Retrospect

Cultivation of spiritual capacities of human is the chief aim almost of every religion. Human does not exist in a vacuum but in a physical phenomenon that is ‘world.’ In a way, human makes a very meaningful interaction between physical and metaphysical worlds. Today, religion is not only a matter of devotion and meditation but is also being analyzed in academia to study its deep impact on latent aspects of human psychology. So as an academic discipline, like other subjects, religion is also being explored in relation to other fields. Transcending the boundaries of individual experience, religion now has been expanded to other faculties of human life.

Scholars are specializing or acquiring knowledge of a particular branch or sub-branches. Scholarship wants to discover unknown aspects of human psyche which in return may facilitate the intellect and reason. In spite of remarkable advancement, informed public feels intellectually, ethically and politically lost. With the spreading of knowledge anxiety, tension and psychological disturbance are also increasing due to lack of universal center. So, modern human needs to integrate the scattered aspects of world-view. Only harmonized or holistic world-view can help human consciousness to contemplate upon reality from right perspective. World-view focuses on human’s attitude towards ‘other than self’ in both pragmatic and epistemological context. Now concept of world-view occupies a very important place in international studies.

Due to such acclaimed significance present research work has tried to locate those elements which determine overall perspective of Sikh world-view. Sikh tenets lie in both doctrinal and living experiences of the Sikh Gurus. So no single type of methodology could work out to illustrate the Sikh world-view. Analytically speaking, we have applied philosophical and historical methodologies in this research venture to examine our research area. Sources employed for the purpose are from tradition as well as academia. In short, it is an attempt to bring out the interactive dynamics of spiritual experience theoretically and its response to historical situations practically.

I

First of all we have marked out the concept of ‘world-view’, its meaning, theory, nature and prominent components in first chapter. We have taken up world-view as a fundamental problem for our theoretical chapter. Our central focus is not on concept of world but conceptualization of
world-view. It means we have to define world that could resemble the world around us and that provides ground for moral struggle.

Generally we know that mystery of world and universe is a major concern of philosophical and religious traditions of the world. To know the reality of material world is the major task of these traditions. Present study tries to understand the phenomenon happening around us. It means we are to know what ‘not I’ is or that is ‘not self’. The term ‘world’ is translated in Sanskrit as samsara and in German as ‘welt’ from which term ‘weltanschauung’ (world-view) evolved. Every culture or society develops its world-view as it perceives or understands world around itself. This perception or understanding may go beyond the physical and natural world.

The concept treated in present research work, is world made of ideas. It is an epistemological structure of material world and other dimensions related with it. Every human has his own world; his idea of world-view expands or modifies itself as new situations, experience etc. are confronted. This is the world of ideals followed by human that consists of beliefs, values, customs etc. A living world-view is reconstructed or modified according to changing reality. One thing which must be remembered is that term ‘world-view’ was coined by cultural anthropologists. They took it as a synonym for cosmology and to elaborate the concept of ‘other world’. It is also a multi-dimensional concept particularly having anthropological and sociological context.

It includes every experience of human activity and understanding while living in the society. Every area or activity of life is subject to the concept. It imparts structure of things or forms of thought as human conceive from his surroundings. In modern age nothing can be defined in isolated terms. Everything is getting closer to other and overlapping in many respects. Thus now categories are losing their particular identity, yet every world-view is considered true in a particular and relevant context. This supposition motivates an individual to adopt a world-view and to establish it as an authentic way of living. It leads to an intellectual exercise that takes responsibility to interpret world-view from new perspectives. Such a practice gives rise to many competing world-views. So world-view is not only an ontological conception but a concrete reality that can’t be interpreted from a specific point of view.

It has been generally observed that world-view is generated by the experience that is deeper than the belief, ideal and behavior. Thus difference of world-view among societies,
civilizations and nations is not because of their distinctive beliefs, ideals and behavior but due to their distinct experience of physical and metaphysical realities. They experience same reality but degree of their attitude may vary at many levels. For example God, Allah and Brahman have been used for same reality but expressing varied implications. During the long journey of human race relative concerns of geography, language, behavior can’t be put aside.

One thing more to be discussed here is that when we perceive the world, our perception is effected by patterns underlying one’s own psychology. It means everybody has a particular way to experience worldly phenomenon. Each one has its own lens through which he looks but can’t see the lens. So when we express or communicate our experience, we share it in referential mode. We can’t say our experience as it happened to us. So our way of expression and our experience becomes relatively distant. In a way, listener grasps the second hand information or to some extent different from original. We do not relive or recreate experience that we are sharing with the other. We talk from a distance and describing in referential mode. This is the major problem to understand a particular world-view. It may be called a hypothesis introduced by an observer to explain one’s experience towards the others. Due to above mentioned reasons; some scholars deny that a consistent and authentic world-view is possible as every world-view is considered to be tentative or ultimate one. Ambiguity is encircling the very conception because it has been defined by many thinkers from different standpoints.

II

Sikhism had its origin in the Indian sub-continent. In order to comprehend the uniqueness of Sikh world-view, a brief discussion on the world-view of Indian tradition holds great merit. The second chapter of the present study takes into account Indian Philosophy that includes spiritual and philosophical systems of Indian thinkers, sages and saints either Hindus or non-Hindus. It enables us to evaluate the contribution of Sikh Gurus in chapters that follow with special reference to their views about existential concerns. The second chapter dwells upon the world-view as suggested by categories of Indic tradition one by one and tries to find out their distinctions as compared to each other. We can say that it is impossible to take Indian philosophy as a whole or a singular thought system because it includes so many schools, sub-branches and divisions within itself, going to counter each other or assisting preceding one with different standpoints. We see that even in orthodox tradition of India so many variations exist.
We have seen that (I) Vedic world-view is based on nature mysticism highlighting anthropomorphic tendency but Upanisadic world-view brings forth realm of pure sacred and displays a shift from nature mysticism to pure spiritual experience. Exploration of pure spiritual potential of human spirit is the chief objective of Upanisadas whereas in Vedic world-view spiritual concerns were also there but attached with earthly commitments. (II) Six systems of philosophy are completely speculative in their nature; they are trying to provide logical formations to orthodox tradition. (III) Generally, we conceive that orthodox school does not let down dominance of spiritual truth. Consequently, *sruti* rules over every faculty of life. (IV) Looking at heterodox traditions, Jainism, Buddhism, and Carvakas express a strong disagreement with the prevailing orthodox thought. The spirit of heterodox tradition is totally different though it shows some affiliation on theoretical level as well. (V) Carvaka depicts the extremist attitude experiencing matter in its full extent. In a way it indicates the *tantric* symptoms, however later on it has spiritual preferences too. It also denies the orthodox view of the world, man and soul. (VI) Jaina and Buddhist world-view demonstrates ascetic tendency. Jaina offers realistic pluralism through theories of *syadvad* and *anekantavad* that are chief characteristics of Jaina world-view. Tirthankras are ultimate reality for them. To study their teachings and to be faithful to them is the only way to liberation. (VII) Buddhist world-view seems to be ethical output of Indian philosophy that believes in dependent origination. The Buddhist world-view revolves around this principle, that’s why Buddha avoided discussing metaphysical problems of speculative thought however posthumously the very trend became an integral part of later Buddhism through intellectual exercise of different schools of thought.

Generally, pursuit of intellectual exercise by ancient Indian sages and thinkers served the esoteric aspect of life. Due to this sometimes it is misunderstood as a mere departure from social life. It is not overall nature of Indian world-view rather a trend.

III

The third chapter takes into account the making of Sikh world-view that still requires attention from scholars. After studying the sacred hymns of Sikh Gurus and Sikh history, we come to the point that these sacred hymns or teachings, due to its revelatory nature, do not definitely conceive different dimensions of socio-cultural-political life as an intellectual exercise. But this transforming experience paved a way to formulate a complete world-view that is a potential area for research. What has been proposed in the present study is not a detailed
exploration of each dimension but bringing out the possibility of matchless significance and locating the inter-connection among various components of Sikh world-view. We can formulate that triad of man, Ultimate Reality and world that holds a great merit in Sikh world-view and these three aspects do not undergo a secluded existence but form an interactive dynamics.

Firstly, Human body is a foremost priority to be called a human being or to have an existence. (I) Sikh world-view denotes that physical body is not a spontaneous or automatic combination of various elements but is created by God and has eternal relationship with Him. (II) Body is not free to follow what it aspires for but is subordinate to soul particularly to mind which dictate latently and body concertizes orders through actions. (III) As body under goes supremacy of mind and soul, similarly mind is also overshadowed by soul that is a fundamental element and microcosmic form of a body. As body is not free to do anything opposite to the command of mind but mind has the option to follow the path negative or positive. However ultimately, mind is ruled by human soul. Nam-simran and karmas lead to attain the status of moksha in which soul of man is transformed into The Man or gurmukh.

Secondly, Ultimate Reality in Sikhism is known as waheguru, akal purakh and akal murti etc. (I) Though Sikh world-view does not believe in notion of incarnation and idol worship but it does not imply an absolute rejection of spirit of God in Hinduism. According to Sikhism, (II) God has three forms i.e. Determinate, Indeterminate and gur-sabda. Last one is pure and absolute that includes other two forms. (III) Mostly, conception of Sikh God is considered as opposite to Advait Vedanta but we have noticed that after Sankra, Ramanuja who is another well-known exponent of Vedanta school of philosophy tries to accommodate both nirguna and sarguna forms. We mean to say that Sikhism must extend dialogue to other offshoots of Vedanta and Indian philosophy as well.

Thirdly, after discussing man and Ultimate Reality conception of world is another important aspect of world-view in which human plays his/her role. Literally world means variants of materialistic expressions surrounding humans. (I) God is material, efficient and instrumental cause of universe. He has capacity to create a gulf between planets and to put them near to each other. Everything, even god and goddesses are made by Him. (II) Nature and its associated domains are a mark of God’s power. In Indian tradition Vedas offer nature mysticism but Sikh world-view does not believe such type of mysticism, however nature occupies a significant place in Sikh experience and Sikh Gurus have designated it with spiritual adjectives.
Fourth chapter finds out social, economic and political dimensions which are relative to each other and are significant components of Sikh world-view. We observe that existential context of human being is very important factor of Sikh world-view. Development of Sikhism and efforts of Sikh Gurus reflect that they were very conscious about it. Existential context contains society, polity and economy which determine the cultural status of any civilization and religion.

Firstly, Sikh Gurus totally transformed the nature of Indian society. They made efforts to eradicate evils from the social fabric of India. (I) Overview of Sikh History points out that initiative for the formation of Sikh society was taken during the Guru period especially with the advent of Guru Nanak, thus construction of Sikh society was not a byproduct or by chance happening rather Sikh Gurus consciously prepared texture for the formation of Sikh society. (II) Formation of Sikh society was not an idea without theoretical postulates but Sikh Gurus provided a healthy doctrinal basis for it too. Household life and gender equality are basic postulates for it found in the teachings of Sikh Gurus. (III) The very doctrinal seeds were concretized in the form of sangat, gurdwara and langar institutions. (IV) Creation of the Khalsa and its code of conduct clearly bring out the distinctive nature of Sikh society.

Secondly political dimension of Sikhism is also significant in this context; though sometime it is misunderstood as an uncontrolled political exposure at the cost of spiritual values. But a close study of Sikh history removes this illusion. Political, social, and cultural issues were welcomed by Sikh Gurus but these were restrained by the supremacy of religion and ethics. (I) Freedom, justice and concept of miri-piri form the doctrinal basis for political dimension of Sikh world-view. (II) Sangat-panth-panj pyaras are those institutions which were archetypal form of Sikh polity and were established by Sikh Gurus themselves. On the later stage gurmata and sarbat khalsa were also institutional foundations of Sikh polity. These institutions, after Guru period played a very memorable role to outline directive principles for Sikh polity upto the establishment of Sikh empire. (III) Idea of Sikh state, ruler and their nature are equilibrium of spiritual and temporal attributes. Akal Takhat in front of Harimander symbolizes the very spirit.

Thirdly economic dimension is also related with existential context. Generally, capital or material pursuit is not paired with religiosity rather both are regarded as opposite ends but (I) Sikh Gurus exhibit no hesitation dealing with capital or material stuff. Manji and masand
systems and *darbar* of Sikh Guru are famous example of it (II) In Sikh world-view, it does not matter whether man possess/follow material inclinations and pursuits. Important thing is utilization of physical facilitations, over indulgence of any type has been strictly prohibited. (III) Accumulation of wealth is not the ultimate object or achievement but a means to develop intellectual and emotional sustainability. This attitude of Sikh Gurus is totally opposite to the modern management which celebrates professionalism in which tasks and targets are primary, man is mere a means to achieve target. (IV) The main objective of economic dimension of Sikh world-view is to evolve service or *seva* oriented model of business and management. To earn benefit or to increase income is secondary to *seva* based commercialism. Thus, in Sikh economy money is subservient to the spiritual, emotional and intellectual faculties of man. (V) In This system charity is not sequential as a part of economic strategy but is simultaneous as a primary task. Even at that time, when human has nothing or is unable to help others.

V

Fifth chapter contemplates upon futurology of Sikh world-view that describes possibilities and effects in prospective terms understanding the present scenario of problems and issues. Analyzing the challenges and anxiety which the Sikhs are 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. a total dichotomy between temporal and spiritual domains. (II) Formation of Guru Granth Sahib validates Sikh world-view’s trans-cultural, trans-geographical and trans-linguistic dimensions which are 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 without any restriction. (V) Sikh world-view visualizes humanity as brotherhood which has 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 all other means fail’ 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 policy of imperialism and hegemonic designs in any form. The Sikh worldview 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.

In recent times, 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, less or more. Postmodern age has rejected the claim of empirical and rational method as a sole means to grasp reality. It gives equal status to every method either traditional or modern. Ultimate 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. Formation of Guru Granth Sahib and its message has propounded the very idea four centuries ago. In this way, the fifth chapter of our study delineates the futurology of Sikhism.

VI

Thus analyzing the Sikh sources the present study endeavors to unveil the problem that whether Sikhism has the potential to create analogical systems and patterns of a fully established civilization as compared to other world civilizations. Our attempt brings out that how Sikhism possibly will have to respond to all faculties of human life not only in present times but in its future too. If Sikh tradition indispensably insists upon more than a spiritual way of living, then it must spell out its own social, economic, cultural and political structures. We have noticed that above mentioned issues can be addressed in independent manner elaborately. To sum up, the Sikh world-view resonates with all inclusive or holistic approach which is considered a prerogative of modern society.