CHAPTER 2

METAPHYSICAL ASPECT OF GURU POETRY

THE CONCEPT OF BRAHMAN

The word Brahman occurs many times in Guru poetry and rather it is the central theme of the Guru poets to talk about and to devise many ways to comprehend that Supreme reality. But before determining the Sikh Guru’s concept of Brahman, it must be kept in mind that like all other theistic philosophical schools, which have formed some conception about Godhead, their concept is based upon their direct experiences and not upon some experimental datum. The Indian philosophers, if they can be named so, are mostly the mystics and the record of their mystical experiences are formulated into different philosophical schools about God, its attributes and relations to the nominal world. As the human nature varies considerably, the perceptive angle too differs from man to man and so these different angles become the basis of the different mystico-philosophical systems. Thus in India it has never been some theory, pre-supposed estimate or some imposed formula to determine the concept of Godhead in a particular system, but the feelings experienced

1. For Supreme Reality, two words, Brahman and Par-Brahman, are used along with others, but between these two no distinction is made by Guru-poets as it is the Monism of Sankara. Here both stand for the same Reality.

2. Whatever I see is Brahman, whatever I hear is Brahman and only one is to be found;—Bilawal M.5, Chhant.
by the mystics and recorded in the scriptures could only
be made responsible for these.

Guru-poetry, the only record of the mystical
experiences of the Sikh Guru poets, too speaks of Brahman
and in fact the whole poetry is an elucidation of His Nam,
the only subject for them to write on. Though the whole
Guru poetry deals with it, yet they believe that it is
such an abstract reality that every effort to describe
Him and every expression to represent Him seems inadequate.

Still, to satisfy the urge of the human mind, the different
systems have adopted certain means and have made certain

3. Even if the whole earth becomes paper, the whole
jungle pen and the speed of writing be that
of air, still the unfathomable cannot be fathomed.
Āsā M.5, Chhant.

4. The primary and valid means for obtaining the
knowledge of Supreme Reality is known as pramana
and different schools differ upon its number.
The maximum number of pramanas is ten, six of
these are common. There are:
1. Pratyaksha or
sense-perception;
2. Anumana or inference;
3. Shabda
or verbal testimony of sacred texts like Shrutis;
4. Upaman or analogy;
5. Arathapatti or presumption;
and 6. Anupalabdi or non-apprehension. The
materialistic like Charvakas accept perception
as the only source of valid knowledge. In
addition to perception, jainas admit inference
and testimony, while Naiyayikas add comparison
or analogy also to the first three sources. The
Mimamsakas or Prabhākar school admit the firstive sources while those of Kumāril school admit
all the six sources valid (B.P. Bahirat;
Philosophy of Jnan-Deva, p. 36, But Guru poets
take perception, inference and verbal testimony
as the source of knowledge.
conclusions which befit their visions and correspond to
their attitude towards the universe and their method of
salvation. The Upanishadic sages have described this
reality as the primal principle, the source of all the
nominal things and ultimate reality to which every thing
returns in the end. It is a Guiding spirit, an Absolute-
ness and Transcendental being. It is Supreme truth and
and perfect silence. There is a sequence when the
expression becomes negative and while talking about Brahman
it asserts that He is not this, not this (neti neti),
but by it, it does not mean that He is devoid of the
attributes, but He is beyond all these or His attributes
are in such a number that human mind is incapable of cal-
culating these. The emphasis here is more upon the in-
adequacy of the fragmentary being than upon establishing
the Supremacy of Brahman. But still the human mind
strives to find out adequate or inadequate means to express
that reality though the method of approach becomes purely
individualistic and corresponds to some mood of the person.

5. Sath path Brähman x. 3.5.11.
8. 'Sir', said a (Upanishadic) pupil to his master,
"teach me the nature of Brahman". The master did
not reply. When a second and third time he was
infortuned, he answered, "I teach you indeed, but
you do not follow. His name is silence". -
Swami Prabhavananda, The Spiritual Heritage of
India. p. 45.
Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, in the ripeness of his mystical flights, as his poetry reveals, experiences the Absolute unity of God and assimilates it into his personality. "My God is one, brethren, my God is one" is the popular belief of the Guru poets and they subject their all mystical potencies to realise this truth and then to communicate it to the people. Brahman for them is an absolute unity, unparallel singularity and indivisible reality, which is not subject to any change. He is Supreme wisdom, Supreme intelligence, truth and indestructible. He is one and only one, and so Guru poets perceive only that reality through every form and colour. They are so firm in their belief that they declare "Only One is perceived, One is reflected upon, One is heard and only One is the source of hearing" Brahman in Sikh Gurus is one and an impartable whole in which every particle of the world abides. It is not that every thing is out of Him, but every thing is within Him. For the further clarification of the subject we can say that every particle of the visible world is a part which constitutes that Whole.

9. Unity which is not subject to diversity.
10. Chaupade Ghar 2, M.i.
11. The Alpha and Omega of Guru philosophy is that there is but one God and that He is ever unchangeable, no sort of change can effect Him. (Ndazan Singh, History and Philosophy of Sikhism; Vol. 2, p. 388).
But that does not mean that That Whole is accomplished by these fragments. He is whole even without the visible existence of these, because in any form these exist in Him. So, He is not subject to any accomplishment and though all-bliss and all-joy, He is not subject to any ordinary sense which practically subdues the every finite being. "He is beyond all the emotional attachment." He is perfect-(Pūran) in Himself.

In the theoretical discussion about the nature of Brahman two angles of being Transcendental or Immanent have almost predominated the whole thought culture of the East and West. Gītā, an authentic treatise on the Indian Philosophy and key to all the prevailing philosophical speculations in India, too raises this point, though it is conceived as a treatise which reflects Brahman as a Personal God in the form of Lord Krishna. In it He is revealed as an absolute being, in whom every thing abides, but He is beyond every thing and is least touched by it.

In another Shaloka He is depicted as a force which vibrates

13. In the sense in which God is necessary to world, the world simply is not necessary to God. Apart from Him it has no being, apart from it, He is Himself in plentitude of being. The world - God = 0; God - the world = God; (William temple, Nature; Man and God, p. 435).


15. Gītā; 9.4.
in every particle of the universe in the form of its essence.\textsuperscript{16} These two modes of expression seem ordinarily contradictory but in fact it is not so. It is an emphasis on the two modes of the representation of the same reality. So, for the theoretical discussion and the nature of Brahman as revealed in the poetry of Gurus is concerned, He is undoubtedly Transcendental being. Sikh Gurus are extremely monotheistic in their theoretical approach towards the nature of Brahman and they believe that He is an Absolute being. He is not approachable by ordinary senses and being self-existent and distinct from the universe, He is not visible. As the above indicated Shaloka of Gita refers that Brahman is a separate identity, similarly Guru poets also believe, but with a difference in approach. "God" in Sikhism "is exalted above all. He is inaccessible, unfathomable, altogether distinct from His creation."\textsuperscript{17} Guru Deva when gives a depiction of his Brahman, he says "He is unknowable, unfathomable, incomprehensible unperceivable and is not subject to time and Karmas. He is beyond the limits of castes. He is self existent and is beyond attachment, superstition and transmigration."\textsuperscript{18} He is beyond the limits

\textsuperscript{16} Gita; 7.8-9.
\textsuperscript{17} Maccabhib; Sikh Religion; p. 171.
\textsuperscript{18} Raga Sorath; M. 1.
of time and space because He Himself is in the beginning, middle and end. 19

This Absolute reality has always attracted the minds of mystics and they have longed to assimilate themselves into that, as it becomes the ideal for them, and in the indescribable maturity they find that they are in absolute unification with Him. Here He does not remain something unattached and some vacuum, but an attachment between the two, seeker and its object of worship, is experienced and consequently He is not felt as distinct from His devotee i.e. creation. 20 Every minute particle of the universe is undoubtedly feeling and enjoying the warmth of His embrace. 21 Not only He is abiding in every thing, but He Himself is prevalent in the form of every animate and inanimate being of this world. "Only one is prevalent, without a second" 22. "One has shown only one,


20. -O, My mind, do not feel that Hārī is away, but find Him always present. He always hears and sees and is vibrating in every word; Asa, M.3 Asvatpadi.

21. O, saints, He is dwelling in every vessel - Sorath M.5. - From whom you are hiding your actions? Where He is always present; - Sri Hāgā; M.5.

because this unity is the diversity." Guru poets have frankly admitted that the Supreme reality is one, absolute and undivided and along with it that reality is prevalent in this world of divisions. He is like a sun which remains absolutely same in essence, though the seasons undergo continuous change, that is, the creator remains unchanged when its creation changes, because such is His will. He has, "mixed in everything like the rays of sun." Want the Gurus want to emphasise—that even though He is prevalent in every minute part of the universe, yet He is pure, undivided and absolute singularity and unchanged reality. No partition in His self is caused, even when He dwells in every soul, in every existent and non-existent being. He is the Self (Ātma) which resides in many abodes simultaneously and with complete harmony, rather He is the only Self which is manifested through many selves. They believe that "Within each body the Absolute (Brahman) is concealed and within each vessel the whole light is His." Guru Arjan Deva says "In every body prevails the prevalent and is nearer than nearer," and perhaps this is the belief which stimulates J.E. Carpenter to suppose that Guru Nanak's

23. Bawan Akhari; M.5.
24. Raga Basant; M.5.
26. Subhī; M.5.
idea of God was pantheistic, rather than theistic.\textsuperscript{27}

It is clear in Guru poets, as revealed in their poetry, that God for them is Transcendental being, self-existent and abiding in Himself but at the same time He is Immanent also, because He is prevalent in all phenomenal abodes. "The goal of man according to Guru is to unite God, who is the whole, one, only and of whom each one is part, not a part in the literal sense of the word, for God is impartable and there is none else but Him, anywhere and everywhere, but a reflection of Him in its limited awareness, constituting its individuality.\textsuperscript{28} The doubt which upsets the human mind is that if He is unchangeable then how can He be prevalent in the whole cosmology? How He can be manifested through many without causing any partition in Himself? But a close study of the Guru-poetry reveals that these doubts do not stand in our way to understand the real nature of Brahman depicted in it and for that we will have to change our mode of vision also. The very fact that Brahman in Guru poets becomes Immanent is that they were not philosophers, in approach, who were engaged in philosophical researches, but they were Bhaktas i.e. mystics and whatsoever they experienced in such state of being, they recorded it into their poems. The solution

\textsuperscript{27} Theism in Medieval India p. 506-511. C/P Dr.Sher Singh Philosophy of Sikhism, p. 146.

\textsuperscript{28} Dr. Mohan Singh; Sikh Mysticism; p. 35.
to the problem of being Immanent or Transcendental simultaneously is not to be found in the philosophical observations only, in which He is Transcendental, but also from the mystical point of view. They do not find the Transcendental being parted (and accordingly they preached it through their poetry), but being their dearest being, they find His spirit everywhere and in every thing. "Wherever I see there thou art". "Whichever direction I see, thou art present". "As fragrance dwells in flower and a reflection in mirror, similarly Hari is living changelessly, brethren find him in yourself". "He lives as ghee (clarified butter) in the whole milk." What is prevalent is His essence, spirit i.e. Ātma.

In the Bhakti scriptures, Supreme reality is oftenly depicted in two forms, i.e. Saguna and Nirmuna, former full of attributes and the latter beyond all attributes. In fact these two are the different forms of the same reality. "The super personal and the personal

29. One of the most convincing aspects of the mystic illumination; is the apparent revelation of the oneness of all the things, giving rise to Pantheism in religion and to monism in Philosophy; — Bertrand Russell, Mysticism and Logic, p. 18.
30. Prabhūti; Ma.1.
31. Śrī Rāga ki ṭā M.1.
32. Dhanasāri; M.9.
33. Sorath; M.5.
representations of the Real are the absolute and the relative ways of expressing the one reality. When we emphasise the nature of reality in itself we get the absolute Brahman, when we get emphasis on its relation to us, we get the personal Bhagwan. It is also ascertained in the Bhakti scriptures that by nature the Bhakta has to start from Personal God and in the end experiences the Absolute. In other words we can say that the Personal form of the Deity emerges out of the need of the devotee and for that the Impersonal manifests itself in Personal form. Guru Nanak too speaks of this fact and believes "Knowable emerges from unknowable and Personal from Impersonal." This is a theoretical fact which can be supported with plenty of the examples from the Indian tradition, and Guru Nanak too agrees with it. But to determine the concept of Brahman in Guru poets, we will have to see which form of the two is accepted, meditated upon and is preached by them. A very strange thing, available throughout the Indian tradition of Bhakti, is that whatever form of Personal manifestation of the Impersonal is worshiped, it is fully identified with the Supreme and Impersonal Brahman in the end. So far as the concept of Gurus is concerned they do not

34. Radhā Krishnan, An Idealist View of Life; p. 31.
36. See Shiva-Gītā, 14.5.
accept the Personal form of God as their Deity, because they are of opinion that these Personal forms are not detached from the world of Gurus and are subject to birth and death. Whereas their deity, as revealed in the Mul-Mantra, is "One, Absolute and Universal Truth, Creator, Fearless and beyond enmities. He is beyond the limitations of time and cycles of birth. He is self-existent and ever gracious." Gurus do not accept the idea of according worship to gods and goddesses and do not identify these with the Supreme reality. Invariably, these gods and their incarnations are under His command, and are His servants only. Then how a servant can be put parallel to Master, though He Himself abides in the servant and

37. Rama and Ravana, though they had big family; yet the both died;— Shaloka;M.9.

38. Karta Purukha (Pursha):— In Sikh Gurus Purkha is a popular expression for Supreme Reality and several adjectives are used with it to express His innumerable qualities. Some of these are Karta (Creator), Akal (beyond the limits of time); Aunashi (Undestructable) Uttam (best), Yogi (ascectic); Agama (unapproachable), etc.

39. Burn the tongue which says: Master is subject to transmigration;— Bhairo;M.5.

40. Mul-Mantra.

41. Avtaras do not know His secret, as He is Supreme Ishvara, Supreme Brahman and is unformable;— Ram Kali;M.5.

42. Ten Avtaras are created by His Order;— Maru;M.1. Sohle.
master alike. "In the master is the servant and in the servant is the Master, wherever I see, none other is visible." But servant here is not adorable. In fact "He (Nanak) started a regular campaign and succeeded in building up a monoteistic system, free from all these elements which he thought were opposed to or unnecessary for religious development and spiritual consciousness." The words Personal (Saguna) and Impersonal (Nirguna) are frequently used by Guru poets also and it is evident from the following use that such distinctions of being Personal or Impersonal are not applicable to the Brahman of Sikh Gurus. It is said:—

"He is the Personal, Impersonal, Formless and He Himself is in the perfect Trance." 45

"He Himself is Personal and Same is the Impersonal, Who has attracted the whole world with his Shakti."

"He Himself is Formless and with Form and Same one is Impersonal and Personal." 47

Thus Brahman in Guru poets transcends even the

43. Dhasasari; M.1.
44. Dr. Sher Singh, Philosophy of Sikhroni p. 96.
45. Sukhmani; M.5.
46. Gauri; Sukhmani; M.5.
47. Gauri Bawan Akhari; M.5.
state of being of Transcendental being. "He lives in all the things and yet transcends them. The universal Self is like the Sun who is the eye of the whole universe and is untouched by the defects of our vision. He is said to fill the whole world and yet remains beyond its confines." He cannot be befitting into the different terms of Transcendental, Immanent, Personal, Impersonal etc. because He is above all these. This is a human effort to categorise Him and is exercised only to meet the problem of communicating Him. Language being the dominant medium of expression and man being bound to express through it, these different terms are used about Him and people poets agree to this handicap, but this does not mean that He is invariably the same as our used terms express Him. All such efforts are exclusively vain to represent Him fully. Guru Arjun Deva has made it clear that uncountable are His names and Guru poets also have used them, but all are used just for

48. S. Radha Krishnan; Principal Upanisads; p. 71.

49. If there is a name, then comes a word to represent it and if there is no name, the mind is not concentrated. But no body knows that He is in the name and namelessness and hence do not realise His actual state of being - Gauri, Pura,licence, Nkhani, Kelini.

50. How an immeasurable can be measured. It is possible only if there is another. But there is none except Him, then how He can be measured? - Bilalwal; M.3.
- His potentiality cannot be said. It is possible only if there is another, equal to Him. - Sukhmani, M.5.
the purpose of apprehension and communication, otherwise, He is beyond all these names or in other words, all these names indicate the same reality. Brahman as meditated upon and preached by Guru poets is definitely beyond all these terms of categorizing Him and in this respect they are identical with the concept of Supreme being as prevalent in Yogis. For them He is a Whole, Who by His Nature abides in every thing and every thing abides in Him, and thus every thing comes from Him, is preserved by Him and returns to Him within the course of time. But He is not subject to any course of time or space.

There is a common view shared by some Eastern and Western scholars that idea of Oneness of God is borrowed from Islam. Dr. Tara Chand, writing on the subject says "How deeply Guru Nanak's debt is to Islam, it is hardly necessary to state, for it is so evident in his words and thoughts." This doctrine is made to stand on the plea that it is only at the advent of Islam that the unity of Godhead was perceived by the non-muslims Indian thinkers and hence before that time they were polytheists. The drawback which overwhelms such an

51. He was existing before the beginning of this universe. He was existing in all the ages. He is existing and He will be existing; Jāgū ji.

52. Dr. Tara Chand; Influence of Islam on Indian Culture;— p. 176.
observation is that: We bring the every day praetiee of the laity in philosophy and draw serious conclusions. Polytheism was prevalent only in common man's every day worship otherwise the unity of Supreme reality was realised even in the remote periods of Indian tradition. Moreover, "To admit the various descriptions of God is not to lapse into polytheism. When Yajnavalkya was called upon to state the number of Gods, he started with the popular number of 3306, and ended by reducing them all to one Brahman. If the common man's every day practice is to be made the basis of determining the concept of God in a particular system then the adherents of Islam too could not be excluded from polytheism, because by this time they too did not stick to their original mode of worship to one God and they would worship prophet, different Pīrs and tombs etc. Moreover, Islam does not exist only in the unity of God, which is broadly speaking accepted almost in every religion, but in few more things, which were discarded by Guru poets.

53. Him, who is one Real, sages call Him variously; - Rig-Veda, - My names are many as declared by the great (ṃ) - Mahān Bhārat Shanti Park.

54. Radha Krisana. Hindu View of Life; p. 29.

55. Reformers, holy and spiritual persons of all ages, creeds, religions and beliefs have admitted that there is but one God or Supreme intelligent Power holding the Government of the Whole Universe; (Khasan Sigh, History & Philosophy of Sikhism; Vol. 11, p. 391).

56. In its monotheism, the Sikh faith resembles Islam and that is the reason why some historians
The concept of **Brahman** in the Guru poets is not, in fact, borrowed from any other religion and is not established on any other doctrine. They were mystics and their conception is based upon their direct experience. They realised that Supreme reality is one and a Whole and at the same time many. "He is such a circle whose centre is everywhere, but whose circumference is nowhere."

An other term **Satācitańanda** is also used mostly by the Vedantist, to explain His many-fold virtuous nature. By this they mean that He is **Sata** (True, unchangeable) **Cita** (consciousness) and **Ananda** (Bliss). Sankara when uses this term, he wants to emphasise that He is not subject to the qualities expressed by the words opposite to these words. Though in Guru poets, this composite term is not used, yet their Brahman is not devoid of

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and writers have asserted that **Sikhism** is the product of the impact of Islam on Hinduism. But a deeper study exhibits the difference in the conception of Godhead. God of Islam is Personal, but the saint poets sing of an Impersonal God. The Muslim believe that Muhammad is His prophet, but the Prophethood of God has been rejected by the saints; (Dr. S.S. Kohli; A Critical Study of Adi Granth, p. 336).

For **Manak** there was no such thing as a God for the Hindus, a God for the Musalmans and a God or gods for the outer hia heathens; Fredric Finoot, *Si Khalsa in the book; 'The Religious systems of the world, C/F Sewa Ram Singh, Divine Master; p. 234.*

A Saying from Saint Anguliani.

Mence the word **Sachchidananda** does not define Reality but is used to differentiates it from opposites;-- B.P. Mahirat; The Philosophy of Jińam-Deva; p. 40).

The words **Sata, Cita and Ananda**, of which it
these qualities. **Brahma in Sikhism** is not formless, taintless, non-spatial, absolute and impersonal only, but He is full of forms, and personal qualities. He is not something absolutely different from His creation, but He always dwells in every being. He is a kind friend, sincere companion, generous father, sweet mother and dear husband. All these different words, containing such meaning as indicate the nearest relation, are used in the metaphorical way and simply to emphasise the warmth He has for His beings and to show that the whole universe is enjoying a lullaby in His lap. He is ever-gracious, all love, all honey and a store of pleasures. So in **Gurus** the term Satācitananda is not used and the meaning pertaining to this are not given to the words Sata, Cita, and Ānanda strictly in the sense, these are found in the

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is a combination are used reparality in Guru-poetry of Adi Granth, but in tenth Guru it is available, as: Sada Sannānanda; - Jāp.

61. "O, Nanak, Father and Mother is Hari Prabha and we are His children and so Hari looks after us; - Ram Kali; M.4.

62. Prabha did not care for my merits and demerits, but cared for His own kind nature. He kept me always in His own embrace and so no hot wind (of miseries) could even touch me; - Sri Raga, M.1.

63. My dear Prabha is a treasure of pleasures; - Bilāwal, M.5.
tradition. Here these are not used to curb the negative meaning relating to their opposite words, but here these are in the purest form. He is not subject to negative qualities, his all qualities are positive, so it is unnecessary to think in this way. In fact his qualities are innumerable and as indicated above, He cannot be made exclusively representable through any term. He is a whole and every thing and every quality is not out of Him, but in Him.

**Jīva**

**Jīva** (a living being or personal soul) is a subsequent evolution after the emergence of matter from invisibility to visibility. But as Darwin suggests in his book, which almost rocked the world, Jīva is not a subsequent stage of the development which matter takes in the evolutionary process of the cosmology from Protoplasm to Amoeba. Jīva is definitely a consciousness, a spirit and sentient in nature, which matter is insentient and unconscious according to Darwin. Then how an unconscious matter can respond to the process of evolution in emerging a consciousness or Jīva. In fact, what seems reasonable and does not

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64. Even if He wills to cause some disappearance in the visible world, it is not a negative quality, but is positive, because it is for change and freshness.

65. Innumerable are your qualities, O, Master Prabha Bilawal; M.S.

66. The origin of the species; Charles Darwin.
lack support from Indian thought culture and Guru poets is that it is not the matter which independently exalted towards consciousness and perfection, but it is the perfection, that is supreme-consciousness, which transmitted Himself into the matter. 67 The spirit, consciousness or Atma in man is manifested through a body made of five elements, 68 and that is why we can say that matter is an important agency to manifest the spirit and hence they are inseparable and impartable as a form from the content and content from the form. 69 But here too, matter manifests the spirit only as long as it does not attain perfection, which culminates with the progress of the human potentialities and divine grace.

Guru poets, as revealed through their poetry, clearly admit that the present birth or life, the (man)

67. This body is the dwelling place (Harimandar) of Hari; Prabhati M.3
- He Himself is in every particle; Kath. Upnishad, 1.11.20.
- Even matter is a manifestation of the Supreme. There is an element of spontaneity and creativity inexplicable in terms of mechanical forces even in the lowest forms of nature. Each phase of our being has its own consciousness, its surface thoughts, its habitual ways of feeling, thought and action; S. Radha-Krishnan, The Bhagavada Gita, p. 62.

68. The puppet (man) is made of five elements (Dhāt); Mahā. M.5.

69. Person is in Brahman and Par-Brahman is in person; Gaurī Sukhmani. M.5.
- Atma is in Sama and Rama in Atma; Bhairo A
is going through is not a creation, as it is, but before reaching this stage, it had to go through many lives in the form of many lower yonis. This is not due to the course of development in insentient matter, as materialists believed, but because of the universal law of creation in correspondence to His Will and Order, because 'everything is within His order.'

Then to believe that it is matter which progressing and encouraging the lower species to enshape themselves in higher being is gradual process of the time, then it would mean that He, Who is representing Himself through all these manifestations, is subject to time, because it is definitely a time-process. But this is not the fact and moreover Gurus do not teach that to go through the life of lower the yonis (lower than man) is due to the gradual development of the matter independently, but contrary to it, it is all due to the Karma or the Will of God. These are our Karmas which stand responsible attract or loose the grace of God, Who determines the sort of yoni (life) through which we are to go and then only Karmas are also not competent as it is ever proclaimed in Indian tradition, to fructify in the particular or corresponding yoni, but

70. Gauri, M.5.
71. Janu ji.
It is He, whose grace decides. The reason which constitutes to the denial of Gurus in accepting the law of evolution of the matter through lower species to higher species is also due to the fact that the Guru poets hold that even the highest perfection of matter that is man has to revert to the lower yoni which becomes unavoidable result of the Karmas.

Guru poets do not believe that Jīva is or can be a rational being, but on the other hand, no rationality in Jīva is ever probable because He is bound to go under the shadows of his Karmas. He is not an independent being, which can exert its will as its rationality directs. But this also does not mean that man is only an output of matter and has no consciousness in it. It is a consciousness, which always corresponds to the will of the supra-consciousness. It is this consciousness (when it reaches at the highest level), which predominates almost all the life on this earth. 'Other yonis are subject to you (man), your rule is on this earth,' and yet it too has to move in accordance with His Will, because everything in the

72. This body is due to Karma, but way to liberation in His Grace, - Japu Ji.
73. Japu ji Pawi 1.
74. Bhairo, M.3.
75. Āsā, M.5.
universe is within His will. When the man identifies himself as doer of all his karmas, under the shadow of this Maya, he becomes victim to ego and loses all such powers. No doubt that he is capable of doing anything, as he is a store of all the possible powers, but only when he is humble and is in direct communication with the truth. He becomes pure consciousness, the whole vigour and vitality when he realises his origins, but when he identifies the fleeting things as stable and everlasting, he loses His grace and subsequently all the powers.

This body of man is definitely subject to the destruction and construction, but the Atma abiding in it is beyond all such conditions. It is unending, because like body, it is not made of five elements of the matter, but on the other hand it is Brahman Himself, manifesting through it, and whenever there is an end of the body, in the materialistic way of saying, it does not mean that whole of the jīva becomes extinct, but it is only the 'Cold and hot dust which is eaten up (by death) otherwise He (the jīva) is neither fresh (child) nor old (old man)’. Guru Arjun Maharaj Gauri elucidates and firmly stresses his view that 'This jīva is not subject to death', and experiences the ever-lasting unity of the jīva and Brahman.

76. Asa, M. 5.
77. Raga Gauri, M. 5.
Strange and wonderful is the story,  
That Jīva is an image of supreme Brahman."
Neither it is old (man) nor fresh (child),  
Neither there is agony for it, nor shadows of death.
Neither it vanishes nor goes, (dies) but exists in the beginning and all the ages,
Neither it experiences heat nor cold, neither it has a friend nor foe.
It is above happiness and sorrow, it is the master and is able to create.
Neither it has father, nor mother, and is existing since ages.
Virtues and vices have no effect on it, in every heart it remains ever awakened."

The same thing, that is the eternity of Jīva is described by Guru Nanak 79 and is made clear that it is only the body which decays, otherwise Jīva is eternal. Body, though is subject to death, yet it does not mean that it is something ignorable or is of no importance, but it too, in Guru poets, is equally important, because it is the form of the content that is supreme truth manifests through it and hence it is respectable also.

'This body' says Guru Amardas in Parbhāti 'is the temple of God and the diamond of knowledge is manifested through it'. 80 Even the Gods are tempted to meditate to be graced with this body; 'The nectar of God's Nam is nine-fold and

78. Gaund, M.5.
80. Prabhuṭī; M.3.
it abides in body. It is also believed that whatever and whichever form is available in the universe that is available in body also and that too adds to its importance.

The Guru poets have fully apprehended and experienced and have equally proclaimed the sameness of Jīva and Brahman. They do not hold that Jīva is a separate entity and is made of different substance. Jīva is substantially Brahman, though not in the strict and absolute sense of the word, because the difference of the part and the whole exists. Jīva is not equally the same, but he stands in the context as a drop of water and immeasurable ocean (sāgar mahen bund...) or a spark which is indebted to fire for its existence. But when, in the ultimate end, the drop rejoins the ocean and the ray embraces its source, all differences vanish and a fundamental unity is caused. The difference, or the distinction which is generally apprehended between Jīva and Brahman is not anything real, but only an output of the ignorance which is caused by the ego. When ego overwhelms the human being and ignorance snubs his all creative faculties, he begins to take false and transitory things as true and eternal. He absorbs himself in the sensual luxuries taking them real, forgets the Reality and

81. Gaurī, M.5.
82. Rām Kali, M.1.
83. Sukhmani, M.5.
identifies himself with the illusions, ignoring his originality. It is this ego which creates the barrier in understanding the reality and unity of the self.

"The unapprehendable is within and is not being apprehended, because ego has created a barrier between."

"With the pre-dominance of ego, truth is not apprehended, (but) when ego vanished, supreme position is attained."

Guru Nanak in his Sidh Goshtgals proclaimed and explained that even the existence of the whole universe is due to the sense of I-ness, that is ego and its extinction means there is none but Brahman, because its extinction is the state of purity and unity. He replies thus to a question, extended by the yogis:-

"0 Purkha (man), the Creation of universe is out of Maumai (ego)."

It clearly indicates that according to Guru Deva, the Jiva is potentially good, pure and undecaying truth and it is only the ego which blinds him to entertain himself as separate identity and embrace the pitfalls.

Sikh Gurus are firm advocates of the law of transmigration of the soul and they have clearly exposed

84. Gauri, M.5.
that 'whatever you sow, you will reap as a harvest of your Karmas.' Good or bad Karmas or a proclivity towards doing these, or thinking ill of others, will bring the corresponding fruits and the Jīva will have to eat these in the form of migration from birth to birth. That means Karmas are to decide the nature of the yoni. It is a clear fact as indicated by S. Khazan Singh. 'There are so many reference to the course of transmigration contained in the Holy Granth, that it will be merely enlarging the bulk of our work to add more. 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.' But there is a strange explanation of the theory of transmigration. There is no doubt that Guru poets explain that under this theory, the Jīva has to undergo many yonis lower and higher as are generally counted 34 lacs, but what is the change essentially brought in different yonis? The Gurus say that this transmigration, an unavoidable fruit of the Karma, is nothing but only the predominance of the mind or matter 'Establishing the mind and body (matter), He has done all His own and that is the transmigration.' Moreover the difference

86. Sāran Māhān Mājh, M.5.
88. Nāmkali, M.5.
between the lower and higher yonis is only that the lower yonis are predominated by materialism, a state of ignorance, and in the higher yonis the spiritualism predominates, a state of enlightenment and unity. That is how Gurus have drawn up an apparent distinction between the enlightened and ignorant jīvas and have emphasised that the former is blessed with the faculty of wisdom and later with ignorance.

Jīva as portrayed by Guru poets in their poetry is not an independent being and always is dependent upon Him. He is only a finite being and is every controlled by the infinite. As a sun, in metaphorical way of saying, sends out its rays when it rises and absorbs them again when it sets, Brahman creates and dissolves its creation. "We come when He sends, Nanak, and go back when He calls back," is the belief of the Guru poets and Guru Arjun Deva has beautifully explained it through a metaphor of a puppet being played in the hands of the master. Again Guru Ram Das says that Brahman Himself is everything and Jīva is His ownself represented in finite beings and He can withdraw His light any time He likes.

89. Var Sarang, M.2.
90. Gaurī, M.5.
91. Sorath, M.5.
Many are the methods employed by different schools of thinkers to define the nature of the universe, its process of becoming, its essentials and its relation to its creator. The Sikh Gurus too have passing references in their poetry to express their attitude towards it. They have emphatically preached that Supreme reality is an Absolute being and is not representable through our conditioned names and forms and was prevalent even before the estimated history of universe was recorded. 'At that time formless (Brahman) was himself and the creation was not into being.'92 There was vacuum all around and no living being was into existence. Guru Nānak in his Rāg- Mārū has described that state of complete darkness which prevailed before the creation of this universe, and has told that there was nothing visible and only Brahman was there in the state of perfect Trance.93

But this does not mean that the matter which constituted the universe was not there. It was there within Him, but was not visible and in this way the matter and God may prove to be co-existent, but only in the sense

93. For detail see Rāgā Māru M.1, and compare it with a stanza from Nasadya Sukta of Rigveda, as translated by Macdonell.

"Darkness there was at first by darkness hidden; without distinctive marks, this all was water."
that He was not devoid of it. Otherwise when the whole universe is His creation, it is obviously a later being and cannot be put parallel to God. When this vacuum around instigated His will to be many, the whole matter, resting in Him, became visible without any mechanical apparatus.  

It is, in fact, His wholeness which spreads under His will order (Raza) or in other words it is His will which is the fundamental basis of all this universe through the execution of His Order (Hukam).

On the process of materialising His will, the date and time of which, according to Gurus cannot be determined, different systems differ and in India alone there are many philosophical systems which hold difference of opinion about it. Some say that these are the Karma, the evolution of which cause the cycles of appearance and disappearance and thus the invisibility is forced into visibility and the visibility into invisibility. The

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That, which, becoming, by void was covered;  
That only by force of heat came into being."  
C/F Dr. S.S. Kohli, Sikh Missionary. p. 196.

94. Marū; M.1.
95. Wha tsoever is prevalent is His Will; Gaurī; M.1.
96. Neither Yogi knows the date or day and nor anybody knows the reason or month of the Creation. It is only the Creator Himself;— who knows, when He created this universe. Japu ji.
Sāṁkhyan system emphasises that it is Prakṛti (Nature of the thought and the material) which stands responsible for the creation of the universe. They believe that there are two separate and independent entities of Purša and Prakṛti, and former being the pure consciousness, has nothing to do with the creation and it is only the later, being active, from which the universe develops and to which it returns. And then this does not evolve itself into creation or destruction, because it is ever living and the present visible universe is one amongst its countless series. So, here it is not creation but evolution. The theory of the creation of the Guru poets has some resemblance with that of the Sāṁkhyan theory, so far as the Prakṛti is considered active in the process of evolution, but here it is not self-sufficient. It itself is evolved from Purša and hence is active or competent to create anything or to be evolved in any form with the transportation of power from Purša. It is sufficient but not self-sufficient. In Guru poets the actual powers are in Purša (Brahman) and Prakṛti is under His Will, because unlike Sāṁkhyan, the Gurus are theistic by postulating

97. Compare with Ramanuja's Brahman-Parināmavāda.

98. Later on Sāṁkhyan too split up into two schools, Atheistic (Anīshvarvādi) and Theistic (Īshvarvādi).
Pursha, as Supreme power. It is made clear by Guru poets that all evolutions, which occur many times, are from Him.

Different Tantra schools hold another view, as regards the theory of creation. They believe that universe comes from Shiva, but only when He is in copulation with his dynamic force i.e. Shakti (energy), without which He is helpless to do anything. Here Shakti stands responsible for creation. Guru poets also agree up to this extent that Shakti is dynamic force and it is the force working behind the evolution. It is said 'three Guna are product of one Shakti and this great Maya (Universe) is the shadow of these (Gunas). But this Shakti in Guru poets is not a phenomena, independent or parallel to God, rather it is a product of God Himself. 'After producing Shiva and Shakti, creator Himself enforces his order.' That is He brings the universe into being. They are very clear in their notion that every other being, however High, forceful and dynamic it may be, is the creation of Lord Himself and hence they have declined the possibility of any other agency, external or internal; independent or in collaboration with

99. Many times the expansion is made, Sukhmani M.5.
100. The whole universe is a composition of three Gunas, 'Tej Gunm meh kina bisthar'.
Him, in the creation of universe because all such agencies are His creations. 'He Himself is the cause and its effect and none other.'

The exponent of the absolute Monism that is Sankara advocates that there exists nothing except Brahman and whatever we take as universe is nothing but illusion (Maya). It is we, the fragmentary beings who out of ignorance take it as something existent, otherwise it does not exist at all. So, here the question of creation does not arise, because there is nothing like creator or creation, when He Himself prevails not in or out of everything but as everything. But Guru poets do not agree with it. They have discarded the idea of Maya as regards the existence of universe. They believe that it exists, it is true, because it is created by the true. 'He is true and His whole creation is true, because the whole creation is by Him.' In Japuji, Guru Nanak Deva says 'Real was the creation of Real One.' In his Asa dī vār says 'this universe is the dwelling place of the real One and He, the true One dwells in it.' In the same long poem, Guru

103. Gaurī Sukhmani, M.5.
104. Ibid.
105. Japuji.
106. Asā dī vār, M.1.
Dora has dealt more elaborately in advocating that no particle of the nominal world is unreal because it is created by the Real. Another difference between the outlook of Sikh Gurus and the Vedāntists also reflects their attitude towards Jagat. As Brahman in Sankara’s Vedāntist doctrine does not involve Himself in Karma, being a source of bondage, the question of creating and taking the Jagat as Real does not arise, but Brahman in Sikhism is Karta (Doer, active) and is represented with a character to create.

Guru poets too have used the word Maya (Illusion), but in them it does not convey exactly the same meaning as in Sankara. At several places they have used it in the sense of this universe, His play and creativity.

107. For Maya, in Guru Poets, word Kadarat (creation) is also used and it supports the above indicated idea: Dr. Jai Kam Kishan, Shri Guru Granth Darshan, p. 108.

108. The Guru did not give up the old vedāntist word Maya. He used it very often but in a modified sense. It is a change. All that changes, appears and disappears in Maya and therefore Sat and all that underlies this change is real and therefore Sat........Dr. Sher Singh, Philosophy of Sikhism, p. 190.

109. This (universe) is Maya attachment to which instigates to forget Hari and to love the secondary; Anand; M.3.

110. It is His own play and He watches Himself after creating it;– Sat........

111. Maya is the mother and three Gunnas are born of her;– Maru M.3.
Here it is not simply an illusion, but is reality, as far as its existence is concerned, though it is subject to continuous change. It is transient, like a dream or play, not because it completely dissolves, but because the human being has fragmentary capacities to vision it as its wholeness and whatever it perceives is only the fragmentary part of that. It is not transitory in essence, but in its appearance, because it goes under constant change. The external world, however, beautiful in appearance it may be, it must disappear. Even the noblest manifestations of Brahman are superficial and transient and have no stand to remain alike in this world of uninterrupted change, which is always caused in form and not in substance. So, it is a real and substantially Eternal, it cannot be only an illusion. Even otherwise, the dissolution of the world is experienced only when fragmentary outlook is not subdued and a wide cosmological outlook is not achieved. If our perceptive sources are perfect, the unending existence of the universe, which is real and eternal according to Gurus, must be perceived and it will not be only an illusion.

Theory of Guru poets about creation is composite one and is distinctive. Three words, relating to this process, are used by the Gurus and these are Mirankar.

112. The whole world is like a dream, which takes no time in dissolution; Sorath M.9.
Ekankar and Oamkar. The first relates to absolute Brahman and tells that He is formless and it is the same reality, Who was responsible for the void before creation. He is the first, primal and ultimate stage of the universe from which it comes and to which it returns. The second stage comes when He wills for creation. At this stage He takes the form of Ishvara by coming into contact with maya. For it the word Ekankar is used. The third stage of expanding the existant matter within Himself into diverse forms and colours, is symbolised by the word Oamkar. This word, in Guru poets, in fact indicates the activities of the first created three forces, named as Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh, which create, preserve and dissolve the world of different appearances i.e. the creator is represented by these. Guru Deva says:

113. Self-existent formless is unfathomable and is not fathomed. He became Ekankar, when He Himself created. And then the process of creating forms was materialised through Oamkar. After becoming Ekankar from Nirankar, (formless) he created innumerable Akaras (forms) from Oamkar:- Bhai Gurdas; Var 22, Passi 2.

114. Maya, the one, in prevailing through with a method;— Japuji.

115. If He likes, He expands and again if He likes He become one (Ekankar);— Sukhmani M.5.
"By Omkār is Brahman's creation,
Omkār created consciousness (Cita),
By Omkār were created stone-ages (Primeval ages)

By Omkār Vedas emerged,
By the word Omkār comes emancipation,
By Omkār Gurmukh (True devotees) are liberated,
Hence and reflect upon word Omam (because)

Omam word is the essence of the three words. 116

Om is made of three letters—A, U, and M and the 'theory
of it is that as A is the first sound, made at the back
of the mouth, and M is the last, made with the lips, and
the U is of the nature of a glide between them, the word
covers the whole range of vowel utterances, and since
vowels are the power in speech and consonants represent
only limitations or applications of the power this whole
word is the expression of creation which indicates the
presence of the creator." 117 Thus Om is a composite
word and its sound through which Brahman vibrates into
His universe. His self operates His whole creation. Guru
poets believe that everything is out of His word 119 and
it is not only the creation by word, but dissolution is
also by it and this happens repeatedly. 119 Both the
states of unity and diversity are by Him. This idea of

118. The whole universe is created with a word;—
Japu-ji.
119. Creation and dissolution both are form a word
and the creation again is from a word;— Māyā ṛṣ.”
the creation of the Jagat by His Name has some resemblance with Islam and perhaps that is the main and enthusiastic inspiration which led scholars to believe that Guru poets are indebted to Islam. But this is not the fact, because Indian tradition has discovered it long ago, even before the commencement of Islam, in the form of word Om as is indicated above. This word (Shabda) is His order (Hukam) through which His will (Rasa) to be many is exercised. This word i.e. Hukam covers the whole range of creation and dissolution. Nothing is out of it.

As mentioned above universe according to Gurus is not something unreal and short living, similarly they do not believe that it is an insentient and unconscious phenomena. In this respect their idea corresponds to that of Sāmkhyans and Tantras in whom the Prakriti and Shakti in addition to being living force is sentient also.

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120. In Guru poetry Name stands for His word also.
121. Merely, when He intends a thing. His Command is 'Be' and it is;
122. By Hukam (order) are the different forms;- Japu ji.
123. Destruction and construction are by His Order, and whatever is liked by Him, is prevalent by His order; - Maru Mā.
124. Everything is within His Hukam and nothing is out of it; - Japu ji.
125. The people who are not followers of Shakti-Bantra
When Guru Nanak says 'whenever I see, I find union of Shiva and Shakti', it clearly indicates that this universe for Him is sentient phenomena. But by this use it may not be inferred that Guru poets agree to the concept of Shakti and Prakirti as prevalent in their respective systems. The words are used to explain their belief symbolically that 'Nothing is created without consciousness'. For further clarification we can keep in view the fact available in Asa Dī Var that everything in the universe is functioning within the fold of His fear. That means everything responds to His orders and acts in accordance with His Will and hence that is the characteristic of its sentient and conscious existence.

Here, a human mind may have to face a doubt that if universe is substantially the same i.e. it is sentient, true and eternal then why He created it? and why it is called secondary (Dui)? It is secondary because it is

believe that Shakti of Brahman or this world is insentient, but adherents of Tantra believe that the Shakti of the Supreme Shiva that is this world is sentient. (Dr. H.P. Dwivedi, Nath Sampardai, p.68 translated four Hindi to English by author).

126.  Sī Rāga M.A.
127.  Sād Rāga m. 1
128.  Shaloka M. 1, Āsa dī Var.
129.  Āsa dī Var, M. 1. Renv.
not primal being, it is not the source but is creation. As a ray is not substantially different from sun, but still the difference of the source and its product is inevitably perceivable and cannot be ignored, similarly though jagat and Brahman are substantially the same, they are qualitatively different at least when we say that one is creator while the other is creation. He creates it, simply because it is His Will and He enjoys and extracts happiness from it. 130

The metaphysical aspect of Sikh Guru poetry, as revealed through the occasional reference, reaches a unique concept of the Whole. They do not believe that any part of this Whole is of any different substance. Brahman, jīva or jagat, according to them are definitely same and the difference is caused only because of the impact of Maya on jīva. To explain this state of complete unity, they have, several times, used the symbol of the thread and a knot in it. As a knot in a thread is substantially the same, but qualitatively different, similarly jīva is same as Brahman. 131 In fact, the word "Creator" does not seem exact, though Guru poets themselves call Him Karta repeatedly, because here it is not an act of creation, but is an act of becoming. It is like a sun and a tree, which do not create any ray or branch, respecting, but expand themselves. This unity, a unique characteristics of the oriental philosophy, which is not available anywhere in the accidental or Islamic philosophy, is widely discussed and preached by Guru poets.

130. Panthī, Āsa dī Vār, M.1.
131. Ṛṣa Kalī, M.5.