defiled with blood
then how a person who sucks the blood of the poor through exploitation can be without stain? He cannot be truthful. To quote him:

If blood sticks to the clothes, the clothes become impure;
Will the minds of those be pure who suck the blood of human beings?

It is the duty of the ruler to see whether one's due is being paid to the same person or anyone else who has not put any labour is taking away the prize, which often happens. The
person who labours with all his sweat and blood is not given the price and the 'owner' takes away all the price without putting any kind of effort. It is just like that a poor peasant who sows the seeds, puts his labour for the crop to come up, guards it for the whole time but it is reaped by the owner of the land and that poor fellow cannot do anything except to helplessly watch. The fifth Guru puts it like this:

As is the watchman over the farm of another,
And the farm remains with the master, while the watchman passes away.
The watchman suffers hard to protect the farm,
But for this, he goes away (in the end) with empty hands.

"The notion of the kingship as a trust was there in ancient India. The king was particularly enjoined to note that the treasury was not his private or personal property. "In the Dhaḥārāma it is written, "If a king misappropriates public funds and diverts them to his personal use, he will be guilty of sin and be condemned to hell,"57

(4) **TO FULFIL THE BASIC NEEDS OF THE SUBJECTS:**

It is the duty of the ruler to fulfil the basic needs such as livelihood, of his people. Just as the King God first of all manages the livelihood and then he creates the creature, similarly the ruler should take the duty to provide his subjects the things of basic necessity as his foremost task. Only such a ruler can expect any respect from the public. The fifth Guru says:
In every home kings the praise of this King, in every
home are men Zealous of Him.
He First Provides Succour and thereafter Createth He
the creatures. 58

The subjects of such a ruler are always satisfied because they
are fed to the full and they always enjoy life. The people
need not to worry about their livelihood and other basic needs.
They are always happy and delightful because of such amenities.
The fifth Guru addresses to the King of Kings:
Content is he and ever at Peace
of whom Thou art the King and Master. 59

According to Guru Nanak only such a person is fit to be
a king or ruler who takes proper care of his subjects. It is
his duty to ensure that each and every person in his dominion
gets the things of bare necessity of day-to-day. Only such a
government can rule successfully and is a true government. To
quote Guru Nanak:
Only His is the true government who nourishes
the people day and night. 60

Only such a ruler is free from any stain or stigma in whose
dominion everyone is happy and gay and has no scarcity of any
thing of the basic necessity. Guru Nanak commands such a ruler:
0 king Thou art free from flaw
for your people are blissful. 61
In Vedic India also "the State was to secure not only moral but also material well-being of its citizens. The kingdom of king Parikshit, idealized in the Atharvaveda (xx.127), flowed with milk and honey. All round welfare of the public was clearly regarded as the chief aim of the state during the Vedic and Upanisadic ages, i.e., down to c.600 B.C."  

In the Mahabharata king Bhima taught Yudhishthira that the ruler must feed his subjects. He should ensure that none has slept hungry any day. To quote him, "He should feed those that have not been fed and enquire after those that have been fed."  

(5) TO UPHOLD FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS OF THE CITIZENS:  

It is the moral duty of the ruler to guarantee his subjects personal liberty and other fundamental rights. He is to protect the honour of his people because death is better than a life of dishonour. The first liberty should be that of conscience. It was for this freedom that the ninth Guru, Teg Bahadur, laid down his life in 1675. Aurangzeb, the then ruler, did not provide his subjects with this freedom. He was trying to impose his own religion, culture and thoughts upon his subjects.  

Guru Nanak in his time vociferously condemned not only such rulers who were trying to impose their culture and faith on their subjects but also condemned such people who adopted the culture and faith of the ruling class under pressure. He condemned the wearing of blue (Islamic) clothes by the Hindus.
who had also started reading Islamic scriptures. In Asa ki Var he writes:

Who (Hindu) Decked Himself in (the Muslim) blue and assumed the attributes of a Turk and a Pathan. They seek approval of the Muslim rulers by wearing blue.

Within, they worship (their idol); (outside) they read Quran and observe the acts of the Turks.

Shed Thy Deceit and Hypocrisy, O Brahmin.  

He even condemned the adoption of the language of the other people under pressure. When the Hindus adopted the Islamic language in the place of Sanskrit and Devanagari, he criticized the Hindus for this.

In every house all the persons say 'Mian' (Islamic language),

Your language has become different, O men (Hindus).

He bitterly criticized such kings who imposed their faith and culture on the subjects. He attacked their policy of repression of others' faith when the Muslim rulers levied tax on the Hindu temples and their religious rites and practices, even though the Guru himself did not believe in those beliefs, rites and practices. What he wanted to speak against was the forcible suppression of the feelings of anyone. While condemning such tax he says:

Ahl Tax is levied on the temples of gods,

Such a practice has come into vogue.
In the eastern school of thought legal, "regards freedom as the very essence of man. It is his distinctive quality. To renounce freedom is to renounce man's humanity. His ideal state is "the state that is the highest and most perfect embodiment of social morality."68

While discussing the rights Herbert Spencer condemned the barbarous governments which interfere with the operation of the law of the energy of faculty. First, the government can efface itself for the sake of the law of equal freedom by admitting the rights of the citizens "to ignore the state". Function of the state is protection-administration of the law of equal freedom-maintenance of natural rights.69

John Locke was a great defender of natural rights. For him the state was constituted for the protection of natural rights. The state is a contract entered into by Locke's natural man. "They join together in civil society to protect their property more adequately-life, liberty and (unequal) estates."70

Harold J.Laski, the great English Political thinker of early 20th century wrote in his book 'A grammar of Politics', "A state is known by the rights that it maintains. The state briefly does not create but recognizes rights. Rights are those conditions of social life without which no man can seek in general to be himself at his best."71 For him without rights there can't be any liberty. He does not want to reduce the
individual to the position of a sheer member of a herd. He describes three aspects of liberty. "Firstly, there is the private liberty—the opportunity to exercise freedom of choice in those areas of life where the results of any effort mainly affects him in that isolation by which, at least ultimately, he is always surrounded". Example of this liberty is religion. For him, private liberty will go to stray dogs if law fails to protect an individual in the matters of access to public places on grounds of religion, caste, creed or sex or if there is discrimination in the matters of employment. Second is political liberty and the third one is economic liberty which means that the citizens should be free from the constant fear of employment and insufficiency.  

For Bertrand Russell "freedom is the supreme good for their realisation. Freedom of thought and speech would go like cleansing draught through the neuroses and superstitions of the 'modern' mind."  

(6) PROPER DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH:

It is the duty of the ruler to work for the elimination of the improper difference between 'have' and 'have-not'. Especially when in the modern times there is a wide gap between the two, it is the duty of the ruler to lessen this gap and bring both closer to each other. Communists call it equal distribution of wealth and that is what gave birth to communism. According to Communist philosophy modes of production should not be in the hands of capitalist class but
in the hands of working class. With this the equal distribution of wealth is possible. F.W. Coker writes about the ideas of Karl Marx in his book 'Recent Political Thought (New York), "the doctrine that wage-workers in fields, factories, and mines are the real producers of wealth, most of which is unjustly taken away from them by employers, traders, and other non-producers; and they proposed collectivist schemes—a state monopoly of the services of marketing and banking, a currency system based on time unit of labour, voluntary co-operative societies—in order either to ensure an exchange of goods on the basis of the quantities of labour employed in producing them or to secure generally an equitable distribution of wealth among those who create it." C.L. Wayper writes: "The class which exercises ownership of the means of production will dominate the rest when, for instance, the most important factor in the forces of production is agricultural, land owners will be the ruling class. The dominant class alone has freedom, and to preserve this must act the part of oppressors. They, therefore, create an executive and repressive instruments by the use of which they hope to maintain their position and which is called state." Egalitarian concept in Sikh society is so well organised that this has become a part of their daily prayer, "Rat Kareo Aakl Khalsa Aaki Reha Na Kaya..." Generally, the term Aaki is misinterpreted. It is often used for the rebellious. Actually
both Aaka and Aaki are Arabic words. The word Aaka is quite commonly used for Malak or owner and Aaki means Malkiat or the ownership. So the correct meaning of this couplet should be 'the Pure shall rule and none other (who is not Pure) will have the ownership'. It is like the nationalisation of the property. The persons who are not pure at heart and mind, have tendency to hoard things to exploit others. Such persons should not get chance to accumulate the wealth. Only persons who are pure at heart and mind will never exploit anyone nor accumulate the wealth. They will always seek the welfare of all. Only such persons are fit to rule and such ruler should have the ownership so that the hoarding and exploitation can be put to an end. Almost every devout Sikh recite this couplet twice a day as a part of his daily prayers. Thus a Sikh prays for proper distribution of wealth.

There can't be proper distribution of wealth where the rulers are greedy and lustful. Guru Nanak condemns such rulers who do not maintain proper circulation of wealth and hoard it themselves. To quote Guru Nanak:

Gathers the world's riches, thou the egoistic king!

The fifth Guru says that such wealth which is always collected through untruthful means, never helps. He condemns the accumulation of wealth by rulers:

Becoming a king, one has dominion over all.
And through oppression, one gathers riches.
Gathers he the bagful, bit by bit,
But God, (in His Justice) snatches it away and
gives it to others.52

Kabir also criticises such rulers who accumulate wealth:
The kings wasted their lives gathering riches and
burying their treasures under the earth.
O my soul such a world is a blind deep pit on all
sides the death's net is thrown.78

If the ruler himself tries to accumulate wealth, its proper
distribution cannot be possible at all. So for this the ruler
should first of all be contented. The fifth Guru writes
that the kingdom of a discontented ruler is of no use.79
Therefore, it is essential that the ruler himself be contented,
only then he can arrange for proper distribution of wealth
amongst his subjects. The fifth Guru advises the people to
boycott such a ruler who runs after wealth. To quote him:
I will abandon the wealth accumulating king.80

Ravidas calls a state an ideal one where there is proper
distribution of wealth, where there are no 'have-nots'. All
the necessities of life are available to everyone in sufficient
quantity; where all are rich and none poor; all live satisfied.
He writes:

Populated and ever famous is that city,
The wealthy and the content dwell there.81
In such a state, he says, there is no agony, no grief, no sorrow. He calls such a state as Begumpura or the 'griefless' state:

'Griefless' is the name of my town,
where abide not either pain or care. 82

(7) TO KEEP THE SUBJECTS UNITED:

The ruler has to keep his subjects united so that they can face the enemy from within as well as from without. There can be difference of opinion but that must be taken in a healthy way. There may be living people from various races, religions, castes and cultures etc., but the ruler must behave with all as a common father, just as God treats all of us as His children. As God keeps even the opposite elements in the nature united, for example, earth and water, wood and fire etc., he keeps close to each other without harming each other. The fourth Guru says:

The earth and water abide in one place and the fire is locked in wood.

Similarly the ruler must keep the people from different belongings united just like the different pearls of a necklace.

The fifth Guru says:

He has stringed the whole world with breath and has kept the fire along with the wood.

He has kept the water and the earth together and no one bears enmity with (or harms) each other. 45
This will create unity in diversity. The ruler should not have in his mind even an idea to act partially.

In the Mahabharata, Bhima asked Yudhisthira, "The king should always bear himself towards his subjects as a mother towards the children of her womb."83

In addition to all these duties the tenth Guru lays much stress on the unity of thought, word and deed. For him the person who does not have this unity in practice is not at all fit to be a ruler. In the Zafarnama, Guru Gobind Singh reminds Aurangzeb of his promise not to harm the former while evacuating the Anandpur fort. Further the Guru condemns Aurangzeb for not keeping his word and contrary to the assurances subjecting the Guru, his family and army to untold sufferings. The Guru tells the king that one, especially the ruler, must not go back from his promises. Otherwise the ruler is becoming unjust. To quote him:

O mortal man thyself thou do adorn
with the bliss of being utter true.
Stick to the position once taken up
Within and without the same be you.84

The Guru condemned his injustice of not keeping his promises:

O Aurangzeb proud lord of the world
Who adorest a monarch's high throne
Strange is the justice thou dispenses
And the royal qualities by thee shown.85
Virtually the whole of the Zafarnama is full of such couplets written against this policy of the ruler of his time. Even the fifth Guru says, in general, that the man must keep the unity of thought, word and deed. To quote him:

He pledges his word but keeps it not, and all the speaks is false

Yea, False is he from within, with Illusion involved. 86

In the Zafarnama the Guru also writes about some more qualities required of a ruler. For him, he must possess wisdom and wit to settle the matters on time and to such a ruler the Guru pays his respect. 87 The ruler must conquer the enemies of the kingdom. He must protect the poor. The Guru gives the example of some ancient Chinese ruler who had these qualities. 88

RIGHTS OF THE RULER:

From the preceding analysis about the duties of a ruler it should not be deduced as if a ruler has only obligations and is not entitled to any special privileges.

The foremost right of a ruler is that he must have sovereignty. He must be treated as the supreme power of the state. He must have the right to order and get the things done. Otherwise he will not be able to function effectively. He must be able to exercise supreme jurisdiction. While telling about the need of inner life for a saint the fifth Guru says that a king without the above powers is just like a warrior without weapons.
As a Brahmin without a saffron-mark
As a Kingship without command
As a warrior without weapons
So is a Saint without an Inner life.

The subjects must treat a righteous ruler, as their sovereign king. Only then they can get happiness or bliss. A righteous ruler is entitled to respect from his subjects. If the subjects pay full respect to such a ruler who looks after them well then they have not to worry at all in any matter. They will have full access to him. He will be able to listen to them carefully. Guru Nanak says:

They looked upon him as a king
and were stopped not at the door of his castle.

Without right to get respect what will be the status of the ruler? He must get some status which he deserves. Guru Nanak gives the example of a cow which does not yield milk. What is the use of such a cow? How can the vegetation survive without water? Birds can’t survive without wings. Similarly no ruler or king can survive or perform his duties effectively without having some status and respect or right. To quote him:

Without milk a cow, without wings a bird, without water the vegetation of what avail are they?

As without obedience a king, so without the Lord’s Name, the mind is but a blind spot.
The fifth Guru says that the ruler must have sovereignty. Only a person having this right can be the ruler. He takes canopy as the symbol of sovereignty.

He is the monarch who has the royal umbrella over His head.92

Another right Guru Nanak concedes to an ideal ruler is that he can levy tax for the earnings of the state. The ruler must have the right to levy the rightful taxes. It becomes the duty of the subject to pay such rightful taxes so as to maintain the state. He says as the gold-smith solders the gold with the help of heat, one is soldered with the world through son, soldered with the body by taking meals and the love is soldered with sweet words, similarly the subjects are soldered with the ruler by the payment of such taxes.93

These are some of the privileges which a righteous ruler must get. But with getting these rights he must remember his duties. Only such a ruler is acceptable who, getting these rights performs his duties well and actually earns these rights.
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4. राजः सारीरकः न मौली मार्गेः । सेनाः प्रत्येके पृथवीस्वरुपः ॥
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5. वैं व मस्तकश्रवणं हुसे : वसेन्ते तो देव आं नैगाहां ॥

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   the fifth Guru, Adi Granth, p. 12.

7. Gopal Singh op.cit., p. 257
   भक्ति नेवन नाति वै वै वै वै वै ॥
   The Fifth Guru, Adi Granth, p. 266.

8. तर्किन हृदय रहित ते स्नाते ॥ दैव भाष्यं कुक्षते तर्किन ॥
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63.

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Mahatma Partab Singh, op.cit. p.1900.


60. Gopal Singh, op.cit., p.400.


63. J.N. Bose, op.cit., p.162.


64.


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72. Ibid., pp.348-9.

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This couplet 'Raj Karaga Khelee Aci Rehe Na Koyo......'
is often said to have been written by Guru Gobind Singh.

But surprisingly I found in the library of Sant Hamam Singh
'Kile Uale', a traditional saint in Punjab, that it was
written in some quite an old edition of Puratan Janam
Sakhi. I found it written in Bhupetnama (an account of
Guru Gobind Singh) also. It is found in Rahitnama of Prahlad
Singh also. I wanted to get photostat copies of these
but he did not allow to take the books along for this
purpose even.


87. ...

88. ...

89. Copal Singh, op.cit., p.1294.

90. ...


92. ...

93. ...
