Chapter I

Identity: Concepts and Theories

Identity is the fragrance of any culture. Nowadays faith, gender, race, class, caste and some other aspects of self are emerging with the complex mixed identity. Thus, there are some multilayer resonances on identity. The question of identity has been discussed on various levels. The post-theories give new dimensions to understand the identity issues. Presently, post-modernity/post-modernism focuses upon the words identity, fragmentation, difference and diversity. The scholars are trying to revive the different disciplines of academic such as religion, philosophy, history, culturology, sociology, political, science, economics, etc. to understand collectively the problems of identity. The general human-psychic question: who I am, is becoming very crucial and complex. This chapter deals with the theory of identity, especially Sikh identity. There are two parts of this chapter. First part deals with theories of identity and the second part examines the works directly associated with Sikh identity.

Meaning and Concept of Identity

Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary records that identity is the characteristics, feelings or beliefs that distinguish people from others: a sense of national, cultural, personal, group identity.\(^7\)

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The Webster’s Dictionary mentions four important features of identity as;

1. The state of being identical or absolutely the same; self-sameness.

2. Sameness or character or quality. Identity may be of two sorts: absolute, which involves exact quality with itself, or self-sameness, as the equation $a=a$; and relative, a less rigid sense, which implies a close material resemblance or similarity, as that the green of two leaves. The distinctive character belonging to an individual; personality; individuality. The state of being what is asserted or described.

3. The distinctive character belonging to an individual; personality; individuality.

4. The state of being what is asserted or described.\(^8\)

Thus, identity is a sense of uniqueness, a feeling of continuity over time and a sense of ego completeness. And characteristic demands identification with the ideals of some group that affirms the sense of self that is the final achievement of a healthy sense of identity.

Theories of Identity:

Jonathan Rutherford:

Jonathan Rutherford describes the issues of identity and develops the perspective of difference. He is a co-editor of the journal of Male Order: Unwrapping

Masculinity. His academic research starts with his Ph.D. thesis on ‘Men, Heterosexuality and Difference’. He employs incommensurability, difference, diversity and margins – the key terms to understand the various dimensions of identity. According to Rutherford, understanding of difference is crucial in the present scenario in fact the other has become a hegemonic point. The other plays a vital part in cultural phenomena. He writes, ‘difference in this context is always perceived as the effect of the other. But a cultural politics that can address difference offers a way of breaking these hierarchies and dismantling this language of polarity. We can use the word ‘difference’ as a motif for the uprooting of certainty’. In the desire to break the hierarchies of race, sex and class, the concept of difference imparts clarity to explain the nature of identity. Thus, identity depends upon one’s relation with the alterity. The being/identity of self and other is reciprocally determined, we are told.

Rutherford uses the word ‘incommensurability’, which states a wider perspective of identity and difference. He writes, ‘the culture politics of difference recognizes both the interdependent and relational nature and their political right of autonomy’. He presents that relationship is helpful to people because difference removes the threat and people become friends by relations. ‘In the commodification of language and culture, objects and images are torn free of their referents for their meanings become a spectacle open to almost infinite translation. Difference ceases to threaten, or to signify power relations. The power relation is closer to tourism than imperialism, an

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10 Ibid. p. 10.
expropriation of meaning rather than material’. ¹¹ He also maintains that the emergence of a cultural politics of difference is a response to the new political subjects and cultural identities. ¹² Identity is the most powerful object in the life because it combines the relations of the past and gives the vision of the future. ‘Identity then is never a static location, it contains traces of its past and what it is to become. It is to contingent, a provisional full stop in the play of differences and narrative of our own life’. ¹³ However, ‘there are no ready-made identities or categories that we can unproblematically slip into’. ¹⁴

Difference and diversity are important variables to understand the culture because the values of difference and respect of other play vital role in society formation of culture. Rutherford employs the concept ‘home’ instead of margin. He himself explains that he uses the word ‘home’ here, not only as making a sense of self and identity, but as a motif for a culture that values difference and thrives on its own identity. ¹⁵ He initiates debate in the realm of identity politics.

He says that formation of identity is incommensurable component. It is important factor in difference. The cultural politics of difference explains living with incommensurability through new ethical and democratic frameworks. It is possible within a culture that both recognizes difference and is committed to resolving its

¹¹ Ibid, p. 11.
¹² Ibid, p. 20.
¹⁴ Ibid, p. 25.
¹⁵ Ibid, p. 25.
antagonism. The acknowledgement of the otherness of ourselves is gained through the transformation of relations of subordination and discrimination.

According to Rutherford, Difference is a response to new political issues and culture identities. He has different approach from Derrida for difference.\textsuperscript{16} Derrida constructs his concept in the philosophy of language but Rutherford observes it in the paradigm of social practice which recognizes the different identities. In his observation, Derrida and the other post-structuralists have helped to make sense of the absences in Marxist theory.

**Homi K. Bhabha:**

Homi K. Bhabha infuses new motifs, models, structures, thoughts and ideas to understand the culture. He presents his understanding with the structure of hybridity. He explains that ‘a process of hybridity, incorporating new ‘people’ in relation to the body politic, generating other sites of meaning’.\textsuperscript{17} Homi Bhabha recognizes the different cultures with the glances of incommensurability. For him, the different values, practices, customs etc. are meaningful and relevant. He denies the diversity rather than the difference. He describes that ‘with the notion of cultural difference, I try to place myself in the position of liminality, in the productive space of the construction of culture as difference, in the spirit of alterity or otherness. The difference of cultures cannot be something that can be accommodated within a universalist framework. Different cultures, the difference between cultural practices, the difference in the construction of


\textsuperscript{17} Homi K. Bhabha, “Introduction: Narrating the Nation”, in *Nation and Narration*, Homi K Bhabha (ed.), Routledge, New York, 1993, p. 4.
cultures within different groups, very often set up among and between themselves an incommensurability'.

Homi Bhabha rejects the earlier and orthodox assumptions and gives the critical views about the sense of cultural diversity and marginalization. ‘The marginal of ‘minority’ is not the space of a celebratory, or utopian, self-marginalization. It is much more substantial intervention into those justifications of modernity – progress, homogeneity, cultural organicism, the deep nation, the long past – that rationalize the authoritarian, ‘normalizing’ tendencies within cultures in the name of the national interest or the ethnic prerogative’.

According to him, dialogues among the different cultures should be open. There is need to study every culture from within and without making other culture a reference point as to such a faith analysis. ‘Other cultures are fine, but we must be able to locate them within our own grid’. It is fact that when a desire enters in super ego then it tries to establish its will. Then we see the homogeneity takes birth which wants to rule on another. The presence of any culture should be respectful and its continuity is very important. ‘The theory of culture is close to a theory of language, as part of a process of translation. Cultures are only constituted in relation to that otherness internal to their own symbol-forming activity which makes them decentred structures – through that

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displacement of liminality opens up the possibility of articulating different, even incommensurable cultural practices and priorities.’

Homi Bhabha rejects the cultural exclusiveism. He prefers the concept of hybridity for culture that provides a third space for the presentation of culture. It explains that the encounters between two culture origins a new arena for discussion and to understand their internal beautiful variations of the various cultures. ‘The act of cultural translation (both as representation and as reproduction) denies essentialism of a prior given original or originary culture, then we see all form of culture are continually in a process of hybridity. Hybridity for me is the ‘third place’ which enables other positions to emerge. This third place displaces the histories that constitute it.’

The concept of other plays a vital role in post-colonial thought. The encounters among the different kinds of values, beliefs, faiths make new impacts. These impacts influence on the shape and form of identity. ‘Cultural and political identity is constructed through a process of othering. The time of ‘assimilating’ minorities to holistic and organic notions of cultural value has passed – the very language of cultural community needs to be rethought from a post-colonial perspective.’ So in Bhabha’s approach of identity emphasis the ambivalent nature of that relationship, which understands political subjectivity as a multidimensional, conflictual form of identification.

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21 Ibid. p. 210-11.
22 Ibid. p. 211.
23 Ibid. p. 219.
24 Ibid. p. 221.
Stuart Hall:

Stuart Hall is a professor of sociology. He writes on politics, race and culture. He did extensive work on cultural identity. A number of his writings have been collected as ‘The Hard Road to Renewal’. He established the meaning and definitions of cultural identity in ‘the third world’. He says that ‘identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead of identity as a ‘production’, which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation’.\(^{25}\) In this way, he covers the thoughts of post-colonial thinkers in his theory of identity.

According to Stuart Hall, the cultural identities have two aspects and which are related with the past and the future. History manifests itself in the present state of culture. It travels unconsciously and reflects its presence on the spot of negotiation. ‘Cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as ‘one people’, with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning’.\(^{26}\) It shows the frozen identity of one’s self. That is bound with limitation. ‘Cultural identity, in the second sense, is a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as ‘being’. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which


\(^{26}\) Ibid. p. 222.
already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories’. 27

The importance of history in cultural identity cannot be ignored because history has its facts, symbols and meanings and we are related with it. ‘It is not once-and-for-all. It is not a fixed origin to which we can make some final and absolute Return. Of course, it is not mere phantasm either. It is something not a mere trick of the imagination. It has its histories and histories have their real, material and symbolic effects’. 28 Thus, every culture is dynamic and its past’s influence shows in present situation. It will also reshape the future image. ‘Cultural identities are the points of identification, the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made within the discourse of history and culture. Not an essence but a positioning’. 29

He tries to understand the concept of hybridity through diaspora. In his perspective cultural identity and diaspora both are important. He says that ‘the diaspora experience as I intend it here is defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of ‘identity’ which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing then solves anew through transformation and difference’. 30

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27 Ibid. p. 225.
28 Ibid. p. 226.
29 Ibid. p. 226.
30 Ibid. p. 235.
Kobena Mercer:

Kobena Mercer works at the British film industry. He has an intensive work on film, media and cultural studies. In Welcome to the Jungle: Identity and Diversity in Postmodern Politics, he argues about post-modernity, identity and politics and their inter-relations and combinations. He tells that ‘everybody wants to talk about ‘identity’. As a key word in contemporary politics it has many different connotations that sometimes it is obvious that people are not even talking about the same thing. One thing at least is clear that identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis. The emergence to talk about identity is symptomatic of the post-modern predicament of contemporary politics’. 31

The predicament has entered a peculiar situation and we can say it is in the form of struggle. This struggle is different in the post-modernity as well as the modernity. Post-modernity has broken the dogmatic and fanatic philosophy or thought of the modernity. ‘Postmodernism means many different things to many different people, but the key motif on displacement, decentring and disenchantment have a specific resonance and relevance for new social movements’. 32 ‘Like identity, difference, diversity and fragmentation are keywords in the postmodern vocabulary where they are saturated with groovy connotations. Postmodernism has been discussed as a weakening, fading or relativisation of the absolutist or universalist values of the

32 Ibid. p. 49.
Western Enlightenment’. In this complicated life, on the one hand a human being is losing his self identity however becoming very conscious of his identity on the other. Identities have different shades and these are explanation of external self. ‘We don't need another hero. But we do need to make sense another of the experiences that characterize postmodern structures of feeling’.

Identity relates with a class, community, tribe, group, faith and religion. It plays an important role to the construction of the self. ‘A recognition of fragmentation of traditional sources of authority and identity membership and belonging such as ‘class’ and ‘community’ that help to construct political loyalties, affinities and identifications’. The views constitute the observations of the other. ‘Identity and subjectivity depend on the negation, exclusion and denial of others. Women, children, slaves, criminals, madmen and savages were all alike in as much as their otherness affirmed ‘his’ identity as the universal norm represented in the category ‘human’.

Mercer gives new dimension to identity by saying that black is beautiful. In addition to that he discusses so many issues about the identity e.g. gays, lesbian, youth and feminine. In the discourses of identity, difference and diversity has become framework to understand and justify to the identity. He also tries to understand the ideology of identity movement. As he says that, ‘I am not so sure that ‘identity’ is what these movements hold in common: on the contrary, within and between the various ‘new’ movements that have arisen in postwar Western capitalist democracies what is

33 Ibid. p. 49.
34 Ibid. p. 50.
35 Ibid. p. 50.
36 Ibid. p. 55.
asserted in an emphasis on ‘difference’. The phenomenon can be understood by relating it to the concept of difference. Difference shows the values between two same personse instead of separateness. So, ‘essentialist notions of identity and subjectivity surface in the vortex of this bewildering experience of difference because of the absence of a common idea of what diversity really means for the multitude of subjects, actors and agents. He concludes as that ‘social identities are structured ‘like a language’ in that they can be articulated into a range of contradictory positions from one discursive context to the next since each element in ideology and consciousness has no necessary belonging in any political code or system of representation’.

**Frances Angela:**

Frances Angela illustrates the various aspects of identity by photographs of herself, her mother and her grandmother. She enters in identity discourse with her term; ‘Confinement’ and analyses herself in the realm of confinement. She creates her theory within a deep pain. She struggles in the search of separate identity. She says about her photographs that ‘all these strands have shaped my life, but they cannot be represented separately. They hold meaning over each other and together they articulate my struggles over identity, about this attempt to represent a life on the margins. Just as language is a site of struggle, so too is representation’.

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37 Ibid. p. 44.
38 Ibid. p. 65.
39 Ibid. p. 57.
She is representing the working women class as a symbol of feminine. In this world, the desires of working class are snubbed, frightened and threatened. Their selves are shrinking. So, Angela uses the word ‘confinement’ for identity. She says that ‘class for me was labour, a lack of social rights and heavy weight of servility which harnessed me to the whims, desires and uses of others. If I have to think of one word that could work as a motif of this experience it is confinement – the shrinking of horizons’. The other wants to suggest about movement. ‘This movement does not abandon that marginal class position. This is a place of resistance’. She has believed with hopes that new identities are articulating and the centre will take his position. ‘This place is neither the old margin nor the co-option of the centre, but a third space where new subjectivities, new politics and new identities are articulated. New location has the resources of the centre but remains outside to disrupt and resist, continually threatening the centre with contradictions of its margins’.

**Jeffrey Weeks:**

Jeffrey Weeks tries to understand the crisis and clashes of cultural confictions of identity and gives a framework of ‘The Values of Difference’. According to him, the identity has different shades, relevance, forms and shapes in different communities. ‘Identity is about belonging about what some people and what differentiates you from

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41 Ibid. p. 72.
42 Ibid. p. 73.
43 Ibid. p. 73.
others. At its most basic it gives you a sense of personal location, the stable core to your individuality'.

Difference is important to understand the inner core of self. ‘Identities are not neutral. Behind the quest for identity, are different and often conflicting values’. The significance of individual-self is converting in fanaticism. Self-importance is more significant than other responsibilities. Desires always drive the ego and some of them take the shape of super ego. So, Weeks agrees that ‘there is no such thing as society, only individuals and their families, difference become merely a matter of individual quirks or pathologies’.

So, the identity of a community is not be monolithic. It can best be described as ‘a community of communities, to achieve a maximum political unity without denying difference’. Change is an inevitable process continuing the aspect of human mind, values, cultural and social development for a civilized world. ‘The aim instead is to offer a concept of politics as a process of continues debate and mutual education, and to broaden the democratic imagination through the acceptance of human variety of difference’.

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45 Ibid. p. 89.
46 Ibid. p. 92.
47 Ibid. p. 90.
48 Ibid. p. 99.
Pratibha Parmer:

Pratibha Parmer is a writer, filmmaker and political activist. She presents her approach of identity politics in her black look. ‘In these post-modernist times the question of identity has taken on colossal weight particularly for those of us who are post-colonial migrants inhabiting histories of diaspora. Being cast into the role of the Other, marginalized, discriminated against and too often invisible, not only with everyday discourses of affirmation but also within the ‘grand narratives’ of European thought’.  

Western thought constructs a stable and fixed frame to represent diasporic and other identities. ‘It has pointed to the disintegration of that paradigm of identity politics which posits our ‘otherness’ and ‘difference’ as singular, seemingly static identity of sexuality, race and gender’. Identity is a feeling, which represents the cultural beauties, virtues and specialties. It works as a hub to conjunct, discourse, explanation and presentation among the different races. Parmer writes that, ‘black Feminism has provided a space and a framework for different ethnicities, class and sexualities, even though at times that space had to be fought for and negotiated’.

The experiences of diaspora reflects new ideas and thoughts to understand the other. Superior status of a class creates a sense of inferiority and jealousy towards particular category. About blacks, Parmer says that ‘differences of skin colour have

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50 Ibid. p. 101.
51 Ibid. p. 106.
become the signifiers of diminished humanity and intellectual and cultural inferiority; black people are represented as savages and natives who have not yet progressed into adulthood and therefore by implication into full humanity.\textsuperscript{52} She takes the minimization of an identity and its dimensions also. She wants to pick up these issues in the search of new area of identity explanation of blacks. To express her views about hopes and observation, she quoted June Jordan as ‘I don’t want anyone to tell me where I should put my attention first. If down the line we can try to respect each other according to the principle of self-determination then we can begin to move forward’.\textsuperscript{53}

\textbf{Gary Taylor and Steve Spencer:}

Gary Taylor and Steve Spencer understand the issue of identity in their multidisciplinary perspective. They write that ‘it (identity) is a concept which embodies our sense of uniqueness as individual beings and as members of groups sharing values and beliefs. On the other it is an intensely political field in which the expansion of critical theory has allowed the emergence of competing voices demanding space for recognition of fragile and previously often fugitive and unspoken subjectivities’.\textsuperscript{54}

They explore the issue of subjectivity and discuss the various aspects of identity in the relations with ideology, class, feminism, racism, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, nationalism and religion. They observe that ‘identity is in part a uniquely personal, internal sense of self, but at the same time it flows of dominant cultural meanings and

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid. p.116.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid. p. 113.
the power relations contingent on these. Language and the other cultural codes are central to our internal identity as well as to our sense of belonging or our collective identity'.

Gary and Steve raise the question about political concerns of identity, which emphatically accentuate on identity. They note, ‘identity is a work in progress, a negotiated space between ourselves and others; constantly being re-appraised and very much linked to the circulation of cultural meanings in a society. Furthermore identity is intensely political. There are constant efforts to escape, fix or perpetuate images and meanings of others. These transformations are apparent in every domain, and the relationships between these constructions reflect and reinforce power relations’.56

Roy F. Baumeister:

Roy F. Baumeister is an experimental psychologist. He explores the terms continuity and differentiation to understand the concept of self-identity. He incorporates three variables (values & priorities, interpersonal aspect and individual potentiality) of identity. He observes that ‘philosophical approaches to identity furnish us the following point of departure for a theory of identity, and a basic question suggests itself: How do we explain how the self can exist as continues – across time as distinct from others? We must also explain how a person can know the self as both continues and differentiated. Although part of the answer can be traced to awareness of the body, a full answer depends on the way people interpret their experiences, especially

55 Ibid. p. 3.
56 Ibid. p. 4.
experiences that continue across time. In addition, identity must be understood in the context of possible events of potentiality’.57

Roy focuses on the element of potentiality to trace the formation of self-identity. It is also important in the continuity and difference, which are very valuable to understand the various layers of self-identity.

**Michael Cronin:**

Michael Cronin designs the concept of translation to explain the identity. He observes that it is very complex task to translate the text/document/speech etc. in its original essence. With globalization, knowledge is spreading all over the world and the translation is contributing to knowledge. But translation of knowledge is complex and complicated task and it depends upon who is translating the text. He argues that ‘identity in this scenario is the bleak, defensive interface between a global economy and infinitely malleable human material. It is in this context that the contribution of translation is paramount in describing both how certain forms of identity have come into being and how they are being shaped. Equally important is the manner in which translation theory and practice can point the way to forms of co-existence that are progressive and enabling rather than disabling and destructive’.58 Thus, the translation creates a place for the process of interpretation of various forms of identity.

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Luke Tredinnick:

Luke Tredinnick explores the effects and modes of identity in the present digital world. In fact, with the spread of technological, lot of information is available, but it is also creating a void in the human atmosphere. Identity becomes more framed, fixed and rigid sediment in the disc of digital information. It also becomes more unstable and fluid. Luke explains about the digital culture’s influence upon identity as ‘this influence contains three entangled elements: sedimentation, virtualisation and fragmentation. With its sedimentation, identity becomes increasingly disinvested from social processes. With virtualisation, the sedimentary record or trace our identity, actions and values become disassociated from our corporal being. With fragmentation, the unity of identity declines’.59

Luke observes that the digital age leads to the paradox of identity, which is affecting the nature of identity. The digital technologies are creating the dislocations of the identity. This paradox of identity gives vision to understand the religious identity. On the one side, a devotee or seeker of any faith is in quest to keep his/her traditional identity through the practice of certain rituals and cultural ceremonies, while on the other, due to conflicts of different cultures the human mind is changing.

Hans Mol:

Hans Mol presents sociological theory of religious identity. According to him, the religious identity relates with sacralization/sacredness. He gives four main features of religious identity. These are:

(1) 'Objectification; the projection of order in a beyond where it is less vulnerable to contradictions, exceptions, and contingencies - in other words a rarified realm where major outlines of order can be maintained in the face of temporal, but all-absorbing dislocations of that order.

(2) Commitment; the emotional anchorage in the various, proliferating, foci of identity.

(3) Rituals; the repetitive actions, articulations, and movements which prevent the object of sacralizations to be lost sight of.

(4) Myth; the integration of the various strains in a coherent, short-hand symbolic account'.

As per Hans Mol, objectification, commitment, rituals and myth are interrelated with each other.

Massimo Leone:

Massimo Leone tries to understand the concept of religious identity from Christian perspective. He employs the semiotic analysis method to understand of the sacred text. Through the analysis of the scripture, he understands the formations of identity. Leone

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shows his interest in conversation. By conversation, he explains that the psychological and social formations are very relevant to understand the identity. He observes that ‘religious identity needs a certain amount of time to consolidate both at a psychological and at a social level. By measuring this time, and the variables which accelerate or delay the formation of religious identity after conversation, it is possible to categorize social and religious groups, depending on the different degree of permeability by which they accept (or reject) converted people, in fact, conversation plays a role of paramount importance in the formation of new religious groups, and in the dismantling of old communities’.  

There are some more scholars, who try to understand the issue of identity from different angles. Mirinal Miri examines this issue within the Eastern and Western traditions. Bidyut Chakrabarty has edited a book Communal Identity in India: Its Construction and Articulation in the Twentieth Century, of the papers of eminent scholars who made valuable comments upon the communal and marginalized identities of India. Harke A. Bosma et al. in their collaborative papers Identity and Development: An Interdisciplinary View explain the concerns of identity which reflect the confluences of individual core and communal culture.  

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Jiloha\textsuperscript{66}, Yogendra Singh\textsuperscript{67}, Michele Friedner\textsuperscript{68}, P.K. Mohapatra\textsuperscript{69}, Anna De Fina\textsuperscript{70}, Bernd Simon\textsuperscript{71}, G. Reginald Daniel\textsuperscript{72}, Michael C. Thornton\textsuperscript{73}, Sallie Westwood\textsuperscript{74}, Farhana Ibrahim\textsuperscript{75}, R Radhakrishnan\textsuperscript{76} are also very important names in the study of identity.

Studies under scan show that there are two perspectives of identity. One is personal and the other is cooperative (group, communal and national). On the basis of these studies, the main features of identity are; incommensurability (Jonathan Rutherford), difference (Jeffrey Weeks), diversity (Kobena Mercer), margin and hybridity (Homi K. Bhabha), confinement (Frances Angela), race and feminism (Pratibha Parmer), conversation (Massimo Leone), translation (Michael Cronin), commitment, rituals, myths and objectification (Hans Mol) and subjectivity (Gary Taylor and Steve Spencer).

However, all the features of identity are determined by culture, politics, gender, race and other social constructions. So, every human being strives to find out the answer to the question that who am I. Above studies give a direction to understand the issue of Sikh identity.

\textsuperscript{76} R. Radhakrishnan, \textit{Between Identity and Location}, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 2007.
Sikh Identity in the Sikh Studies:

The founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak (1469-1539) laid down a new orientation to spirituality. But that time, it was not accepted by the priests of the old/established religions. Due to this, the Sikhs Gurus faced many challenges from the others. The Hindus and Muslims denied to accept the independent identity of the Sikhs. From the very beginning, the Sikh Gurus and the scholars of Sikhism have been trying to describe the various aspects of Sikh identity. In this part, we are trying to understand the issue of Sikh identity from Sikh studies.

Bhai Gurdas Ji

Bhai Gurdas (1551-1636) is known as the first Sikh theologian. He was very close to Sikh tradition because he has accompanied with Sikh Gurus. He has credit to inscribe the first copy of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. He was a well-learned scholar of Sikhism. His writings were appreciated by fifth Nanak, Guru Arjan with the reward of ‘the key of Gurbani’. Dr. Darshan Singh writes that ‘Bhai Gurdas and his writings have an authoritative place in Sikh history and religion. He is important as Ved Vias in Hinduism, Anand in Buddhism and St. Paul in Christianity’.  

Var, Kabitt & Swayye of Bhai Gurdas provide a valuable information about Sikh identity. His spiritual metaphors, symbols, language, ideas and understanding of Sikh

vision in his writings make him a renowned personality of Sikhism. About his writings, Dr. Mohan Singh says that ‘his work is deemed to hold the key to the Sikh spiritual treasury and to make the best and purest Rahit-Nama. Although derivative in thought and resonate and repetitive in vocabulary, Gurdas’s considerable volume of poetry for its wealth of allusion, and imagery-fresh as well as rejuvenated –, its ripeness of Hindu, Muslim and Sikh cultural scholarship, its verbal felicities and rhythmic triumphs, its wide and deep love and observation of Nature – its laws and lawlessness, its realities and symbolism, its teachings and tortures –, and for force and colour-fullness of its style entitles him to the rank of the greatest medieval Punjabi poet outside the House of Baba Nanak’.  

Bhai Gurdas explains the Sikh Panth as a distinct path among the other religions. He interprets all the basics of Sikhism very descriptively. He says that since the true Guru integrated all the four varnams into one, this assemblage of varnas has come to be known as the holy congregation. Among six seasons and six philosophies, the Gurmukh-philosophy has been established like the Sun (among the planets). Wiping out all the twelve ways (of yogis) the Guru has created the mighty Gurmukh-way (panth). This panth keeps itself away from the boundaries of the Vedas and the katebas and always remembers as well as sings the unstuck word (Brahm).

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79 *cwir vrin lek vrin kir vrn avrn swDsMgu jwpY*
   *iCa ruqI iCa drsnw gurmuiK drsnu sUrju QwpY*
   *bwrh pMQ intwie kY gurmuiK pMQ vfw prqwpY*
   *vyd kqybhu bwhrw anhd sbdu agMm alwpY* (Var 23:19)
Bhai Gurdas describes the spirituality/vision/philosophy/doctrine/objective of Sikhism in details. He states that in the world, he (Guru Nanak) established the authority (of his doctrines) and started a religion, devoid of any impurity (Niramal Panth). During his lifetime, he waved the company of Guru seat on the head of Lehna (Guru Angad) and merged his own light to him.80

His information and interpretation have an important place in the Sikh doctrine because he observed the Sikh tradition keenly. His interpretations about Sikhism are much relevant in the identity perspective.

**Sainapat**

Sainapat was a poet in the courtyard of the tenth Nanak, Guru Gobind Singh. He was the first biographer of Guru Gobind Singh. He is the witness of the wars of Guru Gobind Singh against injustice kingdoms. He saw the creation of the Khalsa himself and lived for the time of Banda Singh Bahadur. He wrote all the things in his work Sri Gur Sobha, which is authenticated source of that time. He tells us that the Khalsa has a distinct image in the whole Panth. After the creation of the Khalsa, the message had spread the Sangat of various places. At Delhi, the five Sikhs baptized the Sikhs with Amrit. As he writes that within the pahul so many five Sikhs has blessed. They realized that the Khalsa is distinct from Brahmna and Khatri.81

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80 mwiraw iskw jgiq ivic nwnk inrml pMQ clwieaw
Qwipaw lihNw jlxvdy guiraweI isir CqR iPrwieaw (Var1;45)
81 kir pwhl sb sMgiq cwKI pWc pWc isK kley swKI
KqRI bRwhmN duie rhY inawrw Aun apny mn mwiw ibcwrw
He further discusses about the attributes and duties of the Khalsa. He says that he is peculiar Khalsa that has not any doubt in his heart. He is my Master, who is much distinct from superstitions and customs.\textsuperscript{82}

**John Malcolm**

John Malcolm came to India in 1783. He serviced in the army for few years and after this, he was promoted for diplomatic service by the British Empire. He visited Punjab in 1805 and after this, he stayed Calcutta in 1806. Here, he wrote the Sketch of the Sikhs. Before his writing Charles Wilkins’s article on Sikhs Observations on the Seeks and their College and George Forester’s letter On Sikhs and the Sikh Religion had been published.

His sketch deals the Sikh history and origins of this faith respectively. He tries to give information about Sikh customs and manners. He observes that the Sikhs have ultimate faith in their Gurus and in the effort to keep the words of tenth Guru to establish the power overall nation. As he writes that ‘from...dying words of Guru Govind, the Sikhs believe themselves to have been placed, by their last and most revered prophet, under the peculiar care of God: and their attachment to this mysterious principle, leads them to consider the Khalsa (or commonwealth) as a theocracy; and such an impression is likely to oppose a very serious obstacle if not an

\textsuperscript{82}Dwls Dws khwvY soeI jw kY ihrdY Brm n hoeI[ \\
Brm ByK qy rhY inawrw so Dwls siqgurU hmwrw[ \\
Ibid. p. 128.
insuperable barrier, to the designs of any of their chiefs, who may hereafter endeavour to establish an absolute power over whole nation’. 83

**Ernest Trumpp**

Ernest Trumpp was a Christian missionary. He came from Germany to India to join the service of Church Missionary Society and stayed in Karachi for linguistic research. He was nominated by the Secretary of State for India to translate Sri Guru Granth Sahib from Gurmukhi (Punjabi) original to English. He completed his translation in English in Germany. However, his translation became much controversial in the Sikhs after soon its publishing.

There were so many conflicts, which were raised by Trumpp. His language and idiom were very faded and biased. He did not try to understand the feelings of Sikh faith. He writes that ‘Nanak himself was not a speculative philosopher, who built up a concise system on scientific principles; he had not received a regular school-training, and uttered therefore his thoughts in a loose way, which are now scattered through the Granth……..Nanak himself was by no means an independent thinker, neither had he any idea of starting a new religious sect: he followed in all essential points the common Hindu philosophy of those days, and especially his predecessor Kabir’. 84 As he sees the Sikhism in the continuity of the Hinduism.

**Frederic Pincott**

Frederic Pincott was the first writer who made scholarly comment on the writings of Trumpp. He refuted the points of Trumpp about the origins and nature of Sikhism that it emerged in the contrast of Muhammadanism. However, he also seems to fail to realize the Sikh vision, idea and practice. According to him, ‘it (Sikhism) is based on Hinduism, modified by Buddhism, and stirred into new life by Sufism. There seems to be superabundant evidence that Nanak laboured earnestly to reconcile Hinduism with Muhammadanism, by insisting strongly on the tents on which both parties could agree, and by subordinating the points of difference’.85 Such as, Pincott also tries to describe Sikhism as a part and extension of Hinduism.

**Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha**

In the last decade of 19th century, prominent Sikh scholar Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha wrote a book *Hum Hindu Nahin*, which turned out to be very significant for Sikh identity. This book was an answer to those people who had showed Sikhs as Hindus. Bhai Kahan Singh tried his best to present that Sikhs are completely separate from Hindus and Muslims. To prove this, he relies upon his reading of Guru Granth Sahib, Dasam Granth, Bhai Gurdas Ji, Bhai Nand Lal, Janam Sakhies, Gur Bilasis, Bhai Santokh Singh and Panth Parkashes. This book was written in dialogue form. He himself tells about the aim of this book. He writes that, ‘we are describing separateness of the Khalsa from the Hindu religion, because our brethren already think themselves to be

different from other religions. On account of their ignorance they call Khalsa Hindu, in other words a sect of the Hindus. I believe that my ignorant brethren, having read this book, will conduct themselves according to their religion. Considering themselves sons of the Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh they will join the Khalsa and will believe that ‘We are not Hindus’.  

Theoretically, Bhai Kahan Singh makes a strong claim in favour of the uniqueness of Sikh identity. Discussing the scriptures, prophets, beliefs, daily routines, rites, rituals, symbols, worships, caste and class structures, he gives the powerful textual evidence to prove this claim. Bhai Kahan Singh does not want to create bitterness between Sikhs and Hindus. He has no objection in accepting the term ‘Hindu’ only if this word is taken to be denoting people living in a particular geographical region. For him, using the word ‘Hindu’ as referring to a particular religion is objectionable. As he says, ‘if you call Sikhs Hindus because they live in Hindustan (India), then you should consider Christians, Moslems as Hindu too. If on account of residence they are Hindus we have no objection to be called Hindus, i.e., Indians’.  

He focuses upon Khalsa identity. Although he respects Sehejdharies but according to him, Khalsa represents Sikh identity in principle. After a long discussion on principles from various aspects, Bhai Kahan Singh represents his actual motif, which is to prove the distinct political identity of Sikh community. For this purpose, he uses the word quam (nation) for Sikh community. He states that, ‘o brothers, followers of Guru

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86 Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha, Sikhs...We are not Hindus, Jarnail Singh (tr.), Singh Brothers, Amritsar, 2006, pp. 4-5.
87 Ibid. p. 32.
Nanak, I am confident that having read this book, you will consider yourself as a Quam (Sikh) and will realize that “We are not Hindus”, and will consider all Indians as your part.’

This work performed as justification for Singh Sabha and the other organizations (like Chief Khalsa Diwan) which disseminated the message of Sikh separateness. It has also been one-sided interpretation of the Sikh Panth like other interpretations because Kahan Singh’s terminology emphasizes upon Sikh’s distinct political identity. That’s why, ultimately, he uses the word quam for Sikhs in his conclusion.

Max Arthur Macauliffe

M.A. Macauliffe was a devotional author who has tried to understand Sikhism very carefully. He joined the service of British Empire after qualifying the exam of Indian Civil Service. ‘During his stay in Punjab, Macauliffe devoted all of his time to the study of Sikhism and its literature and published three articles on Sikhism in the Calcutta Review, as early as 1880-81. He studied Sikhism under the able supervision of learned Sikh Gianis including Bhai Kahan Singh of Nabha. He produced his magnum opus, The Sikh Religion (Oxford University Press, 1909, in six volumes), after decades of unremitting hard labour, totally to the satisfaction of the Sikhs’.

Macauliffe presents his observations and feeling in his writing about the faith of the Sikhs. He understands Sikhism differs from various aspects in the traditions of

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88 Ibid. p. 136.
faiths. He observes about the authenticity of Sri Guru Granth Sahib that is distinct. As he writes that ‘the Sikh religion differs, as regards the authenticity of its dogmas, from most other great theological systems. Many of the great teachers the world has known have not left a line of their own composition; and we only know what they taught through tradition or second-hand information........they were written or compiled by his adherents and followers. However, the compositions of the Sikh Gurus are preserved in these volumes, and we know at first-hand what they taught. They employed the vehicle of verse, which is unalterable by copyists, and we even become in time familiar with their different styles. No spurious compositions or extraneous dogmas can, therefore, be palmed off on us as theirs’.\(^9^0\) To justify his point, Macauliffe gives the example of Pythagoras, Socrates, Buddha, Confucius and the Arabian Prophet. But, he does not discuss about Jesus Christ and Bible.

**W.H. McLeod:**

W.H. McLeod started his academic career by undertaking research on the life of Guru Nanak. While comparing Guru Nanak with Sant Kabir, he states that ‘the system developed by Guru Nanak is essentially a reworking of the Sant pattern, a reinterpretation which compounded experience and profound insights with a quality of coherence and a power of effective expression’.\(^9^1\) He further gives some historical observations on Sikh identity in his book *Who is a Sikh? The Problem of the Sikh Identity* which is characterized by an excessive reliance upon logics or reasons. Such

one-dimensional approach (historical) is inadequate to make a sense of spiritual oriented aspects of Sikh Panth. McLeod states that ‘Nanak was a Hindu, and, although the Sikh tradition subsequently developed its own distinctive features, it remains firmly set within the larger matrix of Hindu belief and social convention’.\textsuperscript{92}

He divides the development of Sikh identity in phases. According to him, the first phase begins with emphasis upon Nam, Dan, Isnan. He says that ‘the teachings of Nanak and his early successors focused on the Nam or Divine Name, a term which we have already noted as the dominant feature of the popular nam, dan, isnan formula’.\textsuperscript{93}

He further states that Guru Amardas borrowed the practice of compulsory commensality from the Sufis. According to him, caste system was also not denied by the Gurus. On the basis of Janam Sakhies, he concludes that early Sikh identity was ‘dimensioned by implied comparisons with Vaishnavas, by the suggestion that Nanak might adopt various Panthic identities, and by the occasional claim that he regarded himself as a Hindu. A Panth, which is in the process of self-definition but which has not yet achieved a clear awareness of separate identity. In the case of the early Nanak-Panth the conclusion which follows is that no clear line of demarcation can be drawn in order to separate it from contiguous Hindu tradition’.\textsuperscript{94}

He further writes that Guru Arjan and Bhai Gurdas have given a new face to Sikh identity in early Nanak Panth. He also notes that institutions, Dharamsalas and Baulies are also important in the promotion of Sikh identity. After this, he focuses upon Guru

\textsuperscript{93} Ibid. p. 8.
\textsuperscript{94} Ibid. p. 18.
Gobind Singh period and explores Khalsa terminology. McLeod projects the image of Khalsa dynamically. His thesis on Sikh identity circles around Khalsa and his rahit (Sikh code of conduct). He makes stress on this point that Khalsa identity is distinct from Hindu and Muslim identities. According to him, ‘it is the way of life enunciated by the Khalsa tradition which is summarized in the word ‘Rahit’, and non-Khalsa Sikhs sustain a separate identity precisely because they decline to observe some key features of the standard ‘Rahit’. The ‘Rahit’ is, thus, the Khalsa way of life, the system of belief and distinct behaviors which all who accept Khalsa initiation are expected to observe'.

McLeod locates the formation of Sikh identity in his historical perspective. He examines the Sikh rituals, traditions and institutions as the symbols of Sikh identity. At last, he tries to provide a definition of Sikh identity. He says that ‘it seems clear that a very substantial majority of Sikhs now reject the claim that Sikhs are Hindu or that the Panth is a Hindu sect. The Panth’s origins were Hindu and its partial retention of caste must be acknowledged, but the experience and response of the past five centuries have together generated a sense of separate identity. A few Sikhs may still regard themselves as Hindus. Most do not’.

Above discussion shows that he does not attempt to understand the Divine presence of Guru Nanak, and how Guru Nanak and his ideological arcanums are distinct from other traditions of faith. Rather he combines the Sikh Panth with Sant and Hindu traditions. He finds some contradictions between the ideology of Guru Nanak and Guru

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95 Ibid. p. 30.
96 Ibid. p. 120.
Gobind Singh. For him, Khalsa identity is separate due to its rahit rather than the belief of the Sikhs.

**Harjot Oberoi:**

Harjot Oberoi’s work is known as an extension of McLeod’s work. He raises the issue of religious boundaries of Sikh identity. He attempts to give a historical account of the formation of Sikh identity. According to him, historically, in early phase of Sikh history, there was no fixed identity. ‘A narrative tradition which represents an image of Nanak is constant flux thus has manifold ramifications for early Sikh identity. Just as there no fixed Sikh identity in the early-Guru period’. Oberoi denies that there was a distinct image of Sikh identity. In his perspective, Guru Granth Sahib under the supervision of Guru Arjan makes a powerful declaration of the separateness of the Sikhs. In the verses of Bhai Gurdas, who was somewhat aware of the separateness, we can trace some flashes of Sikh identity.

He does not trace the origin of Sikh identity from Guru Nanak. He notes that the creation of Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh is a milestone in the formation of Sikh identity. He says that, ‘although we have no contemporary description of Khande ki pahul, it is certain that it involved the use of a heavy double-edged sword and sanctified water. Whatever its precise form and sequence, this new image initiation rituals and its

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distinctive religious imagery gave the Khalsa a powerful symbolic grid to proclaim and affirm their new identity.\textsuperscript{98}

In the perception of Oberoi, Khalsa, its rahit and rituals perform the role to make unique Sikh identity. Outlook of the Khalsa with symbols and his practices according to Rahitnamas paints his image distinctively from others. After this he says that Khalsa identity performs hegemonic and dominant role in the Sanatan Sikh tradition which had pluralistic approach for Sikh belief. He also compares the Khalsa with other sects of the Sikh tradition. Within this, he makes the breach in the Sikh collectiveness. As per him, Khalsa is a new identity but in late nineteenth century the practice of Tat Khalsa as he understands it has been the clear awareness and performance of the Sikh identity.

In his whole work, Oberoi poses a serious question about Sikh identity, and reveals that it emerged from the political crisis. He gives the examples of Khalsa creation and the praxis of Singh Sabha in the late 19\textsuperscript{th} and early 20\textsuperscript{th} century. His work shows clearly misunderstanding of Sikh practices. He creates illusions and gives statements and comments. J.S. Grewal comments that ‘does Oberoi suggest that the Sikhs regarded themselves as both ‘Muslim’ and ‘Hindu’? Or none, and therefore they had no identity? If ‘heterodox textuality’ means something different from diverse authorship and content, Oberoi does not make it clear. If the implication is that there are doctrinal contradictions in the text of the Adi Granth, Oberoi does not demonstrate. His insistence on ‘unfixed’ identity of the Sikh Panth does not appear to be an inference drawn from empirical evidence but a priori assumption. His interpretation of the

\textsuperscript{98} Ibid. p. 61.
evidence used becomes forced and farfetched. The statement that ‘identity’ of the early Sikh Panth was fluid and unfixed essentially means that the Sikh Panth was not distinct from the ‘Hindu’ society.  

**Pashaura Singh:**

Pashaura Singh deals with the question of Sikh identity and examines Who is a Sikh. He applies the Western methodology of historiography and divides Sikh history in some phases like early phase of Sikh community, institution of Khalsa to fall of Sikh sovereign rule, British Raj, Singh Sabha and Akali movements. For him, Guru Nanak is the founder of Sikh identity and his philosophy of ideal person Gurmukh creates a different era within the concepts of Nam, Dan and Isnan. He also defines the various concepts and institutions to explain the early Sikh Panth’s identity. For him, Gurmukh, Dharamsala, continuity of Gurgaddi, Kirtan, Langar, Gurmukhi script are main flashes of Sikh identity. He says that ‘(the) sense of distinct identity was marked by distinctive belief system, modes of worship, socio-religious institutions and an over-arching organization with the Guru as its pivot. Indeed, the institution of the Guru carried an aura of divinity for the Sikhs’.  

He contemplates that the building of Harmandir Sahib and compilation of Adi Granth become strong determinates of independent Sikh identity. In his view the early Sikh identity was based upon peculiar doctrines, organizations and institutions and social attitudes including the gumption of spiritual and temporal concerns. In emerging

of Sikh identity, Pashaura Singh goes to find out major four elements\(^{101}\) in his research as he says that ‘all four elements combined to produce the mutual interaction between ideology and environment that came to characterize the historical development of Sikhism. Overall, the pre-modern understandings of Sikh identity were primarily based upon orthopraxy rather than orthodoxy. Although the earlier Nanak-panth had permeable boundaries with the Hindu society at the popular level, the institution of Khalsa sharpened the process of the emergence of a separate Sikh identity’.\(^{102}\)

Further, he investigates the Sikh history after the emergence of Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee. He also coins a new term in the Sikh aura, that is, Ichhadhari, which is neutral in the comparison to other Sikhs (Amritdhari, Sehejdhari etc.).

Pashaura Singh observes that Sikh identity begins with Guru Nanak. He mentions some famous concepts of Sikh Panth and describes the shades of Sikh identity in continual historical process till date. In his account, there is not any fragrance of religious mysteries of Guru’s praxis, Gurbani and the divine Sakhi experiences which are most relevant in the expressions and core instinct\(^{103}\) of Sikh identity.

\(^{101}\) ‘First was ideology, based on religious and cultural innovations of Guru Nanak and his successors. Second was Guru Teg Bahadur’s influence in the rural area. Third one was conflict created by dissidents in Sikh community and at last fourth was the period of Punjab history (17\(^{th}\) to 18\(^{th}\) centuries), in which Sikh Panth evolved in tension with Mughals and Afgans’. Ibid. p. 92.

\(^{102}\) Ibid.

\(^{103}\) This term has been coined to express the brim fullness of a being, which defines the whole process of life around a central point. We shall see in the next chapters that the features or the projections of the Sikh identity have its own era to expand his distinct fragrance and equilibrium.
Daljeet Singh:

Daljeet Singh’s approach to understand Sikh identity is based upon Sikh ideology. He enumerates some features of Sikh identity by distancing his views from McLeod and Oberoi. Here, the point is that McLeod and Oberoi made history as the base to study identity. They evaluated Guru Granth Sahib as a historical text. But in the study of Daljeet Singh, Guru Granth Sahib cannot be limited as per historical document because it is living Guru for the Sikhs. Second, for McLeod and Oberoi, the ten Gurus have various positions but as per Sikh vision they are same light of Guru Nanak. Basically, there is a difference between in the methodological approach of Dajeet Singh and McLeod. McLeod and Oberoi prefer to do the study of events, facts and text as per historical method. On the other hand, for Daljeet Singh history is the part of faith.

To project his thesis on Sikh identity, Daljeet Singh marks the five arenas of Sikh thought and praxis. In his observation, Sikh identity is distinct primarily due to a radically distinct concept of God. He deals with this theme the title Spiritual Experience of the Concept of God.104 His main concern is to explore the concepts of liberalism, freedom and sovereignty of Sikh religion. Sikh God apart from being transcendent, is also immanent and being immanent. He is creative, directive, ruler, protector, sovereign and has all values and virtues.105

The ideological difference from other religions, according to Daljeet Singh is the second feature, which explains the uniqueness of Sikh identity. Sikhism drives its

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105 Ibid. p. 256.
ideological different characters from its unique conceptions of reality of the world and goal of human life is to become Gurmukh. Comparatively, in his view, these attributes distinguish it from other religions. Gurmukh, an ideal of Sant Sipahi is a spiritual follower of Guru Nanak and has perfect consonance with the thesis of the Guru, is entirely different.\(^{106}\) About the third aspect of Sikh identity, he explains about the class distinction in the Sikhs.

He gives the fourth feature of Sikh identity. According to him, ‘Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh-Scripture, is the most emphatic pronouncement about the distinct and independent identity of Sikhism. The phenomenon of Sikh-Scripture is unique in the annals of religious history of man. In the case of every other religion, its scripture was compiled by decades, and mostly centuries, after the prophet had left the physical scene. In all these cases, numerous problems of authenticity, textual accuracy and advertant additions and interpolations, have arisen, thereby creating many controversies, both among the faithful and the scholars. But the step taken by Gurus had a new thesis to give, entirely different from the earlier ones, and for that matter, it required a separate and authentic compilation’.\(^{107}\)

In the last, Daljeet Singh marks the fifth element of Sikh identity, i.e., Panth and Its Institutions. He defines that the purpose of Guru Nanak was not just to deliver the idea but also to spread this through practices. To apply this, Guru Nanak established Kartarpur after his world-wide visiting and meetings with remarkable spirits of that

\(^{106}\) Ibid. p. 258.
\(^{107}\) Ibid. p. 261.
time. Whole life systems of Guru-Panth, Gurdwara, Sangat-Pangat, Miri-Piri, Langar, Sant-Sipahi, Khalsa are based upon Guru Nanak’s visionary thought.

Daljeet Singh gives some clues regarding Sikh identity. He emphasizes on Guru Nanak’s ideology for exploration of Sikh identity. His research is confined to only dealing with the peripheral aspects of the phenomena of Sikh identity which as a result causes his work to overlook/oversimplify this complex issue. ‘For Daljeet Singh, distinct identity was not only fully formed in the time of the Gurus but it was also their creation, resulting from the ideas of Guru Nanak and the ideals, institutions, and actions based on them. He is not bothered about ‘uniformity’ or ‘fixity’ in his conceptualization of identity’.  

J.S. Grewal:

J.S. Grewal is a prominent scholar of Sikh history. He has written various papers, books and documents but in Historical Perspectives on Sikh Identity, he presents a historical aspect of Sikh identity. According to him, Sikh identity begins with Guru Nanak which manifests itself through Sikh ideology, various institutions and practices of the Sikhs. But it is the Khalsa institution, which has given a determinate character to Sikh identity. According to him, ‘He (Guru Nanak) told his followers that this mode of worship was the most effacious for attaining liberation, and for them it was the only way. His successors wrote their own compositions, which were put together in the Granth compiled by Guru Arjan. The compositions of Guru Teg Bahadur were added

later. It is now known as the Adi Granth, and regarded as the Guru Granth Sahib. The adoption of new beliefs, practices, and institutions made the Sikhs conscious of their identity quite early in their history. The institution of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh appears to be a great landmark in the process precisely because it made Sikh identity unambiguously conspicuous. There is a long historiographical tradition in which the Khalsa figure as a community distinct from both Hindus and Muslims.109

Grewal analyzes the approaches of W.H. McLeod, Harjot Oberoi, Daljeet Singh, G.S. Dhillon, Muhsin Fani and Bhai Kahan Sinngh Nabha in detail. In its essence, the Singh identity dominated the other Sikh identities like Sahajdharis, Udasis etc. Before 19th century there was not big rupture but till early 20th century the Singh identity was on its peak. He says that ‘for the Sikhs, however, the Panth consisted of both the Singh and the Sahajdharis. This situation began to change in the late nineteenth century when, in response to assertions that Sikhs had no identity separate from the Hindus, the Singh Sabha leaders began to treat the Singh identity as the preferable Sikh identity because of its greater visibility. But, they were also close to the Sikh tradition of the eighteenth century in which the Singh identity was the preferable Sikh identity. Their eventual success marginalized the Sahajdharis within the Singh Panth’.110

Grewal observes the role of the leaders of Singh Sabhas, Chief Khalsa Diwan, Shiromani Akali Dal and also the movement of Khalistan. On the behalf of these, he understands about the Sikh identity in this era which relates with political flash. He

concludes that, ‘his (Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha) exposition of the Sikh identity was meant to show its political implication as much as its independence. The equation of the Sikh Panth with the ‘Sikh quam’ made the Sikhs a political community. Sikh politics for him came to be based on Sikh identity. But he was not alone. The Chief Khalsa Diwan before and after 1920, the Shiromani Akali Dal before and after 1947, and recent movement for Khalistan invoked Sikh identity of vital importance – positively for the ‘Sikhs’ and negatively for some ‘others’.\textsuperscript{111}

\textbf{J. S. Ahluwalia:}

Jasbir Singh Ahluwalia traces the philosophical problems of Sikh identity. He locates that Sikhism is a synthesis of the sacred traditions. He writes, ‘in the absence of such a methodology Sikhism has been seen either as a continuation of the Hindu tradition in a reformed way, or as a total breakaway from the latter. Neither of the two extremes is true and tenable. Occasionally, there have been efforts to show that this new religion represents the medieval-age synthesis of the Hindu and Islamic elements. Such an integrationist approach, far from proving a synthesis, ends up in presenting a disharmonious picture of Sikhism as a syncretism of odd elements in an unresolved tension and disequilibrium’\textsuperscript{112}

According to Ahuluwalia, Sikhism has emerged parallel to Vedantic idioms and Islamic practices. But the Vedanticized interpretation of Sikhism is eroding its identity. Vedanticization is trying to pave the sovereign doctrine of Sikhism. As per his view, ‘to

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid. p. 76.
\textsuperscript{112} J. S. Ahluwalia, \textit{The Sovereignty of the Sikh Doctrine}, Singh Brothers, Amritsar, 2006, p. 27.
locate the essential Sikh identity on various levels in the doctrine itself. Presenting the essential growth of Sikhism as a historical concretion of the seminal ideas inherent in the teachings of Guru Nanak, I have, for projecting as integral image of the Sikh identity, sought an integrative view of Sikh ontology, Sikh theology, Sikh ethics, Sikh polity, Sikh institutions and Sikh praxis in the unifying context of the Sikh doctrine.\(^1\)

Ahluwalia discusses the fundamental concepts of Guru Granth Sahib and Sikh praxis e.g. Sikh metaphysics, Akal Murat, five Khands, Sikh polity, Sri Akal Takhat etc. He also notes that ‘the doctrinal identity of Sikhism was laid down by Guru Nanak; the socio-cultural identity of the Sikh society was established by Guru Amar Das through nomizational ceremonies, and the political identity of the Sikhs as a “people” was institutionalized through baptismal amrit on the Baisakhi day of the year 1699 at Sri Anandpur Sahib by Guru Gobind Singh, who in very categorical terms enjoined upon them to preserve their self-identity’.\(^2\)

He makes it clear that the creation of Khalsa was the major juncture of separate Sikh identity. He explains that, ‘the essence of the Sikh identity lies in the dual character of Sikhism which is not only an other-worldly path of soul salvation but also a this-worldly ideology with socio-political concerns; correspondingly, the Sikhs are not only a religious group but also a political ‘people’. This transformation, inherent in the

\(^{113}\) Ibid. p. 29.
\(^{114}\) Ibid. pp. 75-76.
doctrine, was institutionalised by Guru Gobind Singh on the Baisakhi day of the year 1699 at Sri Anandpur Sahib.\textsuperscript{115}

**Conclusions:**

1. Identity is the actuality/distinctness/sameness/appearance of a human being. It is dynamic and changes itself according to time and space.

2. Identity has two main orbits. One is personal identity and second is co-operative (group, communal, national and religious) identity. One’s personal identity refers to his/her own psychological, genetically and physical appearance. A group’s identity projects its own religious/cultural/social/communal rituals, rites and practices, which influence upon individual identity.

3. There are three main approaches toward identity. One group of thinkers draws attention upon the surrounding which emphasizes on human being and effects/affects/erodes/fades individual’s identity. Their concepts of incommensurability, difference, diversity, hybridity, and confinement become the interpretation of one’s identity. Second group focuses upon race, feminism and marginality which describe how these concepts impact on co-operative identity. Third group constructs the concepts of objectification, myth, commitment, rituals and conversation. These paradigms explain the religious identity of a person or group and how these are associated to the formation of religious identity.

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid, p. 209.
4. To understand the religious identity, various paradigms are playing a significant role. A person from any particular religion or faith has own identity however an other elements cannot be denied.

5. In Sikh studies, there are different interpretations of Sikh identity. One group of scholars such as McLeod, Oberoi and Pashaura Singh understand the Sikh identity in historical perspective. They describe the Sikh identity as a continuity of Hindu tradition. Bhai Kahan Singh defines the Sikh identity from religious angle, while Daljeet Singh understands the ideology of Sikh identity. J. S. Grewal also takes the position with history but he marks the starting point of Sikh identity from Guru Nanak. For him, Khalsa institution is a crystal form of Sikh identity. J.S. Ahluwalia approaches this issue in a philosophical manner and finally bases his thesis on Sikh separateness rather distinctness. Some important aspects, which emerge from the whole discussion are Sikh doctrine, rites, institutions, rituals, praxis, symbols, etc.

6. Different paradigms of Sikh identity provide three defining essential strands: faith in Ű/Akal Purkh, commitment with Guru/Waheguru/God and practices of the Sikhs.