Chapter-VIII

*MIRI-PIRI AND AKAL TAKHT*

The genesis of *Miri-Piri* goes back to the basic concepts evolved by the First Master, the founder of the faith, whose revelatory experience brought glad tidings to the suffering mankind. The Sikh world-view, based on the spiritual experience of Guru Nanak, encompasses the entire human activity - both sacred and profane. As opposed to the evolutionary system of Indian belief, Sikhism hails this world not as *mithasa, maya* or illusion, but a creation of the Almighty and therefore, real, wondrous and sublime. In fact, the *Mool Mantra* defines God as the Creator and His creation, therefore, is not only real but deserve loving care: “True is He; True is His creation”; “True are Thy continents and True Thy universes. True are Thy worlds and the forms created by Thee”. Moreover, Guru Nanak’s intimations of the divine are of a benevolent and loving God. The Master says: “He is all love and the rest He is ineffable”. He is mightily pleased to contemplate His creation says Guru Nanak in *Japuji*. He is the Master, the Emperor Who
directs the world with His Will. It is His Hukam that prevails and nothing stirs without His will and nothing walks with aimless feet. This clearly indicates that the world we live in is indeed wonderful, for it is the manifestation of the will of the wondrous Lord. Guru says: “This poison-laden world that you behold is the Divine image – In it is beheld the Lord’s image”. The universe is not a mere conglomeration of atoms, nor has this world any fortuitous origin. It has a meaning and a purpose. The human birth is a rare boon, a gift of the Lord, to learn to love Him and live in accordance with the Divine Will.

Sikhism is an original, distinctive and revealed religion with its own scripture, doctrine and institutions. Like Judaism and Islam, it is a whole-life religion and is different from the dichotomous Indian religions. It makes no invidious distinction between man and man, for all are moulded of the same clay and the same spirit throbs in every human heart. The purpose of existence is to recognize this divine life. Says the Master: “Man toon jot sarup hain, apna mool pachhan”.

In the Sikh metaphysic, God is both transcendent and immanent. This seemingly logical contradiction resolves into a harmonious whole when the god-oriented Sikh attains to the status of sachiar, the truthful
person. It happens only through Lord’s nadir through the Guru, the enlightened preceptor. The wall of nescience crumbles and man is face to face with divine effulgence. Then as a truthful person he returns to the world to help others ferry across the ocean of samsaric existence. He becomes the jivan mukta who turns to nishkam sewa of others. Thus he does not merely seek after his spiritual emancipation but turns to the turmoils of existence to practise what he has experienced. To him the temporal and the spiritual are the two sides of the same coin.

The human body is as significant as the soul. Flesh and spirit are one entity. It is the disciplining of the body that stirs the soul from its somnambulance. Human body is not an unholy vessel of sin, but having emanated from a pure source remains pure in essence. So says the Master: “O’mind, thou has emanated from the light of the Lord; know thy essence⁴”. Again, says Guru Amar Das: “My body! the Lord in you placed His light; then did you into the world arrive⁵”. And, therefore, “Man ought to honour himself and deem himself worthy of the highest⁶”. Claims of the body are, therefore, not sacrificed at the altar of monasticism, quietism or asceticism. The Sikh way of life, therefore, enunciates the virtue of leading a householder’s life. This accounts for man’s involvement in the temporal obligations of life. Since all human actions – spiritual and temporal - are under the loving
The concept of Miri-Piri was indeed a radical departure from the prevailing Indian religions and played a revolutionary role in creating a community of soldier-saints who wielded the sword to oppose tyranny and the sword replaced the rosary which symbolizes retreat from the worldly affairs and stress on individual salvation. Concepts like moksha, mukti and nirvana are emblems of a quietistic approach towards life. Since God as the Emperor and Master of the world, guides both the Piri and Miri aspects of the universe, the Guru, His messenger on earth, is the master of Miri-Piri. He is to look after the spiritual and material welfare of his folks. The min piri concept is “fundamental to Sikhism” and has been a part of the Sikh tradition and “a product of the Guru’s response and reaction to contemporary political authority” and there is no doubt that “the Gurus operated in both the spheres, temporal and spiritual.”

Sikhism is a religion of total commitment and complete surrender to the Guru and his ideals. It involves every kind of sacrifice. The Guru’s call to his followers was: “If you want to play the game of love, come with your head on your palm.” His dynamic ideology became evident from his rejection of contemporary Indian values and concepts.
He directed his tirade against the religious hypocrisy and spiritual cant of the priestly class which caught the ordinary mind in the trammels of superstitious beliefs, empty ritualism and futile ceremonialism. The common man suffered dual slavery: slavery to superstition and servility to the ruthless Muslim rulers. As a strict monotheist, Guru Nanak rejected belief in the gods and the goddesses, incarnation of God in the human form, the ideal of renunciation and monasticism and asserted his fearless, whole-life doctrine.

II

Sikhism is a way of life sharper than the razor’s edge and demands unflinching allegiance from neophytes. This is quite evident from the message the Fifth Guru gave to Bhai Manjh when he asked him if he should follow *Sakhi Sarvar* or be a Sikh of the Guru. The Guru replied that he better continue to follow *Sakhi Sarvar*, because as a Sikh his wealth and life would be at stake. Guru Nanak was not a mere reformer and cannot be regarded as a *bhakta* of the *Sant* tradition as MacLeod accepts it. The *bhaktas* were the votaries of *ahimsa*, renunciation, celibacy and individual salvation. Though some of them did raise their voice against the prevalent casteism, they never thought of breaking away from the Hindu society. Alama Iqbal paid the most
glowing tribute to Guru Nanak’s dynamic ideology and revolutionary social and spiritual ideas: “A man of perfection woke Hind from its world of dreams." To call Guru Nanak a mere reformer is to “underestimate the dynamism of his creative vision – a vision in which the timeless and the temporal blend beautifully and evolve a new and saner path for humanity”.

This rare amalgam of the spiritual with the empirical was the matrix out of which emerged the *miri piri* doctrine. Though Guru Hargobind at the time of his accession to the throne of Guru Nanak donned the two swords symbolizing *Miri Piri*, the doctrine has been the basic driving force of the Sikh way of life since the time of the First Master. Guru Nanak’s doctrine of *miri piri* enjoins upon the Sikh a keen sense of social responsibility, egalitarianism based on the concept of fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man, the need for productive work and social emancipation. He built institutions for the concretization of his ideals. His *udasis* took him to distant and hostile terrains to convey his message to mortals struggling in the coils of superstitious beliefs. Wherever he went, he established *Sangat* and *Dharmsals* for the regular meeting of his followers. He established institutions so that his ideals could survive to enlighten the fumbling mankind. Guru Nanak’s ideology was entirely different and radical in
nature and it challenged millennial old concepts, values, ideals and ethos of Hindu culture and various other creeds like Buddhism, Jainism and the Vedanta, and the cults like Siddhas, Yogis, Naths. It was indeed a revolution, spiritual and moral, that gave the clarion call of ‘game of love’ and rejected in most vociferous terms the caste-ridden, superstitious society.

For Guru Nanak, deeds were more important than mere precepts. “All his life he has to follow the path of deeds and that is the methodology prescribed by the Gurus, i.e. both the goal and the methodology are different from those indicated in the earlier Indian religions\textsuperscript{13}. In this way, Guru Nanak put the seal of his approval on temporal pursuits as well. “At one stroke.... he (Guru Nanak) unmistakably accepted and implemented the elements of a whole-life or miri-piri system and rejected all the essentials of the earlier over 2500-year old dichotomous tradition\textsuperscript{14}.

It is a historical fact that when Guru Nanak visited his successor Guru Angad at Khadoor Sahib, he found him leading a somewhat secluded life and reminded him of the mission for which he was anointed his successor. Obeying the mandate of his preceptor, the Second Guru took concrete steps to establish Guru Nanak’s ideals on firm and permanent footing. He strengthened the institution of Langar
that gave a rude setback to caste-ridden, pollution-conscious, social order of the day. A great leveller, the Langar proved of far-reaching consequence to create an egalitarian Sikh society. He entrusted the task of running the Langar to his spouse Mata Khivi who looked after it with great devotion. Satta and Balwand sang poems of praise for Mata Khivi in whose Langar were available dainty dishes like kheer. The Second Nanak also made it clear that the udasis or the recluses had no place in the emerging Sikh society. For the physical well being of young Sikhs, he organized wrestling bouts. A gurdwara named Mal Akhara is a witness to this revolutionary step.

Guru Amar Das settled at Goindwal by the bank of the boisterous Beas. He further strengthen the institution of Langar, for he issued instructions that only those could appear in his court, who had first taken food in the Guru’s kitchen. Another significant step to organize the Sikh society was his establishment of twenty-two districts for preaching the Sikh religion. To wean the Sikhs away from the Hindu places of pilgrimage, Guru Amar Das got a bauli dug at Goindwal and ordained his Sikhs to take a dip in its holy water on all festive occasions. Guru Ram Das founded the new city Chak Ramdas pura, later known as Amritsar, the veritable Vatican of the Sikh community.
It became a nucleus of all Sikh activities and has been the heart of the Sikhs all over the globe.

Guru Arjan played a stellar role in the consolidation of the Sikh community. With his deft editorial skill, he edited the *bani* of the Gurus and the *Bhaktas* and prepared the sacred Sikh text, which was installed in the *Harmandir Sahib* in 1604. Moreover, under his spiritual patronage, *Harmandir Sahib* became the *sanctum sanctorum* of the Sikhs who would come from far and near on the festive occasion, especially *Diwali* and *Baisakhi*, to pay their homage to the Fifth Master. He introduced the *daswandh* system where every Sikh was enjoined to contribute one-tenth of his earnings to Guru’s treasury. For proper collection, he re-organized the system of *manjis* and *masands*.

The Amritsar tank was widened and another dug at Santokhsar. A *buali* was constructed at Lahore. He founded the city of Tarn Taran and a *gurdwara* with a tank was established for worship. Hari Ram Gupta highlights the spiritual and temporal pre-occupation of the Fifth Master: “The Guru erected lofty buildings at Amritsar, wore rich clothes, procured horses from Central Asia, kept elephants and engaged retainers for them”. Cunningham thus wrote, Nanak had sanctioned or enjoined secular occupation, Arjan carried the injunction
into practice, and the impulse thus given speedily extended and became general.  

With the accession of Guru Hargobind to the gur-gadi, the concept of Miri-Piri took an explicit and tangible shape when he wore two swords and sent signals to the rulers of the day that he was the true king in whom vested, both spiritual and temporal authority. It was meant to carry out Guru Nanak’s mission who hailed God as “The Destroyer of evil”. “The saviour of saints” and “the destroyer of demons”. Following this dictum of God, the Guru adopted the policy through which he could protect the fundamental rights and freedom of the people, inculcate a spirit to resist evil and tyranny and to improve the lot of the depressed and the downtrodden, to bring equality.

The construction of Akal Takht was another landmark in the history of the Sikhs. The two flags that flutter in front of it are profound symbols of Miri-Piri system – a fusion of the spiritual and the temporal authority and the Sikhs took great pride in hailing their Guru as Sachcha Padshah. The ideal of Sachcha Padshah came to be associated with the Gurus. Bhai Gurdas wrote, “The true Guru is the carefree emperor, unfathomable and full of all qualities of a master.”

The Sikh concept of Miri-Piri has also been defined as Raj-jog in Sikhism. Jagjit Singh says: “Another concept, indicative of the
blending of the worldly power and spirituality, and which has also its roots in the earliest Sikh tradition is that of ‘*Raj-jog*’\(^1\). McLeod also draws this inference from the *Dabistan-i-Mazahib* and *Janam Sakhis*\(^2\). Guru Nanak is said to have enlightened Raja Shivnabh: “*Jog* (spirituality) is attainable with *Raj*. Meditate and serve God. I have made you *Mukat* within *raj*\(^23\). Bhai Gurdas described Guru Nanak as *Sachcha Padshah*, “Who achieved complete control over *Raj-jog*\(^24\)”. Guru Nanak has disciplined alliance as well as separation. Again, according to Bhai Gurdas, Guru Ram Das lived a life of *Raj-jog*\(^25\). He is bestower (unattached), enjoyer, and he has created holy congregation which is equal to the abode of God.

### III

The concept of an ideal life in Sikhism is the blending of the spiritual and the temporal and thus enjoins upon the Sikh a great religious responsibility to protect the weak, to oppose all forms of tyranny and oppression. Consequently stress on virtuous deeds becomes its categorical imperative. To fight evil becomes the moral obligation and a Sikh is expected to attain to a state of fearlessness. Guru Nanak’s mission was to liberate the common man from spiritual and social evils. Social emancipation was naturally linked with the
ruling authority of the day. Babar Bani is a sure proof of Guru Nanak’s exemplary courage and fearlessness which were carried on by his successors. No other Bhakta could have the courage to admonish the invading Mughal emperor as Guru Nanak did.

In Asa Di Var, he deprecates the priestly class – both Brahmin and Muslim – as man-eaters and butchers: “Look at the mockery of religion, those who gorge on human beings perform namaz. Those wielding the butcher’s knife wear the sacred thread round their neck²⁶”. Again, Guru Nanak says: “Rulers are turned beasts of prey, their officers hounds; None do they allow in peace to rest. The subordinates wound the people with their claws: You dogs! lick on the blood and marrow of the poor²⁷”. He admonishes the rule of ruling Lodi for his failure to protect his subjects from the invading Mughal adventurer’s cruelty: “If a powerful person were to attack another powerful person, there shall be no ground for anger. But if a ferocious lion were to fall upon a herd of cattle, the master of the herd has to answer for it²⁸”.

Babar Bani is in fact a corollary of Guru Nanak’s Miri Piri system that is based on the principle “of game of love” which requires total commitment, even self-sacrifice for the cause of love. It is this whole-life attitude that embraces in its fold all human action, especially
supreme sacrifice for a noble cause. Kharak Singh rightly says that “an important corollary of the whole-life religion is the institution of martyrdom.”

The presence of the Sikh Gurus all over the Indian sub-continent shows that the Sikh identity is as old as the founder of its faith. Guru Nanak was imprisoned by Babar with other sadhus only to be freed with repentance. Hamayun, after his defeat at the hands of Sher Shah Suri, came to seek Guru Angad’s blessings. Haunted by his lost sovereignty and impotent rage, he unsheathed his sword and received the Guru’s admonition. Unperturbed, the Guru coolly said, “When it was the occasion to wield the sword you took to your heels like a coward. Why unsheath the sword here?” The author of Mehma Prakash narrates thus: “Hamayun spoke with humility, I am guilty of a great lapse O divine Lord, pardon me.” The Guru exhorted his disciples: If you have to join the battle field, face the enemy. Turn not your back on him. Wield your weapons fearlessly and win fame. The warrior who faces the enemy in the battlefield is sure to go to heaven.

The emperor Akbar visited Goindwal and was impressed to see the Guru and his organization. He partook the Langar and granted a piece of land to Bibi Bhani where the Fourth Master found Chak
Ramdaspura which later came to be known as Amritsar. Here the three cardinal principles of Sikh faith: Naam Japo, Kirat Karo and Vand Chhako were put into practice. Guru Amar Das would engage himself in manual task to earn his living. Parasitism has no place in the Sikh way of life.

The role of Guru Arjan is of profound significance as a leader of Miri Piri society. It was during his period that the Sikh society was taken by his contemporaries as H.R.Gupta points out to a “separate state within a state32”. The Guru was hailed by the Sikhs as Sachcha Padshah of Miri-Piri. He enjoined upon the Sikhs to pursue worldly as well as spiritual pursuits with equal zeal. The Guru’s exhorted his Sikhs to enter the horse trade and he himself took to horse trading. This interest in the procurement of horses and training in horse riding had great future implications. Kharak Singh rightly says: “This distinct turn to a new profession given by the Guru himself is meaningfully suggestive of the coming confrontation with the empire of the day33”.

Guru Arjan used to hold assemblies which, according to W.L.McGregor, “gave them the look of royal darbar (court)34”. Syed Mohammad Latif also states that “the Guru was looked upon by his followers as a worldly Lord and ruling sovereign35”. One of the reasons of Guru’s martyrdom was Jahangir’s charge that the Guru “noised
himself as a worldly leader\textsuperscript{36}. It shows that Guru Arjan’s was the political execution. It is also evident that Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi, the head of the \textit{Naqshabandi} order and a keen revivalist of Islamic orthodoxy, sensing the growing influence of the Sikh society, urged the emperor to curb the development of the Sikh society in the area. On the basis of the evidence of \textit{Dabistan}, G.C.Narang arrives at the conclusion that a state, peaceful and unobtrusive, had been slowly evolved, and with Guru Arjan at its head as \textit{Sachcha Padshah}, the Sikhs “had already become accustomed to a form of self-government within the empire\textsuperscript{37}". Toynbee too endorses the view that the predecessor of Guru Hargobind had already transformed the Sikh community “from an embryonic Church into an embryonic state\textsuperscript{38}”. Thus Guru Arjan clearly laid the foundation of a political state in his life time and gave direction to his son to create and carve out an independent state.

With the martyrdom of Guru Arjan and later on the incarceration of Guru Hargobind at the Gwalior Fort, the Sikhs came into direct confrontation with the empire. Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi was overjoyed to hear the news of Guru Arjan’s martyrdom and wrote to the Governor of Lahore: “The execution at this time of the accursed \textit{Kafir} of Goindwal… is an act of the highest grace for the followers of
Islam. This clearly indicates that the Muslim theologian was afraid of the serious spiritual and temporal consequences of Miri-Piri system of the Sikhs. Jagjit Singh rightly interprets Guru Arjan’s martyrdom: “It was not Guru Arjan’s martyrdom which gave a political turn to the Sikh movement; rather it was the political overtone of the movement which contributed to his martyrdom”. Guru Arjan’s martyrdom convinced the Sikhs and Guru Hargobind that to protect their faith and folks, they were to prepare for an open conflict with the tyrannous state. Islam, like Sikhism, being a whole-life religion, made the Ulama and the emperor apprehensive of the Sikhs growing strength and power. They felt a threat to Shariat as well as administrative control over their subjects, for the Sikhs alone were committed to a worldview that defined God and the Guru as the master of both spiritual and temporal power.

In 1609, Guru Hargobind built Akal Takhat, the living embodiment of the sovereign temporal power of the Sikhs. The Sikhs under the challenging situation had to be prepared to face the unjust and unrighteous rulers. A regular daily programme was introduced at Akal Takht. Besides worship and kirtan, heroic deeds of the warriors began to be recited and services of dhadis and rababis were acquired for this purpose. He recruited warriors and raised an army to oppose
the aggression and tyranny of the Mughals. The Sixth Master kept up the spirits of his warriors by taking them out on hunting expeditions, by arranging games and wrestling bouts, and by holding the symposium of martial music. The Guru proclaimed, says H.R.Gupta, that “fighting against the wrongs was not against the spirit of any religion, but it was an essential ingredient of a practical religion”.

Akal Takht was built close to Harmandir Sahib, the seat of spiritual authority. Two flags were hoisted in front of the edifice and these ensigns symbolized Miri and Piri as the two aspects of the Sikh religion. The Guru received visitors and offerings here and delivered sermons to his followers, issued Hukamnamas to various Sikh sangats, scattered all over India and administered justice. Subsequently, it became the highest seat of spiritual and secular power of the Sikhs. It is from this place that the affairs of the Sikh community began to be administered. Even Rattan Singh Bhangu describes it a centre of organizational and military activities. Guru took full decisions with the help and advice of the Sikhs. Even justice was given to the Sikhs who submitted their petitions here as they have staunch faith that his justice was fair, impartial and speedy. Moreover, the Akal Takht became a symbol of the rising Sikh identity. In the words of G.C.Narang, “The Sikhs had already become accustomed to a form of
self-government within the empire. Their power and prestige had increased and they were fast becoming a factor in the political life of the province43”.

At the time of his installation as the sixth Guru, Guru Hargobind not only wore two swords symbolizing spiritual and temporal power – Miri-Piri, but also told his followers “that my rosary shall be my sword belt and on my turban I shall wear the emblem of royalty”. The Guru meant that temporal pursuits were as significant as spiritual concern and it was justified to wear arms in defence of righteousness. “Such steps amounted to the declaration of a parallel government and marked an open change in the external character of the movement44”. Giani Gian Singh writes, “Akal Takht was looked upon as a seat of political power where functions relating to state were performed. Programmes for the welfare of people, international relations, principle of governance and diplomacy were chalked out here45”.

Some historians fail to appreciate the doctrine of Miri Piri in the right perspective and regard it as a departure from the policy of the first five Gurus. Gurdarshan Singh Dhillon rightly says that such historians fail to have “a clear perception of the integrated spiritual thesis of Guru Nanak” and regards this Miri Piri system as “natural and inevitable outcome of the doctrine of the combination of the spiritual
and the empirical, laid down and founded by the first Guru⁴⁶. The Guru exhorted his Sikhs that it was their religious responsibility to rise against tyranny and oppose unrighteousness according to the spirit of the times. Along with Naam Simran, the Sikhs were given practical lesson of Dharam Yudha. Says Latif: “Guru organized a military system, and, arming his followers, made them buckle on the sword and prepared them action in the field⁴⁷, actually fought battles and thus in reality Guru Hargobind rendered a unique service to this country in showing the true path of deliverance from political bondage. The Guru created a revolution in the life of the Sikhs. Revolution implies a doctrine and originates in the realm of ideas. Jagjit Singh rightly avers that “The Sikh revolution originated in the concept of Miri Piri which has its roots... in the earliest Sikh tradition, beginning with Guru Nanak⁴⁸ and, therefore, the raising of Akal Takht was a natural corollary of the doctrine of the First Master.

While hymns of peace and praise were chanted at Harmandir Sahib, the congregation heard ballads extolling feats of heroism, and instead of listening to religious discourses, discussed plans of military adventures at Akal Takht. Teja Singh explains the intent of the Guru to build Akal Takht: “The step of constructing the Akal Takht near the Harmandir was taken on account of the Guru’s idea of keeping
temporal and spiritual centres near each other, so that both should influence each other and one should also orientate the activities of the other.45"

The construction of the Akal Takht was a landmark in the history of the Sikhs. Till this day, it commands power over the Sikh psyche and demands unflinching allegiance and obedience to its mandate. In the chequered history of the Sikhs it has played a momentous role. A source of inspiration, it has been the ideal of Sikh heroism and sacrifice. Momentous discussions at the biannual meetings of the Sarbat Khalsa on the eve of Diwali and Baisakhi guided the community at all times. The Gurmattas passed in its precincts provided guidance to the community. From here, Guru Hargobind took cudgels against the Mughal tyranny and by decisive battles against them proved his mettle as a saint and saviour – the Sachcha Padshah, the Master of Miri-Piri.

The tradition was carried on by his successor, the Seventh Guru. His court, writes H.A. Rose, displayed “the pomp and circumstances of a semi-independent military chieftain.50" While Guru Arjan feared not the imperial ire and blessed the fugitive Khusro, Guru Har Rai supported Dara Shikoh. This was evident from the fact that at the request of Dara Shikoh, Guru Har Rai with his 500 horsemen checked the advance of Aurangzeb for one day. Sujan Rai also refers to Guru
Har Rai’s association with the Dara Shikoh, who had come with a large force.

Martyrdom, as has been referred earlier, is a corollary of *Miri Piri* system. Based on Guru Nanak’s doctrine of ‘game of love’ as prerequisite to discipleship it demands complete self-surrender that culminates in the supreme sacrifice of one’s life and thus earn martyrdom to vindicate the master’s mandate. Guru Tegh Bahadur had earned the title of ‘*Tegh Bahadur*’ from his valiant father for showing exemplary heroism in battle that the Sixth Master fought against the Mughals. Though the Ninth Master spent a large part of his life in contemplation, yet he enjoyed a state of perfect poise and never waivered from the ideals set forth by his worthy peers. He oriented the Sikh character for the new challenges that the Mughal government had thrown to the Indian society. The socio-political fabric of the country was challenged by the powerful government, which enforced the doctrine of one state and one religion. Fear not and frighten not was his advice to the Sikhs. The Ninth Master in one of his *salokas* says:

One that strikes not terror in others, Nor of others stands in fear –
Saith Nanak: Listen my self, Know such a one to be liberated.

Guru Tegh Bahadur’s martyrdom was unique and rare in the annals of martyrdom. It was not for his own interest, but to protect
Dharma of the Hindus, the harassed Kashmiri Pandits, that he offered his head to the bigoted and besotted Aurangzeb. His extensive tours to the east, his following in Assam and Decca and his close association with Raja Jai Singh and the King of Assam reveals that he met them on equal footing as the sovereign Lord of the Sikhs, the embodiment of Miri-Piri system of the Sikh Gurus. The Guru courted martyrdom in 1675 A.D. Guru Gobind Singh writes about his father’s execution in Bachitra Natak. He says, “Guru suffered martyrdom for the sake of his religion; he gave his head, but swerved not from his determination”. Again Guru Gobind Singh refers to his noble father’s inimitable sacrifice: “Guru Tegh Bahadur protected the frontal marks and the sacrificial threads of the Hindus, and displayed great bravery in the Kali age. When he put an end to his life for the sake of holy men, he gave his head but uttered not a groan”. Again, “At his departure there was mourning in this world; there was grief through the world, but joy in paradise.”

The emperor had received reports that Guru Tegh Bahadur was trying to create a new nation which would be a challenge to the imperial hegemony and for that reason, the emperor conveyed a message to the Guru that if he desisted from his political activities, he would be given grants for his prayers and preachings. The Guru paid
no attention to the lure and continued his missionary activities and willingly courted martyrdom. Cunningham also writes, Guru Tegh Bahadur’s injunction that his disciples should obey the bearer of his arrows, show more of the kingly than of the priestly spirit, ... thus making the disciples of Guru Nanak martial as well as devotional people\textsuperscript{58}.

His worthy scion, Guru Gobind Singh, continued the system of \textit{Miri-Piri} which reached its highest watermark with the creation of the \textit{Khalsa}, a perfect egalitarian order as envisaged by Guru Nanak. Guru Gobind Singh held a court so splendid that it became an eye sore in the neighbouring hilly Rajas who harboured ill-will against his growing strength and his veneration by the Sikhs as \textit{Sachcha Padshah}, a title, which according to William Irvine, was an important reason for the execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur. Irvine says, One of this Guru’s (Guru Tegh Bahadur) crimes, in the Emperor’s eyes, may have been the style of address adopted by his disciples, who had begun to call their leader \textit{Sachcha Padshah} or the True King... Its use was extremely likely to provoke the mistrust of a ruler even less suspicious by nature than Alamgir\textsuperscript{59}.

So naturally Guru Gobind Singh’s worship of open defiance of the Mughal authority was the culmination of \textit{Miri-Piri} system. Jagjit
Singh rightly says: “The Sikh revolution originated in the concept of *Miri-Piri*, which had its roots, as seen, in the earlier Sikh tradition, beginning with Guru Nanak; and the creation of the Khalsa and the continuation of the armed struggle during its revolutionary phase was just an extension of *Miri-Piri*. Guru Gobind Singh’s fight was never for any territorial or material gain. It was to make the Mughals recognize his status as Master of *Miri Piri*. He clearly tells Aurangzeb that one should resort to the sword when all other means fail. When all the constitutional and remedial measures ultimately end in fiasco, there accrues, but a legal jurisdiction in brandishing a sabre to chastise the offender thereby.

Guru Gobind Singh’s battles against the Mughals, his pains and privation, the supreme sacrifice of his dedicated Sikhs and sons were to protect this ideal advocated by Guru Nanak. That the objectives of the Guru were religious is evident from the fact that even the Muslims fought by his side. To protect *Dharma* and oppose tyranny were his coveted goals. His brief friendship with Bahadur Shah and his honour at the Mughal Court were the recognition of his *Miri-Piri* status. In the *Akhbarat* from the court of Bahadur Shah the first extract refers to Guru, “Gobind the Nanaki came armed, in accordance with order, and presented himself making an offering of 100 *ashrafis* (gold coins). A
robe of honour and *padak* (medallion) set with precious stones was given to him, and he was permitted to leave⁶². He tells in his *Hukamnamas* how the Emperor presented him a *Khilat* and how he rode on his steed right up to the throne, and revealed the purpose of his meeting the emperor. He wished to get Anandpur back⁶³.

Guru Nanak’s *Miri-Piri* system was indeed revolutionary, for it made a radical departure from the existing Indian ethos. Niharranjan Ray opines, “To be able to achieve that integration of temporal and spiritual seems to me to have been the most significant contribution of Guru Nanak to the totality of the Indian way of life of medieval India. Indeed, he seems to have reared up a new image of a socio-religious community given at once to temporal and spiritual pursuits of life⁶⁴. It gave a rude setback to the caste ideology and the concept of pollution. The institution of *Langar* demolished all distinctions between man and man based on caste and creed. Casteism in fact has been the bane of the society for centuries. To challenge and demolish it was indeed an onerous task which the Guru did with one stroke – by instituting the *langar*. *Langar* in fact was the practical expression of Guru’s ideal of Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man. It led to an egalitarian social order where man was recognised not by his caste but his deeds. The first Sikh leader who struck a coin was Jassa Singh Kalal.
considered to be a low sub-caste according to Hindu standards. Bhai Jiwan Singh and Jassa Singh who belonged to the Ramgarhia class rose to position of eminence in Sikh society.

This process of equality and socialism led to the abolition of Zamindari and Jagirdari system during the rule of Banda Bahadur who created a bold peasantry. The status of women was improved. Some of them became heads of manjis and misals. The Sikhs developed a secular outlook. Maharaja Ranjit Singh made no distinction between the Sikh, the Hindu and the Muslim. Deeds and merit alone counted. Work was given importance over parasitism. Jagjit Singh rightly concludes that it was Miri Piri system that “permanently broke in the Punjab the social stratification in order to raise the level of the lowest classes in the social structure⁶⁵”. His purpose was to build a new society in which man would be perfect in all fields, and could help others to achieve the perfection and thus constitute a complete society.

Thus, the Sikh Gurus gave a spiritual basis to politics, for the political power without spirituality and morality would promote selfishness, opportunism, compromise on principles. The Gurus wanted to inculcate the values of universal brotherhood, social responsibility, love, charity, self-surrender so that congenial atmosphere be created
where each one should respect one another and value human relationship. Giani Gian Singh says that a political system of governance is not sustained without the foundation of spirituality and without spirituality everything is a hotch-potch. Thus, the institution of Miri-Piri was implemented so that spiritual pursuits could be blended with the material well-being of the people.
REFERENCES

1Sri Guru Granth Sahib, Raga Asa, Mohalla 1, p. 463.

2Ibid., Raga Asa, Mohalla 5, p. 459.

3Ibid., Raga Ramkali, Mohalla 3, p. 922.

4Ibid., Raga Asa, Mohalla 3, p. 441.

5Ibid., Raga Ramkali, Mohalla 3, p. 921.

6Ibid., Raga Gauri, Mohalla 9, p. 219.


9S.G.G.S., Salokas, Mohalla 1, p. 1412.


13Ibid., p. 5.


17S.G.G.S., Raga Majh, Mohalla 1, p. 145.

18Ibid., Raga Gauri, Mohalla 1, p. 224.
19Ibid., Raga Maru, Mohalla 1, p. 1028.
20Gurdas, Bhai, Var 24, Pauri 3.
24Gurdas, Bhai, Var 7, Pauri 2.
25Ibid., Var 24, Pauri 14.
26S.G.G.S., Raga Asa, Mohalla 1, p. 471.
27Ibid., Raga Malar, Mohalla 1, p. 1288.
28Ibid., Raga Asa, Mohalla 1, p. 360.
31Ibid.


55 Ibid., *Saloka 13*, p. 46.

56 Ibid., *Saloka 16*, p. 46.


