CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION
CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The time was out of joint when Sikhism emerged on the horizon of India. The Gurus came to dispel darkness and enlighten the masses. They applied themselves whole­heartedly to eradicate the socio-religious ills and evils nourished by the steel frame of the Indian society, i.e. the caste-system. They pulled woman out of the malaise of the ages and placed her on a par with man. The forte of the Gurus was love, service, humility and compassion, and they harnessed these qualities to the service of the cause that they had espoused.

The central idea of the Gurus' teaching was the oneness of God, the brotherhood of man and 'Simran' or constant remembering of God. They emphasized the futility of escape from life. They exhorted their followers to 'live pure amidst the impurities of the World'. (Anjan mahe niranjan rahiye). In all their utterances, implicit or explicit, they denounced superstitions, rituals and dogmas which had been leading the people astray from the true path of worship of one God. They aimed at evolving an all-embracing unity, a human fraternity based on the idea of one Supreme Being as an omnipresent and omnipotent force,
and all their efforts and philosophy were directed towards
the achievement of this objective.

The Gurus, with the sweep of their practical minds,
concretized ideals into the institutions of 'Sangat' and
'Pangat' in order to inculcate into their disciples, the
ideals of corporate life, humility and equality they cherished.
These institutions became a part and parcel of the Sikh
faith and went a long way in removing the rust of the ages
and initiated a new era.

The institution of Sangat became a vital force and was
instrumental in bringing about structural changes in the
social and mental set up of the people.

The institution of Pangat was a practical demonstration
of the high ideals of the Gurus, and it helped to inculcate
into the minds of the Sikhs the spirit of the dignity of
labour and service. The focus was on the supremacy of the
Sangat. The values and the ideals concretized in these
institutions initiated the Sikhs into new ways of life and
helped them transcend their petty selves.

Guru Gobind Singh kept burning the flame lit by Guru
Nanak and fed by the other Gurus. The stupendous task
accomplished by the Guru was the creation of the Khalsa. It
was an event of great magnitude, unparalleled in many ways.
It was a dramatic culmination of all that the earlier Gurus
had endeavoured to achieve. The creation of the Khalsa gave
the severest blow to the caste-system, and instilled courage
into the disheartened people. A new people was born, committed
to the great ideal 'all men are one'. The crowning feature
of this splendid feat was that the Guru himself received
baptism from his own disciples whom he had earlier baptized
and, thus, merged himself into the Khalsa. He declared that
the Khalsa was the Guru and the Guru was the Khalsa. Never
before in history had a religious leader—a master—so
completely identified himself with his disciples as the Guru
did.

After Guru Gobind Singh's disappearance from the
scene, Banda, who was commissioned by the Guru to fight
Mughal oppression and tyranny, emerged as a forceful
personality. The catholic and democratic spirit of the Gurus
was reflected in the coins that Banda got struck and in
the abolition of the 'Jagirdari' (feudal) system. The moment
he deviated from the chosen path, his glory vanished.

After the death of Banda Bahadur in 1716, the dark
period of Sikh History began. The Sikhs were left without
a leader of status and calibre. They were subjected to
unparalleled persecutions and atrocities. They passed through
the baptism of fire and sword and came out in resplendent
glory because they had never lost faith in the democratic
spirit infused into them by the Gurus. They succeeded in
wresting political power and established twelve 'Misals' (principalities). The rule of the Misals was, to a great
extent, democratic in its outlook. The 'Gurmatta' grew into
a distinctive feature of the Misals. All important decisions
were taken with mutual consent, and the sanction behind them
was both moral and religious.

Lust for power and the spirit of possession gave
birth to rivalries among the Misals. This set the stage
for the emergence of Ranjit Singh on the political scene
of the Punjab and he wrested power from the Misals and
established the Sikh Raj. He was a tolerant and large-hearted
ruler, imbued with the spirit of Sikhism and was secular in
his outlook. The Sikh spirit is reflected in the coins
which he got struck (with the Guru's name on them).

After Ranjit Singh, the Brahmanical influences started
creeping over the Sikh society. Religious places went into
the hands of Sadhus and the professional priests. Hindu
rituals got incorporated into the Sikh mode of worship again
and idols found their way into the premises of the Sikh
shrines. Custodians of the gurdwaras became greedy and the
property of these places became hereditary. The Narskaris
and the Namdhari were in the vanguard of this revivalist
trend.
The Singh Sabha Movement that started in 1873 A.D. was a pronounced reaction to this revivalism. It was a mighty movement and it rejuvenated the Sikh faith. The Gurdwara Reforms Movement, an offshoot of the Singh Sabha Movement, aimed at freeing the gurdwaras from the hold of the hereditary mahants. The Sikh suffered tremendously, were persecuted and imprisoned, but their spirit could not be crushed. They succeeded in getting the Gurdwara Act passed in 1925 A.D., and the control of the gurdwaras passed into the hands of Shri MANI Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, an elected body of the Sikhs. It brought factionalism in its wake and polluted the atmosphere of the gurdwaras again.

The present day scene is disappointing. The Sikhs have ceased to have a living faith in their ideals and beliefs. The caste-system, severely castigated and condemned by the Gurus, has again entrenched itself into the Sikh society. The rituals and the forms, assailed by the Gurus, have also staged a come-back.

The hoary institutions of Sangat, Pangat and Gurmatta are still there. But much of the spirit behind them is gone. The Sikh masses occasionally protest against the deterioration
that has set in. Their disgust with this state of affairs is expressed in the protests that they raise from time to time. Any reform movement, launched in right spirit and right earnest, can give a new lease of life to the democratic institutions projected by the Gurus, which have fallen on bad days, and which alone can set Sikhism again on the right path.