CHAPTER IV

The concept of transmigration in the poetry of Guru Nanak

That is the end of human life? Therefrom man comes and where will he go? What has he been in the past and how has he come to be what he is today? That is it that binds him to the Karma or to the round of transmigration and how will he be released? What is it that controls his destiny now and what will happen to him after his death? Is physical death the end of the human life or there is a spirit that reincarnates itself? These are the questions pertaining to the law of Karma and transmigration, which have persistently haunted man's mind since the earliest times. Guru Nanak, in one of his hymns in Haga Gauri has put forth similar questions. He says:

"The man is born and then he dies. O, therefrom doth he come?

Say, whence emergeth he and whereto goeth he?

How is he bound down to the round of transmigration and how is he released? 1

How may he merge in Eternal Lord?"

The Guru himself has answered these questions in the following lines.

"Man cometh and goeth in the natural way i.e. (according to the law of Karma)

He is born (because of the desires) of the mind and merges into the mind again.

The God-oriented are emancipated and are not bound again, for, they dwell on the Word and get deliverance through the Name.

On the tree (of life) abide many, many birds at night;

Of these some are happy, some not, and lured by the desire of mind, they all perish.

Night and Day they look (longingly) towards the sky;

And wander about in all directions, as in the suit of Kama.

(But) they who are merged with the Name take the world to be a pasture-halt;

And shedding their lust and anger, break the pitcher of the poisonous Maya.

So according to Guru Nanak, desire is the cause of bondage.

Those who are god-oriented and merge with the Name of the Lord, get emancipation.

Some of the thinkers believe that Guru Nanak gave his message to the people of different religions according to their own beliefs and practices prevalent at the time. And he personally did not express himself in favour of or against the concept of transmigration.

Narin Singh, in his book, 'Guru Nanak's view of life' states, 'The Guru does not seem to believe in the transmigration of souls in the generally accepted sense, that the souls have to pass through a fixed number of wombs and have to be changed from the human to the animal bodies to finish the cycle. He simply echoes the prevailing belief of the time, regarding births and deaths without going into the detailed technique of the theory and refers to it only in a general manner'. Commenting upon the eschatological
belief, Sehan Singh, in his essay 'Sikhism among the World Religions', observes, 'since the description of the actual state of life after death is beyond the physical experience of the human mind, Guru Nanak, did not go into the controversy of accepting or rejecting the one or the other. To him these beliefs (Death and Salvation) were the vivid symbols of man's ultimate concern. And Guru Nanak, without espousing the doctrine of the Day of Judgment, accepts the idea of a running balance sheet of good or bad deeds in a man's life. The belief in rounds of births and deaths which springs from the traditional culture of India, also forms the basis of Guru Nanak's teachings.' But, Khasan Singh, the author of 'Philosophy of Sikh Religion' upholds, 'The rule of transmigration is maintained in the Hindu scriptures and the Gurus also advocate it.' Again he says, 'Guru Nanak and his successors were firm believers in the law of transmigration as a fact and not merely as an allegory or illustration as some people are apt to believe. They who say that he did not believe in it are quite wrong'. Dr. S.S. Kohli, in his book 'Philosophy of Guru Nanak', writes 'Hinduism believes in the theory of Karma and the doctrine of rebirth. The Guru has accepted these doctrines, but he has laid emphasis on the doctrine of grace.'

In the introduction to 'The Sacred Writings of the Sikhs', Dr. S. RadhaKrishnan, states, 'the doctrine of the immortality

5. p. 105.
6. Ibid. p. 143.
7. p. 96.
of the soul and the transmigration were adopted in their entirety by the Sikhs and they were taught to believe that good works and the utterance of God's Name were the most meritorious human acts leading to absorption in God and release from the pains of transmigration.²

The doctrine of transmigration stated in its simplest form, is a belief, that a man in a body is only a link in a series of embodied personalities prior and posterior to this particular life. There is some permanent element in an embodied person joined to an impermanent element. The permanent element is the soul and the impermanent element is called the body. Before the soul assumes a particular body, that soul had been in some earlier body or rather in a series of earlier bodies. The body falls down and the soul assumes a new body. When the new body drops down, the soul will get into another body. And this process of a body being assumed and falling down continues till the 'jīva' gets final emancipation.

Some of the great religions of the world, like Christianity and Islam have denied the truth of transmigration, while other religions, like Hinduism and Buddhism have accepted it. But, almost, in all the religions, we find a varied interpretation of the doctrine of transmigration. Now two different religions have given a similar interpretation.

Christianity believes in a single human birth and thereafter only the life of eternal or partial beatitude in heaven, or eternal damnation in hell.⁹ Islam also

---

² p. 15.
⁹ T. Gopal Singh, The Religion of the Sikhs, p. 103.
believes in one birth theory, that is, that God creates the souls at the time of birth out of nothing, and these souls having come into existence, continue to live for ever. The soul experiences only one birth in this world and after death, i.e., after leaving the body it continues to live hereafter till the Day of judgment, when his deeds, good or bad, will be taken into account, and accordingly, he will be sent to Heaven or Hell to enjoy or to suffer throughout eternity. Islam believes in the Day of Resurrection or the Day of Judgment.

Among the Greek philosophers also, we find that Pythagoras, Plato and their followers believed in the doctrine of Metempsychosis or transmigration of souls. Pythagoras says, 'After death the rational mind, having been freed from the chains of the body, assumes an ethereal vehicle and passes into the region of the dead, where it remains till it is sent back to this world to inhabit some other body, human or animal. After undergoing successive purgations, when it is sufficiently purified, it is received among the gods and returns to the eternal source from which it first proceeded'.

But according to this Platonic theory of rebirth, there is no association of the law of Karma with it. The law of Karma plays no part in the transmigration of souls. Here the souls are allowed to choose their own lot according to their experience or bent of character, but not to receive the natural consequence of

10 Swami Abhedananda, Reincarnation. p. 88.
their deeds and misdeeds. It is said, 'Some being disgusted with mankind, prefer to be born as animals such as lions and eagles or some other animal. Others delight in trying their luck as human beings'.

In Hinduism the doctrine of Karma and transmigration are inter-connected. It is the law of Karma that governs the transmigration of souls. The nature of the future organism of the soul, depends upon the actions—meritorious or demeritorious—performed in the previous lives. The Hindu religious thought enunciates the idea that a soul gets endless chances to improve upon his conduct through reincarnations as animal, bird, plant or man, till it is finally released.

In Buddhism, the concept of transmigration is accepted but the belief in God and the idea of soul are discarded. Buddha disconnected the correlation of the law of Karma and the concept of soul. He substituted the doctrine of transmigration of character (Skandhas) for the doctrine of transmigration of soul. T.N. Rhys Davids writes, 'Gotam Buddha held that after the death of any being whether human or not, there survived nothing but the 'being's Karmas', the result that is of its mental and bodily actions.' So according to Buddhism, what transmigrates is not a person, but his Karma.

Guru Nanak, unlike Buddha, has accepted the
existence and the immortality of soul. The law of Karma has not been kept apart from the concept of transmigration as we find it in the ancient Greek thought. One birth theory of Christianity and Islam has been disapproved by Guru Nanak. In his poetry, Guru Nanak has not, expressed anywhere his belief in the Day of Judgment or eternal life of happiness or condemnation in Heaven or Hell. Guru Nanak has accepted the doctrines of Karma and transmigration, with the modification that the performance of Karmas, whether meritorious or demeritorious, can not bring the final beatitude by ending the cycle of transmigration. It is only by the Grace of God, that a soul (jiva) exhausts his all the 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. It is, for him, the starting point for God - realisation. Guru Nanak says, "After wandering in the several lower lives, the soul is blessed with the human body. Now it is the time for him to meet the Lord."

Out of the eightyfour lakhs of species created in the universe, God has given the highest and honourable place to the human being. And in this

14. 1) Sorath M-9, p. 632
    ii) Asa M-5, p. 12.
    iii) Sorath M-9, p. 632.
organism, if one fails to achieve the goal, one is deemed to suffer in the wheel of transmigration. 15

In his poetry, at many places, Guru Nanak has referred to the course of transmigration. The following few verses from his writings, clearly indicate the firm belief, he has, in the doctrine of transmigration.

1. "The soul has wandered through many births". 16

2. "We were inhabited in several plants and trees and then reincarnated as animals. We were born as serpents of several species and then winged birds". 17

3. "How many times have we been fathers and how many times sons, and how many times gurus and disciples.

No, there can be no end, in the past or in the coming future, of our distinctive selves." 18.

4. "I (soul) am tired of wandering and knocking at doors of many houses.

I had innumerable births, which I cannot count.

As a mother or as a father, as a daughter or as a son; we became disciples of many preceptors". 19.

5. "Just as the pots of a Persian wheel go down, fill with water as they come up, empty and go down again, so is the life, a pastime of our Lord". 20.

6. "Those who turn their back on the Guru are born again and again, as pigs, dogs, donkeys, cats, animals, men with evil tendencies and low caste chandals.

Fettered by their evil tendencies they come and go". 21

7. "The Creator who made the manifestation, has decreed the cycle of transmigration to go on". Guru Arjan, the fifth Sikh Guru, has also supported the view of Guru Nanak about the concept of transmigration in the following verses:

"The Jiva was born several times as worm and flying insect,
it was born several times as an elephant, a fish and a deer;
It was born several times as a bird and snake,
it was born several times as a horse and a yoked bull,
Meet the Lord, this is the opportune time,
After a very long time, you have come in this body.
It was born several times as a stone and mountain,
it was born several times as gems,
it was born several times as plants,
it strayed into eighty-four lakhs of physical forms."

Regarding the transmigration of souls, Kabir says, in one of his hymns "when (in the next birth on account of evil deeds) you will have four feet, two horns, and you will be dumb in speech, how will you then sing the praises of God? Then at every turn, you will get stroke upon stroke and you will seek in vain, a place where to go."

22. i) Asa M.-1, p. 467
   ii) Malhar M.-1, p. 1284.
   iii) Prabhata M.-1, p. 1342.
   iv) Asa M.-1, p. 412
   v) Mahagra M.-8, p. 542.
   vi) Asa M.-1, p. 472
   vii) Asa M.-1, p. 420.
   viii) Vadhana M.-1, p. 680.
   ix) Malhar M.-1, p. 1284.
   x) Maru M.-1, p. 1021.
24. Kabir, Gujri, p. 524.
the famous 'Vais' (a form of poetry) says that among the eighty-four lakhs of lives, incarnation in human form is of the highest order. 25

**Ascending and Descending Orders of Transmigration.**

The concept of rebirth has been interpreted, variedly, by the modern thinkers. Mainly, there are three doctrines of rebirth, which are mentioned in different religions. The first is the doctrine of pre-existence. Some people believe that the soul, existing from the very beginning, takes birth in this world. This is his first opportunity of getting a physical body. And after the death of the physical body, the same soul never takes birth in this world. The Christians and many other like minded people believe in this doctrine of pre-existence. The second is the doctrine of reincarnation. The notion underlying this concept is that the soul, before getting human body in this very life, has taken birth several times, previously, but only as human being. It had never born as birth or beast. After leaving physical human body of this organism, the soul will take birth, repeatedly, only as human being until and unless it gets final emancipation. The third is the doctrine of transmigration. According to this concept the soul takes various physical forms. Before entering into this human body, the soul had been dwelling, in his several previous existence, in different bodies of either human,

animal or angelic. After departing with the physical human body of this life, the same soul may again take birth as human being or go down to the animal plane and be born as an animal. 26

As far as Guru Nanak's view point on these concepts, mentioned above, is concerned, he does not accept the idea that soul takes birth only but once. So the doctrine of pre-existence of soul is ruled out. Guru Nanak does not believe that if once a soul gets human body, it can not be born again as other than human being. From a number of verses of Guru Nanak, quoted already, it seems clear that the soul may enter into human body or may go down into the body of an animal.

The concept of reincarnation finds a different interpretation in Hinduism. There, it means, incarnation of God or a descent of the Universal Spirit. 'The Hindus believe that God incarnates Himself again and again in flesh and blood whenever religion (dharma) gets perverted and irreligion (adharma) gains prominence. They (Hindus) hold that on such occasion God comes down to this earth with a physical body to show the right path of deliverance to the righteous ones and to inflict due punishment on the wicked ones'. 27

Guru Nanak has rejected even this idea. All the Sikh Gurus are very emphatic that God does not incarnate

27. Gita. IV. 7-8.
Himself in a human form. Guru Nanak says, "Burnt be the tongue that saith, God falleth into the womb". Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Sikh Guru, gives a stern warning against the incarnation of God. He says, "He who calleth me God, will burn in the fire of hell".

So out of the three different doctrines of pre-existence, reincarnation and transmigration, Guru Nanak puts forth his belief in transmigration.

In Sikhism, the concept of transmigration has two distinct aspects i.e. transmigration in the ascending order and transmigration in the descending order.

**Ascending order:** when a soul passes from one human life to another, in its moral and spiritual progress, it goes on acquiring human births till it gets final beatitude. Such a birth is considered as a blessing and a gift of God. It means, God out of his mercy and compassion has given the 'Jīva' one more opportunity to fulfil his mission of achieving Ultimate Reality. 'Jīva' wants to dedicate his life to God. Ravidas says, "For many lives I have been separated from Thee, O, Beloved. This life is dedicated to Thee".

Human life is the only opportunity, when the soul (Jīva) can rise to God. That is why the human life is called a very precious life. Every man can cut asunder the bonds of

---

31. Suhi M.1, p. 751.
birth and death during human life and attain perfection. This hope is extended by the Sikh Gurus to every human being. This reincarnation is in the ascending order till man completely eliminates rebirth. Guru Nanak says in Sidha Goshti, “Rebirth is eliminated through Guru’s word.”32

Descending Order: Rebirth in the descending order is a punishment and curse. The soul passes through animal lives suffering untold agonies. As a beast of burden, he carries the load of his sins, without any opportunity to get out of the wheel of transmigration. Under the influence of Ego, ‘jīva’ becomes a victim of the wheel of transmigration. As a blacksmith strikes the iron, after it is put in the furnace, so is the state of a wicked person, who wanders in several organism.33

Death and after:

In the second stanza of Japji, Guru Nanak affirms, “By His Will some are brought under His Grace; by His Will others go the round of transmigration”. In plain words, the Guru teaches that the future life is of two kinds: union with God and transmigrating of the soul.

In discussing the mysteries of future life, the Guru does not mention any place like heaven or hell. He simply says that nobody knows how death takes place. The subtle body going out of the gross body is never seen. Where from man comes and where he goes hereafter is a

32. Ramlali M-1, p. 940.
mystery. No one can point out the direction of its movement or the plane on which it settles. The fundamental belief of Guru Nanak is that soul is immortal. It never dies. Death lays its hand only on the body. Guru Nanak has expressed this thought in the following ways:

"The body is dust; the air speaks (through it) tell, O wise man, who hath died?"

The ego, and quarrelsome nature have died,
The one that sees, hath not died,
... I have not died, my ignorance hath died.
The one that prevades hath not died. The soul (jīvatma) is eternal but the 'jīva' is tied by illusion and worldly attachment. He does not know what happens after death. The Guru says,

"He knows nothing of the life beyond death.
The one who weeps also leaves the world.
'jīva' is tied by illusion and worldly attachment, which becomes dream and the blind grieves in vain.
The 'jīva' comes and goes under His Hukam.
Nothing dies nor any thing is prone to death.
The 'jīva' does not die, it has to become eternal."

Life and death are relative terms. The soul is life or consciousness. The physical body is matter. Only

35. Asa M. 1., p. 380.
the collaboration of the two i.e. soul and human physical body, constitute the human being. Without soul or spirit, the body is dead and without gross body, the soul cannot function. The mind, intellect and vital breath are attached with the soul and not with the body. When the gross body (sthūla sarīra) dies, the subtle body (sukshma sarīra), of the soul consisting of the vital breath, mind and intellect lives. This subtle body of the soul also dies when the state of final emancipation is realized. Thus the term 'death' only applies to the body, whether it is gross or subtle.

What path the soul traverses after death? How much time does it take in reaching its abode after the actual time and date of death? And when does it come back into the womb? These are the questions which perplex the mind of the thinkers. Dr. S.S. Kohli, in his book "Outlines of Sikh Thought" writes, 'when the soul appears before the God of Justice after death, a decision is taken about its future according to its actions in the material world. It may be sent to be reborn as an animal, a bird or an insect. It may even be sent to higher planes of gods according to its actions. It may be sent to be born as a human being again for its further development.' And Khasan Singh the author of 'Philosophy of Sikh Religion' remarks, 'After separation of the soul from the body after death, God has arranged for an immediate reward or punishment. The

38. Dr. S.S. Kohli; Outlines of Sikh Thought, p. 75.
39. Ibid. p. 77.
righteous are received with due honours and rewarded by a
wittance into heaven, or by getting a high and happy
position in life on being reborn through transmigration
according to the merits of their individual actions. The
wicked are at once subjected to persecution and punishment
by the angel 'Azrail', who is deputed for the purpose. 40

The idea of the interval between death and the
next birth is described by Lokmanya Tilak, in Gita Rehasay:
"The man who has acquired knowledge - and he must have
acquired this knowledge at least at the moment of death -
goes and reaches the sphere of the Brahman, after his body
has fallen and has been burnt in the fire, through that
fire, passing through the flames, day light, the bright
half of the month and six months of the 'Uttarayana'; and
as he attains release there, he does not take birth again
and come back to this mortal world; but that man who has
been a mere orthodox performer of ritual and has not acquired
knowledge, reaches the sphere of the moon, through the smoke
of the same fire, and through night, the dark half of the
month, and the six months of the 'Dakshinayana'; and when he
has enjoyed the reward of all the meritorious actions,
which he has performed, he again returns to this world". 41
But in 'Chandogya Upanishad', it is written, "Those whose
conduct has been good will quickly attain some good birth
of a 'Brahmin', a 'Kshatriya' or a 'Vaishya'. But those

40. p. 120.
whose conduct is evil will quickly attain an evil birth, the birth of a hog or dog or a chandala.\(^{42}\)

Guru Nanak does not seem to enter into such a controversy regarding the interval or time, a 'jīva' takes, from his leaving the one gross body and getting the other. According to Him, all the activities of nature and universe, are governed by God Himself through His Hukm (Divine Will).

The law of transmigration of souls also works under His Will.\(^{43}\) How it works, the Guru does not explain. Neither it is possible for any human being to explain the working of the law of transmigration of souls, unless one actually dies, experiences the whole process and comes back to us with all the memories of various states which he passed through. So Guru Nanak believes that it is futile to know the working of Divine Laws. He says:

"By His decree all souls come into existence and they engage in activity as decreed by Him."

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

"Says Nanak, whatever He wills, happens, nothing can be controlled by the creatures".\(^{44}\)

And again

"None could with-hold our coming, none could hold us back from going."

"He alone, who has created all and in whom all are bound to submerge, knows the mystery behind".\(^{45}\)

\(^{42}\) Ch. Up. V. 10.7. 
\(^{43}\) i) Maru M-1, p. 1034.
 ii) Maru M-1, p. 1020.
\(^{44}\) Sri Raga, M-1, p. 58.
\(^{45}\) Prabhati M-1, p. 1329.
Ouru Hanak believes that the idea of death is not a fearful one, if the 'Jīva' knows how to die. It is rather a privilege of the brave people. The devotee has no fear of death. In fact he welcomes death, because it gives him a chance for merger in the Lord. Kabir, in one of his hymns, says, "Death which the whole world is afraid of so much, hath a joy for me. It is by dying that the Supreme Lord of Perfect Bliss is found." Again he says:

"The death which hath frightened the whole world,

The Word of the Guru hath enlightened me about that death.

How should I die now? My mind understands (real) death.

They die who have not known the Lord;

All talk about death,

But whoever dies in Sehj becomes immortal.

My mind is in acstacy, saith Kabir,

The illusion hath gone and the Lord remains (within) me."

Guru Nanak has beautifully expressed his views about death. He says:

"You will not call death bad, O men, if only you know how to die.

Serve your All-powerful Master so that your path may become easy to tread hereafter.

You will be awarded with glory hereafter if you tread the path in peace.

If you go with an offering (of self) you will be merged in truth and your faith will count.

You will get a place in His palace, the Lord will be pleased with you and enjoy you in love.

46. Kabir, Salok.
47. Kabir, Gauri, p. 327.
You will not call death bad, 0 men, if only you know how to die.

Death is the right of brave people who die winning His approval.

Those alone are to be called brave who are honoured in the True Court.

Those who die in faith are honoured in His Court and will not suffer pain hereafter.

They will get this reward when they contemplate One God, serving whom all fear runs away.

They remain silent and do not shout aloud about their spiritual state, for God the All-Knower knows all.

Death is the right of the brave men who die winning His approval*. 48.

Guru Nanak, here lays stress on the point that those men who are attuned with the Will of God, have conquered death. They are really brave men. Guru Amardas, in one of his hymns says that he who understands His 'Hukum' by the grace of the Guru, attains eternal life. He fears no death. He becomes 'jivan-sukt' (released in life). The Guru says:—

"Nothing do I know about my end, how shall I die?

If the Lord is not forgotten, the death will be easy.

The world fears death, everybody wants to live.

By the grace of the Guru one dies while living, he understands it in 'Hukum'.

If one dies such death, saith Nanak, he attains eternal life". 49.

The evil person, however, dreads death. For him it will be an unending cycle of births and deaths.

Because of his wicked and evil deeds, he takes birth in the lower species and this cycle of transmigration keeps him away from divinity.

Heaven and Hell

The concept of heaven and hell is old enough. In Hinduism, it is associated with the doctrine of transmigration and in Islam it is related to the idea of Last Day of Judgment. According to Vedas, heaven is the abode of gods and the dead blessed fathers (pitris) 'Yama' and 'Yami' are regarded to be the first mortals who entered heaven. 'Yama' is the ruler of heaven. A reference to Hell is also made in the Vedas. The god 'Varuna' imposes punishment to the evil doers and put them down into the dark abyss for ever. Upon whom the gods are pleased, enjoy bliss in the heaven and with whom the gods are displeased, is put into the hell.

In Islam, it is believed that Allah Himself created the earth and heaven.

"Dost thou not see that Allah created the heavens and the earth with truth? If He please, He will take you away and bring a new creation and this is not difficult for Allah, and they shall all come forth before Allah". 53.

On the day of resurrection, the dead will rise from their graves in order to receive the rewards and punishments for their actions. The bodies will be formed again from the

50. 1) Raga Sa M-1, p. 352
   11) Sri Raga M-1, p. 23.
51. Rig Veda I.24.1 and VIII. 56.24.
52. Rig Veda X.85.15.
seed bone 'Al Ajib' which will not be consumed by the earth like other parts of the body. On the day of Judgment, prophet Muhammad will act as an intercessor. Those with good record will be sent to heaven, the evil ones will go to hell. There is a bridge named 'Al Sirat' over the abyss of hell. It is finer than a hair and sharper than the edge of a sword. The good will cross this bridge and the evil will fall into the abyss of hell.

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. It is true that there are references in the poetry of Guru Nanak, about heaven and hell, the 'Dharamraj', the 'Chitra' and the 'Gupta', the 'Yamraj' and 'Israil' etc., but these references are there to make ideas more intelligible. When, for instance, it is desired to emphasize that good actions produce happiness and bad actions result in misery and suffering, the same is expressed in terms of heaven and hell. The picture of hell as a place of varied and terrible tortures is symbolic. Guru Nanak says:-

"There is a stream of fire from which some pious flames;

There is none else there except the self.
The waves of the ocean of fire are on fire.
And the sinners are being burnt in them."55

55. Haru, M-1, p. 1026.
There are a few other references about hell which occur in the hymns of Guru Nanak.

1. "Man commands here as he wills, but Hereafter he passes through a narrow path. And naked he is driven to hell and he is struck with terror". 56.

2. "The false ones find no refuge, their faces are blackened and they are marched off to hell". 57.

3. "Forsaking the (Lords) Name, one earneeth sorrow. And, when such is the Lord's Will, how can one stop the transmigration. And, lo, one is drowned in the well of hell and cometh to sorrow as doth the fish without water. The worshipper of 'Maya' passeth through the hell of eighty-four lakhs species. But he receiveth the reward of what he had committed. And without the true Guru, one is Delivered not. 58 and bound by wrought deeds, one is trapped (by Maya).

'Let good deeds be your soil and the Guru's word the seed. Irrigate it daily with the water of truth. Turn yourself into a farm and let the crop of faith germinate, enabling you thereby 59 to learn about the state of Heaven and Hell.'

It is clear from the quotations, given above, that the reference to Hell carries symbolic meanings. Similarly, there is no actual place called heaven. In fact the concept of hell and heaven is just a rough illustration for clarifying the doctrine of Karma. Hell and Heaven refer to evil and good stages of life respectively and they can

57. Asa Var, M-1, p. 473.
58. Maru, M-1, p. 1028.
59. FriRaga M-1, p. 880.
be lived here and now in our earthly existence. They are symbolically represented by joy and sorrow, bliss and agony, light and fire. According to Guru Arjan, "wherever the praises of God are sung there verily is heaven". Likewise, the society of the wicked is a hell.

The concept of heaven and hell, as distinctive spheres, some where else, can not be accepted logically. If the 'jīva' has enjoyed the fruit of all his good or bad actions in heaven or hell, then what factor remains which determines man's rebirth? The birth of the 'jīva' is not justified unless he has past Karman. So the concept of transmigration and the belief in heaven and hell become antagonistic. If the reply is, that 'jīva' begins the cycle afresh, as it began for the first time, then how we are to explain the inequality of opportunities in this life? How to account for the diversity in mental and material inheritance of different men? There is no satisfactory answer. Thus the Guru seems to have avoided the inconsistency by rejecting the theory of heaven and hell.

Moreover, the aim of life according to Guru Nanak, is not to get salvation or a heavenly abode, but to develop the best in us which is the Love of God. Guru Nanak says, "If a man loves to see God, what cares he for salvation or paradise". Again he says, "Those who are God-oriented keep heaven and hell away from them. They even reject the idea of 'Mukti'."
Kabir has expressed a similar idea about heaven and hell. He says, "Which is the hell and which is the poor heaven? The saints condemn both. We have nothing to do with any by the grace of our Guru." And again he says, "Kabir hath risen above heaven and hell by the Guru's grace. And now he liveth intoxicated with the Lord's Lotus-feet."

Guru Ramdas and Guru Arjan also support the viewpoint of Guru Nanak, that the ideal of a Sikh is, not to reach heaven, but to absorb his mind in God's Love. Guru Ramdas says:-

every body longs after salvation,
paradise or elysium, setting their hopes on them every day of their lives.
But those who live to see God do not ask for salvation.
The sight itself satisfies their minds completely.

And Guru Arjan says:-

"I do not want kingdom; I do not want 'Mukti'. I want the Love of Thy feet, O. God."

'Chitra-Gupta'

There is a reference in the poetry of Guru Nanak about 'Chitra' and 'Gupta', who, according to an old belief, present the account of the individual's life before 'Dharamraj'. In 'Sikand Purana', it is said, that there was a king named 'Chitra' who was deputed by 'Yamaraja' to keep

63. Ramkali, Kabir, p. 969.
64. Slok, Kabir, p. 1370.
the accounts. There is a legend in 'Bhavishya Purana' that after creating this Universe, Brahma was absorbed in deep meditation. There appeared from His body a 'Chitra-purush', with pen and ink in his hand, who afterward, was engaged by Brahma to keep the account of all the 'jīvas'. According to 'Garur Purana', 'Chitra - Gupta' has his own abode near the palace of 'Yamarāja'.

In Islam, we find a similar belief. There are two heavenly angels who keep a constant watch over each and every individual, and record each and every action performed by him either on the debit or the credit side of his Karmic ledger account. There is a mention, in the Quran, of two angels named 'Kirāman' and 'Katibeen', one of them remains present on the right hand side of the individual and the other on the left hand side of the individual, to record the virtuous and evil actions respectively. The book of deeds, in which the good and evil deeds of human souls are recorded by the angels, is also mentioned in the Quran.

"This is our book that speaks against you with justice; surely we wrote what you did," 69.

"Or do they think that we do not hear what they conceal and their secret discourses? Aye, and our messengers with them write down". 70.

The Pauranic idea of 'Chitra' and 'Gupta' and the Islamic thought of book of deeds and angels, should not be interpreted literally. The fundamental idea behind this is

68. Ibid. p. 607.
69. Quran 46.29.
70. Quran 43.80.
that every action (Karma) of a 'jīva' must bear fruit. No action goes unrecorded. In the 27th stanza of 'Japji', a poem by Guru Nanak, occurs a reference to 'Chit' and 'Gupta' who record man's deeds for 'Dharamraja' to adjudicate. This reference to 'Chit' and 'Gupta' can also be interpreted as one's own actions, conscious (chit) and unconscious (gupta), that perpetually get recorded in one's character. In this context Guru Arjan says, "Chitra' and 'Gupta' are our conscious and unconscious Karmas".

Last Thought

In some religions, it is believed, that the last thought or last desire at the time of death, forms a basis for the next birth. In Buddhism the last thought of the dying receives a prime importance. The people who believe in God meditate upon Him at the last moment with the desire to secure a better organism. Since Buddhism does not believe in God, it explains that at the time of death, all that exists is the 'dying thought' and 'Skandhas' (the sum total of all the physical and mental Karmas in the shape of character). The rebirth thought and the 'Skandhas' are determined by the 'dying thought'. It means that if the mental state at the time of death is good, a pleasant birth will take place, if it is bad, an unpleasant one.

73. Encyclopaedia, Religion and Ethics, Volume XII, p. 429.
The Bhagavad Gita also explains how the last thought of a person determines his future after death. The Lord says, "O son of Kunti, thinking of whatever objects one leaves this body at the time of death, that and that alone he attains, being ever absorbed in its thought". Since the last thought of a person is, what we can say, the aggregate of thoughts or the dominant thought which keeps him engaged during his lifetime, the person therefore makes efforts to do good deeds throughout his life with the hope of getting nearer to the Lord. The Lord says, "He who departs from the body, thinking of Me alone, even at the time of death, attains my state, there is no doubt about it."

Among the poets of Adi Granth, Trilochan, the Maharashtrian saint says that the final desire at the time of death determines the future destiny of the jīvas. He says,

"He who at the last moments of his life desires for wealth, would born again as serpent.

0 mother, lest I forget, and remember not the Name of God.

He who at the last moments of his life desires a woman, would born again as harlot.

He who at the last moments of his life desires for a house, would born again as ghost.

He who at the last moments of his life, thinks of his sons, would born again as a pig.

74. Gita. VIII. 4.
75. Gita. VIII. 5.
He who at the last moments of his life, meditates upon the Lord, would get released and the Lord would reside in him". 76.

It is clear from this hymn that -

1. Desire (of worldly objects) is the root cause of transmigration;

2. The final emancipation, one gets, only through the Name of the Lord;

Guru Nanak, at several places in his poetry, states that 'jīva' undergoes the wheel of transmigration because of his attachment with the worldly things. He says:

1. "Through attachment thou art destined go the round (of birth). Yes, getting attached thou are driven to the abode of death". 77.

2. "My mind is unwise that it is lured away by greed. And is awayed not by the Word; and this evil makes me come and go". 78.

3. "The 'jīva' cometh and goeth, bound by the attachment of 'Maya'" 79.

4. "The jīva cannot escape the wheel of transmigration because of his attachment with the three gunas (Maya)". 80.

Guru Nanak does not go into the controversial aspect of the nature of desire, that determines next organism. He simply affirms that, as is the desire of a 'jīva', so is the thought; as is the thought, so is the Karma he does. And according to his Karmas, he takes the next birth. The Guru

76. Gujri, p. 526.
77. Asa M-1, p. 356.
78. Sri Raga M-1, p. 21.
79. Maru M-33, p. 1060.
80. i) Majh M-1, p. 740
   ii) SriRaga M-1, p. 61.
   iii) Majh M-1, p. 138.
"As is one's own mind, so one findeth that of another,

And as are one's desires, so becometh the state
(of the mind). 81

And as are one's deeds, so is one absorbed".

And again

'This mind becometh as it thinketh and so doeth it act.
For thatone,somethone reapeth oneself:
That else one can say about this'. 82.

How transmigration ends:

According to Sikhism, the individual has got the human form after going through innumerable cycles of birth and death. He must therefore try for spiritual evolution, so that he may be free from the wheel of transmigration. Guru Nanak lays down, that the cycle of transmigration can come to a standstill, if a man gets himself regenerated in the Guru and dwells upon the Name of God. He says:-

How may one's comings and goings cease? How may one meet the Lord?

Immense is the pain of births and deaths because there is ever doubt and duality.

One's comings and goings cease, when one attaineth to the perfect Guru, who blisseth one with the gift of the Name and then the false doubt is dispelled. 83.

The wanderings cease, if a person is born in the Satguru and in the spiritual ecstasies, he applies his mind (to God). 84.

81. Prabhati, M-1, p. 1342.
82. Suhi, M-3, p. 756.
83. Ams, M-1, p. 422.
84. Raamkali, M-1, p. 940.
The transmigration of soul comes to an end by adopting the following means:

1. By remembering the Name of the Lord.
2. By taking refuge with the Guru and dwelling upon his Word.
3. By the service of the Lord.
4. By destroying ego and becoming God-oriented.
5. By the Grace of God.

1. **Name - Meditation**

Remembrance of God - "Nam Jap" is the essence of Sikhism. Life without Name is barren and meaningless. The Name of the Lord provides the devotee true peace of mind.

Guru Nanak points out repeatedly that the cycle of transmigration does not end without the Name of God. He says:

1. The ego-centric walks in darkness and is blind to the Name,

   His comings and goings cease not and he is born to die, and be born again to be washed away. 85.

2. The false one, when he quitteth the world forsaking the Name, cast dust thrown in his head and so he cometh and goeth. 86.

3. Without the Name, one is friendless; hosts of men (without the Name) go the round of transmigration. 87.

4. O Ye men, utter ye the blessed Name of the Creator Lord. That ye are cast not into the world of flux again. 88.

5. And through the Lord's Name, one is delivered and rid of the woes of birth and death. 89.

6. One eateth poison, uttereth poison, and doeth deeds for the sake of poison;

86. *Maru, M-1*, p. 1027.
88. *Prabhati M-1*, p. 1329.
89. *Prabhati, M-1*, p. 1330.
And so one is bound down and struck at the 'Yama's' door, and the release is only through the True Name. 90.

7. Without the Lord's Name thou art emancipated not. 91.

8. They are not, die not, fall not into hell, they who dwell on the Lord's Name. 92.

9. Rare is the one who knoweth, by the Guru's Grace, That without the Lord's Name, one is emancipated not. 93.

10. One wanders through a myriad wombs, And is netted by the 'Yama' over and over again, realizing not the Guru's word.

This mind now flieth up to the skies, now sinketh in the underworld;

And is released (from his wander-lust) only by cherishing the Name, through the Guru's word. 94.

11. Drink thou the Lord's Nectar, to ingather the Supreme Bliss; then thou shdest in thyself.

Sing thou Him who destroy's the fear of the world and the cycle of births and deaths; in this way, thou shalt not be born again. 95.

12. The Name is the lamp into which I have put the oil of Pain so that as the lamp burneth, it sucketh up the oil (of Pain) and in consequence I am saved from meeting the 'Yama's'. 96.

13. As the metal mergeth into the metal of its own kind, so doth the praiser merge in Him, the God of excellence, through His Praises.

He gets deep dyed in the True Colour the Colour of His Love,

He attaineth Truth and is satisfied through reciting His Name single mindedly. 97.
2. The Guru and his Word.

According to Guru Nanak, transmigration of soul comes to a stay when the ‘jiva’ meets the True Guru and dwells upon his Word. On meeting the Guru, the ignorance is removed and one obtains divine knowledge. The Guru gives light through his Word.

1. The God-conscious being emergeth from Truth and mergeth in Truth too;

Yea, he, who is Pure, is indentified with Truth.

The false ones come into the world, but get no refuge, and leaning on the other, they come and go.

It is through the Guru’s word that transmigration endeth, for the Lord Himself seeth and blesseth.

2. The believer reaches the gate of salvation; His kith and kin he also saves.

The believer becometh the congregation; Their souls are saved from transmigration.

3. Those who realise not the Word through the Guru, they are born only to die;

They come and go again and again.

4. My mind is not swayed by the word, and its evil makes me come and go.

5. Without the True Guru, one is emancipated not; And one cometh and goeth, and dieth in death over and over again.

6. Without the word, the world is led astray and is born to die again and again.

7. Without meeting the Guru, one cometh and goeth the round of transmigration.

98. Ramkali, M-1, p. 940.
100. Sri Raga, M-1, p. 19.
102. Prabhali M-1, p. 1343.
103. Sri Raga M-1, p. 88.
8. Without the True Guru, one is blest not with the Name, without the Name, one is rid not of one's doubt.

For, he who serveth the True Guru, attaineth peace, and then cease his comings and goings. 105.

9. Yes, if one seeks not the Guru's refuge, one attaineth not to God.

And one is strayed by doubt and is born to die to be born again.

If one dieth in vice, one is bound at the 'Yama's' door;

And within one is not the Name, nor the practice of the Word. 106.

Service (Seva)

It is said in the Gita, 'Thy duty is but to act and never to be concerned with results. So let not the fruit of action be thy motive. Do not let thyself be drawn to the path of non-action'. And again, 'Men suffer the bondage of Karma only when an act is done otherwise than in the spirit of service. In that spirit, free from attachment engage thyself in action'. Guru Nanak has also laid stress on service as a means for acquiring spiritual power. Service of the Lord frees the 'Jiva' from pride and greed. 'Jiva' gets out of the wheel of transmigration by serving the Lord and His Creation.

1. Serving the true Guru, the bonds of death are loosed, And thou cherishest the true Word in thy heart. 109.

2. Without service of the Guru, there is no peace, and one cometh and goeth. 110.

3. Only by serving men in this world can a seat in Heaven be attained. 111.

105. Ramkali N-1, p. 904.
107. Gita IV, 34.
Ego (self-hood) and 'Mâyā' (illusion) is the true cause of separation from the Supreme self. Transmigration ends by destroying ego and becoming God-oriented. The Guru says:

1. Engrossed by I-am-ness, we attain not to the Truth, but when ego departs, we attain to the highest state of bliss. 112.

2. The Gate-way to Him opens up, when the fire of ego extinguished. 113.

3. Then ego goeth, one mergeth in Him. 114.

4. Ego leads us to bondage and so we wander, Saith Nanak, in the Worship of the Lord, is all peace. 115.

5. We speak of births and deaths, but all this is the play of the Creator Lord:

Yea, who he, (dieth to) his self, he dieth not again.

One should do the deed that's writ in one's lot by God.

If one offers one's mind to the Guru and so Meeteth Him, this meeting is beyond value. 116.

Grace of the Lord.

The grace of God plays a very vital role in shaping human destiny. The 'Jīva' gets final emancipation only, if he comes under the fold of God's Grace. Guru Nanak says in Japji that 'the body takes its birth because of Karmas; but the salvation is attained through the grace of the Lord! To be a recipient of the grace of the Lord, the devotee

113. Asa, M-1, p. 466.
114. Sukh, M-1, p. 750.
must struggle for spiritual development by serving the Guru and dwelling upon his word, by meditating upon the Name of God, by serving the humanity and by shedding off egoistic tendencies and by becoming God-oriented. Guru Nanak says:-

1. Without the Guru one is led astray and cometh and goeth.

But when the Lord is in grace, He uniteth one with Himself. 118.

2. The Lord Himself establisheth and disestablisheth; and as is His Will, so doeth He.

He doeth and watcheth what He doeth and worketh His Will, and emancipateth him on whom is His Grace. 119.

3. The whole world is bound by a myriad bonds; the chains of the Yama have chained it Yea.

And only those who are saved, by the Guru's Grace, who seek the refuge of the Lord. 120.

4. They who are separated by God, wail grievously, Yea, when their time is over, they die only to be reborn.

But he whom the Lord forgiveth, him He blesseth with glory, and uniting Him with Himself, he regrettest not. 121.

In the following two hymns, Guru Arjan, the fifth Guru, has given a beautiful description about the cessation of transmigration. He says:-

1. Transmigration comes to an end by the service of the Lord.

By giving up self (ego) and taking refuge with the Guru;

118. Asa M-1, p. 412.
120. Asa Patti M-1, p. 434.
121. Maru, M-1, p. 1035.
It is thus that the precious human life gains salvation, by remembering God, who is the support of our vital energy,

We have closely studied 'Saritas', 'Shastras' and 'Vedas'; a person can not free himself (from the cycle of births and deaths) even if he tries diverse means;

Apply your mind to meditation on God and secure your heart's wishes, 122.

2. The ego of doubt has been smashed; the mind has been illuminated;

The Guru has smitten the fetters and given a release from the bonds.

My coming and going has ended.

The burning (oil) in Pain's mind which is always uneasy has cooled down, as the Guru gave (the gift of) the cooling name.

The load of Karma has gone and we are free from Karma.

We have crossed the ocean (of 'Samsara') to the other coast, the Guru has, in this, proved his characteristic (of merciful succour), 123.

122. Gauri, M-5, p. 263.
123. Maru, M-5, p. 1002.