The present study of the topic entitled "The Concepts of Karma and Transmigration as revealed in the poetry of Guru Nanak in the background of ancient and medieval Indian thought" leads us to the following conclusions:

1. The first rudiments of the doctrine of Karma and transmigration can be traced out, to some extent, in the early Vedic literature. But it cannot be presumed that the doctrine of transmigration owes its origin and early growth to Indian soil. The concept had been prevalent among the primitive civilizations, stretched in many parts of the world. How it began and where, no body knows. It can be stated undoubtedly that:

(a) The theory of transmigration is much more ancient in its primitive form, than the Vedic period, which ranges from 3000 B.C. to 1500 B.C.

(b) The concept is not developed in the philosophy of any other civilization in the world, till the early Vedic literature emerges.

(c) No ancient civilization has developed this doctrine to such a systematic and complete form, as it is developed in the Indian philosophy. This way the concept of transmigration occupies a unique place in the Indian philosophical thought.

2. The doctrine of Karma and transmigration are found fully developed in the 'Upanishadic Philosophy'. The 'Samhita' portion of the Vedas reveals the first seed of the law of Karma,
in the form of prayers, sacrificial ceremonies and rituals.
The conception of 'Ritam' with its controller, the god 'Varuna',
plays a very important role in shaping the religious, moral
and social life of the people. In the period of 'Brahmanas',
the Vedic rituals grow complicated and the people are grossly
absorbed in 'Karma-Kanda'. They believe that the sacrifice,
when performed with perfect accuracy is sure to produce the
desired effect in this life or hereafter. The 'Upanishads'
react strongly against the outwardly rituals and sacrifices
of the 'Brahmanas', and assert that it is not the sacrifice
but the deeds that would effect the life of a man. The law
of Karma as operates in the 'Upanishads' is that 'nothing
can happen without a sufficient cause in the moral as in the
physical world - that each life with its pains and pleasures,
is the necessary result of the actions of past lives and
becomes in its turn the cause, through its own activities,
of future births.'

According to 'Upanishads', the doctrine of trans-
migration of souls is a belief that the soul passes at death
into another body whose character is determined by its former
deeds.

3. Jainism gives a new interpretation to the concept of
Karma. Karma, according to Jainism, is of material nature
(Padgalika). The particles of the subtle matter, when come
into contact with the soul, form Karmas. These Karmas then
build up a special body called 'Karma-sarira'. The 'Karma-
sarira' does not leave the soul till its final emancipation.
The soul, according to Jainism, is not a substance of limited
size. It expands or contracts depending upon the body in which
it is corporate. Jainism believes that the liberation or 'Nirvana' can only be achieved on the human plane.

4. Buddhism denies the existence of God and soul. Here, it is the law of Karma, that performs the function of God. The law of Karma is the law of cause and effect - that every thing that happens is the result of a previous cause and will itself cause a further result and so on. Karma is the link between one life and another. After the death of any being, whether human or not, there remains nothing at all but the being's Karma only. When a being dies, a new being is born and inherits his Karmas. What transmigrates is not a person but his Karmas.

The final beatitude in Buddhism is known as 'Nirvana'. It means the extinction of Karmas and the extinction of the cycle of births and deaths. In Buddhism, the last thought of the dying is considered most important, as it affects the next birth.

5. In 'Bhagavad Gita', Karma assumes more or less an ethical aspect of life. To follow the law of Karma, a stress on three points is laid down.

(a) Desireless action.
(b) The dedication of all the actions to God.
(c) Surrendering oneself to God, body and soul.

Karma, in 'Gita', is said to be beginningless and the exact manner how it works is hard to understand.

'Gita' believes in rebirth. The final emancipation from births and rebirths is reached only when all the types of Karmas, i.e. 'Sanchit', 'Prarabdha' and 'Kriyaman' are exhausted.
In 'Gītā', the last thought of the dying receives great importance.

6. 'Pūrva Mimāṃsa' rejects the notion of God and believes in the infallibility of the Vedas. The law of Karma works in 'Mimāṃsa' in an autonomous way. The performance of sacrifices generates an unseen potency (apūrva) in the self which generates their fruits without the intervention of God. The 'apūrva' is the link between the act and its fruit.

'Mimāṃsa' divided all actions into three kinds, i.e. obligatory, optional and prohibited. 'Mimāṃsa' considers that Karma is the cause of bondage. When the cause is removed, the effect also ceases to exist.

7. The exponents of 'Vedanta' accept the concepts of Karma and transmigration. But from moral and ethical point of view, they provide different interpretation to the concept of Karma. Sankara thinks Karma as the product of 'avidya' or wrong knowledge. We are born into this world according to the deeds done by us in our previous lives. The process of getting successive organism on the basis of Karma goes on until perfect knowledge is gained. Sankara believes that liberation cannot be achieved through Karmas. Ramanuja considers Bhakti as the only means of attaining liberation. He holds that God's Grace is necessary to achieve the real goal. Ramanuja describes action as manifold. They are the daily (nitya), the accidental (naimittika), the desired (kāmya) and the prohibited (pratisidha). Madhva says that Karma is to be performed without any desire or fruit. Like Ramanuja, he also stresses upon Bhakti and the Grace of God. Nimbarka holds that human individuals undergo experiences in accordance with their past conduct. According
to Nimbarka, there is no ‘Jivan-Mukti’. Release is only possible after death. Vallabha divides human beings into three categories and thinks the Grace of God as necessary for attaining perfection.

8. Islam believes that a man is born on this earth only but once. It believes in the Day of Judgment. It has a firm belief in the eternal soul, i.e. the life after death. The idea of future life, in Islam, is founded on the belief that in a state of existence hereafter, every human being will have to render an account of his actions and that the happiness or misery of an individual will depend upon the manner in which he has performed the behests of his Creator. The doctrine of Karma (action) has got nothing to do with the concept of transmigration.

The Sufis do not follow strictly the Islamic ideology in respect of the concept of transmigration. There are Sufis, like ‘Jallaluddin Rumi’, who believe in the concept of transmigration.

9. (a) Guru Nanak accepts the concept of Karma, as a fundamental principle, but he gives a different interpretation to it from that we find in Buddhism and Jainism. The law is, ‘that one soweth that one reapeth’ and ‘man’s own actions make him, what he is’. But Guru Nanak has modified the doctrine into two directions. Firstly the efforts of the individual self are necessary for improving his condition and secondly, Karma can be rectified or made ineffective by the Grace of God.

(b) How did Karma begin? Guru Nanak explains that at the time of creation, it is God, who created the first cause
of Karma. He is the Controller of Karma. The law of Karma works only through the power of All-pervading Consciousness.

10. (a) In the poetry of Guru Nanak, Karma is stated to be of two kinds: higher Karmas and lower Karmas. Lower Karma (Karma-Kanda) has been rejected by the Guru. He lays emphasis only on those Karmas which lead us to the realization of 'Brahman'. The higher or meritorious Karmas, that bring release, are 'Harikirti' Karmas (to sing the praises of the Lord), 'Adhyatam' (religious) Karmas, and 'Huka Rasai' Karmas (actions dedicated to God). The lower or demeritorious Karmas, that cause bondage, are 'Karma-Kanda' (conventional Karmas), Svo Karmas or self-willed actions and 'Triguna' (Satas, Rajas and Tamas) Karmas.

(b) Guru Nanak states that God is the Creator of Karma and He too is its destroyer. Karma ceases only by the Grace of God. 'A man takes birth because of his Karmas, but gets final emancipation by the grace of the Lord.'

11. (a) Guru Nanak affirms his belief in the concept of transmigration. As against Buddhism, he accepts the existence and immortality of soul. He does not keep the law of Karma apart from the concept of transmigration, as we find in the ancient Greek thought. One-birth theory of Christianity and Islam has not been approved by Guru Nanak. He has not expressed his belief in the Day of Judgment. He has accepted the doctrines of Karma and transmigration, with the modification that the performance of Karmas do not bring the final beatitude. It is only by the Grace of God, that a soul (Jiva) exhausts all of his Karmas, ends the wheel of transmigration and gets final emancipation. Guru Nanak
supports the Hindu view of transmigration that a man has passed through millions of births on various places of existence, such as stones, plants, animals, birds etc. And his birth in the human form is the highest point of his perfection.

(b) Explaining the mysteries of future life, Guru Nanak says that no body knows how death takes place. He simply affirms that 'Jīvatma' (soul) is eternal but the 'Jīva' is tied by illusion and worldly attachment.

(c) Guru Nanak does not believe in heaven and hell as places of bliss or torture, where people go after their deaths to reap the fruits of their actions. The references to heaven and hell, in his poetry, carry symbolic meanings. Likewise the reference to 'Chitra', 'Gutta' and 'Karamraj' is also symbolic.

(d) According to Guru Nanak, the transmigration of soul comes to an end by the following means:

(i) By remembering the Name of the Lord;

(ii) By taking refuge with the Guru and dwelling upon his word;

(iii) By the service of the Lord;

(iv) By destroying ego and becoming God-oriented.

(v) By the Grace of God.

12. The most important problem in the entire law of Karma is, whether a man is free to act according to his own will or his actions are determined and he is never free to act independently. According to Guru Nanak, man is partly free and partly determined. Man is free to choose and act to a certain extent and to that extent only he is morally
responsible for his actions.

13. There is no contradiction between the idea of Divine Grace and the operation of the Law of Karma. Guru Nanak provides a compromise which does accord a necessary place to Karma and specifies grace as the ultimate determinant. In a significant line from 'Japji', Guru Nanak speaks of Karma and Grace.

'The body takes its birth because of Karmas,

But the salvation is attained through the grace

(of the Lord).

14. Guru Nanak emphatically condemns not only the caste distinctions, but also the religious distinctions. According to him, there is only one religion of all the mankind. The caste and other distinctions are man made only. No body's caste would be taken into account hereafter. He stresses the point that it is not the caste but the Karmas that make a man 'Brahmin' or 'Kshatriya'.

To give a practical shape to the concept of casteless and classless ideal society, Guru Nanak established the institution of 'Sat Sangat' (Holy Congregation), provided equal status to woman, preached the brotherhood of man and fatherhood of God, and propagated the principle of 'Nam Japo' (remember the Name of the Lord), 'Kirt Karo' (do honest labour for a living) and 'And Chhako' (share the earnings with others).