In the medieval Punjab, creeds and concepts grew with tropical exuberance. Caught in the trammels of metaphysical subtleties, expounded by the advocates of different religions and sects, the common man felt himself in a blind alley. Political instability, social and moral anarchy, ethical decay, debased religion and empty ceremonialism baffled the ordinary mind. It was during this spiritual turmoil and moral confusion that Guru Nanak saw the light of the day to lead the common man to a straight and simple path to God. Dr. Mohammad Iqbal rightly pays the glowing tribute to the advent of Guru Nanak on the spiritual scenario of the day, “A man of perfection woke Hind from a world of dreams”.

Guru Nanak founded a new religion which was revolutionary, unique and institutional. His approach and objectives were altogether different. He gave a new ideology, a dynamic philosophy and an egalitarian social order. For Guru Nanak, religion was an important factor to regulate the spiritual and social life of man. It was a whole-life and positive ideal that included the social, political and economic
development of man. His aim was both the social and spiritual regeneration of the common man. He visualized a socio-political order that could shape and guide the destiny of ordinary mortals and through his exhortations he revealed the secret of transformation of man into an angel - a God-like creatures, epitome of nobility and virtue.

Religion is the basic need of man, for it imparts significance and purpose to human existence. Guru Nanak’s mission was to help the individual to transcendent his creatureliness. He offered his adherents a metaphysic, a cosmology, a system of ethos and a concept of salvation or liberation from bondage to brute things. Guru Nanak realized that man has been sent to this earth for a specific purpose. He is expected to regulate, control and harmonize his natural impulses and instincts so that they may lead to a well rounded and integrated personality. Thus, the transformation of man and society. Guru Nanak says: "A hundred times each day am I sacrifice to my Master, who into God has turned mere men, without a moment's delay". For a sane and healthy social order, the individual had to recreate himself to conform to moral and spiritual ideals. In this way alone he could discover the meaning and purpose of life.

Guru Nanak acquainted himself with the existing religions of his day and found nothing commendable in them. Hinduism, Jainism,
Buddhism, Islam and prevailing sects had lost their spirit and stressed mere formalism – a routine of empty rituals and meaningless ceremonies.

During this period, the major stress of Indian spirituality had been on the other-worldliness, for the prevailing Indian systems shunned the temporal and the phenomenal reality as mere _maya_, an illusion, an empty show. The Indian mind suffered from an obsession with eternity that could only be achieved through austerities, asceticism, fast, penance and ceremonial worship. The Indian psyche had drifted into the world of wishful dreams from which Guru Nanak roused it by a rude shock.

At the time of Guru Nanak, _Vaishnavism_ and _Shaivism_ were the two main sects of the Hindu faith and they stressed devotion, meditation, inner purity and social equality and advocated _bhakti marga_ to attain salvation from the bondage of existence. It is precisely for this reason, that most of the early studies placed Guru Nanak in an erroneous historico-religious perspective and consider him a part of the _bhakti_ movement. Guru Nanak was hailed as a social and spiritual reformer who protested against the debased Hindu spirituality, whose fundamental teachings were similar to those of Ramananda, Kabir and Chaitanya. Historians like W.H.McLeod erroneously associated Guru
Nanak with the Sant tradition, and his inheritance from the southern bhakti cult.

I.B.Banerjee concludes that there is “no satisfactory evidence to show that Guru intended to overturn the social order and his aim was to build an entirely novel structure on the ruins of the old”. What greater evidence is required than the Mul Mantra, the rubric of the Sikh faith. In the Mul Mantra, Guru Nanak stressed the unicity of God and defines Him as unborn and fearless, without enmity, and He can be realized only through the grace of the Guru. There is no place in his religious thought for the descent of God on earth in the form of any Avtar, i.e. Krishna and Rama, or as the Prophet of God, i.e. Mohammad or Jesus as the son of God. Guru Nanak rejects the Hindu belief in incarnation as enshrined in the Bhagwad Gita. “In every age I come back to deliver the holy to destroy the sin of the sinner and to establish righteousness.” The Shaivites held Shiva and the Vaishnava held Vishnu, Krishna and Rama in great veneration as the incarnations of God.

Moreover, most of the Bhaktas were polytheists, whereas Guru Nanak asserts an uncompromising monotheism. In the Mul Mantra, Guru Nanak, by putting the numeral I before Omkar, clearly affirms strict monotheism. His emphasis on the oneness of God and rejection
of the cult of god’s and goddesses constituted a daring and glaring departure from Hinduism. He states, “In all worlds is operative God’s sole ordinance; From the One has arisen all creations”. Worship Him alone who is the Creator, Timeless and Self existent.

Fearlessness is another attribute of God which the Sikh Gurus imbibed as a cardinal virtue. The Bhaktas on the other hand preached the ideal of Ahimsa and thus were the votaries of pacifism. The highest religion for the Hindus was “Ahimsa Parmo Dharma”, the Hindu philosophy of other-worldliness and Jainism and Buddhism abstinence from violence. It was this attitude of non-violence that led to the subjugation of the people and suffer foreign invasion and plunder and devastation of the country. Guru Nanak was fully aware of the grave socio-religious challenges of his time, but had no means to fight the challenge. The revolutionary nature of challenge required a revolutionary response. He himself responded to the challenges, the existing social and spiritual orders and wanted to infuse both the spiritual and physical strength and courage to stand against tyranny.

Guru Nanak’s sense of fearlessness is quite evident from Babar-bani where he admonishes the Mughal conqueror for shedding the blood of innocent people. Guru Nanak even protested to God as the guardian of man for allowing the weak to be oppressed by the strong.
Guru also castigated the rulers and exposed their tyranny and oppression of the ruled.

He said that submission to or acceptance of an exploitative and repressive administrative system at any level tantamounts to active participation in the perpetuation of corruption and cruelty. He directs his tirade against the rulers “The kings are butchers and cruelty their knife, sense of duty and responsibility have taken wings and fled". Again “Kings are like leopards and their revenue collectors behave like dogs, they go and awaken people at all odd times, their servants wound the people with their claws and lick their blood like curs". It underlines the fact that many ruling classes had lost their legitimacy and potential and relevance. “They symbolize the process of disintegration of the sacred world, which indicates the disintegration of the real world on which it is constructed". Thus he was aware of the grave political challenges of his times.

No other bhakta ventured to raise his voice against the tyranny and oppression of the invaders. It is against the will of God to coerce and exploit another man. Ruler should be compassionate and just and treat his subject as his children. Guru says: “Now is the gracious Lord’s ordinance promulgated : None to another shall cause hurt. All mankind now in peace shall abide – Gentle shall the governance be".
People should not accept the tyrannical rule of Mughals. The Guru’s clarion call to his devotees was: “If you are keen to play the game of love, come with your head on your palm”\textsuperscript{14}. It is this dynamic ideology that imparts distinct identity to Sikhism. So Guru inspired the masses to shake off slavery, fear and submission to the forces of evil and fight against the tyranny and despotism. He gave a call to wage a battle for justice when the need arises. Guru says: “People of the world! revile not death, should one know how to die. Serve the Lord Almighty – thereby shall your path hence be made easy. As this easy path you tread, reward shall you receive, And exaltation in the hereafter\textsuperscript{15}”. Again: “Holy is the death of heroic man, whose dying is divinely approved. Such alone may be called heroes as at the divine portal obtain true honour\textsuperscript{16}”. It is this fearlessness that culminates in the ideal of saint-soldier created by the Tenth Master.

J.D. Cunningham rightly observed that the saints, “perfected forms of dissent rather than planted the germs of nations and their sects remain to this day as they left them\textsuperscript{17}”. Guru Nanak alone was among the saints of India who had the patriotic impulse and prophetic vision of reshaping history in the name of God. It was Guru Nanak alone who set up an ideal before him and thus he cannot be dismissed as a mere part of the sant tradition. Niharranjan Ray also pointed out,
“He (Guru Nanak) gave them after centuries a system of ideas, images and symbols and set a discipline all in precise and clear terms and in a very coherent and consistent manner.”

Guru Nanak had had a divine mission. It was to set up a new social order based on revolutionary lines. He had a compassion for all and wanted to bring social equality among all sections of society. It shows his concern for ordinary man. The analysis of the theological imagery of Guru Nanak’s *bani* indicates that he addressed himself largely to petty traders, artisans and bonded servants of the moneyed magnates. He outrightly rejected the rigid caste system and its resultant inhuman institution of untouchability. Guru Nanak thus raised his voice against the then existing social order which was primarily based on the four-fold objects of life: *Kama, Artha, Dharma* and *Moksha*. Four-fold order of society: (Varnas): *Brahmins, Khatris, Vaish* and *Sudra*, four-fold stages of life (Ashrams): *Brahmcharya, Grahsatha, Vanprastha* and *Sanyasa*. His *bani* re-interprets the various social institutions in order to reconstruct a religious system anew. He had clear vision of a just society where all men be treated alike and where God bestows his grace and bounty on all without discrimination. Man’s lower caste is not because of his birth, but because of his deeds. He says: “Know each being to be repository of Divine light – Ask not for
anyone’s caste! In the hereafter are castes not considered. Again he says: “God approves not the distinction of high caste and low caste. None has He made higher than other.” Guru thus sought to release his followers from the bondage of caste tyranny.

In his concept of community, high caste Brahmin could eat with the scums of society. A Hindu would not run away from a Muslim by dubbing him a malesha and a Muslim dare not look down upon Hindu as a kafir. He says: “Evil is conflict and acrimony – by such dispute comes ruin. To live without the name, in evil doing and illusion, is to meet destruction. One knowing both paths to be one shall alone find fulfilment: One that repudiates this faith, in hell fire must burn.” Guru laid emphasis on the unity of mankind.

To Guru Nanak, social redemption is far more important than individual salvation. Guru says “Man may perform sacrifices, make fire offerings, dispense charity, perform austerities and offer worship, and on his body inflict torture of penance – still without devotion to the Name Divine liberation he would not attain.” So he rejects withdrawal from socio-political activity and envisioned an ultimate transformation of man within society. He stood for the total orientation of life of the individual and society towards a creative, purposeful existence. The social group of the early Sikhs was the locus of the spirit to have a
natural affinity with its theological injunctions in *Kirat Karna, Wand Chhakna, Naam Japna*. It is this idea of social responsibility that marks the tangential departure of the Sikh religion from other faiths. Attar Singh rightly says: "It is in this revolutionary configuration of protest, revolt and confrontations that the inner urges and aspirations of the pure teachings of the Guru assumed a critical attitude towards the three cardinals pillars of Hinduism, the priesthood, the caste system and the Vedas." 

The mission of Guru Nanak was to develop an ideal man – A man morally and spiritually sound, aware of his responsibility to his society and God. He was opposed to evolutionary and dichotomic religions like Christianity, Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism, where the ideal man is obliged to abandon house and worldly life, perform various austerities to attain salvation. Such men were known as *Yogis, Sanyasis* and *Siddhas*. He set himself apart from the crowd of quietistic *Sadhus, Bairagis* and *Udasis* who sought alienation from the world and its problems. The Guru says: “The *Yogi* practises *Yoga*; the householder enjoys things of the world. The ascetic practises austerities, bathing at sacred spots assiduously ... of no use is the body, wherein abides not the holy Name." Guru rejects asceticism and monasticism and is opposed to renunciation in quest of the
Absolute. He says: “The Lord abides within, go not outside to seek Him. Why discarding amrits dost thou swallow poison of evil passions?”

Guru Nanak advocates a whole-life religion like Judaism and Islam, it is life-affirming and optimistic in approach towards life. Guru insisted on a life of non-attachment. He says: “To abide undefiled amid maya – defilement, is the true way to attain success in Yoga-praxis”. He advocates, “To die while living – practise such yoga, As resounds the horn without blowing, Is attained the state of fearlessness”. He often quotes an example of the lotus that lives in water undetached and the duck that floats over the stream yet keeping the plumage dry, ready to take a flight away from the surface of water. He says, “Cursed be life devoted to gobbling food and adding bulk without devotion to holy Name, is man befriending his real foes”. The conception of salvation is a living reality and it can be achieved only when man is alive. It is this worldly achievement of an actual realism and can be had only through building up of Naam character, i.e. Jiwan-Mukta. “By lodging the Name in the mind is attained liberation while living”.

Guru Nanak rejects many tenets of then existing spiritual traditions. Guru Nanak recognizes not the concept of incarnation: For
Guru, God is both transcendent and immanent. He is the Creator and the world is His creation, which clearly implies that the religious man has to lead a life of creativity and activity. For Guru Nanak, there is only one true object of worship, only one God, that all other gods and goddesses are not just secondary but absolutely false. He says: “None is real, eternal; Neither deities nor demons nor humans; Neither Yogis, nor Yoga practitioner, nor earth itself. Thou Lord, alone art eternal; None but Thou32”. Again he says, “All of us being, under the earth shall go – Holy men, divines, kings; All must go; God alone shall abide. Thou Lord, alone art eternal; none but Thou33”. 

Guru Nanak does not regard this world as *maya* or an illusion but as real and recognizes the importance of virtuous deeds. In traditional Indian philosophy, *maya* occupies an important place, without which the process of phenomenal creation cannot take place, but to Guru *maya* is the veil, the scam over the surface of the pure sheet of water, the dust obscuring the surface of the mirror of the soul. Guru says: “True and holy are Thy continents and universes; True and holy are Thy worlds or the forms created by Thee34”. Again “Revile not the world for anything – by the Lord is it created35”. This world is the abode of truth and the true one resideth in it. Man is not a born sinner, he has the divine in him. Human life is the rare boon to attain individual
salvation, to attain the status of what Guru Nanak calls ‘sachiar’, a God-oriented person who does not live in the mystical bliss but maintains a state of sahaj or equipoise to bring about social transformation. It rejects the ideal of renunciation so fervently advocated by the Indian spiritual tradition.

Guru Nanak accords sanctity to the householder’s life and recognizes the role of woman as a mother, consort and the mistress of the household, for Sikhism recognizes the householder’s life as of prime importance. Woman is not given a secondary and inferior role as a temptress, an unholy vessel as is found in the Indian tradition. Indra seduces Ahilya, Gautma turns her into stone, Yudhishtra plays dice, Draupadi pays the price; Rama returns from exile to rule, Sita is forced to second exile. What justice to the mother of the human race? While Bhaktas shunned her as a temptress and Kabir believed her to be a cobra, Guru Nanak recognizes her creative and constructive role in effecting the social salvation which was the object of his divinely ordained mission. It was indeed a unique and revolutionary step on the stagnant spiritual scene.

It is difficult to accept Sikhism as a reformed version of Hinduism. The learned Jewish scholars have demonstrated that many or most of the sayings attributed to Jesus in the gospels are recorded
in Hebrew writings, as the saying of one or the other of the great rabbis, but this does not alter the fact that the structure of even primitive Christian thought is entirely distinct from that of Judaism. Whatever, Islam may have incorporated of earlier religious ideas, does not alter the fact that the religious attitudes expressed in and mediated by the Koran constituted a new and distinctive religious structure. Similarly, Sikhism may have been influenced by the existing traditions and religions, but the fact remains that it is an entirely a unique and revolutionary religion and “qualitatively different from Hinduism and other religions, philosophies and practices, both in metaphysical postulates and social dynamism\textsuperscript{36}.”

Guru Granth Sahib strongly suggests that Sikhism should be regarded as a new and separate world religion\textsuperscript{37} as it records the bani of the Gurus which is much more militant and sharp in social and political criticism. It also indicates the new process of reconstruction of religious thoughts stated by Guru Nanak which aimed at the spiritual rejuvenation, moral upliftment and social emancipation of people\textsuperscript{38}. Guru Nanak wanted to root out all the impurities associated with worship and belief. Sikhism is a revealed religion and Guru Nanak meant to carry out the specific command of the Lord, Who is the Perfection Incarnate. Guru Nanak, the Prophet was the messenger of
God, who uttered what he received from this court. He tells Bhai Lalo: “O’Lalo, as I do receive the word of God so do I pass it on to you." Again: “I say only that what you, my Lord, inspires me to say." Thus, Guru Nanak, a minstrel of the Almighty, a bard of the Omnipotent God, came as His messenger to dispel the gloom of falsehood and show the path of inner purity and peace. Thus, he founded a new structure which was based on Gurmat Advaita supported by new socio-religious aspects, morality, thinking and bhakti.

From the very beginning, Guru Nanak exposes the religious hypocrisy and spiritual cant of both the Hindus and the Muslims, for they were quite alien to the spiritual ideal of their spiritual peers. Guru Nanak refused to wear the sacred thread and wanted to break away from the Samskars of the Hindu social order. He kept himself away from Brahminism, formalism and ritualism of the Hindu society. He even went out to preach his mission in Muslim countries, where he had to eat their food and drink their water, a practice which was strictly forbidden by the Shashtras. He exhibits a revolutionary trend of mind ignoring the petty differences of caste and creed and chose a muslim bard Mardana as one of his companions during this period.

Thus Guru Nanak received the divine mandate to propagate naam and create a new panth, which enjoys a unique status in the spiritual
history of the Indian subcontinent. Bhai Gurdas has categorically stated, "The Guru's Panth is distinct, and cannot be mixed with others". It is fourth way of salvation, more instrumental and effective than any of the other three. The Panth was a different religion and "an instrument or a vehicle for giving practical shape to Guru Nanak's prophetic, unitary view of life" and that the Panth was meant to pursue "the twin purpose of the transformation of man and transformation of society".

Indian society was divided into two broad and significant compartments, the high and the low, the clean and the unclean, the godliness and the ghastliness. Guru Nanak wanted to replace this decadent self-destroying social order, with a social order which should be more vital in all spheres, one that fulfils the social, economic, intellectual and spiritual requirement. Guru Nanak had a clear social purpose in view and made a conscious effort and started his mission systematically. He suggested various ways and means in the form of institutions which were later organized by him during his life time. He realized, as Jagjit Singh says, that "A mere faith in any personal transcendental ethical God was not enough" and that "something more than that was needed" to ameliorate the masses. His objective was
the attainment of the goal of an ideal personality through the cultivation of the essential attributes of God.

He wanted to bring the social and cultural transformations and provided guidance and help to produce a new society. Guru like any other Bhaktas and Sants of medieval India, was not content to express his opprobrium against the rigid caste ideology of the day. He designed to create a social order, where egalitarianism and justice could prevail. He came across people of different castes, creeds and denomination and his cross-cultural experience convinced him that for the transformation of man and society, there was a need to build a response of faith in his disciples, not by issuing commandments, but actually showing them the path of salvation. For this an organization in the form of institutions was required, because without the support and strength of the institutions, no ideology would assume a concrete and practical shape and permeate into the human psyche as a true reflect.

Guru Nanak reinterpreted religion as a new way of life in which asceticism, monasticism and escapism found no place. He looked to the whole of a person and of his society with no distinction between sacral and natural spheres, between a person’s soul and his bodily life, between religious norms and social norms. He was of the view that religion must be capable of providing a harmonious life. He wanted to
bring overall change, a change from traditional society to a rational order. Guru Nanak felt that once rationality was established and innovation was accepted, all economic, social, spiritual, cultural, intellectual and political improvements would naturally follow. This was, in fact, the emancipation of mankind from a long and mostly irrational dark past. The rigid institutions were obstacles in the way. So he realized that to emancipate human mind, to open new path, to provide new opportunities, new institutions are to be set to help man to hasten the process. He gave new direction to man’s life and brought together the spiritual and the empirical realms of human existence into a healthy and harmonious whole. In Teja Singh’s words, “The religion Guru Nanak founded was not to remain content with the salvation of a few individuals. It had noble potentials in it which could help to organize itself as a world force and evolve as a living and energetic society for the upliftment of mankind”.

Guru Nanak laid down the foundation of the new religious and social institutions for the development and growth of his ideology. To implement the true cardinal principles, **kirat karo** (work), **naam japo** (worship) and **wand chhako** (sharing), he reorganized distinct socio-economic institutions. The most important feature of Sikh social life is dignity of labour, which was not much recognized in Hindu community.
where honest labour was looked down upon with more or less contempt. It gave birth to begging which affected the lives of its inhabitants. For Guru Nanak, cult of the work was more important than even meditation. When he settled at Kartarpur and put aside all garments of renunciation, he “found time” says Macauliffe “to attend to agriculture46”. Bhai Gurdas also writes: “Then Baba returns to Kartarpur where he put aside his attire of a recluse. He put on householder’s dress and sat splendidly on a cot47” and executed his mission.

Guru Nanak refuted the existing three margas of salvation: Gyan, Karma and Bhakti and advocated Naam marga. He set aside the authority of the Vedas: “Vedas and the Koran His mystery have not unravelled48”. Knowledge brings egoism or haumai, which is detrimental to spiritual evolution. Karma theory was also set aside by him as it promotes individualism. The notion of Karma teaches a Hindu that he is born in a particular sub-caste, because he deserves to be born there and is asked to accept his lot, while in Guru’s philosophy, Karma becomes absolutely extinguishable by the grace of God. In Japuji he says that by man’s action is acquired the vesture of human incarnation; by God’s grace is attained the door of liberation49. Again, Guru says, “Approval or rejection by God comes from each one’s
actions. Those who meditating on God have earned merit through hard endeavours – says Nanak – their faces are radiant with the divine light: many shall find release through them. Again he says, “Liberation from the bondage of transmigration comes by His grace. None in this can intercede.” Similarly for Guru Nanak, meditation alone could not help man attain higher life for the individual.

Guru Nanak thus emphasized Naam marga. His purpose was to make others perfect like Him. Guru says in Japuji, “Filth on hands, feet and body may with water be washed off; clothes fouled by dirt may with soap be washed; the mind, fouled by sin and evil, may only with devotion to God be cleansed.” Again: “By devotion to the Name is annulled suffering of birth and death; And liberation attained.” Guru also favoured sharing of the fruit of his labour with his neighbour and a Sikh should not accumulate wealth and exploit others for it. Guru took care that his creed should be well-defined and they should not be confused with beliefs and practices of other religions. To give practical shape to his vision, he established institutions so that a life-affirming, vital society could be organized in which people would live according to ideals laid by Nanak himself.

During his missionary travels wherever he went he suggested a methodology in the form of institutions through which man could raise
and enhance the quality of his life and could participate in the social life. He held regular congregations and asked his followers to form *Sangats*. It was a system in which each individual could work for his salvation along with like-minded individuals and this was indeed a call for unity on spiritual and social basis. *Sangat* was considered an embodiment of the Guru’s spirit, where efforts were made by the seeker to learn to contemplate in the din of the work-a-day world. The neophyte was prepared for corporate life and communion with the essence of reality and to overcome desire for worldly temptations. It brought a structural change in social and mental set up of man and a real brotherhood, based on egalitarian principles was created.

Guru also established *Dharmsal* as centre of a new society as the untouchables were denied access to temples. *Dharmsal* literally means a place for practice of Dharma and righteousness. Guru Nanak regards this world as *Dharmsala*: “The world is, in its essence a spiritual and moral order, i.e. *Dharmsal*”. He gave a congregational mode of worship in the *Dharmsal* in place of individual worship of Hindus. Thus, Guru Nanak prevented the social conflict in society and promoted the feeling of friendliness and goodwill. It shows that Guru Nanak was bent upon creating a society of men who would rise above their
individual limited existence. Guru left behind him Sangat with a place for regular or periodical socio-religious meetings of his group.

Guru also laid the foundation of Langar, which was in itself revolutionary in his times, where all could sit together to eat. It swept the old caste barrier and the concept of pollution. Guru Nanak used the term 'Deg' in Guru Granth Sahib to denote the infinite generosity of earth, that sustains and nourishes every creature living on it. Guru made these free kitchens open to all and became a succour of the destitute. It also provided an avenue for sewa, which is an essential institution. Bhai Gurdas says: “Guru Nanak put the prince and the pauper on the same footing and propagated the rule of humility in the world.” Thus Guru Nanak envisioned an egalitarian order with its distinct organization and institutions to bring equality among the masses and promised them a spiritual perspective where men could walk like angels on the earth with a distinct spiritual identity of their own.

Finally, Guru started the institution of succession, for he knew his ideals required to be nurtured, motivated and developed. Guru was essential as it provided the spiritual knowledge to an individual and dispel darkness from his mind. Being a teacher, he wanted his disciples to be guided. As the seeker required special efforts and training for the
practice of Naam and it was Guru who could indicate the path of supreme bliss. Guru could initiate him and recommend constant repetition of the divine Naam. Guru Nanak says: “None else His state and extent knows – without guidance of the Master comes not such realization.\textsuperscript{56}” Again: “By grace of the holy preceptor are discovered in the self, Treasure-houses of jewels, without the masters guidance none has these obtained.\textsuperscript{57}”

Guru Nanak, thus, identified the task and created institutions and entrusted his task to a successor so that a proper and functional organization could be developed. His successor was to devise practical responses according to the gravity of the challenges. Guru Nanak’s twin mission of spreading Naam and establishing Panth was carried on by his successors till it culminated in the emergence of the Khalsa. It was a mission of setting a new social order, based on revolutionary lines, opposed to the existing religious systems and their otiose traditions. Guru Nanak set up institutions diametrically opposed to the existing ones and handed over his missionary obligations to his successor whom he christened ‘Angad’ a part of his ownself, and thus appointed his successor to carry on the activities and run institutions established by him. Thus, “the revolutionary factor of Sikhism is contained in its institutions.\textsuperscript{58}”
With these institutions Guru Nanak reconstructed the society and made men truthful, pure and co-operative. Institutions also provided new dimensions to the religion as it clearly defines that Sikh goal is not merely a mystical quest, but it “must fulfil its obligatory social function... It must uplift man both individually and socially and enable him to grapple with the practical issues of life⁵⁹”. Thus, institutions cater to the individual and the corporate, for in Sikhism, individual salvation alone is not enough. Social emancipation is more important than personal liberation.

The religious institutions created by Guru Nanak have proved of lasting significance in the history of India. While other Bhakta sects ultimately lost their sway and their identity in Hinduism, Sikhism acquired a distinct identity as a religion because of its distinct and original institutions. Thus Guru Nanak “presented a religion totally unaffected by Semitic or Christian influences. Based on the concept of the unity of God, it rejected Hindu formalism and adopted an independent ethical system, rituals and standards which were totally opposed to the theoretical beliefs of Guru Nanak’s age and country⁶⁰”

In the context of Guru Nanak’s mission and message, Sikh institutions acquire prime significance for their originality and
revolutionary nature, and, therefore, form the purpose of the present study. These institutions, therefore, are the major thematic concerns of the next chapter.
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