Chapter III


Sikhism, founded by Guru Nanak (A.D. 1469-1538), is the youngest and most modern religion of the world. In the long history of religious thought of the world, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam occupy a prominent place. These religions have distinctly developed their own metaphysics, i.e. the concepts of Godhead, Universe and Soul; and they have formulated their own codes of ethics. Guru Nanak has accepted some of the doctrines expounded by other religions, like Karma and transmigration, Bhakti and Salvation, the One absolute God; and rejected others which were out of harmony with an integrated view of life, like Idolatry, Caste, Priesthood of the Brahmins, Asceticism, and renunciation. The doctrines accepted by Guru Nanak of other religions, mentioned above, do not come down in Sikhism in the same form, but they have been enlarged, modified in deepening their meaning, thus arising to an original and new interpretation. To some scholars of Indian Philosophy, the faith of Guru Nanak was a mixture of Mohammedian, Buddhist and Hindu ideas. Frederic Pincott remarks that 'like the Mohammedians, Nanak taught that the great name of God was an efficacious instrument of the saving grace; like the Buddhist, he held that the attainment of Nirvana, or eternal passionless repose, was the highest and final reward of virtue, like the Sufis, he believed that each soul was an
immortal ray of life from the Supreme; and like the Hindus he thought that the quintessence of all doctrines rested in a realization of the formula 'so hum' (I am that).

By the time, Guru Nanak started his mission of preaching universal brotherhood, the Muslim philosophical thought had already crept into the domain of Hindu religious life. For the last five centuries, the Muslims were pouring into the Indian soil with the notion of establishing a stable Muslim Dominion, and subsequently making this land a permanent home for them. The Muslim political authority, in power at the time of Guru Nanak, and Sufi saints, were preaching to the people, the ideals and way of life enjoined by in the Qur'an. There was a lot of conflict between the ideology, preached by Muslims, and the principles adhered to in the Hindu religious life. The Hindu was an idol worshipper, whereas the Muslim was an idol breaker. As a result of which there prevailed ill-will between these two major creeds. The Hindu population, by its own socio-religious conditions, had already split up into many sects. People were divided into four castes. The life was measured into four separate 'Ashramas' or stages, i.e. 'Brahmacharya', 'Garasthaya', 'Vanaprasthya', and 'Sannyasa'. The 'sanyasis', the 'Yogis' had their own different paths. The exponents of the six systems of Indian Philosophy had created a confusion in the minds of the people regarding their attitude towards God, and the ways and means to be adopted for attaining

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1. Religion of the Sikhs - A Symposium, p. 74.
perfection. while portraying the scene of both the societies, existed at the time of Guru Nanak, Bhai Gurdas says:

"There are four castes of Hindus and four sects of Muslims in the world;

Jealousy and ego result in mutual bickerings and use of force;

The 'Ganges' and 'Banaras' belong to Hindus and 'Mecca' and 'Kasba' belong to Muslims;

The Muslims perform 'Summat' and the Hindus wear the sacred thread and instil a mark on the forehead;

The Hindus name God as 'Rahim' and Muslims as 'Rahim';

The Lord is the same but both the communities have gone astray;

They have forgotten 'Vedas' and 'Khitars' and have fallen into the Satan's snare of greed and worldly attachment;

The truth has been left over. The 'Brahmins' and 'Maulanas' quarrel and destroy themselves;

They cannot thus escape transmigration".

The people in general, were devoid of all the virtues and had become the victims of the evils. The Guru has given a description in his poetry, in this regard. He says:

"The subjects are blind without knowledge; they are like corpses full of fire;

The wise ones dance and play on musical instruments, they decorate their bodies; 

They make loud conversations and sing their thoughts about the heroes; 

The foolish 'Pandits' have the wisdom of arguments and love the accumulation of wealth.

2. Bhai Gurdas, Var-1, Pauri. 81,
The virtuous ones practise virtues but get no reward; they ask for the gate of salvation.

They are called ascetics, but do not know the method; they leave their hearths and homes.

Every one is perfect by himself, none calls himself deficient.

The weight of honour is put in the balance, saith Nanak, and then by weighing in it, it is known what man is worth". 3.

And again the religious degeneration of the times has been portrayed by Guru Nanak in the following verses:

"The Muslims Judge (Qadi) tells lies and accepts bride,
The 'Brahmin' bathes but kills beings,
The 'Yogi' is blind and does not know the practice of 'yoga',
All the three are bondage for leading astray". 4

The description, given above, in the words of Bhai Gurdas and Guru Nanak, stresses the point that the religious life at the time of Guru Nanak had become polluted, superstitious, outwardly and ritualistic. Outward observance of the religious ceremonies were preferred to the spiritual development of the inner self. Thus Guru Nanak was confronted with two-fold problem; firstly, to expose the uselessness of the external religious rites and practices like fast, pilgrimage, idol-worship, wearing of thread (Janaū) circumcision etc.; and secondly, to awaken the people into the faith-in-God, by shedding off all the immoral attitude of life. Apart from the 'Yogis', the 'Siddhas' and the Ascetics, Guru Nanak had the audience of the people of two different

religions i.e. Hinduism and Islam. In Guru Nanak's poetry, we see both the trends of teaching concerning moral uplift of the people. Addressing Hindus, he would stress upon doing good deeds and meditate upon Him to end the wheel of transmigration; and to Muslims, he would lay emphasis on performing virtuous actions in this life, which in return, would help them favourably, hereafter. To become a good Hindu or good Muslim, requires certain qualities like love, purity, contentment, faith, to be developed in human character. On the other hand, they were required to shed off all the empty and conventional formalism. Guru Nanak, in his poetry, has addressed to Hindus and Muslims as under:

"Brahmin is he who knows Brahman, and practises japa, and restraint to that end, and firmly sticks to the vow of contentment and good temper. He breaks all bonds and gets emancipation". 5.

"Brahmin is he who bathes in the knowledge of Brahman, and worship God with leaves of virtue". 6.

To become a good Brahmin, Guru Nanak emphasised:

"The body is the Brahmin, the mind the dhoti, Onsite the sacred thread; meditation the kasha-ring". 7.

And to Muslims the Guru said:

"It is not easy to be called a Musalman. If there were one let him be so known. He should first take to his heart the tenets of his faith and purge himself of all pride. He will be a Musalman who pursues the path shown by the founder of the creed, who extinguishes anxiety about life and death, who accepts the will of God as supreme, who has faith in the Creator and surrender himself to the Almighty. When he has established his good will for all, O Nanak, will he be called a Musalman". 8.

And again:

"Let compassion be thy mosque, faith thy prayer, and honest living thy Quran;

Humility thy circumcision and good conduct thy fast; thus dost thou become a true Muslim.

Let pious works be thy 'Kaseba', Truth thy 'Pir' (teacher) good actions thy prayer;

And acceptance of His will thy rosary; thus will the Lord give thee honour.

Thou sayest thy prayers five times a day and givest them five maes.

Let Truth be thy first prayer, honest living the second and working for the well of all, the third.

Let good intentions of thy mind be the fourth prayer and the praises of the Lord the fifth.

Say thou the prayer of good deeds and thus become thou a true Muslim.

All the rest are false Muslims and they achieve nothing but falsehood". 9.

Guru Nanak, as is revealed from his poetry, has a belief in the doctrines of Karma and rebirths, but he did not go too far with regards to the details of these concepts, and their philosophical backgrounds. We just find quite a number of references to this effect. In fact the aim of the poetry of Guru Nanak is not so much to reach philosophical truth, as to bring peace and harmony to the anxious human spirit. In devotion and love to God, Guru Nanak sings the praises of the Lord. Philosophical speculations, is not the sole motive of Guru Nanak, yet the solutions of metaphysical questions are put forth in the form of dialogues (as in Sidha Goshti) and in general.

9. Var Majh K-1, p. 141
The concept of Karma, as discussed in the poetry of Guru Nanak, made departure from the existing line of thought prevalent in Hinduism and Buddhism. The Buddhist doctrine of Karma differs from the Hindu and Sikh tenets of Karma. In Buddhism the law of Karma is the stern controller of the lives of human beings, and occupies the place of Providence. In this religion, the effect of the act, once done, can not be destroyed until it has borne its result. No power of nature can stop it from yielding its result. In Hindu philosophy, in general, the effect of some acts can be averted. But according to the teaching of Sikh Gurus, all actions can be rendered harmless.

The vital difference between the Buddhist philosophy of Karma on the one hand and Sikh doctrine on the other, lies in this - while the Buddhist do not believe in a soul and the actions done in a life, transmigrate from birth to birth in the form of character or 'Skandhas', both the Hindus and Sikhs believe in an immortal soul which causes the continuity and establishes the link in the successive lives. Mainly the law of Karma, in Sikhism, is modified into two directions. Firstly the efforts of the individual self are necessary for improving his condition. Guru Nanak says, 'They who toil to earn their living and then share the earnings with others are the people who find the true way'. The law of Karma should not lead him to the state of renunciation, as in Buddhism and to passivity.

as found in the thought of Sankara. Secondly, Karma can be rectified or made ineffective by prayer and Grace of God.

Guru Nanak put forth his belief that, "myriads of our sins are effaced by Thine in an instant". Prayer and other spiritual efforts are counter-actions in the field of Karma. They (prayer and grace) help in neutralising the previous Karma.

Guru Nanak says in Raga Majh, "No count of the Karma of a person can one speak of whom the Lord Himself hath blessed".

And again "Nanak, he whom He blesseth is not asked to render account".

The origin of Karma:

How did Karma begin?, is the question posed prominently in the Sikh scriptures. Bhakt Kabir argues, "if thou sayest the soul is subject to Karma, who gave Karma to the soul". And saint Namdev says, "when there were no 'ashastras', no 'Vedas', from where did emerge the Karma".

Guru Nanak, while explaining the concept of Creation, in one of his famous hymns, tells us that it was God's Will that created Karma in the beginning. In Raga Maru the Guru says, "for countless ages there was darkness all around. There was neither earth nor sky. There was neither day, nor night, nor sun, nor moon. He was in abstract meditation. There was none of the four sources of life, no kind of speech, no air, no water, no life, no death, no transmigration — There was no

14. Raga Majh; M-1, p. 143.
15. Ibid. p. 143.
'Brahma', 'Vishnu' or 'Shiva'. There was none except Him, no man, no women, no distinction of caste and birth, no comfort and no agony — There was no 'Brahmin', no 'Kshatriya', no god, no temple. — no sacrifice, no bathing at holy places, no guide for worship .... There were no 'Vedas', no 'Kitebs' (Hebrew scriptures), no 'Smritis', no 'Shastras', no reading of 'Puranas'...... When it was His Will, He caused the Universe without any support ..... He created 'Brahma', 'Vishnu' and 'Shiva' and augmented the attachment of 'Maya'. He created ten 'Avatars' (incarnations) from the void and made Himself manifested through the Universe. He created gods, demons, human beings and placed them under the writ of karma.

It is clear that the first cause of action was created by God Himself. He is the controller of Karma (Karmayadbaksh). We may not be able to understand, how it all happened but the hard fact remains that human being does not find himself caught in the net of Karma, as a result of which the cycle of births and rebirths continues. This wheel of transmigration cannot come to a stay, unless he gets release. It is God Himself only who is above Karma.

Guru Nanak did not accept this view that the life was sinful in its origin. On the contrary he believed that man had emanated from the Pure source, and therefore, could
have no past Karma at the beginning of his coming into being. How the Jīva was caught into the fold of Karma, remarks Dr. Trilochan Singh, in his book, The Religion of Guru Nanak', that 'so long as he was conscious of his spiritual origin, and so long as he lived understanding his true spiritual nature, there was no cycle of births and deaths for him and there was no wheel of Karma. Karma originated for each individual when he lost consciousness and his spiritual destiny and became the victim of his egoistic will. The farther away he goes from God, the greater are his entanglements and sorrows of transmigration from one creature to another'.

The law of Karma, as accepted by Guru Nanak, is that 'man's own actions make him what he is', 'what one soweth that one reapeth'. If he sows evil, he must reap evil and become evil. The Guru says, 'The good and the bad a man doeth, he himself reapeth the fruit thereof'. The man himself is held responsible for the actions he has done, and he cannot blame others.

"Why blame others? I must blame my own deeds for, I have got the fruit of what I had sown. No, others must never be blamed for what befalleth me". 28.

Every act is followed by consequences which also have a suitable reaction on the character and disposition of the performer of the act. The Guru says, "O, my mind, thou

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26. Subh, M-1, 1930
27. Asa M-1, p. 470.
hearest the consequences of thine own acts". And, "As one doeth, so one is rewarded; as one soweth so one reapeth".

As regards the nature of the doctrine of Karma, there are two ideas lying at the root of its function. Firstly, that deeds shape the character of a man and secondly some sort of continuity in life is required for its working. As the effects of action may not be exhausted in one life, they logically, require as many further lives as may be needed to be worked off. Guru Nanak, as well as the other exponents of the major religious systems of the world, except Buddhism, believe in the continuity of the soul after its life in this world. As far Buddhism, it compensates the no-soul theory by the law of Karma itself. In this school of thought, it is not the soul but 'Kandhas' that form a link between different lives. Guru Nanak has a firm belief in the immortality of the soul.

Thus the law of Karma cannot stop operating at any time not even after death, for the death causes only body to break up, leaving the soul to survive. Just as our present life is the result of our past Karma, the present Karma, as well as the past accumulated Karmas (Sanhit) will determine our future life. It means every act good or bad, has its effect on the door in shaping his character and further development. An action leaves behind an impression.

32. Vadhanas M-1, p. 579.
... by repeating the same action over and over again, the impression changes into habit, which in due course becomes a part of one's nature. In this way our past Karma influences our present actions. Guru Nanak says:

"Mind is the paper and our actions the ink. Virtue and vice are the two writings inscribed thereon. We are driven unto paths determined by our past Karma". 34.

The moral effects of one's doings are thus worked up in the character of the self. The desire to commit an act enters the mind spontaneously, even against one's will, which becomes too weak to resist, because of the previous impressions.

For instance, a person who takes to alcoholic drinks, habitually does it in obedience to an element in his nature over which he has lost control. Even when he realises the evil effects of drinking and resolves to give up the habit, it will on the slightest temptation, overpower him and make him a helpless victim before it. Thus each man is what he is because of his Karmanas. He himself is responsible for what he is and also for what he will become. Guru Nanak says: "written has been prepared according to our own deeds. No order can as change it, we read/it is written, none can deface it".

"Oh, dear friend, the record of one's deeds cannot be effaced; remember, these deeds are recorded by God". 37.

33. Dr. Bhai Jodh Singh: Gurmukh Nirman, p. 251.
34. Maru M-1, p. 290.
36. Asa M-1, P. 389.
"Who can erase the writ of my Karma? What do I know as to, what will be my lot in the yond?" 38-43.

The doctrine of Karma is a counter-part of the Universal law of causation. It is generally held by the scientist all over the world, that the law which governs all actions and events is the Universal law of causation. It means that there can be no event or effect without a cause. The law of causation, so far has been limited to the physical world. It is believed that the physical effect is the result of a physical cause. But the law of Karma has a wider base. It covers the range of all actions in the universe, physical or mental, performed by human or non-human beings. In Sikhism, it is believed that Karma itself is not capable of producing its retribution. It is the Will of God that controls the fruits of Karma. The law of Karma works only through the power of All-pervading Consciousness. God Himself is the creator of cause and effect. Guru Nanak says:

"By His will you created the souls, By the same Will they are exalted.

High and low exist through His Will; they experience joy and sorrow as decreed by Him.

His Will bestows grace on some (and they get salvation) others are ever made to wander (in transmigration) by the same Will. 46.

30. Vadhan M-1, p. 564.
32. Var Gujri M-3, p. 509.
33. Vadhan M-1, p. 832.
34. Dr. Bhai Jodh Singh; Gurmat Nirnay; p. 232.
35. Sikk Sheskriti M-1, p. 1383.
And again,

"By His decree all souls come into existence and they engage in activity.

By His decree they are subject to death and according to His decree they are merged in Truth". 47.

Although the law of Karma operates through His Divine Will, yet His pen flows in terms of one’s own Karma.

The Guru says,

"He caused all to work in His Will, but His pen floweth in terms of one’s own Karma, because the Lord is True, His Glory is True and His Court is True". 48.

**Division of Karmas**

The classification of Karma can be made according to its different relations either to time or purpose, or nature or quality or result. Under the first head (time) Karma may be divided into three categories.

1. 'Sanchit' - (Past - static and accumulated)

2. 'Prārabdha' - (dynamic and the blossoming forth of past actions).

3. 'Kriyānā' - (Actions which are being performed or again in the present).

The Karma which is ripe for reaping is called 'Prārabdha'.

All the stored up Karmas of so many previous births including those of the present life, which have not yet borne fruit, are known as 'Sanchit' or accumulated Karmas. Some of the 'Sanchit' karmas, which are in the process of blooming forth, are known as 'Prārabdha'.

47. Sri Raga, N-1, p. 85.
48. Sarang, N-1, p. 1241.
The difference between the 'Sanchit' and 'Prarabdh' Karma is only with regard to the time of their fruition. Both these types of Karma pertain to the past. The Karmas that we are doing in the present are known as 'Kriyaman'. But each 'Kriyaman' after being performed will naturally be added to the store of 'Sanchit' Karma.

According to 'Bhagavad Gita', Karma can be divided into three categories.

1. Karma
2. Vikarma
3. Akarma

Karma means action, 'Vikarma' refers to selflessness and non-attachment in action. 'Akarma' means no action. As soon as Karma becomes 'Vikarma', it automatically converts itself into an 'Akarma' or no action and ceases to have the effect of a Karma which binds. Gita says, "He who sees the inaction that is in action and the action that is in inaction is wise indeed".

The Karmas can also be divided into two kinds, according to its aim or purpose.

1. Karmas: those undertaken for securing a desired result (karma)
2. Karmas: those done merely as a matter of duty (nitya-nalmithika) and without a conscious desire for reward.

The second type of Karma are considered the superior Karmas as these facilitate an approach to 'Moksha'. According to the poetry of Guru Nanak, the main division of Karma is made

50. Gita 4.17.
51. Gita 4.10.
52. Dr. Chandrakar Sharma, A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy, p. 236.
into two classes.

1. Higher Karmas
2. Lower Karmas.

Lower Karma (Karma Kanda) has been rejected by the Sikh Gurus. They lay emphasis only on those karmas, which lead us to the realization of 'Brahman'.

From ethical point of view, Karmas are of two types—good or bad; virtuous or sinful.* Guru Nanak says,

"Out of His Absolute self came the five elements,
And of them was assembled the body and one practised deeds,
And good and bad were krit on the forehead of the man,
And the seeds of virtue and sin were sown".

And again,

"Mind is the paper, actions are ink; good and bad effects are both recorded therewith". 55.

Karmas can again be divided, broadly, into two categories.

1. Karmas: which are being performed by the human beings. (Individual Karma)
2. Karmas: which are beyond the power of human beings. (Phenomenal Karma).

As far as phenomenal actions are concerned, God's 'Hukm' (Divine Will) prevails upon them all. Earth, space, planets, Sun, Moon, water, air, fire, etc. all those are busy in their respective activities under the guidance of Supreme

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53. Dr. S.S. Kohli, Outlines of Sikh Thought, p. 51.
54. Maru K-1, Sikhaw 17, p. 1038.
Divine Will. Guru Nanak says,

"Through fear of Him, the wind blows,
Through fear of Him, lakhs of rivers flow,
Through fear of Him, labours the fire,
Through fear of Him, the earth remains over burdened,
Through fear of Him, stands Yama at His gate,
Through fear of Him, move the sun and moon,
They traverse millions of miles, with no end,
Under His fear are 'Sidhas', 'Buddhas', gods and 'Nathas',
Under His fear, the skies have spread,
Under His fear are warriors and brave people,
Under His fear, multitudes come and go.
All are under His fear, with the writing on the forehead.

Only one, True and Formless, is Fearless, saith Nanak".

For making detailed study into the analysis of Karma, all the Karmas performed by the human beings, may be divided into two parts.

1. Demeritorious Karmas or Karmas that cause Bondage;
2. Meritorious Karmas or Karmas that bring Release;

Demeritorious Karmas may be divided into three sub-parts:
1. 'Karma Kanda';
2. Ego Karmas or self-willed actions.
3. 'Triguni' ('sattas', 'rajas', and 'tamas') Karmas.

66. Asa K-1, p. 464
Meritorious Karmas may also be divided into three sub-parts:

1. 'Hari-Kirat' Karma (to sing praises of the Lord)
2. 'Adhyatma' (Religious) Karma.
3. 'Nahn Rasai' Karma (Actions dedicated to God).

'Karma-Kanda' (Conventional formalism)

'Karma Kanda', actually means a section of the 'Vedas', dwelling mainly on rituals. The Karmas placed under the fold of this section, pertain generally to the religious side of man's life. Right from the period of 'Vedas' to this day, Hindus believe in some external rituals and ceremonies, which according to them help in purifying the mind and leading to spiritual growth. In the 'Vedas' and 'Brahmanas', we find a large number of rites, rituals, sacrifices, prayers and ceremonies, which were being observed by the people of the age. The essence of these formal activities, was not as to reach the Truth, but simple worldly profits, i.e. to crush one's enemy, to avert misfortunes in this life, to gain power over others, to seek pleasure and health of the children and to avoid the wrath of the supernatural powers, which were considered as the gods. Some magic rites were also in vogue since the days of 'Atharva Veda' and in later period practised by the 'Tantras'. 'Purva Mimansa', one of the six systems of Indian Philosophy, has based its entire thesis on the ground

of ritualism. Nature forces like Sun, Moon, planets, fire, water, air and earth were worshipped as the gods. Certain trees, herbs, grass, flowers and stones were considered holy. The mountains like the ‘Himalayas’ or the ‘Vindhyas’, and rivers like the ‘Ganges’, the ‘Jamuna’, the ‘Godavari’, the ‘Sarasvati’, the ‘Narmada’, the ‘Indus’ (Sindhu) and the ‘Cauvery’ were (and even now are) considered sacred by the Hindus. Even the cities like Benaras, Allahabad, Hardwar, Brindaban, Ayodhya, Dwarka, Puri etc., became the holy places for pilgrimage.

At the time Guru Nanak appeared on the scene in the fifteenth century, the Indian society was divided, mainly, into two parts; one representing the Hindu culture and the other representing the Semitic culture. The Hindu society, again, was split up into several cults like the ‘Vaishnavites’, the ‘Gurbishtis’, the ‘Tantrists’, the ‘Sannyasis’, the ‘Yogis’ and the ‘Siddhas’. Having different beliefs and practices, they were engaged in preaching their own way of life by practising certain rituals and ceremonies. The conventional formalism had lost the inner significance of purity of mind and spiritual advancement and had become merely a hoax.

Without having any hatred and enmity with any religious sect, Guru Nanak courageously spoke and preached the futility of Karma Kanda. In his views, it is got the outward form but inner truth that matters. He spoke to the

\[\text{Ramkali M-1, p. 961.} \]
'Vaishnavite', the 'Shaivite', the 'Tantrist', the 'Sannyasi' and the 'Yogi', the 'Pandit' and the 'Mullah', the 'Jain' and the 'Siddha'. Exposing the hollowness of Karma Kanda, widely prevalent among the different religions at the time, Guru Nanak said, 'When a Hindu comes to join the Hindu fold, they recite certain 'mantras' and put a cotton thread round his neck. But after investiture if he commits evil deeds, his washings and ablutions will stand him in no stead. A Mohammedan praises his own creed, and says without believing in the great Prophet none will get any place (in His Court). But very few follow the path indicated by him.

None will enter paradise without good deeds.

"In the house of 'Yogis' they point out the way and for that purpose they put rings in the ears. With rings in his ears he begins to roam from place to place. (He forgets) that the Creator pervades all places. All men are wayfarers; when the writ comes, they will depart without delay. He who knows Him here will know Him after death. For the rest all boast of being a Hindu or Muslim is in vain. All will have to render account at His door. Without righteous deeds none will get salvation. Rare is the man who talks only of the Truth of all Truths. From him, Nanak no questions will be asked hereafter".

The Brahmni priest-hood, which had been dominating the religious life of the people, through the ages, was

60. Var Harkali, p. 961.
61. Var Harkali K-1, p. 982.
rejected by the Guru. Outward forms, formulas, incantations and image - worship did not find favour with Guru Nanak's thought. He laid stress on the point that it is the right conduct and not external appearance that helps in attaining inner purity. Guru Nanak says,

"Useless is worship without faith, restraints without Truth and 'Janesu' without self-control. You may wash and bathe and run the mark of your caste (tilak) across your forehead, yet purity will not be attained without pure conduct".

Renunciation, austerities and penances have also been rejected by Guru Nanak. He says "Some worship stones, not realizing that stones which themselves sink cannot ferry others across".

62. Suhis, M-1, p. 766.
63. Serath M-1, p. 637.
64. Ramkali ashtpad M-1, p. 903.
65. Var Mahal M-1, p. 1284.
66. Bihagra, M-1, p. 556.
some go to visit places of pilgrimage and some take their
abode in the forests. They roam and they falter. How can one
become pure until the mind is rid of contamination? He is
honoured who achieves the Truth". And again, "He performs
'Sandhya' and reads books to engage in wrangling..... Three
a day he recites 'Gayatri'. A rosary round his neck and a mark
on his fore-head, he has two dhoties and cloth to cover his
temples. If thou thinkest that these are godly acts, that
this belief is baseless and the deeds will bear no fruit, saith
Manak, Meditate on Him with faith but this way will not be
found without the True Guru".

Guru Nanak ridiculed the idea that the impurity of
mind could be washed away by taking a bath at the holy places.
He says, "False inside with a show of piety outwards are
hypocrites in this world. They may bathe at the sixty eight
places of pilgrimage; their dirt will not be removed". Guru
Manak condemned the idea of giving alms to please the gods,
who, in turn would confer favours on the 'pitris' or one's
forefathers. The giving of alms of ill-gotten wealth was
condemned upon by the Guru, "If a thief breaks a house and

68. Var. Ass p. 470; Swardh M-l, p. 636; Bilasal M-l, p. 838;
Ramkali M-l, p. 904.
69. Var Ass M-l, p. 472.
70. Subi M-l, p. 762.
71. Ass Di Var, p. 467.

"While going to pilgrim stations with evil in mind
One part of the sin is washed, the others are
sullied twice over.
From without they are cleansed like a gourd,
but inside them is poison.
The saint is blessed without such a wash,
the thief remaineth a thief even after
ablution".

"The more pilgrim stations one visits the more one prates.
The more he puts on garbs the more he suffers,
Suffer thou, these are your own deeds."
donates stolen goods in the name of his forefathers, the stolen goods will be identified in the next world and his ancestors will be declared thieves. The hands of the broker will be cut off, this will be the judgment of the Lord says Nanak, a man gets hereafter what he earns*.

There is another ritual act, the wearing of sacred thread (Janesu), very widespread and practised by all high caste Hindus. To Guru Nanak, the thread is just a bit of cotton spun and twisted, if it does not induce in the wearer the qualities required for high moral life. He says, "Make mercy the cotton and spin out of it the thread of continence, tie on it the knot of the self-control, and give it the twist of truth. If, O pandit, you have such a thread I will wear it as it will never break or wear off or get soiled, burnt or lost". While explaining the futility of this ritual act, Guru Nanak comments "A thread is bought and sitting on a plastered square it is put round the neck. Instructions are whispered into the ear and the 'Brahmin' becomes the Guru. The man dies, the thread wears off and he goes into the next world without a thread. A hundred thousand thefts, a hundred thousand adulteries, a hundred thousand falsehoods, a hundred thousand abuses, a hundred thousand frauds and other innumerable sins go with the soul night and day. A thread is spun out of cotton and the 'Brahmin' comes and twists it. A boar is slaughtered in the Mohammadan way, it is cooked and eaten, and all say,

72, Var Asa No.1, p. 472.
73, Var Asa No.1, p. 471.
'Let the investiture take place'. When the thread wears off, it is exchanged for another, says Nanak, the thread would not break if it had some strength.

Then which type of thread is required? Guru Nanak says, "By obeying the Name, faith is produced and by singing His praises true thread is spun. It is put around the neck in His Court such a sacred thread will not break."

According to Guru Nanak the study of 'Vedas' should destroy evil understanding and remove ignorance with the light of knowledge. But now the reading of 'Vedas' has become a worldly occupation. 'Pandits' read them and interpret them without knowing the essence and waste their lives. They cannot cross the ocean of 'Samsāra' unless they become God-oriented. In one of his hymns in 'Var Asa', Guru Nanak has outrightly rejected the ritualistic way of life of 'Brahmin', which has lost all the virtues and moral responsibility towards his fellow men. 'With a sacred mark on the forehead, he wears yellowish coloured 'dhoti'. But with a knife in hand he butchers his own people. Wearing blue clothes he wins the approval of the officials and worships the 'Pranas' with gifts from the 'Malechhas'. He eats the meat of a goat, at the time of slaughtering which, words of a foreign tongue have been uttered. He does not permit other man to enter his cooking square saying, 'do not touch the square, do not touch the square, otherwise my food will be polluted. With bodies defiled they indulge in

74, Var Asa, No.1, p. 47.
75, Var Asa No.1, p. 47.
76, Var Sahi, No.1, p. 76.
sinful deeds. With impure minds they rinse their mouths to be pure".77

While addressing 'Muslims', Guru Nanak was equally forceful in condemning the practices and conduct of the 'Qazis', 'Mullas', who were devoid of morality and inner purity. Like 'Brahmin', 'Qazi', also tells lies and eats dirt. He poses to practice charity but gathers wealth through evil means. Guru Nanak says: 'The Qazi sits to dispense justice. He counts his rosary and repeats the Name of God. He takes bribes and decides against what is right. If one questions, he quotes authorities. His ears and heart listen to what the 'Turks' advise. He helps in plundering of people and eats what he earns by informing against them'.78

The widespread cult in India, that of the 'Yogīs', was equally in force at the time of Guru Nanak. Like Brahminical rituals, the 'Yogīs' had also developed an elaborate system of formalism concerning their outward appearance as well as relating to the technique of concentration of physical and mental powers. The main feats, practised almost by all the 'Yogīs' were, the control of breath (prānāyāma), Āsanas (balanced postures), śat karmas (six purifications) and arousing the secret serpent power known as 'Kundalini'. Guru Nanak did not approve the methods adopted by the 'Yogīs', as far as the spiritual and moral life was concerned. There is a striking difference of

77. Var Asa M-1, p. 471.
78. Var Ramkali, M-1, p. 951.
view-point, (as found in the poetry of Guru Nanak, especially in *Siddha Goshii* and *Var Ramakali*) between the 'Yogis', the follower of 'Hath Yoga' and Guru Nanak, the believer in spiritually elevated life. According to Guru Nanak, the 'Siddhas', the 'Munis' and the 'Yogis' who practise self-control through 'Hatha Yoga', do not feel satiated. Outwardly they look pious and inwardly they are full of desires. About such 'Yogis', Guru Nanak says:

"Some pick up roots and herbs to eat and live in forests.

Some roam in ochre-coloured robes calling themselves 'Yogis' and 'Sannyasis'.

Full of desire inside, hankering after food and clothes, they waste their lives in vain, neither they are householders nor 'Udasis'.

Commenting upon the external and conventional formalism of the 'Yogis', Guru Nanak has stressed upon the point that true religion does not lie in observing certain kind of 'Karma Kanda' but leading an uncontaminated life amid worldly temptations, Guru Nanak says:

'Yoga' lies not in the patched garment, nor in his staff, nor in besmearing the body with ashes.

'Yoga' lies not in suspending large rings from split ears, nor in shaving the head, nor in the blowing of horns.

To live uncontaminated amid worldly temptations is to find the secret of 'yoga'.

'Yoga' lies not in the empty words. He who regards all man as equal is 'yogi'.

79. Ramkali ashtpadi M-1, p. 906.
80. Var Majh, M-1, p. 860.
81. Ramkali, ashtpadi, M-1, p. 902.
'Yoga' lies not in the wandering outside the tombs and places of cremation, nor in the pastures of contemplation.

'Yoga' lies not in roaming abroad, nor in bathing at places of pilgrimage.

To live uncontaminated amid worldly temptations is to find the secret of 'yoga'.

Giving ethical and spiritual meanings to the outward symbols, Guru Nanak insisted upon the 'Yogi' to inculcate the inner qualities for conquering his ownself. He says:

"Make contentment thy ear rings, endeavour the beggars bowl, let meditation be thy ashes. Let the idea, that the body is betrothed to death be thy patched-coat and let faith be the staff of thy 'Yoga'. Let considering all men as thy equals be thy 'Ayes-Panth'. By conquering self wholeworld is conquered".

The religious practices and all types of Karma Kanda of Jainism have been rejected by Guru Nanak. The monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen that constitute the brotherhood of Jainism, was divided into two main sects, i.e. Shvetambers and 'Digambara'. The 'Digambaras' were very rigid in their practices.

In the following hymn, Guru Nanak has described the way of living of the Jaina monks.

"They pluck (the hair of) their heads and drink washings and beg for the leaving of neela to eat.

They rake up their excreta and inhale foul smell and fear (or detest) water;

Like sheep, (the hair of) their heads are plucked and their hands are filled with ashes.

They do away with the living of their parents and their families lament about them.

82. Sohi N-1, p. 730.
83. Japji Pauri 27.
No ritual regarding rice balls on a leafy platter is performed for them on their death nor an earthen lamp is lighted.

They are not given refuge at the sixty eight holy places and Brahmans do not eat their cereals.

They remain unclean always, day and night and there are no tilaks (sacred marks) on their forehead;

They always gather together in a state of mourning, they hide themselves and do not attend public meetings;

The bowls hang by their waist and brushes in their hands, they march in queues.

They are neither yogis nor shalivites, neither sadis nor Mullahs.

Having been deprived of the grace of the Lord they wander aimlessly like a cursed herd.

They go about without charity and bath, ashes be put on the shaven heads? 34.

So Guru Nanak has condemned all the bad practices of the Jaina monks i.e. the plucking of the hair of the head; drinking of the washings; begging for the leaving of the meals; raking up of excreta and inhaling foul smell; fearing or detesting water; filling of hands with ashes; their gatherings in a state of mourning; the handing of bowls by their waist; the keeping of brushes in their hands and marching in queues.

Ego Karmas or self-willed actions guided by egoism.

'Ahankāra' or Ego is a conception or a principle by which every worldly object, whether animate or inanimate, takes a different and separate form of its own individuality

84. Var Majh, p. 149-150.
85. Dr. S.C. Kohli, Guru Nanak and Jaina scriptures, an article published in Paramh, p. 41.
or its own I-ness. 'Sānkhya' philosophy postulates that the evolution of the world is due to twenty five elements; the most important among these are 'Prakriti' (matter) and 'Purush' (Spirit). At the root of this process of evolution, it is, fundamentally, the ego or 'Ahamkāra' that causes separateness.

Guru Nanak has accepted the 'Sānkhya' principle of 'Ahamkāra', through which the whole universe is born. Then questioned by the 'Yogis', about the birth of the world, Guru Nanak clearly says that this world is created in ego. According to Guru Nanak all the activities of the self are under the influence of ego. He says:

"In ego one comes, in ego one goes, In ego one is born, in ego one dies, In ego one takes, in ego one gives, In ego one earns, in ego one loses, In ego one is truthful, in ego one is false, In ego one reflects on sin and virtue, In ego one goes to hell or heaven, In ego one laughs, in ego one weeps, In ego one is fool and in ego one is wise, In ego one loses caste or species, And one does not know what is salvation or deliverance, In ego is the illusion, in ego is the shadow, Creation of living beings has been through ego". 88

The Karmas done under the influence of Maya or ego are the cause of transmigration. Even the pious and apparently virtuous deeds which are done under the impulse of egoism are never spiritually fruitful. Some people perform religious duties and pious acts with the pride and determination to realise the final beatitude. Guru Nanak

86. Dr. S.S. Kohli. Outlines of Sikh Thought, p. 69.
88. Var Asa N-1 Pauri 7, p. 486.
believes that such Karmas (deeds) may have some other utility in forming habits or regulating conduct, but such deeds can never bring spiritual illumination. Guru Nanak remarks: "Egoistic deeds do not lead to the realization of truth. When egoism is destroyed, one achieves the Supreme state..... Egoism is annihilated when one contemplates Guru's word and renounces his fickle intellect and destroys the five evils... Egoism keeping one in bondage, makes him wander in transmigration. He will find peace, says Nanak, through devotion to God".

Guru Nanak, in his poetry, has mentioned the ailments born out of ego or I-ness. The whole of universe is afflicted by this disease. The father, the mother, the body, the relatives - all are its victims. Rivers, Seas, Islands, earths are all within its fold.

Supporting the views of Guru Nanak about ego, Guru Angad says that 'ego is a dangerous disease. When a self-oriented man acts, he acts in ego. Ego enchains him and transmigrates him repeatedly. The only remedy to shed off the egoistic tendency is to come under the fold of God's grace and to work under the 'Nukh' of the Lord.'

The ego takes the form of pride or vanity which may be due to learning, power, money, beauty or high caste.

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89. Sri Raga, M-1, p. 221
90. Gauri Guheri M-1, p. 222
91. Gaur M-1, p. 790
92. Bhairon M-1, p. 1133
93. Aa Var M-1, p. 486.
It leads to arrogance and a sense of superiority. It creates an individualistic entity of the self, which differentiates between man and man. This ego, not only keeps him far from his fellowmen but also from God. Egoistic actions are like chains round the neck of the individual.

The actions which a man does under the influence of ego, cover almost every field of activity of human life. The Karmas or deeds of egoistic nature exist prominently in the following spheres:-

1. Religion
2. Education/knowledge.
5. Wealth.
6. Family.

Many persons having religious bent in their lives, are busy in doing Karmas with the right earnestness. They feel pleasure and mental satisfaction by doing these actions. But if they have not killed the egoistic tendency and have not come under the fold of God's Grace, their efforts would not avail themselves of the fruit desired thereof. Guru Nanak says:

"Man may do countless good and virtuous deeds and what are received as charitable acts;

He may practise countless austeritys in the wilderness to balance the mind;

He may perform countless acts of bravery in war and in fighting breathe his last;"
He may perform countless readings of the 'Srutis' and the 'Puranas'; and may in countless ways philosophise and meditate;

Yet all these devices are vain, says Nanak, the true index of the way is the Grace of Him". 94.

Guru Nanak has laid stress on the avoidance of doing all such Karmas as involve egoistic tendencies.

In the field of knowledge and education, Guru Nanak asserts that the only essence of learning is to find out the Truth. Without this the education is futile. A lot of reading may sharpen the intellect but it creates vanity and, in turn, becomes obstacle for illumination of the inner self. Guru Nanak says:

"We may read and read, and make cart loads with books or pack caravan with them;

We may read and read and load boats with books or fill cellars with them;

We may read for all the years and months that are given to us;

We may read as long as we live and breathe;

Yet, says Nanak, there is only one truth that matters, all else is vanity and vexation of spirit. 97.

Guru Nanak, in his poetry, at many places, has exposed the uselessness of ritualistic actions performed under the influence of ego. The 'Siddhas' and the 'Yogis'...

94. Var Asa Mel, p. 467.
95. Var Asa Mel, p. 471.
96. Bilawal Mel, p. 632.

"Everyone talketh of wisdom and Gnosis and this vain glorious utterance leadeth to discursiveness and pain. Everyone utters and talks (of the Lord's wisdom) but if one is imbued not with its essence, one is emancipated not".

wear ascetic garbs, afflict their bodies, abstain from eating, wear no clothes, practise silence, go barefooted, put ashes on their heads but for that egoistic nature, they lose their self-respect. They do not enshrine the Name of God in their hearts and do not earn God's Grace.

Hindu scriptures have divided the society into four Varnas, i.e. 'Brahmin', 'Kshatriya', 'Vaisha', and 'Sudra', and have allotted different types of Karmas to be performed by the people according to the nature of the 'Varna'. These 'Varnas', eventually, led to the formation of a caste system, by which a high or a low status of a person was determined. So when a person, keeping in view his high caste or status performs an act, he is motivated by his self-willed egoistic nature. Such actions do not lead a person to the higher spiritual plane. Guru Nanak says:

"Caste and power are of no avail hereafter, on their account no body is honoured or dishonoured for want of them. Those alone will be deemed good, whose faith receives His approval". 100.

And

"Observe the inner light (of God), do not ask the caste, there is no caste hereafter". 101.

And again

"Of no avail is caste by birth, thou canst enquire from teachers of truth. A man's caste or faith is determined by the works he performs".

Accumulations of wealth, family ties and pride of beauty are the other aspects of human life in which his

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98. Ibid. p. 467-68.
100. Var Anr M-1, p. 469.
102. Parbhati M-1, p. 1830
actions or activities are bound by his self-willed attitude. He gathers wealth by all the wits at his end, to show intellectual superiority or to gain distinction in the social set up. To Guru Nanak's mind, all efforts of human being, leading him to become even a 'Sultan', would be of no avail, if he is devoid of the True Name of God.

By his sense of discrimination and by the self-willed actions, the 'Jīva' is tied up with this world. He develops relation with others as father, mother, son daughter, etc. The whole fabric of family ties becomes a bondage for him. Guru Nanak believes that if a 'Jīva' by his non-egoistic attitude and pious Karman, is blessed with the society of saints, he realises the true kinship.

The pride of youth and beauty is almost universal among all the human beings, whether rich or poor, high or low. The egoistic attitude of 'Jīva' in this world will not bring him any satisfaction hereafter. Guru Nanak comments in one of his hymns that beauty and youth are the deceivers which have deceived the whole world. He says:

1. "Dominions, riches, beauty, caste and youth, all the five are great deceivers; which have deceived the whole world and no one's honour is safe from them". 107.


104. Asa M-1, p. 416.
106. Asa M-1, p. 379.
107. Var Malar p. 1288.
Triguna Karma:

Triguna means three 'gunas' (qualities) which are the modes or attributes of 'Māyā' (prakriti). 'Māyā' is the bondage for 'Jīva' and its main functionary is ego or 'Ahamkāra'. According to 'Sāmkhya' philosophy, three 'gunas' are the resultants of ego or 'Ahamkāra'. 'Tamas' is resistance, 'Rajas' is motion and 'Sattva' is rhythm. Evolution takes place when the equilibrium of these 'gunas' is disturbed.

All the Karma done under the influence of 'Triguna' lead to bondage. One who is attached with the world of 'Māyā' undergoes transmigration. Guru Nanak says:

"When actions are within the three qualities, hopes and fear abide. How can then one be released from the three 'Gunas' without the Guru? It is only in the 'Sehaj' that peace is attained". 114.

With the three qualities of 'Māyā', man is attached to the world and he knows not the Unknown.

Meritorious Karmas or Karmas that bring release.

Meritorious Karmas are those which are performed without the slightest thought of reward and with the spirit of

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110. Var Nahm 1-2, p. 140.
111. Gauri Raga M-1, p. 154.
113. Suhf Raga M-1, p. 751.
114. Sri Raga M-1.
115. Basant M-1, Gaur 156.
abiding by His will. These actions lead to the attainment of highest spiritual state. Guru Nanak, as well as, other Sikh Gurus admit the importance of virtuous actions. Guru Nanak believes that virtuous actions are means for attaining perfection.

The virtuous deeds that lead to salvation, can be divided into three categories.

1. 'Hari kirtan' Karma: To sing the praise of the Lord in the holy congregation is the highest Karma. The Guru says: "The highest deed is the Lord's praise in the society of saints; be he alone attains to it in whose lot it is so writ by God".

In Sikh religion, 'Harikirtan' Karma or to sing the praise of the Lord, is considered as the essential feature of 'N Chant'. 'Harikirtan' is described as the priceless gem.

In Sikh religion, almost, all the 'samskaras' of human life are incomplete without 'Harikirtan'. In this iron-age (Kaliyug) 'Harikirtan' Karma - the most meritorious deed - leads to 'Jiva' towards the realization of God, if he follows the instructions of the Guru.

According to Guru Nanak, the performance of the sacrifices, austerities, worship and virtuous acts do not lead the 'Jiva' to liberation. The best action in the

117. Ramkali, M-1, p. 982.
118. Ramkali, M-1, p. 982.
120. Majh M-3, p.15
121. 'Kirtan Krmolak heera' Ramkali M-5, p.983
122. Kanre di var, M-4, p. 1314
123. Parbhati, M-1, p. 1342.
world is the remembrance of the Name of the Lord. All the sins are washed away with the love of His Name. All Praising of the Lord becomes a constant nature of the Jīva, if he imbibes Truth.

There are virtuous and evil deeds, which a Jīva has performed in the previous lives. These are the Sanchit or accumulated Karmas. The Sanchit Karmas contribute towards the making of a character, in the next life, when they start giving fruit in the shape of Prarabdha. The effect of Karmas which have yet to bear fruit can only be effaced by HariKīrat Karma or with the Name of God. Guru Nanak says, 'One wanders from birth to birth, doing whatever is in his destiny. How could the writ of eternity be obliterated, when the writ is by His Will. Without the Name, nothing can save thee, and through the Guru's word, one meets the Lord.'

Religious Karmas:

Religious Karmas or Adhyatam Karmas are those, that establish the contact between Jīva and Supreme-Self. Only those religious efforts are condemned by Guru Nanak, which carry with them the tinge of ego or Ahamkāra. About the Rāwals, the Sannyāsīs, the Yogis and the Jainis, who have not killed their egoistic

127. Prabhāti M-1, p. 1333; Gaurī M-1, p. 223.
129. Majh M-3, p. 115.
130. Bhai Randhir Singh; Gurmat Adhyatam Karma Philosophy, page 446.
attitude and have not merged in His Name, Guru Nanak says, "The 'Rivals' waste their lives in their ten sects, so do the 'Sannyasis' in their twelve creeds. So do the 'Yogis', 'Kapris' and the hair-plucked Jainis, without the Word, all will have nooses round their necks. Those who concentrate on the Word are the perfect 'Bairagis', they beg alms in their own body and fix their attention on love of the One alone. The 'Brahmins' read and discuss and engage in acts prescribed and make others do the same. Without real understanding they can not see the path, the egocentric undergo the misery of separation. Those united through the Word engage in pure deeds and get honour in the True Court. Ever, their attention is fixed on 'Nam' and in every age they are absorbed in Truth. All the acts, duties, purities, controls, mutterings and asceticism are contained in the Word. Says Nanak, when His grace makes one meet the Satguru, his miseries, sins and death vanish'.

Those religious deeds which he p in the betterment of life are regarded as essential, by the Guru, in our daily life. He says that without Truth, restraint and good conduct, the body is like a ghost. It is futile to live on a life without charity, purity and holy congregation. At another place Guru Nanak remarks that a 'Jīva' who performs

132. Ramkali, M-1, p. 906.
133. Ibid. p. 906.
'Adhyatma' Karmas, inculcates in himself the following qualities. "He destroys the five evil forces and lives a truthful living. By following on the teachings of the preceptor, he sees the same God-light in all the beings. He keeps himself absorbed in meditation and concentration of the Name and does not indulge in doing bad deeds. He serves the Guru and has a full faith in god's Grace. He destroys ego'.

Hukm Raazai Karma:

'Hukm Raazai' Karmas are those karmas, which a 'Jiva' performs in accordance with the will of God. 'Jiva' acts on three different planes, i.e. physical, mental and spiritual. It is only after the 'Jiva' enters into the spiritual realm, that he acts under His will. A person who has attained the highest point of realization or who is illuminated, can perform these Karmas. 'Hukm Raazai' Karmas do not leave any effect or impression which the doer has to consume in future lives. The doer of 'Hukm Raazai' Karma is illuminated and feels identity with Him. Guru Nanak says that those who are attuned to God's will, their worldly actions are shattered off. "If they know the nature of the Lord, they would know these deeds and beliefs to be vain".

'Hukm Raazai' Karmas or Karmas dedicated to God, are performed only by the 'Jiva', whom God has brought under His Grace. Such 'Jivas' abandon their self-entity and all

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134. Haru, N-l, p. 1039.
their actions are directed under His will. By His Grace they reach the True Court of the Lord.

**How Karma is annihilated:**

The different schools of Indian religious philosophy have expounded different theories about the extinction of Karma. In Buddhism, 'desire' is considered to be the root cause of Karma. The pursuit of Karma ceases only when the desire ceases to haunt a man altogether. "He who is free from desire and without grief, beholds in tranquility of the senses, the majesty of the self". Craimer Byng in his book 'Legends of Indian Buddhism' remarks that Karma ceases only when there prevails perfect wisdom, absolute detachment from the world and all craving for existence is vanished.

According to Upanishads a person may by good deeds, earn a limited amount of merit to be enjoyed for a time, in heaven, after which the inexorable law of rebirth sends him back to the world.

"Having had enjoyment on the top of heaven won by good works, they enter this world, or a lower". 141.

On the basis of the teaching of Gita, it is enunciated that one can cut off the knot of Karma -

1. by giving up all the desires of fruit, when doing good deeds;
2. by getting rid of 'Ahamkara' or ego; and
3. by laying all the acts at the feet of the Lord.

Ramanuja and Madhava, the exponents of 'Vedanta' system of philosophy, hold that apart from true knowledge and devotion or Love of God, God's grace is necessary to render all the Karmas inactive.

In Jainism the cessation of Karma takes place in two stages. The first step is to stop the inflow of Karmic matter into the self. This can be done by practising meditation, conquest of suffering and good conduct. The second stage is the shedding of Karmic matter already accumulated. This requires right knowledge of the self and self-restraint.

Guru Nanak, as we have already seen, has not followed the concept of Karma strictly in accordance with its prevalent form in other schools of religious thought. Guru Nanak has modified and supplemented the Karma theory with the concept of God's Grace. Hence from Guru Nanak's point of view, God is the creator of Karma and He too is its destroyer. A 'Jiva' takes birth because of his Karma but gets final emancipation (or destroys his wheel of Karma) by the Grace of God. But there are certain efforts like

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142. Gita, 3-1, 11, 13, 20.
143. Sri Bhagya 4.1.13; and Brahma Sutra, p. 66.
144. Dr. Radhakrishnan and Charles A. Moore; A Source Book in Indian Philosophy, p. 259.
145. Manu N-1, p. 1024.
Prayer, sincere repentance, constant association of good men, following the instructions of the preceptor, dwelling upon the 'shabd' (the Word of the Guru), and the love of 'Nam' that help in inviting God's Grace. God, in Sikhism, is not thought of as Law only, but also as Love. Prayer and other spiritual efforts are counter-actions, in the field of Karma - that neutralise the previous (sanchit) or accumulated Karma and purify the mind. Guru Nanak has combined the two ideas of Karma and 'Nam'. He says, "whatever one soweth that one reapeth, whatever one earneth that one eateth. But no accounts are asked of him if he goeth there with the passport of the Name". And again he says:

"I care not for the merit of Karma, for great is Thy Magnificence, O Lord, to me all merits of works and all merit of religion is the essence of Thy Name". 148.

"The Habit (character) formed by Karma cannot be destroyed because the man has not earned the wealth of the Name of God". 150.

To meditate upon the Name of God, does not mean mere repetition of a word or words, nor any superficial performance of ceremonies. No mere lip homage, in whatever form it is done, has the power to cleanse the mind of its sin. The change has therefore to be brought about in the operation of the mind itself. The power of the awakened soul is unlimited.
The bonds of Karma can be burnt through the 'Word' and then they take no roots just as a burnt seed takes no root. "Countless karma of our past lives are washed away by the 'Shabd' of the Guru". Guru Nanak says, "when the Lord cometh to reside in the mind, pain and ignorance depart".

By the grace of God the Karma of a 'Jiva' is shattered.

"No account of the Karma of a person can one speak of, whom the Lord Himself has blesseth".

"Nanak, he whom He blesseth is not asked to render accounts".

The association of good men also help in the extinction of past Karmas. The Guru says, "All past Karmas are effaced through the association of saints and the lifeless comes back to life".

According to Guru Nanak, mere discussion of 'Vedas' will be of no avail. It is only the Guru who can help in the extinction of Karmas. He says, "Many 'Pandits' and astrologers expound the 'Vedas'. They extol discussions and oppose to the other point of view. But mere discussion leads to transmigration. Without the Guru, none will escape the net of Karma, whatever we may say, hear or discuss".

162. Asa M-1, 7938a.
163. Majh M-1, p. 143; Asa M-1, p. 433.
164. Majh M-1, p. 143.
165. Dhanasri M-2, 79383.
166. Karna M-5, p. 1235.
167. Sri Raga M-1, p. 56.