Chapter 5

Futurology of the Sikh World-View

5.1 Introduction

In modern age that is science and reason driven, religion is being understood as an irrelevant and illogical phenomenon. Due to rationality dominating inclinations, religion is losing its hold on the human mind. Rapid development in material world has inspired human psyche to follow the law of survival of the fittest. This attitude has created rivalries and bloody wars in history. We are witness to the fact that though religious traditions propagate that the spirit of man is divine and pure but it also possesses negative tendencies as well. History till date has confirmed that the later aspect of human self has dominated his overall personality. Scriptures proclaim that all human beings are the offspring of the same Father (The Divine) yet this proclamation did not appeal to human mind much. We are living in the world of questions and complexities which can’t be skipped over and will have to face them. Withdrawal from situational realities may be considered escapism that will not prepare a ground for the future of mankind.

Cartesian dualism, that dissociated subject from object, conveyed the message that matter or nature is not a part of human self that can use it for its benefits. Jasbir Singh Ahluwalia observes, “The worldview of the modern civilization is essentially influenced by dualism and dichotomy of reality ontological and epistemological coupled with reductionist methodology...The resultant worldview dualistic, dichotomous, reductionist, atomistic is qualitatively different from a holistic view that treats reality in its concrete wholeness, integrality and inter-connectedness and inter-dependence.”¹ This very thinking gave rise to production based technology which further resulted in capitalism, materialism and imbalance in eco-system. Consequently, scientific temperament has been a fashion of the day. It has established a new empire of rational intellect and refined matter. In other words, modern man has created a new visible god for himself instead of Divine that is abstract in itself; statements relating to creation of man and world are being challenged by science. Darwin’s theory of evolution had ushered a transformation in thinking patterns. Now, matter is not only superior to unseen divinity but it has become a primary and central concern of modern life. Human body is not regarded as sacred in
its essence but just a combination of blood, muscles and veins. Concept of ‘that world’ has been replaced by the idea of ‘this world’. Discoveries and inventions have given man limitless freedom and power to suspect everything. In such a situation life is getting faster, machine has made man more capable to control and to understand natural resources and dynamics of matter. All these advancements have shaken the foundations of religion in modern age. “Materialism denied God and spirit or soul. It considered matter to be the only reality; the senses were regarded as the only gateways of sure knowledge. Nothing could be regarded as real unless it was revealed to us by our sense and could be proved and demonstrated there was no design behind the universe; Matter and chance were carrying it…The body was regarded as a complex machine manifesting life.”

Post-colonial awakening, rapid technological advancements etc. are outcome of globalization. Unequal division of resources has created a feeling of insecurity. This fear has resulted into global tension, war, violence, terrorism, ecological imbalance and violation of human rights. In 20th century two world wars have already shattered the illusion of ‘development’ and now humanity is baffled to resolve the issues in a civilized way. Establishment of UNO was a serious step to fulfill the very purpose. After the Second World War, the issue of human rights was raised by thinkers, humanists and social reformers. Sikhism is a votary of universal brotherhood and advocates welfare of all. It stands for the freedom and rights of each individual. It asks for social justice, gender equality, compassion and eradication of evil from all walks of life. So “for survival of humanity in these troubling times, Sikhism because of its universal nature can be called the religion of future mankind.” In the face of above type of global issues that has driven the humanity into a serious crisis, what may be the role of Sikhism, forms the subject matter of section of our study.

Examining the futurology of Sikhism, in the 21st century, we cannot ignore the stunning reality about man, that is, as Readfield has shown in his analysis, alienation of man from nature, society even from oneself. Modern age has given dominance to man over all phenomena disengaging spiritual reality from his life. According to existentialism, existence precedes essence. It means it has given man uncontrollable freedom worth chaotic autonomy or anarchy driven sovereignty. Due to his scientific advancements, developed through logic based discoveries, man considers himself measure of all things. In fact it was an impact of Cartesian dualism that reigned every sector of human life, and divorced the matter from mind. It was the first transformation that had happened in the history of ideas. Secondly, reason was given
primary status over other methods of inquiry to know the reality. New discoveries and inventions filled man with confidence that further developed into over confidence and finally converted into egoism. All institutions and systems of thought have been shaped accordingly. Jasbir Singh Ahuluwalia says that “Modern-nation state has appropriated into itself a godly status. Godly authority as well as godly egoism dressed up as secular nationalism and paraded as the ideology of nation-state.” And further he argues that “On another level, this new (secular) mode of thinking brought in philosophy of humanism, which asserted that it is man who is the measure of all things and not any ‘outside’ transcendental reality or principle. The normative in man’s life is historically determined that was claimed by different varieties of historicism-evolutionary, dialectical etc.”

But now the hegemony of scientific thought and materialism has been broken down by new ideas known as postmodern thought. It asserts the dignity of every entity on equal scale irrespective of its size and value. As mentioned before material growth has increased human desire to accumulate wealth and other resources of the objective and natural world, consequently man tried to usurp the rights and dignity of others. Conflicts in Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Russia etc. can be viewed in this context. So, assertion of one’s own dominance over others has created a war like situation. Postmodern age has rejected the claim of empirical and rational method as sole means to grasp reality. It gives equal status to every method either traditional or modern because reality can’t be grasped with a single way because of its complex nature. Therefore, now objective methods are not sufficient to know multifaceted truth. Its trans-empirical nature transcends the scientific logic.

Now the world is going to face a very odd situation along with the theoretical challenges of humanism, democracy, scientific thought, etc. Sikhism is also confronting the same problems. Homosexual culture, live-in-relationship, liberalism etc. are some of the other questions. Sikh scholars will have to address these questions or situations by taking close examination of human psychology rather than responding with whimsical statements but a speculative framework will have to be reconstructed. Question is that how these issues and problems can be interpreted/solved, while sustaining the spirit of teachings of Sikh Gurus. Addressing these problems is a duty of spiritually awakened persons who seek to cultivate hidden faculties of man in its fullest expression. Sikhism has always played an important role towards social responsibilities and commitments whenever confronted with contentious issues during its long history. It has evolved a unique identity, system of sacraments and rituals and, political
aspiration as well. As it has adopted a secular disposition too, so Sikhism will have to show its capacity to resolve the contemporary issues.

5.2 Secularism

It is a post medieval concept that originated in Europe. Generally, the term secularism implies the anti-communal character. Drawbacks of the alliance between religion and politics opened the door for secularism in which both institutions are considered independent of each other. No one has right to interfere in the domain of other. The idea was floated that institutionalized religions always exploit humanity, enjoying a friendship with politics. So there should be demarcation between religion and politics. It provided a basis for secularism. It does not fix any particular interpretation; but every country or group has adopted it according to its local settings. Thus, there are many versions of the term. For example, it can’t be taken in India the way it is taken in the west. In religious context it can be defined that, “it ensues from a basic acceptance of the postulate that even though each religion may be distinct and different from all other for various historical and cultural reasons. It can’t enforce any special claim as being the only and final embodiment of the eternal religious truth.”

While exploring the secular context of India Dr. Amrik Singh writes that “In the Indian context, equality before law was a notion that did not exist till the Muslim period, whenever anyone was punished for any offense, the determining factors was his caste and social status.” British rule brought a couple of things into notice with a complete break from traditional ways. According to Dr. Amrik Singh these were:

I. India as a part of international market whose production center was not the countryside but urban area.

II. They introduced a formalized system of administration based on the rule of law that claimed to administer justice irrespective of any discrimination and without fear and favor.

III. They brought the system of representation in polity based on vote formula.

Presently, what is happening in secular India clears our misbelief that religion does not play a pivotal role in politics. Carnage of the Sikhs in ’84, barbarous attack on Muslim community and Christian missionaries are the examples of similar nature. It should not be overlooked because conflict is seen in terms of religious differences either the case may be of
America versus Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, or the case may be of India and Pakistan. Some may understand it as an error of judgment or others can relate it to consequences of coincidental events. In the present milieu majoritarian communalism of India wants to avail the situation in the name of secularism or nationalism. In this context observations of Amrik Singh are worth-noting. He says, “What is happening in India today indicates fairly emphatically that Hinduism had become more militant and would fight in defense of a decisive role for itself in the affairs of the country.”

As far as we are concerned with secularism in relation to Sikhism, we know that as a religious tradition there is no problem but as a cultural, political, or minority community there are some concerns which require in depth discussion.

To sum up, we can say that secularism puts a break on religious ideas and prevents religion interfering into worldly activities. It means human life should not accept any supernatural or metaphysical control and fear. Thus it withdraws society from traditional settings. In other words, it may be said that it is departure of ‘this world’ from ‘that world’ and that very norm creates a dichotomy between sacred and profane. So rationalism, capitalism etc. all has their roots in the term one or other way. Here man’s relation with other fellow beings and society, and his individual assertion in the form of personal autonomy and freedom are more important than any sacred and cosmic reality. Dr. Attar Singh sums up and remarks, “In broad sense these two poles of ideation may be identified in western history as humanism and individualism which incidentally have been the strongest impulses behind the movement away from religious world-order.”

Thus, the very conception of secularism highlights the demarcation between sacred and profane. It means man and reason are parallel powers that operate against religion. Analyzing the problem and difference between attitudes of the East and the West, Dr. Dharam Singh comments precisely that “So religion is just one factor in civilization in the west. On the other hand, in the east, religion is not just one element in civilization; rather it has been the form of that civilization.”

In the case of Sikhism, it does not consider any conflict between these two poles. Even the founder of Sikhism and, his successors have accepted illusory and transitory nature of world partially, yet it is a place to realize the spirit of dharma. Guru Arjun emphatically declares that creation is true. So Sikhism does not accept any tension between contingent and necessary aspects of matter. Guru Nanak’s notions of nirguna and sarguna as mentioned in Guru Granth Sahib, involves transcendent-immanent complexion of reality having both the attributes. The Sikh experience accepts contingent (जलद, नाट लिख, एटीओ, मंज़ा) as well as necessary aspect
Attar Singh clarifies that, “Insofar as Sikhism admits of the reality of the world and its distinction from the realm of faith; it does so within a hierarchic conception…both these groups of conception are not mere metaphysical categories. Whether alluded singly or in pairs in Sikh religious texts, they are charged with powerful emotive significance implying the temporality, transitoriness, frugality and inevitability of the decay, death, and destruction of the former, and eternality and immortality of the later.”

Another aspect of Sikh world-view is that it holds the creation of universe as a result of immediate will of God. There is no idea of creation as modern scientists claim it in the form of evolution or gradual development, therefore Sikh faith does not visualize any line between sacred and profane. Guru Gobind Singh admits state and religion both are created by God. Development that took place after the death of Guru Arjun, is sometime apprehended as secularization of Sikh faith but we can’t ignore the challenges Sikhism had to meet at that time.

In Sikhism human is respected regardless of his caste, creed and color. Both physical and metaphysical concerns are taken care of for the balanced growth of man. There are no strict dogmas and rituals, so it paves the way for liberalism. Doctrines of Sikhism do not authorize any particular class as priests but follows the way of direct communion with God. It removes the possibility of any mediation between man and God. Except Guru Granth and Panth no one can claim spiritual authority in Sikhism. Persons who perform various types of services are just like caretakers or custodians in the sense of sewadars. They don’t have any special rights as compared to other Sikhs. So such type of liberalism projects human being as a liberated one. In this sense, Sikhism is a humanistic religion, not in the context of classical interpretation in which God is replaced by man, but in holistic context. It recognizes man’s physical, emotional and spiritual pursuits and creates no dichotomy among them. Man’s primary identity is that he has originated from one common source i.e. Universal Spirit manifesting all over the universe. Before the Sikh Gurus there were two systems which had created inequalities in society. These were caste system and feudal administration. They not only rejected both but also made efforts to liberate Indian masses from the clutches of these evils. So Sikhism is neither an ethnic (racial) nor a feudalistic religion. All these distinctions hold no value at the time of initiation ceremony of holy amrit. The first five beloved ones (panj pyaras, most esteemed authority and institution) belonged to the so called lower castes of contemporary society. No idea of ‘Promised Land’ exists here. Guru Granth does not accept gender discrimination and caste based discrimination.
All these ingredients of Sikhism make it a universal religion which is equally concerned with the temporal and spiritual advancements of society.

### 5.3 Globalization

The phenomenon of globalization is of recent origin which has taken place due to rapid technological development in modern times. This type of rapid change may cause tension in many forms which may be the result of misunderstanding and insecurity. In this scenario religion will have to play a significant role to solve these problems. Sikhism is capable to meet the crisis. In this context Guru Nanak’s proclamation, “There is no Hindu and no Muslim” (ਰਾਹੀਣ ਹਾਨੀਨੀ ਹੈ) will work as a beacon light to pave the way for the process of globalization that it should happen with peaceful manner. Trans-cultural, Trans-geographical and Trans-linguistic features of Guru Granth Sahib proves it to be universal scripture and the message is not only for the ‘chosen people’ but for the whole of humanity irrespective of caste, color, creed, ethnicity etc.

The conflict between secular nationalism and religio-ethnic minorities is growing more intensively, but somewhat a change positive, is also happening that practices of common currency, free exchange of goods and migration have brought different states closer to each other. With this change, political restrictions are also withering away and man has become a global citizen. This very phenomenon is known as globalization. Fresh political and constitutional initiatives have taken place in world politics. With the emergence of print and electronic media, and internet information technology, gap of time and space has been decreased. Subaltern communities are raising their voice for justice, unknown facts regarding world and life are being revealed every day. All these social developments internal and external are catalysts in the formation of a new world-view. Independence of nation state has been shattered, now it is not as autonomous as compared to before. Different countries constitute a single world made of different inter-connected segments.

In the context of Sikhism, it is sorry to say, though today the Sikh diaspora is quite visible in major countries of the world like America, England, Canada, Africa, Australia, Italy etc. yet it is still incapable to form an image of international brotherhood. Teachings of the Sikh Gurus, no doubt, are of universal character but it has not become an integral part of international studies as compared to the other religious traditions. Overall nature of Sikh studies is determined
by regional and local issues. It means geography specific problems have occupied major space in academic studies at the cost of universal concerns. Sikhism can’t afford such type of closed existence or moribund approach. Sikhs of South and North-East India, Far-eastern Asia and Africa are still waiting to be discussed as a significant part of mainstream Sikhism. Today problems pertaining to the Sikhs of Punjab dominate the whole Sikh world. The Sikhs living outside Punjab are being analyzed with an eye on local settings and are being defined in the context of Punjab. This trend may be taken as an obsession which lacks in all-inclusive approach. In modern age, as already discussed no community can survive in isolation without exchanges with other cultures. Now Sikhs will have to imbibe global vision embedded in genuine global affairs of modern world. In this way they will be able to influence international community in a more positive way and in return people of other nationalities may get interested in Sikhism.

We can say that teachings of Sikh Gurus are addressed to whole humanity not to a particular group of society. Sikhism is universal in its nature as no particular group based on caste, region or race can hold monopoly over Sikhism. Critically speaking sometimes Sikhism is regarded synonymous to Punjabi jat caste of rural area. That’s why Alice Basarke have put the question in one of his article, “Is Sikhism a universal religion or a culturally specific one? A tough question, isn’t it?...but if Sikhism has the ability to stir the hearts and souls of all mankind, why is it still culturally specific to Punjab?”15 Due to historical reasons, it may be one form of socio-cultural-political dimension of Sikhism but in modern world people from different societies, cultures and ethnicities have embraced Sikhism. Their involvement and contribution must be discussed as an integral part of mainstream Sikhism. For example Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam are spreading in different cultural and ethnic settings other than their birth localities. Sikhism must exhibit flexible attitude and spirit of accommodation in modern world to convey his message to humanity.

5.4 Ecological Imbalances and Environmental Concerns

Human beings and other creatures can survive only in some sort of natural environment. Concept of nature has been explored and discussed in every tradition particularly in religious context. Guru Granth Sahib termed it as qudrot. Here nature includes not only vegetation or animal world but total environment and biological world come under the definition of very word. In religious context everything, including plants, animals and human beings have been created
by some ultimate power teleologically. So Shashi Bala also finds these connections and more clearly says that, “The whole universe, according to ecological principle is one living organism, matter or non-living as well as living beings do not remain exclusive of each other but together constitute one existence.”\(^{16}\) Ecology is an understanding of living organism. According to it everything in atmosphere is related with one another. So every object must be looked in a friendly and loving way. “Every man is related by invisible bonds to every other fellow being to every other creature in the living realms and even to the non-living aspects of the universe. This invisible web of interconnections is the basis of ecology.”\(^{17}\) Apart from other things, existence of non-living objects are also serving higher law.

No doubt, scientific discoveries and technological tools have helped man in various manners to facilitate human life on earth, and thus contributed to the development of human race. With the increase of population, these mechanical tools were also developed both in quality and quantity. Setting up and multiplication of industry, chemicals etc. have put a question mark on the cycle of life on planet. Water, air, soil and food grains have become polluted due to uncontrolled use of pesticides and industrial waste. So there is an urgent need to create consciousness for the preservation of eco-system. Jodh Singh argues, “It may be said that saving the eco-systems of nature is not merely for the sake of aesthetic value but mainly they are required to be protected through conservation of soil, water and air for the survival of human beings themselves.”\(^{18}\)

Today we know that problem of environmental pollution has become major issue in modern studies and even in world politics. The problem is that today humans have no emotional relation with nature and it is just regarded as lifeless matter that can be exploited for material benefits. This absolute demarcation between matter and mind, expanded to over-exploitation of nature which in turn has disturbed the system of natural resources. Reckless usage of chemicals and nuclear wastage has led to dangerous results in the form of destruction of ozone layer and global warming that has put in danger the ecological balance. Today we see that man has adopted a very aggressive attitude towards nature that had never happened before in the history of mankind. In earlier stages of life, man-nature relations were maintained as sacred. Talking about Indian context we find that pre-Aryans were profound worshipers of nature. Aryans though were of materialistic nature, yet they adored nature in the form of different gods. Even in modern age some tribes, which are untouched by technological advancement, are able to sustain that very
relationship. Same thing can be said about ancient western civilization. Undoubtedly, the crisis of man-nature relationship had its origin in industrial revolution.

We see that Guru Granth Sahib recognizes nature as sacred and essential part of human life, thus it is not different from being. That’s why it has been interpreted as godly extension or assigned with religious epithets. In this way, Sikh Gurus adopted a holistic attitude as found in the tendency of animism which was prevalent in all primitive cultures and traditions. In Sikh thought, God is considered one with his creation that is nature; therefore, due to product of divine source it reflects the divinity. Here God, man and nature are in total harmony or unison but not as dichotomous as found in western lifestyle. The Sikh experience celebrates nature in ecstatic mode that can be observed in Guru Granth Sahib. So many symbols and metaphors of natural phenomenon have been employed by the Sikh Gurus to express their spiritual vision. It shows that spiritual experience and natural order has similarities, and nature assists in spiritual awakening.

For the Sikh Gurus, earth is a place to cultivate righteousness. It is a Universal Mother who faces and suffers all sorts of pain to feed her progeny. As a mother takes care of her children by feeding them, similarly earth grows so many types of vegetation for human consumption. It is a source of deg i.e. free food that is served to needy persons. Guru Nanak and Guru Arjun have composed two long poems in raag majh and tukhari respectively named as barahmah, a classical genre in literature based on nature and seasons. How different seasons and objects of nature are related with man’s spiritual journey, both the compositions depict that human, nature and soul are closely related to each other. Description of nature in Guru Granth rekindles the human soul which in turn rejoices in ecstasy. Primitive man’s relation with atmospheric objects though defined rudely just as ‘animism’ in anthropological and evolutionary sense but he was more attuned with it. Modern man is exploiting nature just to achieve his commercial goals whereas primitive people considered nature a part of their life. They used it as a heaven-sent gift and lived in it friendly just to meet their daily needs but not for material benefits. Jodh Singh writes, “seen in the epistemological perspective the Gurbani considers the sense of wonder and love towards all as the very valid sources of knowledge. Man is required to fill his heart with innocence of a child who when exposed to the world around, is wonder struck to see different kinds of people and objects…his existential sense becomes wide and he happily accepts the presence of all other fellow beings who are in no way less important than his own
self.” Evidently the Sikh experience gives a very gentle and loving treatment to nature. Here nature is a way to reconnect with the Divine.

Another aspect in the cosmological context, creation and dissolution has been termed as sanjog and vijog, akarkhan and udkarkhan. Sanjog symbolizes the feelings of attachment or love, whereas vijog points out to feelings of separation or pain. Whole of the natural order comes into existence with love or sanjog whereas dissolution occurs due to feeling of pain. It may be deduced that man has exploited nature to the point that now nature mother is suffering from such type of pain, so consequently dissolution can happen anytime. We can say that Sikhism is essentially a spiritual tradition but it also lays stress on congenial attitude of man towards nature.

No doubt man was created by God and enjoys superiority over the ecological life. But it does not mean that scriptures have assigned him any special right over nature to fulfill his selfish motives. If earth is to serve the goal of life in cosmos, commercialized man will have to restrain himself from exploitation of nature just for the sake of money. For a spiritually awakened person for whom nature is not an object but God’s own image and God is immanent in nature. According to Sikh thought a man should live in harmony with nature. However man’s desire to control and dominate nature thrusts the humanity into the modern environmental crisis.

Though Sikhism holds a very loving attitude towards nature, yet it can’t be described as nature mysticism. Because it does not romanticize the nature into anthropomorphic forms of God or as a self-managed phenomenon but God created it along with universe. Here biological life does not play a role of nature religion or nature mysticism, it fills man with the sense of wonder that is its charm, but nature is a part of spiritual journey not an independent whole in itself. It is very clear that in Sikhism, neither nature has been conferred upon with godly authority, nor it has been taken as an object of material advancement. Here we find a very balanced and exemplary approach. In Guru Granth Sahib one of the major characteristics of self-realized soul is that in higher state of spiritual experience man feels a kinship with whole of the universe. According to Sikhism, spiritual realization is not a state of pure bliss, an isolated entity divested from other concerns of life. But man enjoys mysterious relation with nature and other species of creatures. Here self-realization means understanding of the common bond that connects all the natural objects. ‘Cosmos exists within human body’ means that there is only a one whole, everything exists within it. Surjit Kaur precisely summarizes that, “the totality of creatures is seen as a whole, as a single ongoing system, in which different creatures and nature are interrelated
directly or indirectly. This interrelation and interconnectedness is a very complex and mysterious relation.” In the same vein Shashi Bala writes, “The Sikh view of ecology enunciates a close affinity of man with nature. Nature is defined as revealing symbol of God and not as an unconscious object alien to human existence and subject to be treated as merely a means for man’s material well-being.” In a way, Sikhism highlights the idea that everything is related with everything thus, advocates a very soothing and friendly relation with nature. According to it, love is the primary condition to follow the path of spirituality, in fact it is a path of love in itself. It is a highest kind of love that Sikhism wants to flourish.

Sikhism propounds the value of love which can decrease the imbalance that has occurred in the ecosystem. In turn it may help humanity. Nature must be loved as our co-partner of life we can take help from it as we borrow from our friends. We should not ‘use’ it but should take help from it. For Guru Nanak’s *arti* hymn offers the best example of it wherein nature is engaged in the praise of Lord in its own way. Similarly, Bhagat Kabir argues that flowers and leaves which are offered to lifeless idol, are in fact vibrant with life. So Sikhism exhorts man to respect the nature because before taking the human form he has gone through all forms of nature.

History of ideas and religious experience has great impact on man behavior with the ‘Other’, including the natural environment. Ancient man took everything as god due to reverence or awe. Economy based on industry and agriculture prompted man to utilize natural sources more diligently. Finally, it has resulted into misuse, even to the point of exploitation of nature. Capitalism is the product of such an attitude of man towards nature. In ancient India natural objects like plants, mountains, birds, animals, rivers etc. all had godly status. Rather understanding of it was identical to god, Sikhism regards nature as a creation of God. It means ecology and spirituality have a common meeting point. No doubt Sikh Gurus have acknowledged the supreme status of man, but it does not mean dominance or exploitation of any sort. Man can utilize natural resources which are absolutely necessary for survival. But it should be in accordance with the natural laws. He has no right to exploit its power just for the sake of commercial ends. If he does so, nature may also respond furiously. Increasing incidences of natural calamities may be understood as radical responses of nature, though modern reason based society can’t believe, rather can ignore it just as a superstitious outlook but in religious context it may be true. Objects of nature are imprints that lead the human being on the path to ultimate reality. God can be realized through the mysteries of nature.
It is generally supposed that word *waheguru*, regarded as *gurmantra* in Sikhism indicates the ‘sense of wonder’ revealed in Guru’s spirit. Even God, Himself, enjoys the game of mystery and complexity beholding with delight and wonder. In Guru Granth Sahib physical elements have been regarded as *gurmukh* and spiritual quest has been expressed through natural symbols. It suggests that a seeker or *gurmukh* and his spiritual pursuits have been depicted through natural phenomenon. It means nature bears the attributes of a spiritual man who scatters fragrance like *chandan*. Nature has its own laws of functioning and preservation which should not be interrupted by outside intervention. Inherently nature does not tolerate interference in it. Gurbani says that seed planted out of season cannot sprout. Similarly Baba Sheikh Farid ironically speaks, “A jatt sows acacia tree but has desire for grapes. He spins wool but aspires to wear silk.”

Guru Ramdas opines that entire creation has been made up of five elements, it is impossible for man to produce sixth one. But man for his selfish ends is trying to misuse nature, creatures and fellow beings. This problem is also being portrayed in the world of entertainment. Modern cinema has made efforts to portray the very tragedy of man in movies like *Brave New World, King Kong, Rise of Planet of the Apes, God Must be Crazy, Apocalypto, Avatar* etc. which have depicted the above mentioned tragic aspect of modern civilization. Most of the science fiction movies have helped the people to understand the significance of nature for human race. These movies show that man had fabricated technology as subservient help for himself but now machines have become more intelligent than man and have overpowered him. For the sake of future generations, modern man will have to control his materialistic attitude and greed oriented psychology, captivated by glamorous but superstitious view of science and technology.

**5.5 Problem of Religious Pluralism and Multiculturalism**

Religious pluralism or the issue of co-existence is closely connected with the comparative study of religions along with secularism. Historically, we have witnessed that India has been a house of composite culture of several tribes, races and ethnicities. This disposition even goes back to the times of Vedic age in which Shiva and incarnations of mother goddess have their roots in Dravidian civilization. Dark skinned Lord Krishna was supposed to be accepted by the white skinned Aryans. It means India has varied types of experiences at cultural level which reflected unity in diversity. Owing to such reasons Indian tradition can’t be described as
monolithic or one dimensional development of single religion or race. India’s unity in diversity includes many religions, cultures, races etc. Not only India even whole of the world embraces different forms of above mentioned categories. Today the issue of religious pluralism is being discussed to understand other cultures and religions as well.

Five centuries ago, Guru Nanak visited prominent centers of different religions and cultures. He went there to convey the revelatory truth that had descended upon him. Scholars of Sikhism are familiar with the fact that throughout the period of ten Gurus, everybody, regardless of caste, colour and creed was welcomed in their house (guru ghar). A cultural and religious identity is of no use until one follows the path enunciated by his tradition. In this way Sikhism denies the discrimination based on caste and colour, rather emphasizes the unity of manhood. All human beings are children of God, so no one should be looked neither superior nor inferior. In this context Sikhism accepts the existence of all religious traditions. Guru Gobind Singh reminds that in spite of different religious affiliations all of them basically belong to one caste i.e. humanity. According to Sikhism only good deeds, as prescribed by one’s own scripture, would help man in spiritual progress.

In modern times western perspective is dominating the life and thought patterns of the World. Words ‘modern’ and ‘western’ have become synonymous. Western interpretation of thought and life is being presented as universal and is being imposed on other cultures even to those having different background than western. Today every text is translated in terms of western methodology and terminology. Local cultures and rituals have come under the scanner of western interpretation which presents them as irrelevant and redundant. Orientalism is dependent on western outlook for its proper explanation. Myth of ‘white man’s burden’ has adopted the exclusive attitude that created friction among Christianity and other religions and traditions of the world. “The myth of religious superiority and uniqueness came about to dominate others and to survive and keep its own identity intact.” But on the other hand “Pluralism rejects the myth of religious superiority and accepts validity to all faiths. It considered all religions authentic and genuine, and capable of providing salvation to man.”

Sikhs Gurus have emphatically responded against the tendency of exclusivism. “In sum, Sikhism prescribes inter-religious cooperation, but that cooperation has to be on the basis of the fatherhood of God.” Though interfaith dialogue was not the primary motive of Sikh Gurus but they valued it as they wanted to learn from other traditions as well. Other’s view may have some
truth and we should also share our view with the others. After the enlightenment at Sultanpur Lodhi, Guru Nanak proclaimed, “There is no Hindu, no Muslim.” This does not imply the condemnation of both religions but it rejected the institutional forms of religions wherein their perennial spirit had been lost, “Mutual dialogue cleanses misunderstandings and paves path for clearer vision of others’ perspectives, which may be heading towards unity in one global culture.” Thus a dialogue widens the horizon of our mind and intellect. It is a liberal mindedness that believes in other’s existence and by giving up its superiority, creates space to accommodate the others.

One’s relations with other cultures are not confined in strict boundaries of isolated existence. Guru Granth Sahib helps us to come to terms with this. Dr. Gurbhagat Singh terms it as, “de-othering the other that means free all that exists.” That’s why Guru Granth Sahib rejects the category of caste. Prophetic message contained in sodar hymn proclaims that deities of Hinduism are praising God and six systems of philosophy also talk about different forms of Divine. It means the Sikh Gurus have acknowledged the existence of others. An illustration in Guru Granth Sahib symbolizes the world with that of a large tree upon which different types of birds are singing in different ways. Gurbhagat Singh while discussing the idea of I-thou of Martin Buber, rightly proposes that “in his open sort of framework, no ‘Other’ or cultural group is an individuated whole. The identity of a group comes through de-identity, through an existential meeting of wholesome response.”

All groups, based on different identities and having distinctive cultural background, have been accepted in Sikhism, because they all share same light and thus common origin. It does not allow even a slightest possibility of the subjugation of other cultures and groups in radical sense. Different religious traditions present God from multiple angles according to their own experience of reality. A balanced dialogue among various traditions must ‘seek the approval of other’ without reducing or assimilating its existence.

5.6 Inter-Faith Dialogue

Interfaith dialogue is a very modern concept that has originated under the pressure of pluralism. Its chief motive is to prevent conflict among religious traditions of the world. In its preliminary stage it was started as comparative study of religions but afterwards it was transformed into exchange of divine message contained in their respective scriptures. Its primary
purpose was to decrease tension among religious traditions and to create an environment of peaceful co-existence. It is understood that every religious tradition of the world has same light of truth though reflected in different manner due to time-space variations. So each tradition should share its distinctive views either spiritual or temporal in a friendly way. It is evident that in future world no race, ideology, tradition or country etc., can claim its ultimate right or dominance over the others, but approach of mutual understanding and sharing should be promoted for peaceful future.

Generally, we observe that due to misunderstandings or with the sense of prejudice, crisis of terrorism or militancy is intricately connected with religion. But discord among different countries also can be solved through religious values such as love, compassion, tolerance, cooperation etc. John B. Chethinttam defines interfaith dialogue as, “…a sort of interaction confined not only to religious traditions but also pertaining to social and cultural problems. This type of dialogue issues forth a spirit of fellowship and recognizes diversity in unity i.e. visualize the whole in each part. In fact dialogue is a relationship that demands distinction and maintenance of the identity of each partner.”

Talking about the goal of dialogue based on the teaching of Sikh Gurus. Shashi Bala opines that, “The aim of interfaith dialogue in the scripture is neither subjugation, nor domination nor conversion, nor degradation of other traditions but to make them visualize the kernel of truth and implement it in their lives for spiritual transformation.”

In the case of Sikhism, we know that, as according to eastern spirit of religions, Guru Granth Sahib accepts only one religion in different cultural and institutional garbs. Realizing the very spirit Guru Arjun also declares that remembrance of God is the most sublime dharma and, to chant nam of lord and to maintain pure conduct is excellent dharma.

Bhagat Namdev also highlights the very spirit of religion. He remarks that “Both Hindu and Muslim are sightless, spiritual seeker is wiser than them. Temple and mosque are sacred space of the Hindus and the Muslims respectively, but Namdev serves the Lord who is beyond these limited cultural identities.” Sikh Gurus and their followers, of course, have admitted socio-cultural identities but these should not overpower the essence of spirituality. Spirit of every religion is same that should not be swallowed by external factors. Bhagat Kabir talks about the same truth and asserts that he has no conflict either with Brahmin or the Ulema.

In raag bhairo, Guru Arjun underlines the similar reality. The sacred hymn, in which he puts forth his thought, captures our attention very seriously. Words used in the hymn are
symbolically very important and to unfold the oriental spirit of religion and interfaith. It is the crux of true spirit of religious pluralism, co-existence and interfaith. Guru Arjun says that “I do not observe fast like Hindus and Muslims, except serving the God who is really mine and can solve the problem of this dualism (Hindu and Muslim). I do not visit shrines neither of Hindus, nor of Islam nor perform worship in particular manners of both religious streams. Thus I am neither a Hindu nor a Muslim but my physical body and breath goes to both. My spiritual teacher has helped me to trace the true way of spiritual realization.” Undoubtedly, above mentioned description rejects superfluous ritualism combined with socio-cultural form of religion. It elaborates all inclusive nature of Sikh experience. Religious traditions, mentioned in the above hymn should not be taken in concrete or literal context strictly. These words do not imply mere physical contexts, but have something extra more than institutional forms. Therefore they also have cultural meanings but only in the terms of culturally tied rituals, dogmatism and formalism which are suppressing the true spirit of both the religions. However, the spirit of hymn transcends the literal meanings. There are some lines from the original text of hymn that support our view point:

- एं द्वारा अल्ल्ह भेंज़... 
- अल्ल्ह उब वे छिड़ धर्म... 
- गुर पीति झंझि धर्म धड़ा...  

In these lines, pairs of ‘द्वारा अल्ल्ह’ , ‘अल्ल्ह उब’ and ‘गुर पीति’ unveil the latent spirit within these words. We can say that Sikh Gurus do not accept religion in western sense of term but ‘The Religion’ is prevailing everywhere in the cosmos.

The Sikh tradition has coined the word ‘gosti’ for mutual understanding among different kind of religions, ethnicities and thought systems. Tradition of gosti began with Guru Nanak’s long journeys during which he held discourses with spiritual teachers of contemporary faiths and inspired them to “rediscover the internal significance of their beliefs and rituals, without discarding their chosen faith. This is how Guru Nanak envisaged a pluralist conception of interfaith dialogue as one of the means to dissolve the rigidities of religious exclusiveness.” Such example of pluralism and liberalism can hardly be found in any other spiritual tradition of the world. The main characteristic of gosti is acceptance of the ‘other’ as equal to oneself. Other is not separate from one’s own identity and spirit thus there is no ‘other’ except ‘one’.  

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In modern world, ‘other’ is considered as an opposite to one’s own existence. Therefore to control other’s behavior or thought patterns, diplomacy is resorted to bring about ethno-religious or ethno-political homogeneity. Such attitude of politically authoritative majorities has resulted in identity crises for the minor tribes, races or minorities. Now they are more conscious about their identity either religious or ethnic or linguistic. After the Guru period, when the Sikhs were being persecuted as religious community, the Sikh leadership reacted very strongly in order to save their identity as a community. After the independence of India, there are some examples when the Sikh community has been quite unhappy due to dictatorial nature of Indian polity. Every incident happening in Punjab or with Sikhs was looked upon in religious terms. Though the demands raised by the political party of Sikhs were related with more autonomy of the states, right of Punjab over river waters, inclusion of Punjabi speaking areas, and some other religious and cultural issues but the Indian Government looked upon them with contempt. Resultantly, in June 1984 operation Bluestar was launched and in its attempt to flush out the militants, Indian army attacked Darbar Sahib, Amritsar Complex which gave rise to the Sikh militant movement. Some of the political analysts feel that it was the self-assertion of an aggrieved minority. The question remains unsolved that what should be the approach of Sikh community regarding the resolution of political, religious, cultural and economic issues that come under the domain of central government.

Here discussion over the origin of Nirmala School holds some merit. Primarily it was an initiative to establish Sikh thought in speculative terms. It was launched by Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth master, for the purpose of an independent hermeneutical school of Sikh tenets, so that Sikhism must be able to conceptualize its own metaphysical structures and may have insights and help from the Indian tradition. It means Sikh Gurus were conscious to construct systems of diverse thought patterns under the over-arching umbrella of *gurbani*. Another implication can also be derived from the very fact in the context of our ongoing discussion is that it introduced a platform of mutual understanding among diverse religious traditions as a prelude to interfaith dialogue. Thus contribution of Nirmala School must be investigated in this regard. Though on the later stage, it is generally believed that Nirmala School got embedded in Vedantic philosophy overwhelmingly losing its original character. Udasi sect of the Sikhs may be the outcome of a dialogue with Shaiva tradition; because it has some similarities with Shaivism. Similarly construction of Harimander was inaugurated by a Sufi saint, Mian Mir. It is a well known fact that Sikh Gurus had cordial relationship with so many other Islamic saints. It means they have
recognized the spiritual significance of other faiths and with the purpose of nurturing it provided a space.

What we want to say is that Sikhism owes responsibility to set up the agenda for interfaith dialogue with Indic and Semitic traditions. Foregoing discussion shows that Sikhism has capacity to perform the function of a catalyst which may result in the formation of Indo-Islamic and Indo-Sikh schools for interfaith understanding.

5.7 Identity Crisis

We know that humanity is passing through a very critical stage. Traditional values and systems are being challenged, and their authority has been eroded. Virtues are no more valuable for modern man but to satiate the instincts of human body is the primary concern. Owing to advancement, distance of time and space has decreased. Along with earth, man has approached and explored other planets, yet gap the between man and man is increasing. Resultantly, it has disharmonized man within and without.

All this has created a serious problem for world peace. Basically peace, in social relations and life derives its original archetype from peace at psychological level. Spiritual peace leads to terrestrial peace, that’s why former has been given primary status in Guru Granth Sahib. It is not extrinsic but is intrinsically related to social responsibility. It is not a state of passive bliss but is more active and energetic in every walk of life.

Sikhism does not come to terms with lopsided interpretation imposed by modern nation states which check the right of an individual in the name of law and order and suppress the genuine dissent. Sikh Gurus were supporters of freedom therefore subordination in any form has been repudiated. Here the concept of righteous war may result in martyrdom, thus pain and suffering for the principle of truth is equally sanctified. Human body can be sacrificed to vindicate the path of love and truth. Withdrawal from active life can’t establish peace in society but one must raise his/her voice against injustice. Indulgence in mystical trance at critical junctures offers no solution, but struggle for protection of one’s own rights is also a responsibility of dharma. Thus, Sikh Gurus’ spiritual approach is essentially associated with social dynamism. This idea combines meditation at spiritual level and service at social level and both lead to the same goal. Consequently, love for humanity is also a religious action.
Distinction of Sikhism from other prevailing religions and faiths came to the fore during the period of Sikh Gurus, however they had adopted a very balanced and controlled way to convey their message to the masses. That’s why there were fewer instances of conflict with the others. With the development of Sikhism the religious and temporal authority of Sikh Gurus had increased and Sikhism’s area of influence had also expanded. Consequently, the Mughal state looked upon it with contempt which resulted in persecution of the Sikhs. “As it was also militarized the tension between the Sikh society and the state naturally grew, ultimately leading to open clashes.” Subsequently armed confrontations with Mughal rulers was the outcome. All these developments started a process which was directed to safe-guard the socio-religious identity of Sikhism. The issue of religious identity in modern context especially under the definition of secularism is thought of as a variety of communalism. However under the British rule the Sikhs had become aware of ongoing political and social developments. Like others they became a part of communal contention based on identity. In fact identity is closely connected with social dynamics. While defining the identity Amrik Singh correctly says that, “each one of us belongs to a family, a group, a community, a nation and so on. Whatever the attributes of these social formations, these became a part of our identity.”

The Sikh crisis of identity culminated in 1984, which is generally developed into a conflict with Hindu majority Indian state. Demands of Punjabis were of economic, linguistic, and cultural nature and they sought more autonomy to state. These demands adopted religious form when taken by dharam yudh morcha launched under the patronage of Sri Akal Takhat. After the operation Blue Star, anger of Sikhs turned into alienation with national mainstream. In modern period due to increasing contact with other communities either religious or ethnic, Sikhs are becoming more self-conscious. “To combat total assimilation new Sikh organizations were formed that were meant to protect Sikh identity…the threat to Sikh identity did not become less acute with the advent of India’s independence.” The self-consciousness is the core of identity recognition. This identity awakening in Sikhs claimed distinctive or autonomous existence as a socio-cultural community (or a nation). Radical or activist thinkers concerned with militant movement suggested a total separation of Punjab from India, as an independent country. On the other hand some scholars repudiated the view on the basis of common cultural and spiritual background with Indian sub-continent. They think that socio-cultural tension should not harm spiritual relations, so this social distinction must not be translated into religious conflict. Acknowledging the fact that Indian state has adopted an irresponsible attitude towards Sikh
demands, Dr. Ahluwalia’s comments are worth-noting. He wrote, “It needs to be stressed here that distinctiveness of Sikhs from Hindus should not be misunderstood as separatism from Indian nation or secession from the country. One eye is distinct from the other, yet they are integral parts of same organism, which analogously means Indian society in the case under reference.”

Dr. Ahluwalia in his book *Sikhism Today: Crisis Within and Without*, finds out three reasons which contributed to misunderstandings for the identity crisis of Sikhs both on the micro and macro levels. In this regard he underlines: (I) feudalization of Sikh movement, (II) Vedanticization of Sikh doctrine, and (III) Brahminization of Sikh society. According to him first is the primary cause that contributed to disturb the universal spirit of Sikhism, while the last two are correlatives to the process of feudalization. Further he has traced three phase of modern identity crisis through which it had to pass. These are (I) loss of political power in 1849, (II) from inception of Sikh Sabha until partition of India, and (III) since 1947 to onwards. Further he also suggested three solutions to thwart the confrontation between the Sikhs and Indian State. These are:

I. “It would be more appropriate to treat Sikh religion as a part of Indian commonwealth of religions rather than a part of the Hindu commonwealth of religions.”

II. “Differentiation of Sikhism from Hinduism does not mean a denial of the historical and cultured relatedness of two religions. By the same logic, this self-differentiation of Sikhism does not mean contra-differentiation from national main stream.”

III. “To evolve new systematic relationships of pluralistic nature and the corresponding politico-constitutional forms essential for corporate participation and integration of the minorities in the political structures of the country.”

Unrest and frustration among the Sikhs should be viewed as their aspiration for federal and pluralistic system. Today, the issue of Sikh identity has become more complex due to multiple insertions of those issues which are not directly related with it. For example problem of allocation of share in river water, management and control of hydro electric head works, financial autonomy to the states, and inclusion of Punjabi speaking areas are political problems but these were taken up by *dharam yudh morcha* under the patronage of Akal Takhat, That’s how these issues became integrated with identity issue. Basically all these issues are related with the economy, society and culture of Punjab and that should have been solved through political intervention.
Sikh Gurus’s all-inclusive approach was based on congregational set up of society wherein one should be true to his/her faith. Guru Teg Bahadur sacrificed his life for upholding the principle of religious pluralism. Problem starts when minorities based on religion, ethnicity, language etc. are looked upon as a threat to national integration by a state and doors are shut for a dialogue and consequently concerned group reacts in an extremist manner. Dr. Ahluwalia says that India is a multi-cultural or pluralistic country but she had structures and institutions based on patterns of nation state borrowed from centralized setup followed in the west. Thus a complex contradiction appears between Indian state and her minorities. Western models are unitarian in their nature, so they can’t accommodate with structures and institutions of a related group.67

Guru Nanak’s teachings paved a way for Sikh identity providing it theoretical basis. Other succeeding Gurus added more social and cultural institutions along with its revelatory nature. Guru Gobind Singh, “…not only institutionalized the individual’s religious identity through the five external symbols (five Ks) but also transformed religious identity, into political identity on the corporate level…”68 Political character of Sikh doctrine and practices has also contributed to the crisis of identity whenever it came in sharp contrast with other communities. “What we seek to emphasize is that Sikh identity, not in any manner, is artificial or later addition to Sikh movement but was clearly created and proclaimed by the Gurus themselves.”69 Dr. Dharam Singh writes that “We need to discover now to affirm our identity without threatening the identity of the other. Religious resurgence is a positive development and must not be confused or identified with the evil of religious fundamentalism.”70

It must be noted that the nature of ultimate reality in Sikhism is not static but dynamic. It can’t be defined or interpreted in human language and other expressions. Sikh scripture uses the terms ‘विभास’ or ‘अकल मूर्ति’ in this sense. According to Sikh experience, God takes up newness or freshness in every moment. Mostly this implication is employed for the rejection of idol worship negatively, but positive usage of it means that God can embrace the form of reality either static or dynamic. He is beyond the connotations of words, static or dynamic (nirguna-sarguna). He may be Ram or be Allah. That’s why no hesitation has been shown while using these names for the absolute truth from Indic and Semitic traditions. It means implication of akal murti is broader than other terms related with God. Terms ‘विभास’ or ‘अकल मूर्ति’ explain not a vague and hazy complexion but a multi-facet reality. That’s why conventional categories of nirguna and sarguna are unable to derive the real meaning of Ultimate Truth. Sikh God is ‘ever fresh or new’ (तीज
The very nature of Sikh scripture unveils those implications which are broader than their literal sense.

In above mentioned context it has been said that, “Sikhism is a sovereign religion having given birth to some new thought patterns and value-systems, while sharing some of the basic postulates of Indian thought. Sikh philosophy constitutes a destination phase in the evolutionary process of Indian thought.” It would be right to say that Sikhism paved a way for multi-cultural society in which each group can participate through his institutions and structures because no single system of society and polity would be suitable everywhere in all times. Thus Sikh experience leads to flexibility through pluralism. Inner unity is a first and foremost principle of such system but external uniformity should not be imposed by using power or law.

5.8 Problem of Fundamentalism and Human Rights

Though American declaration of independence on 4 July 1776 is generally considered as initiative to human rights but Magna Carta or The Great Charter of the Liberties of England was a founding step in the constitutional history of human rights. It was a document of some conditions that was forced on the then King of England by the feudal barons, to restrain his powers by law and protect their own rights on 15 June, 1215. In modern times it has become symbol of equality before law and shows that the head of a state is also bound by the law.

Idea of human rights is very new in modern studies though it had been discussed and practiced since hundreds of years yet its formulation as an academic discipline is wholly new particularly in Indian context. The very idea designates the fundamental rights such as right to life, justice, freedom and dignity to human beings on equal level. If these rights are disturbed or violated by any type of authority or power even by state, then people have right to resist in a lawful manner, but sometime reaction to it by the state has been found aggressive and oppressive, which have resulted in large scale protest leading to rebellion. Discussing the problem of terrorism, Dr. Nirbhai Singh tries to locate the basic cause of terrorism and states that, “Its roots lay in European enlightenment which gave reason supremacy...The enlightenment promoted materialism and capitalism, and spiritualism has been suppressed.” According to Dr. Ahluwalia modern western civilization is based on renaissance, reformation and enlightenment movements that ideationally floated Cartesian dualism followed by modern world-view. Sociological patterns of this world-view are humanism and secularism but
differences are there regarding humanism proposed in Sikhism as compared to its classical implications. He remarks that, “the new humanism, envisioned in Sikhism, stresses that divinity and sovereignty of man who partakes of the sovereignty of the Divine. Sovereignty belongs to and is inherent in man, and not to any organization, religion (Church) or secular (State). Organization is only a medium for the self-flowering of man’s sovereignty.”

History of humankind shows that every state generally uses power to implement law and sometime suppressing the rights of its subject either knowingly or unknowingly. It is found that implementation of rules and regulations often done by use of power leads to conflict between the state and its subject. Due to its authoritative position, a state dominates the situation, even to control the more complex circumstances, it tries to regulate the psychology of people through print and electronic media. Issue of human rights is partially associated with the rise of terrorism. As mentioned above in its attempts to suppress one’s attachment with community, religion and ethnicity, a nation-state uses its power. In reaction to it a particular group of people or race may resort to the way of armed confrontation.

According to Sikhism only that person will win favor in the court of God who does not usurp other’s right. As per the idea of human rights nobody should not interfere in the freedom of others. Persecutions of Jews by Hitler and large scale death and destruction in two world wars have highlighted the idea of human rights very strongly. As mentioned elsewhere that man has not only isolated himself from nature but even from other fellow beings. Thus, for man ‘other’ is totally other that is not identical to one self but an antagonist. Dichotomy, extended to psychological level raised the question of ‘I’ and ‘Thou’ in which both have separate identities.

In Sikh experience, these two transcend their identities and differences. Guru Nanak raised his voice against political tyranny including Babur’s atrocious traeatment to common people during his invasion on India. So one should respect and ensure the ‘others’ dignity and honor. In Sikhism a person’s civil, cultural, religious rights etc. are taken care of. Sikh Gurus has rejected policy of imperialism and hegemonic designs in any form. The Sikh ideology does not accept those systems which overrule one’s religious and cultural identity or marginalizes it. Sikh history has confirmed that Sikhism became the mouthpiece of deprived ones. Guru Granth Sahib can’t be equated with just a collection of spiritual teachings but also offers speculative insights relating to the formation of afresh world order, thus paving a way for new civilization. We know that Guru Granth Sahib is the outcome of conscious efforts in medieval period that presented an
alternative system for deprived sections of the society. If human rights are violated and no authority helps in such a difficult situation then it is a fundamental right of a man, according to the teachings of Sikh Gurus, to confront it with physical force sanctified. Such type of violence is not the outcome of hegemonic will but it is a ‘liberative and restorative violence that guides humanity for freedom. So Sikhism realizes the value of rights of other with compassionate attitude. Even non-human have been treated with sympathy. Dr. Gurbhagat Singh comments upon the above view that, “Other’s right can be fully recognized only by a loving, self-realized and liberated person. The rights of other cannot be prescribed with the hegemonic paradigm.”

Sikhism does not favor any type of restrictions on individual but ensures the liberty of every individual and advocates equal opportunities to every culture to flourish in its own way leading to universalism.

Gurbani declares emphatically that state and its allied institutions have been created by man for the betterment of society. It means state must serve human being in a meaningful way. A mute acceptance of social and political discrimination has not been recommended in teachings of Sikh Gurus. Even if injustice is done to others; it is the duty of a Sikh to raise his voice against the evil order. “Sikhism’s central values are justice, equity, and brotherhood of mankind, equity, mercy and compassion. These value call for a preservation of the dignity of rights of human beings in general.”

Regarding it views of B.S Kumar are very relevant. He states that Sikhism, “is distinct from other religious groups of India, as it projects a moral order for its adherents, not in an isolated framework, but in the total involvement of the society to its application.”

Dr. N. Muthu Mohan writes that, “the holistic philosophical input of Sikhism is that it criticizes the dichotomy of spirituality and temporality not only for religious reasons but also for social reason, both the realms go together.”

When we look upon Sikhism as a universal religion, it means its spiritual message has potential to attract the minds of people irrespective of time and space. But owing to so many challenges that Sikhism today is confronted with wherein danger of delimitation, decline or decimation exists at collective level. In such an environment a society or group isolates itself from the outer world out of fear or to protect itself from the external influences. Same thing is happening with Sikhs on psychological level particularly after the Operation Blue Star in 1984. Thus, “there is a danger of becoming too introvertive and pre-occupied with one self. This pre-occupation can be crippling, render you (Sikhism) unable to progress to the next logical step.”
5.9 Holistic and Universal Vision

According to J. S. Ahluwalia “Modern civilization was based on the grand narrative (in postmodernist terminology) of reason. This meta-narrative was constituted by certain universals which flowed out of reason as the central supreme absolute ‘universal’. But by the 20th century a shift happened in the history of mankind. The meta-narrative based on reason was threatened by new discoveries in physics that rejected the supremacy of reason. It was discovered that sub-atomic particles refused to behave rationally, even their position at a particular point of time can’t be traced. It removed the illusion of reason as supreme method to know reality. However there is basic difference pertaining to overall approach of religion and science. “Religions neither follow the inductive method of science nor the deductive method of philosophy. The knowledge gained through religion is based upon revelation...The scientific truths are known through intellect, but the spiritual truths are realized through inner discipline. The scientific truths are liable to change with further researches in the area but the spiritual truths are true for all times and all places.”

In modern times uncontrolled consumerism has played an important role in exploitation of natural resources. Production is not based on necessities of life but through glamorous publicity food stuff is pretended to be more healthy and useful for human beings. Desire or lust for consumerism is created through different ways whereas emotional and spiritual needs are being ignored. It leads to destruction of inner peace. It may be called dehumanization of man, in which man has become just an object to consume things. Everything is produced and designed in such a way that it has cascading impact on man’s physical, emotional and spiritual world. For modern socio-political systems man is just an object that must be tamed according to the needs of system forgetting the reality that systems are made for man. That’s why existence of man has been reduced to just a vote or a digit in the eyes of modern nation state. Problem of terrorism or militancy is also related with the dualism of mind and matter. In fact it is a conflict between religious nationalism and secular nationalism. Modern secularism is unable to reconcile with spiritual authority, even it challenges the religion through its extended institutions. Terrorism has its roots in demand of absolute power to nation state where as spiritual domain also asks for man’s loyalty. Secularism excludes man’s loyalty to metaphysical concerns. Dr. Jasbir Singh Ahluwalia says, “The contradiction of the religious and the secular nationalism is one of the main factors in the rise of religious fundamentalism.” We have observed that all these problems
arise from the dualism of subject and object, knower and known. A new holistic world-view is needed to embrace reality in its totality. This dualism has made human life isolated and compartmentalized into segments. We have observed that model of world-view, proposed by Neo Apsotle is very much relevant in this context. In Sikhism variations and varieties of ethnicities and cultures all of them are connected with a common source. They exist in unity and have been accepted, harmony in which every sector or fragment is intertwined and mutually inclusive but not overpowering others. Following sacred hymns of Gurbani are very much relevant in this context:

- Clay is the same but fashioned in various ways

  As various seasons originate from one Sun,

- Similarly God has manifested Itself in many forms

  As a single thread holds thousands of beads,

- In the same way He works in universe

Realizing the basic spirit of Sikhism J. S. Ahluwalia says that, “in the process of ushering in a new holistic world-view for the post-modern global society of the 21st century Sikhism can play a vital role both on metaphysical and sociological levels.” And more specifically he further adds, “in fact the holistic world-view of Sikh religion brings forth a new plank for solving the dialectic of religious and secular nationalism.”

As discussed earlier Sikhism is suffering from identity crisis because it is rooted in Indian environment which is dominated by Hinduism. But the process of mutual understanding needs liberal and philanthropic attitude towards each other. So according to Sikh scholars, rootedness must be translated into affiliation rather than labeling Sikhism as an offshoot of Hinduism. Former is gentle and loving whereas later is homogeneous and hegemonic. In this way both can serve the humanity as two models of civilizations. Sikhism has paved a way of all embracing model of unity, a non-reductionist mode that does not tend to assimilate other units but integrates them into a universal whole. Only such type of friendly sharing can constitute a true and productive interfaith dialogue.

Criticizing the reductionist approach, postmodern thought has created a niche for itself, because it supports the theory of ‘whole within whole’ in which every unit irrespective of size and quantity shares equal status and enjoys corresponding rights. Dr. Jasbir Singh Ahluwalia’s
views in this regard, are more suitable that transcend the postmodernist notion of ‘whole within whole’ and encompass keynote of the idea of pluralism. He observes that, “the pluralist-historicist concept of inter-religious dialogue postulates that different religions represent different stages of the evolution of spiritual consciousness of making a viewpoint which may not be easily acceptable to certain religions that hitherto have been claiming that they express the full and final revelation of absolute. Implicit in this claim is not only religious exclusivism betraying an aura of superiority, but also a pre-supposition that spiritual consciousness of mankind is static and does not ascend to higher stages of speculative thought.”

In addition to the above, hegemonic trend creates centralized forms of social structures. Tyranny in the name of Islam and injustice with the lower castes in the name of dharma in Hinduism are the best examples of this stratification. Semitic tradition has the idea of ‘chosen people’ and subscribes to ultimate and complete revelation, whereas in Hinduism, Brahmin enjoys higher status over the other varnas as a sole exponent and claimant of shruti. As a custodian and receiver of revelation he does not allow shudra to share his spiritual lineage. Here validity or existence of ‘other’ is condemned in one or other way by claiming own superiority. On the other hand Sikhism neither claims monopoly over absolute wisdom nor excludes ‘other’ but celebrates existence of other. Guru Arjun Dev declares that all shares Your Grace none is beyond You. Guru Amardas also realizes the same spirit when he exhorts humbly that, “O Lord save the world in flames, in whatever way.”

In this way Sikhism rejects the way of unitarianism and recognizes pluralism. Owing to absolutistic attitude of majorities, problem of terrorism or fundamentalism takes place. Fundamentalism basically grows in reaction to the desire of autonomous existence or homogenizing nature of any state though the very problem is paraded as a threat to national integration and peace or a political issue. In most of the examples, minority suffers a great loss due to reactionary and defensive attitude. Then gradually it tends to move towards religious exclusiveness. In the case of Sikhs last half of the 20th century, particularly last two decades has been very testing in this context.

Anyway, all-inclusive or holistic approach has generated a lot of debate at global level. Now every country is obliged to rethink its attitude towards minorities and subaltern communities. That’s why in modern times postmodern thought is being highlighted of which inter-community sharing is a salient feature. Now flow of potential has changed its course. It is
not from particular to universal as in traditional paradigm of society, culture and politics but vice-versa. Holistic view of the reality has changed the move. Theory of aggregate of fragments has reductionist/analytical method of systems. Now segments do not hold together to form a bigger whole but every component is considered a complete whole in itself. Rigid division of noumenal and phenomenal has been melted into inter-connections.

Formation of Guru Granth Sahib showcases the very cosmic nature of Sikh thought. According to Shashi Bala, “…cosmopolitan spirit (of Guru Granth Sahib) is evident as it incorporates the compositions not only of the Sikh Gurus but also of some Bhagats and Sufis of medieval period and as well as panegyrics of Bhat. The approach of the holy scripture is holistic and integrative with emphasis on the dynamic aspect of reality.” Revelation can’t be accepted as relative or specific to any mundane factors either region or ethnicity or caste. Compilation and contents of Guru Granth Sahib testify the notion that spiritual truth, underlying the cosmic unity, is possible. However it also pointed out the limitations of earlier scriptures, but the Sikh worldview accepts other revelations valid in their own way:

- Don’t blame Vedas, Quran and Bible as false
  but false is who does not contemplate upon them.
- Human is not attentive to the nam containing in Vedas
  but wandering like a demon.
- Every age has dharma but in its own way.

It means each one is free to follow a particular path of religion. The best example is generally quoted of Guru Nanak when he visited Multan, a city known as spiritual centre for hundreds of Muslim saints and sages, who sent a bowl of milk filled to the brim, symbolizing no room for any other saint, sect or religion. It is said that Guru Nanak put a petal of Jasmine flower on milk without making it overflow. So Sikhism propagates coexistence without replacing other. We are obliged to live in world radically pluralistic in so many ways. Pluralism denotes the urgent need to appreciate other’s beliefs and practices. “While trying to understand and examine the faith of the others, one obviously cannot put his own faith in parenthesis but one must listen attentively to the faith of the other as this unfolded by the believer himself, without prejudging...
that faith and without abandoning one’s own commitment.⁹⁴ We can’t live in seclusion but monopoly of any single religion or community would cause so many problems.

Due to rational understanding and over-dependence on technology, traditional value system has been compelled to be unable for its sustenance before reason inspired psychology. Traditional values are considered irrelevant in modern living standards. Ethical norms have met a serious attack from liberalism in present times. Modern age has established its own ethics displacing the old value system. It particularly affected bio-ethical aspect of human life. Now sex is not a taboo as was considered in orthodox societies. It is being discussed openly in education, cinema, society and even in families. Electronic, print and social media have enabled people to access hidden things. The distance between younger generation and some ethical issues, which require not to be shared up till a certain point of age, has been reduced by the flood of information. It means modern man does not accept restricted existence AIDS, Drug addiction, cloning, genetic engineering, weak family relations etc. are some emerging characteristics of modern society. AIDS has become a major threat to Bio-ethics. LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans-gender) is a new community based on sexual distinctions. Homosexual marriages and live-in relationship have disturbed the sacredness of traditional lifestyle. In fact all these problems basically emerge out of body oriented living standards followed by western civilizations, yet they have entered into native cultures through globalization.

As far as Sikhism is concerned, with these problems it does not recommend such unethical liberalism which disrupts common universal values. Sex in Sikhism is not animalistic mechanism but a responsibility to contribute in the process of procreation. To channelize basic human instincts Sikhism suggests married life but too much indulgence also has been prohibited. Joint family structure is unable to sustain in life centered on individuality consequently isolation in family life has become another feature of modern society. Sikhism suggests sangat as a basis of social structure as discussed in social dimension of Sikh world-view. Sangat refers to collective life encompassing the individuality; so sangat is not only a body of spiritually realized persons but its spirit and model also contribute to resolve modern ethical and social problems.

5.10 Empowerment of Women

Status of women is intimately related with socio-economic development of any country. No development model would dare to neglect the role of women in society because she is a
dynamic factor in the process of development. Misunderstanding about woman as a burden has been shattered in modern age. Today, she doesn’t need humanitarian sympathy or concession as a marginalized group but does so, as human being. Her position varies from country to country yet there are some issues which are common to position of women throughout the world. Geographically, reasons may vary as to fixing the women’s participation in different spheres of life but according to A.M. Bagulia, “Their role in biological reproduction has generally restricted woman’s participation in the main stream of social, economic and political process.”

Though we are living in postmodern age yet women do not hold complete control on their physique and psychology. They are forced to marry men they don’t like and male prowess is thrust upon them. Even her procreative process is dictated by male dominance. In this way she faces sexual assaults in many forms. The marginal position of woman cannot be justified in any way. Here it is also important to note that the problem cannot be solved through economic rights and social liberalism as sometimes understood, but by recognizing woman an independent and interactive partner to male gender. Uncontrolled social liberalism may cause a disturbance between relations of masculine and feminine.

In modern days every religion is trying to find out its feminist connections with its ancient tradition because issues pertaining to female freedom and rights are being highlighted under the feminist movement. Hindu goddesses are supposed to establish Indian approach of feminism. Particularly, chandi has become a significant symbol of female liberation as she does not wear clothes and kills demons showing aggressive behavior. In the words of Rajeshwari Sunder Rajan “In contrast to singular patriarchal god of Judeo-Christian tradition, Vedic Hinduism had female deities and (arguably) a matriarchal worldview.” On the contrary side the very attitude is also contrasted by calling it majoritarian communalism in which “Hindu religious symbols and practices are treated as an unquestioned secular ‘norm’ and have a tendency to alienate women in the movement who belong to minority communities.”

So the very issue of empowerment of woman is significantly highlighted in recent times. It incorporates body politics, feminist art, reproductive rights etc. Thus status and role of women has become a debatable issue in modern gender studies. Concept of empowerment of women is not only a reflection on social dynamism but also has theoretic and philosophical discourses known as feminist theory that focuses on gender inequality, sociology, psychoanalysis etc. The feminist theory can be summarized in the words of Irengbam Arun, that “Bodies have been
historically associated solely with women whereas men have been associated with the mind. The
notion of the body (and not the mind) being associated with woman has served as a justification
to deem women as property, object, and exchangeable commodities among men." This theory
promotes reproductive rights, lesbian rights, free sex rights, women’s health etc.

As in the case of Sikhism, there exists no rigid dichotomy of male and female as found in
Western world. In spiritual world this dichotomy disappears because we all are wives of
Husband God or children of a same Father. Shashi Bala also writes that “No distinction is made
between man and woman on the theological level. The loving devotion or prem bhakti, stressed
in the Holy Scripture, is symbolically presented through the metaphors of the husband-wife
relationship. God is conceived as Husband or Spouse and the individual soul i.e. jivatma is
presented as Bride.” It must be noted that conception of Sikh God is not male oriented but
matriarchic as well. In Sikhism, God reflects both aspect of human and care his devotees as a
mother looks after her children. Nevertheless as human beings physical aspect matters. There
may be cases of gender discrimination in Sikhs on socio-cultural level but we must notice that it
is not sanctioned by Sikh Gurus. So such practices cannot hold an ideal position in Sikhism.

Looking back in the times of Sikh Gurus, we have already discussed elsewhere that
society was facing the problems of sati, purdah, child-marriage, foeticide etc. They condemned
all these social evils and advocated equal status for women. No doubt in ancient India woman
also enjoyed a respected status, but in spite of that, evidences are available to prove the
degenerated condition of woman as well. Lord Buddha accorded an honored place to women in
social and religious life. They were admitted to initiate in sangha yet Budhha had fear that by
doing so Buddhism would not stay for long.

In India Sikhism worked hard for to liberate women from irrelevant restrictions imposed
on them. The Sikh Gurus repudiated the old beliefs regarding women and favored their freedom
and active participation in public life. According to Sikh Gurus woman is basis of social and
household life, then why we call her evil. Sikh Gurus’ viewpoint does not conform to western
feminism as it favors unbridled freedom for women from which lesbian style culture and other
diversions would grow disrupting the natural order of physicality. In this regard Avtar Singh
writes that “In order to appreciate the great stress in Sikhism on the proper moral practices and
that also is keenness to ensure respectable status of women. We may examine the above cited
evil practices and bring out the role played by Sikhism in their rejection and moral

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condemnation.” In this way Sikhism reflects potential to provide with a balanced approach to guide feminism to the right path. Being a supporter of household life, Sikh Gurus considered asceticism and renunciation a defeatist outlook because these disciplines consider woman an evil in their spiritual attainment. Wives of Sikh Gurus took keen interest and participated in community responsibilities not as a complimentary or helping hand but as an equal partner. Sikh history is full of such examples of women whose role cannot be deleted from it.

During recent years, issue of participation of woman in the proceedings of Harimander Sahib was raised by some foreign community members. We must keep in our mind that they are living in the western world where feminism highlighted the very issues. Western models could not be implemented in Punjab in its totality especially in religious spheres. We know that gender inequality exists within Sikh society and it should not be diluted in the name of tradition. Otherwise it may cause deterioration of Sikh doctrines and spoil the spirit of Sikhism.

As far as extra-marital relations are concerned, this is not only woman who is prohibited to indulge in such immoral practices but both men and women have been instructed to regard adultery as unethical because it disturbs the sanctity of family as well as social relations. Thus chastity and fidelity are morally important for both. Along with this female infanticide, sati, child-marriage, widow remarriage are other issues upon which Sikh Gurus expressed their views. Sikhism possess the vitality to resolve these issues.

5.11 Concerns for Subaltern

Subaltern is considered socially, politically, geographically and economically marginalized either as a group or person. It talks about people who have been excluded from mainstream dynamism by some authoritative power. They are kept outside from established system in the subordinate position. Problems and issues related with subaltern were especially discussed after colonial period. Defining the term Shashi Bala writes that, “In its modern usage, the term ‘subaltern’ stands for the downtrodden or dalit class; socially and economically weaker section of any society and also for minority, ethnic and cultural groups.” Further she describes the consequences of this exclusiveness that, “It existed as an institutionalized form of dehumanization that has permeated all aspects of social life. This process of social exclusion has deprived the lower castes of resources, power and human dignity and had reduced them to the most degrading social existence.”

Today it has become an independent discipline known as
‘subaltern studies’ which has its own theory, method and perspective to analyze some sort of data. Primarily, it revolves around the socio-religio-political concerns of a related group or country. From comprehensive viewpoint it presents a post-colonial critique on western models for studying non-western cultures and societies. It provides a space of difference to oppressed people by criticizing hegemonic methods of dominant power. Edward Said, David Arnold, Eric Stokes, Ranjit Guha, Gayatri Spivak etc. are some of the internationally acclaimed exponents of ‘subaltern studies.’

In Indian context, subaltern comprises those oppressed sections of society particularly lower castes, tribes and minorities, which suffered from majoritarian communalism and superiority which later on adopted the form of Indian nationalism. Dalit is a native term used to denote the lower castes, the weaker section of the Indian society that is the main concern of our discussion here. This term was used by Dr. Ambedkar, a well-known advocate of rights of subalterns, in 1930 for Maharastrian sudras. Varnashrama is the system that caused this hierarchy within society. It makes each section with already determined set of duties. Varnashrama or classification of society assumes its validity from the purusha sukta of Rig Veda in which caste system has been described as a divine order. Sikhism shows incompatibility with such type of differentiation of human society. Guru Amardas states that Namdev and Kabir attained the wisdom and gave up their caste tag attached to them and Guru Arjun reiterates same views. No doubt Sikh Gurus recognized cultural and religious pluralism but rejected the monopoly of any particular section. They promoted equality ideologically and pragmatically. It must be kept in mind that we are talking about a particular section of society but tribes and minorities are not exclusive to the spirit of our discussion. Problem to define the term ‘subaltern’ also appears before us. For example message of the Sikh Gurus defends marginalized people but Sikhs themselves have become a subaltern group. India is considered subaltern nation in world politics and economy, yet within India many groups bear subaltern positions. We mean to say that this term carries contextual and relative meanings escaping strictly fixed implications. So, a subaltern group or society may also take the hegemonic status over other sub-cultures which exist within that. In this way it is very problematic to determine the meaning of the term.

We are here concerned to trace the cosmopolitan spirit of Sikh world-view which excludes every type of discrimination and works as defensive shield for the weaker section of society. Guru Granth Sahib does not recognize subalternity in any form. It emphasizes the egalitarian nature of Sikhism that promises to remove the social pollution suffered by
untouchables. It is strange that in spite of efforts made by Sikh Gurus, Sikh society still has subaltern sections. Ravidasis, mazhabis, nayi, jhewer, ghumiaar, luhar, sahansi, ramgarhias, saini, suniaar, julaha, chhiban etc. form the very segment of subaltern society. A large numbers from these groups though primarily follow the Sikh way of living and believe in Guru Granth Sahib yet their participation in Sikh affairs is not adequate. There are two reasons responsible for such critical problem in Sikh Panth. Firstly, they are economically unprivileged; lack of resources compelled them to live a moderate and submissive life. Their poor condition led them to be uneducated and labor class. Secondly, excluding some metro-cities where process of formation of civil society have been started, particularly in rural areas jatt caste dominates the social fabric of Punjabi society and owns a major part of agricultural land. Due to its strong economic position, jatt caste controls the managements of Gurdwaras and the politics of Punjab. Incidents of clash between the jatt (dominant caste) and dalits (subaltern) have come to the fore in Sikh society.

Owing to such reasons lower castes have built their own Gurdwaras of which they manage themselves. This indigenous character of caste consciousness is even followed in western countries by the Indian and Sikh migrants. An issue of Sikh Formations just published after the Vienna incident supports our view. So prevailing tensions among the various social groups needs an urgent reconciliation. We must recall that these socio-cultural problems of Sikh society should not have occur keeping in the mind egalitarian and cosmic spirit of Guru Granth Sahib. There may be conflicts within sub groups of Sikh society but universal appeal of Sikhism cannot be overshadowed by these local concerns and most importantly these problems did not exist during times of Sikh Gurus. So it may be a drawback of socio-historic-cultural development of Sikhs but not that of spirituality of Sikhism.

Sikhism genuinely inspires the inclusive approach opposite to exclusivity of subalterns. Spiritual experience of Sikh Gurus works as the beacon light to lead the whole humanity. Before Sikhism condition of dalits was deplorable. The teachings of Sikh Gurus exercised a notable influence on the subalterns of Punjab. Sikh Gurus have shown their commitment for the upliftment of downtrodden. Guru Nanak identifies himself with these oppressed masses and on similar lines Guru Gobind Singh also credits subaltern segment for the creation of Khalsa and shows his steadfastness to the uplift their social and cultural status. Institutions of sangat and langar were especially built to eradicate caste based hierarchy. Inclusion of hymns revealed by Indian bhaktas in Guru Granth Sahib implies that Sikh Gurus have broken all the walls of
social injustice inflicted on these classes. These saints and sages from different cultural and religious backgrounds proved to be an integral part of divine revelation of Guru Granth Sahib. This is a uniqueness of the Sikh scripture that points out a radical shift in the spiritual history of India. So Sikhism has capacity to play a vital role not only in Punjab but to lead other national and international subaltern communities too.

5.12 Production and Distribution of Resources

Economic problems and issues are major frustrations of modern cultural man. Making out an overall viewpoint about present age, we see that money dominates the human existence pretending as an authority and power. Modern man thinks about anything in terms of money. Technological advancements, through the process of globalization, have made it widespread phenomenon. The overwhelming response to capital or materiality is an instinctive feature of human personality as history confirms it, but technology has enhanced the desire to amass and control money in more intensive way. Diwan Singh comments on materialistic attitude of modern man that, “In fact the whole of India, rather Asia is in a hectic race to amass money much above needs while most of the men enjoy life in Europe and America. It accompanies tension and worries in the race…”

It has become a common belief that money can make a person to do something that is generally assumed beyond reach. By possessing expensive houses, vehicles, clothes etc. people give a superficial impression of being wealthy. Mass media has emphatically established this perception that money brings the reputation and power but the question is whether money brings happiness.

Today generally material comforts are recognized as happiness. On the other side people leading a luxurious life still feel alienation, depression and other psycho-emotional problems. It means money can facilitate only physical comfort but not the emotional and spiritual one. From this point of view money exhibits its relative or contextual value, not the absolute value as modern man thinks about it. Even the value it has is provided by man; in itself it is devoid of any worth. Dr. Gurbhangat Singh has made efforts to explore the idea of capital from the Sikh viewpoint and he termed it as ‘रितस्मापनी पूंजी’ (rapturous wealth). It means money necessarily must lead to bliss and happiness and be subordinate to emotional and spiritual faculties. Sikhism legitimatizes money joined with happiness on emotional level and maximum prosperity on physical level. Spirituality is basically bliss or joy in internal spheres of soul, Sikhism extends it up to the phenomenal level. Spiritual bliss is not divorced from physical joy, that’s why
materiality is significant part of Sikh religiosity. J.R. Dass correctly writes that, “Sikhism, in fact, lays emphasis on better human life base on the fulfillment of those human desires which are conducive to a healthy social living.” Lives of Sikh Gurus reflect that creative economy should not be designed to enrich people but to enable them to become ethically good civilian. Capitalism and Socialism both have been modeled to enrich people and economic concerns occupy a primary status in these systems. Consequently out of these models an elite class emerges that controls a great major amount of wealth. These models ensure security of few rather than harmonious development of whole society. According to Lajwanti Lahori, “All the Gurus gave a great importance to the practice of honest, hard and productive work so that the society as a whole could become economically self-sufficient, and weaker and helpless section of society could be uplifted.”

Antonio L. Rappa explores the reason behind zig-zag development and clearly asserts that, “The roots of these economies are deeply embedded in the Industrial Revolution, but the speed and pace of modernization has resulted in an incomplete understanding of the economic lessons that were themselves partially understood.”

J.R. Dass writes that, “The Gurus idea about the solution of the prevailing economic problems, about business practices, capital investment, economic disparities, ownership etc. can be easily discerned in their devotional text.” For Sikh Gurus money is not an uncontrolled channel but is obliged and subject to ethics, otherwise it would create poverty, exploitation, robbery, murder etc. Money without ethical lessons would prove to be a vehicle without driver. In modern world, market is not liable to be ethically positive. Every time it should not remain profit oriented. There are so many things which cannot be bought with money. Love, compassion, truth, respect etc. are some of the virtues which money cannot buy are invaluable. Trouble to understand the perplexing economic situation leads us to spiritually and morally fractured relations between production, distribution and consumption factors. Sikh Gurus were very conscious about it, so they imposed moral bounds on market phenomenon. According to that money may be employed as a means to serve or help others without any reward. We know that when Guru Nanak was given money by his father to invest into some profitable business. He agrees but on the way he found some saints hungry for many days. He spent all money he had, to serve them food. Similarly, daswandh also symbolizes the very spirit of a healthy and creative economy.

For prevalent systems, market exchanges and transactions are voluntary but people may buy or sell their possessions under some economic pressure that disrupts the professional ethics
and norms. According to Sikh experience transaction and exchanges should not be imposed rather than should be exercised in accordance with the norms of love and responsibility. Due to such reasons Sikh Gurus condemned the *zazia* tax that was compulsory for non-Muslims to be paid. They put economic problems of peasantry class before contemporary rulers. Here money is not only for profit and basic values are not ignored. Prostitution has become a legally sanctioned market in most of the western countries. It cannot be legitimatized because exchanges and transactions are always not voluntary rather may be inspired by some economic or social compulsion or stress. This disrespects the sanctity and procreative capacity of human body violating the values of intimacy and family responsibility. These problems are result of money oriented economy that indirectly avoids social responsibility by recognizing exchanges and transactions necessarily voluntary. It does not intend to build character of its citizens full of civic virtues rather endeavors make them materially rich. From the standpoint of economic dimension of Sikh world-view, money must carry social responsibility.

Lives of Sikh Gurus denote that capital is not root of evil in absolute sense. It is also positive and can be taken as a means to achieve the common cause of society. “To the Sikhs, religion is not a form of worship but a way of life, a vehicle for the transformation of society to its new role…To Sikh Gurus religion was synonymous with the philosophy, the struggle and movement for the upliftment of mankind.”

For example, Guru Arjun invited merchants from different states of India to be settled in Amritsar and encouraged his Sikhs to deal in horse market. The purpose was not of garnering wealth but to establish the center of modernity and civilization in an unnoticed area. Such economy makes efforts not only for material prosperity but to shape a civic character of its citizens. So production, distribution (sharing) and consumption factors must honor civic morality instead of merely focusing on profit. It encourages a cooperative market mechanism replacing the competitive patterns of business behavior. The capitalistic and Marxist model has failed to meet their poverty reduction targets. Modern business theories are detached from spiritual and emotional aspects. They require a certain amount of poverty to sustain their existence. Antonio L. Rappa says that, “The operating principle here is that capitalist societies need many more poor and impoverished persons as a compliment to wealth and power of few.”

This feature reflects ideological nature of capitalism that wants the presence of poor to strengthen the position of rich. Opposite to this model, spirit of Sikh economy favors have nots. Though the economic disparity cannot be eradicated completely but human efforts must be aimed to create a balance between production and sharing patterns.
Imbalance between these patterns causes poverty and other problems related with it. The process of globalization has introduced an integrated system of economy, technology, labor standards and communication management focusing on the world as global market. In this economy money commands the power preying on the traditional value systems but it has positive as well as negative aspects.

Sikh Gurus established new cities yet they focused on villages as well. A large number of their followers were from countryside, particularly from the lower castes. They were skilled in manual jobs. They often used to offer hand made goods before Gurus. Thus *kirt* occupies a central place in the teachings of the Sikh Gurus. They had earned their bread by doing manual jobs. It implies that Sikh economy promotes industries based on both villages and cities in which skilled workers are honored. Villages are not only considered as provider of raw material rather are foundations of economy as production and market hub. City helps village by providing it national/international exposure and environment to flourish its skills. This outlook is opposite to western economy which is exclusively based on urban areas and villages play the role of subordinate. Capitalistic economy has changed the very polarity of production. Manual labor (especially of village) has lost the opportunity to be skilled worker as needed by the capitalistic world. His land and his body have been reduced to the site of raw material. Their skills and labor doesn’t get the share of economy that they deserve. According to the Sikh vision of economy, not only the skills of the manual labor will get its due share but his land will not be reduced to the excessive production and dumping ground of wastage of the Industry. Village is not subordinate to urbanization as it has become an ideological belief rather both play significant role to sustain the society. So material comforts should not be limited to a few but happiness should be extended to optimum number.

Trio-principle of *nam japo - kirat karo - vand chhako* prepares the fundamental ground for Sikh economy. Discussing last two in the context of economy, Lajwanti Lahori examines that “The first commandment *kirat karo*, enjoins the individuals in the society to earn their livelihood by honest creative labor and forbids parasitism in any form. Thus stress is laid on the social aspect of the productive economy in which activities like begging, gambling, prostitution, usurping other’s wealth by way of exploitation of weaker, theft and deceitfulness are absolutely prohibited. The second command *vand chhako* – deals with the consumption and distribution aspects which lay emphasis on sharing the fruits of one’s labor for collective progress of society, at the same time not denying the use of one’s produce to meet one’s basic needs. The second
commandment thus ensures that the poor, helpless and the unfortunate section of the society are uplifted. Thus the Gurus regard a cooperative society as an only truly religious society.\textsuperscript{122} So principles of kirat karo and vand chhako which are secular in their nature can compel the modern world to rethink its economic policies and help for maintenance and sustenance of a balanced economic and social system. We can observe that in this trio-formula spiritual and secular have been integrated, otherwise their divorce would bring an imbalance into society. It extends ones skills or reward to deprived ones providing a base for universal welfare (ਸਰੜਕ ਵਿਚਾਰ ਚਲਾਂ) .

Sikhism promotes the phenomenal reality which is in resonance with the nomenous. But it inspires man to live a simple life of minimum needs.\textsuperscript{123} To follow the pursuit of materiality blindly would result in diversion from ultimate goal of human life rather it should be availed in controlled manner. City symbolizes the modernity and civilization whereas village represents tradition and primeval mode of living. As temporal and spiritual coordinate to each other in Sikhism, similarly tradition and modernity have been blended in the spirit of Sikh economy.

5.13 Conclusion

As a whole futurology describes possibilities and effects in would-be or prospective terms understanding the present scenario of problems and issues. Analyzing the challenges and problems which Sikhism is facing today, we have seen that Sikhism promotes a holistic world-view avoiding the exclusive approach towards life. We can formulate that (I) Sikhism rejects the basis of classical secularism i.e. dichotomy between temporal and spiritual domains. (II) Formation of Guru Granth Sahib validates Sikh world-view of trans-cultural, trans-geographical and trans-linguistic which is free from any type of ethnic or racial hegemony. In this way it cultivates a true spirit of globalization. (III) Opposite to materialistic attitude towards nature (qudrat) the Sikh world-view regards it as a life vibrant organism that also needs man’s tender and loving response. Nature also contributes to realize spiritual concerns of humanity. (IV) Sikh Gurus have emphatically responded against the tendency of exclusivism and provided a space for religious pluralism and multiculturalism. Groups having different identities and cultural backgrounds are accepted here liberally. (V) Sikh world-view visualizes humanity as brotherhood of a common origin. So there are no strict demarcations of Semitic or Vedic religions. Above all Sikhism bridged these two culturally opposite poles. That’s why sometimes Sikhism is misunderstood as syncretism of both. Sikhism has evolved Nirmala, Udasi and Seva Panthi Schools to promote interfaith dialogue. (VI) Identity crisis of Sikhs emerged due to
confusion of approach to solve the political issues which have adopted religious nature. So, political problem must not be translated into religious contention. But their solution should be sought through political intervention or diplomatic strategy. (VII) Violation of human rights came into light during Militant Movement emerged in the last decades of 20th century. It has become a problem for Sikh community to interpret their doctrine and right to ‘use force when other means fails’ that is religiously sanctioned by Sikh Gurus. In modern transforming scenario right to freedom and dignity is taken on the guidelines of secular and democratic set up. But it is true that Sikh Gurus have condemned the policy of imperialism and hegemonic designs in any form. The Sikh world-view does not accept those systems which overrule or marginalize one’s religious and cultural identity. (VIII) Sikhism has paved a way of all embracing model of unity, a non-reductionist mode that does not tend to assimilate other counterparts or units but integrates them into a universal whole. (IX) We know that gender equality exists within Sikh society but on cultural level, it should not be allowed to expand over spirituality. Otherwise it may cause deterioration of Sikh doctrines and spoil the spirit of Sikhism. (X) Guru Granth Sahib does not recognize subalternity in any form. It emphasizes the egalitarian nature of Sikhism that promises to remove the social injustice suffered by untouchables. (XI) Economy makes efforts not only for material prosperity but to shape a civic character of its citizens. So production, distribution (sharing) and consumption factors must honor civic morality.