PREFACE

History, the grand Old Dame, smiles at the attempts of man to discover the mystery that envelopes his existence. From the fearsome lofty retreats to the concrete wilderness of the day, man's march towards civilization has been marked by his persistent endeavours to develop cults and creeds, institutions and organizations to evolve a set of values that can help him establish an emotionally satisfying relationship with the universe at large. History is not only a record of the rise and decline of civilization, but also preserves man's values that aim at harmony and peace. Mose's Tora, Christ's Sermon on the Mount, Mohammed's declaration from the Mount Hira, the Buddha's Sermon at Sarnath, Guru Nanak's after his re-emergence from the river Bein are rare attempts to direct human energy into channels that can lead to joy and peace. Institutions were built around their revelations for the instructions of mankind.

It is thus the revelatory message of the Prophet that gives birth to institutions for the full flowering of his communion. Like many of his predecessors, Guru Nanak created institutions for the concretization of his message on the coming generation. Since Sikhism is a revealed religion of paramount importance on the Indian scene, the purport of the present study is to examine the various institutions that were raised by the message of Guru Nanak and imparted a unique identity to Sikhism as opposed to the caste-ridden Hindu society of the day.

While chapter one introduced the major thematic concerns of the proposed study, chapter two is devoted to Guru Nanak's message and mission. It brings to the fore Guru Nanak's concern at the social disparities and religious hypocrisies of the day and his aim to create a new, egalitarian social and spiritual order. Chapter three, therefore, unravels Guru Nanak's concept of sangat, a truly God-oriented body of the Sikhs devoted to the selfless service and naam of the Lord.
Consequently, sangat leads to the concept of langar where the commensal dining was prevalent and all distinctions of caste and status disappeared with the wind of change. For the meeting of the sangat, a place was required. First named dharamsal, it later on became the gurdwara, the focus of the Sikh faith, is the theme of chapter four. Chapter five is devoted to langar and sewa, for these twin principles are like the two sides of the same coin. Selfless service is a preliminary condition for the realization of the divine.

Chapter six, Guru and Guruship dwells on the psychic and spiritual significance of the Guru in Sikhism. Guru Nanak felt that his mission of building up revolutionary institutions could not be completed during his life time and, therefore, chose his successor and this process continued till the Tenth Master gave guru-gaddi to Sri Guru Granth Sahib. Chapter seven brings into focus the significance of martyrdom in Sikhism and shows how the martyrdom of the fifth and ninth masters changed the Sikh perspective.

Chapter eight, Miri-Piri and Akal Takht deals with the concept of Miri-Piri which, though an essential part of the Sikh message since Guru Nanak, came out when the Sixth Master donned the two swords of Miri-Piri and built Akal Takht as a supreme authority of the Sikhs in all their temporal affairs. This ultimately led to the creation of the Khalsa which forms the theme of the ninth chapter. Chapter ten sums up the argument of earlier chapters.

To accomplish this onerous task, I owe and acknowledge my debt of gratitude to my Supervisor, Dr. Gurdarshan Singh Dhillon, Professor of History, Department of Evening Studies, Panjab University, Chandigarh, but for whose encouragement and inspiration, this work would have remained a mere dream. He illumined many a dark crevice of my mind to enable it to appreciate the Sikh institutions from altogether different angles. I have no words to express my gratitude to my Principal, Mrs. Harrinder Dhillon, who persuaded me to do research work and encouraged me at every step and gave me every kind of help to attain my
goal. I also owe my profound thanks to Prof. Kulwant Singh Gill of the Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana, for going through the entire work and for his valuable suggestions in revising the work. I profusely thank the library staff of Khalsa College for Women, Panjab University Extension Library, Ludhiana, Library of Punjabi Bhawan, Ludhiana, A.C.Joshi Library, Panjab University, Chandigarh and Dwarka Dass Library, Chandigarh, for their ungrudging and unstinted support. I also thank Mr. Dildar Singh who has typed it out with loving care and my friends with whom I shared my thoughts during the study. To my beloved husband and children, I am immensely grateful for their persistent pursuasion and for sparing me from many domestic chores.

I know no dissertation is ever complete. Though every attempt has been made to contact all possible sources, there are still possibilities of lapse. Time and mobility are the facts that can never be ignored. If there are lapses, they are surely mine, the rest is the Guru's grace.

Ludhiana
Dated:
21 3 2002

(RUPINDER KAUR GILL)
Lecturer in History
Khalsa College for Women
Civil Lines, Ludhiana