PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Publication of standard works on the life and teachings of the Sikh Gurus and Sikh history is one of the important aims and objectives of the Guru Nanak Foundation. Beginning with the Quincentenary volume of the Life, Time and Teachings of Guru Nanak, the Foundation has by now brought out nearly thirty titles on different aspects of the Sikh history and religion. In addition we are regularly bringing out a bi-annual journal. *Studies in Sikhism and Comparative Religion.*

[n the present title Sardar Jagjit Singh, a noted scholar, has attempted to tackle two most significant problems of Sikh history. In the first part of the book he has tried to establish how the Sikh movement succeeded in uprooting the ideology, culture and institution of caste among the Sikhs and led to the establishment of an egalitarian order. In the second part of the book the author has studied evolution of the Sikh movement since its inception till the rise of the Sikh misals. We are confident the book will be read with interest by scholars and general public alike.

GURU NANAK FOUNDATION,
New Delhi.

HARBANS SINGH
Honorary General Secretary.

January 1985.

PREFACE

Establishment of centres of Sikh Studies at various Universities in and outside Punjab has generated a good deal of interest in the academic study of Sikhism. Similarly Sikh Studies are becoming increasingly popular in some of the Universities abroad. As a result quite a large body of literature on different aspects of the life and philosophy of the Sikh Gurus and the Sikh movement has recently appeared. However, requisite attention has not been paid to the indepth study of the two vital issues, firstly, whether or not the Sikh movement was able to establish a caste-less society and, secondly, what were the forces which were responsible for the militarization of the Sikh movement.

In the first section of the book an attempt has been made to project the egalitarian character of the Sikh movement and Sikh Gurus' role in establishing a caste-less society. The second section deals with the militarization of the Sikh movement, the creation of the Khalsa and its prolonged struggle for capturing political power.

The Sikh movement was an organic growth of the Sikh religion or the Sikh view of life. The founding of the Sikh *Panth* outside the caste society in order to use it as the base for combating the hierarchical set-up of the caste order, and the creation of the Khalsa for capturing the state in the interests of the poor and the suppressed, were only a projection, on the military and political plane, of the egalitarian approach of the Sikh religious thesis. But, some writers, having failed to grasp the socio-political significance of the Sikh religion, have tried to cloud the genesis of the. -Sikh movement by suggesting that the militarization of the movement was initiated and reinforced by the influx into it of a large number of Jats. The refutation of this hypothesis is important, because its elimination would leave no plausible alternative in the field to contend the thesis that the militarization of the Sikh movement was a logical development of the Sikh view of religion.

In the present title an attempt has been made to remove misgivings on these two vital issues of Sikh history. I hope this will help understand and form a correct appraisal of the Sikh movement.

I am grateful to the Guru Nanak Foundation for having kindly agreed to publish these essays.

JAGJIT SINGH

Ghaziabad,
January; 1985.

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Section One

CHAPTER I

The Caste[1] and the Caste System

A good deal of confusion can be avoided if a clear distinction is kept in view between the relative significance of caste, as such, and when castes come to constitute a system, as it happened in India alone.[2] A system, by its very definition, is a complex whole, made up of different parts, which coordinates and harmonizes the working of its constituents to serve a set purpose.Without unity of purpose and coordination of functions, the constituents either remain a haphazard assortment of factors and forces, or, at best, these combine casually to form a fraction of the potentially possible resultant force.This is amply illustrated by many examples of caste-like elements present in societies outside India.We cull a few of the facts given by Hutton[3] and Ghurye[4] to prove our point.

In ancient Assyria and Egypt, traders were forbidden to intermarry.Goguet writes that "in the Assyrian Empire, the people were distributed into a certain number of tribes, and the professions were hereditary. . . . . .We know not the time nor the author of this institution, which from the highest antiquity prevailed almost over all Asia and even in several other countries."[5]

Risley argues that whenever the conquest of one people by another has taken place, it has been followed by inbreeding, and by an initial stage of hypergamy.Where the two peoples concerned "are of the same race, or at any rate of the same colour," the initial stage of hypergamy passes away and a state of complete amalgamation follows.On the other hand, where marked distinctions of race and colour intervene, "the tendency is towards the formation of a class of half-breeds, the result of irregular unions between men of the higher race and women of the lower, who marry only among themselves and are to all intents and purposes a case."[6] Thus, in the Southern states of the U.S.A., "negroes intermarry with negroes, and the various mixed races, mulattoes, quadroons and octoroons, each have a sharply restricted *jus Connubii* of their own and are absolutely cut off from legal unions with white races."[7] Hutton draws the conclusion that although the "negro in the Southern states has been in many respects kept segregated as a distinct community, prohibited or at least prevented from using the same public amenities as white men," and although "it is certain enough that there is a strong prejudice on the part of the whites against mixed marriages, but the question of taboo and pollution by touch hardly arises.A negro servant to a white man is no strange anomaly, but a Brahman with a Chandal cook is unthinkable, and hardly less so a Rajput with a Dhobi for a valet. . . . . .Conditions such as those under which negroes and whites live together in the United States do not form a true parallel to caste in India. . . . . .".[8]

Herodotus tells us that the Egyptians were divided into seven classes.The profession of priests and fighting men were hereditary.No artisan was allowed to have another trade and employment and the Egyptians came to hold the agriculturists as well as the able craftsmen in light esteem.[9] Pig was regarded as an impure animal, "mere contact with which made it necessary to bathe.The swineherds, although native born Egyptians, could not enter any temple, and they married among themselves, as no one would be willing either to give a daughter to one of them in marriage, or to receive a swineherd's daughter as a wife.The priests were also hereditary, and we learn, among other things, that they bathed themselves in cold water four times every twenty-four hours. . . . .

.drank universally from brass vessels which they scoured daily, and regarded beans as.unclean *(on katharon)* food. . . . . .The parallel with caste is further emphasized by a statement that no Egyptian man or women will kiss a Greek on the mouth, or use the knife, spit in cauldron of a Greek, or taste the flesh of a clean *(katharos)* ox if cut by a Greek knife. . . . . .It all sounds as though a caste system not unlike that of India may have existed in ancient Egypt."[10] Further, "The Egyptians might not eat bread with the Hebrews, for that is an abomination unto the Egyptian."[11] But, Revillout, who has gone into this question carefully, "comes to a definite finding that whatever the nature of these so-called Egyptian 'castes', there is nothing to show that there was any caste system which really resembled that of India, nor anything in the customary laws of Egypt which interfered with social intercourse between these groups or prevented their inter-marriage (no doubt with the possible exception of the case of the pig-keepers), instances of which are known to have taken place."[12] "Indeed, in so far as there seem to have been groups analogous to caste in Egypt, they seem to have been rather of the nature of administrative organisations like those of the later Roman Empire, than of quasi-organic development like castes in India. . . . . .".[13]

The Burmese analogue is possibly as near to the essence of caste as any parallel elsewhere.Here, seven distinct classes of outcastes were recognized.Members of these outcaste classes in Burma cannot enter a monastery nor become a Buddhist monks.One of these classes, the "pagoda slave is such for life, and his children and descendents are pagoda slaves *in perpetum;* they cannot be liberated even by a king.If a person who is not a pagoda slave marry or be married to a pagoda slave even unwillingly, such a person and all her or his children, even by a former marriage, also become automatically pagoda, slaves in perpetuity.Pagoda slaves cannot be employed in any other capacity than that of pagoda servant.It will be observed that in the last two respects the disabilities suffered are even more severe than those of outcastes in India, though the element of untouchability is not stressed at all to the same degree."[14] However, although the seven classes constituted an outcaste population distinct from the people, their social relations with the remaining population were possible.[15] "They did not constitute castes, so that there were, so to speak, only incaste and outcaste in Burma, and no 'Caste system'."[16] The analogy of the caste system is clear also in this respect that the untouchability in Burma is obviously based on taboo.There seems, therefore, "to be common ground here for an origin of caste, which, while developing in India into an organic structure of society, has in Burma become stabilised in an undeveloped form, or even degenerated, so as to affect only a limited part of society, and leaving the main body of the people untouched.For the Burmese as a whole are as free from the working of the caste system as are other peoples among whom analogous institutions have been pointed out."[17]

Nearest to the Indo-Aryans are the Aryans who migrated to Iran.There, the work of the priest was regarded as of the highest merit and that of the artisan as of the lowest.Change of profession from one class to another was allowed only to those who demonstrated exceptional merit.The priest could marry girls from the lower classes, but did not permit his daughter to marry a man from the lower class.[18] In fact, the early population of Iran was divided into four *pishtras,* analogous to the four *varnas* of India[19]; and the priests were likened to the head of man, the warriors to his hands, the husbandmen to his stomach, and the artisans to his feet[20], which simile reminds one of the *Purnsha Sukta* Hymn.But, the "existence of castes is nowhere attested in the history of Persia."[21]

China, whose civilization is considered older than India, also had traces of caste-like social exclusiveness.The barbers and their sons were regarded among the pariah classes.They were not allowed to compete for the civil service.Singing girls, play actors, policemen and boatmen were

considered low and had to marry within their own class.No slave could marry a free woman.[22] But, seen in the overall context, the "Chinese society has been characterized by a remarkable minimum of hard and fast class divisions."[23] "By the time of the fourth and third B.C., the idea that social status should be determined mainly by individual merit had become deep rooted."[24]

In Japan, during her military age, society was divided into five distinct groups.The fifth group was formed of the *Eta* and the *Hinin,* who were the outcastes of the society."Every occupation that brought a man into contact with unclean things, such as the corpses of human being, the carcasses of animals, and offal of all descriptions were degraded."[25] "So strong is the prejudice against them (Eta) that the very word *Eta,* if it must be uttered, is only whispered. . . . . .They were considered subhuman; remembered with the termination—*biki* used for quadrupeds; lived in separate quarters in the village; had to wear distinct dress; could only marry among themselves; had no social intercourse with other classes, and could only go abroad between sunset and sunrise. . . . . .In the small fishing village of Mihorosaki. . . . . the children on either side never crossed an imaginary line which marked the frontier of untouchability half way up the street."[26] "Their (Etah's) position is not without analogies to that of the exterior castes of Hinduism, but probably both here and in Burma, what there is of caste is closer to the Ceylon than to the Indian pattern."[27]

"The laws of the Anglo-Saxons laid it down that none was to seek in marriage a mate outside one's class, so that if a person of lower status married a woman of a higher class he was to perish. . . . . .In the eyes of the tribal law the only legal marriage that could take place was between free-born people of equal status.The free women who married her own slave lost her freedom, and had her property confiscated, and the slave was killed on the wheel. . . . . .Originally members of different status groups could not contract a marriage. . . . . .Well-marked status—groups within a society, distinguished from one another by rights and disabilities, separated from one another by the absence of freedom of inter-marriage, may, therefore, be considered to be a common characteristic of the mental background and social picture of the Indo-European cultures."[28]

It was a 'common characteristic of the mental background and social picture' of not only of the Indo-European cultures.In fact, social differentiation has been, and is, a characteristic common to all societies, including the most primitive ones.This social differentiation has developed into different degrees of social discrimination or exclusiveness, and taken various forms in different societies.Hutton and Ghurye have given instances also of caste-like elements present in many primitive, tribal and less developed societies outside India.The excerpts given above we have selected only from advanced societies, because the chances of system formation were greater there.

In the instances cited above, we meet almost all the elements that go into the formation of castes.There are strong colour and racial antipathies; taboos regarding human-beings, animals and callings; notions of purity and impurity; restrictions on inter-marriages; hereditary status-differentiation and functionalism; social disabilities and segregation; and even extreme social formations of outcastes comparable, in some respects, at least to the miserable condition of the Indian outcastes.But nowhere these caste like elements of social exclusiveness present in societies outside India developed into an elaborate system of castes.[29] The general tendency for caste like social exclusiveness in other societies was either to melt away into more fluid class distinctions; or this exclusiveness, in its rigidity, remained in the nature of aberrations limited only to a segment of the society concerned.Social exclusiveness elsewhere lacked that motivative force, unity of purpose,

organization, coordination, thrust and propulsive force that welded the Indian castes into an elaborate and all embracing caste system.

Caste as a System

A system is qualitatively different from a casual or unintentional get-together or assortment of factors or forces.It is what distinguishes philosophy, a religion or science from an unintegrated mass of doctrines, tenets or data.It is what distinguishes an army from a rabble, as it involves organization, arrangement, method and considered principles of procedure.Above all, a system presumes a direction, a plan, a purpose, an objective, towards the fulfilment of which the functioning of the different parts of the system is coordinated and harmonized.As soon as a person loses his urge and will to live and survive, the working balance between his nervous, circulatory, respiratory and digestive apparatuses, etc., which maintains the body as a, functional whole, is disturbed, and he is on the way to his finale.Moreover, a system has its own cumulative power, thrust, momentum and grip.

Whereas, in other societies, the number of distinct hierarchical layers or stratum could be counted on one's fingers, the number of well-defined Indian sub-castes is well over 3,000.And, all these sub-castes were meticulously arranged in a hierarchical social pyramid in which the social grade of each group and individual was fixed permanently by birth.Each layer in this social pyramid was superior in caste status (i.e. virtually in social status) to all the layers below it, and lower in caste status to all the others above it, irrespective of their political and economical position.Even the Brahmins at the top of the pyramid and the unapproachables at its bottom were graded among their own ranks.The privileges, disabilities, obligations and duties, i.e. practically all aspects of social behaviour, of each sub-caste were regulated by fixed rules and codes.These sub-castes were, by and large, endogamous groups, and they worked sedulously to isolate themselves from each other in other social matters too.Mutual exclusiveness was caused predominantly not by social, but by ritualistic factors.[30] Ritual barriers are absolutely essential for caste[31], and the caste order is orientated religiously and ritually to a degree not even partially attained elsewhere.[32] Such factors as personal endowments, wealth, political power, colour and racial prejudices, and even taboos, which determined the hierarchical set-ups in other societies, were not the final determinants of the Indian Caste hierarchy, though these did contribute to its development.Nothing could change the Indian caste hierarchical pattern.Although individuals, groups and sub-castes were in the grip of a continuously downgrading process, there was practically no upward social mobility.Whatever little there was, was only marginal and was exceptionally allowed in the interests of preserving the overall hierarchical structure, and never to its detriment.In short, the Indian caste hierarchy was not a fluid hierarchy of the types based on social prejudices or social grades, which are common enough, but which elsewhere lack integration into an elaborate social philosophy or a rigid social system.The caste system was a hierarchical system with a vengeance.The way its hierarchical stratum were arranged in minutest details in a hierarchical whole; the elaborate caste rules, codes and norms which regulated the application of the hierarchical principle at various sub-caste levels; and the thoroughness with which sanctions were applied by the caste committees or panchayats to enforce these caste rules and norms; showed a unique social phenomenon in human history.In other.words, the caste system had all those elements of arrangement, organization, methods and principles of procedure which distinguish an organic growth from a casual one.

The second main feature of a system, we pointed out, is that it has a purpose, an objective and a plan in view, and the functioning of its different parts is coordinated and harmonized towards the fulfilment of that purpose and plan.It is, in fact, this purpose which sets the direction in which

the system is to move, and helps to coordinate the functioning of its constituents towards that direction.The overriding consideration of the caste system was the preservation of the caste status, primarily of the priestly castes, and to a lesser degree that of those slightly lower to them, in fulfilment of the hierarchical scheme noted above.Towards that end, the economic status was lowered than the caste status, and political power was made subservient to the Brahmin priesthood.[33] The preservation of the caste order became the overriding compulsion of the caste society to such an extent that all liberal and egalitarian social values and movements were either scorched or suppressed.Even purely religious movements, which had in them socially egalitarian seeds or trends, were either engulfed in the caste ideology or distorted to blunt their liberal import.[34]

The functioning of the main elements that characterize Indian castes was directed towards the fulfilment of the supreme purpose, noted above, of the caste system.In fact, the distinctive traits and significance these factors assumed in the Indian context, in contrast to the significance of the role of the same factors in other societies, was due to their getting interlocked in and with the caste system.

"Neither race nor occupation or function is by itself enough to cause a caste system to come into being, or to account for its restrictions on commensality and marriage."[35] Hereditary functionalism does not constitute caste.[36] "Colour and racial exclusiveness have been common enough, but they have nowhere else led to such an institution as caste, and it would be rash to suppose that they could have done so in India of themselves."[37] In the modern world, the racial and colour prejudice is most prominent by contrast among the Negroes and whites of the Southern States of U.S.A."It is no doubt true that separate railway carriages, separate restaurants, even separate townships, are provided for Negroes but no pollution takes place as a result of employing Negro servants, and there is no hard and fast line which is really analogous to a caste distinction between, say, quadroons and octoroons; nor have the social factors which might have tended to produce similar results in India ever succeeded in making Muslims, Anglo-Indians or Europeans into a caste in the Hindu sense; and where Muslims do form a real caste, it is always one which has been converted to Islam from pre-Islamic inhabitants while retaining its original caste organisation."[38] In India, hereditary functionalism assumed special significance because it was used to support a permanent hierarchical caste order.It is not hereditary functionalism that created caste, rather it was the caste system, of which it became a part, that gave hereditary functionalism its own significance in the Indian caste context.Similarly, the racial and colour prejudice between the Negroes and the whites in the U.S.A. is a hard present day reality of life, but the admixture of racial and ethnic stocks in India had taken place on such a scale that no caste can boast of its blood being pure.[39] The actual existence of racial and colour prejudice in the U.S.A. has not led to the formation of castes there, but the myth of the preservation of the non-existent purity of Aryan blood grades set in and augmented the process which led to the formation of numerous sub-castes.This difference is due to the fact that, in the U.S.A. the racial and colour prejudice did not develop into an all embracing Varna Ashrama Dharma, or a system of socio-religious exclusiveness; in India it did.

Restrictions on connubium and commensalism are the most outstanding features of the caste hierarchy.These restrictions are, in fact, part and parcel of a general principle of purity and impurity "on which the entire system depends."[40] It is not to our purpose to go into the various hypotheses which trace the genesis and working of this notion of purity and impurity to the

beliefs in taboos, *mana,* soul-stuff and magic etc.[41] What is pertinent for us is that the beliefs in taboos, *mana,* soul-stuff and magic were current in many societies, but nowhere these led to the formation of castes, much less a caste system."No doubt, ideas of magic, *mana,* taboo and soul-substance were no wanting among the Indo-European themselves.Parsi priest; have to undergo elaborate ceremonies of purification, and while, in state of purity must eat no food cooked and drink water drawn by any one but a man or woman of the priestly class."[42] "With Parsis eating and drinking are religious rites."[43] "The *mana* principle appears in the Buddhist religion as *iddht* and in Islamic beliefs as *kudrat*."[44] "It is not suggested that the caste system has developed from ideas of soul-stuff, *mana,* magic and taboo noted above; only that without these ideas it could not have developed.If these ideas alone were enough, one might expect to see a caste system in every island from the Nicobars to Easter instead of only in India."[45] Not only that.We have seen, more than mere ideas or notions, a fairly well developed social phenomenon of untouchability in the cases of the Pagoda slaves of Burma and of *Eta* in Japan."The untouchability in Burma is obviously based on taboo."[46] What was peculiar to India was that these notions of taboos, *mana,* etc., were systematized by Hindu priests and law-givers into an elaborate system of social philosophy Varna-Ashrama, Dharma, rules and norms, which, in turn, became the all pervasive ideological basis of the caste system.In fact, these rules and norms were a part of a wider hierarchical cosmic principle which graded gods, animals, food, drinks, vegetables and many more things of common use into higher and lower categories in terms of their preconceived grades on intrinsic purity and impurity.Similarly, restrictions on intermarriages are a common feature of many societies.But, in class societies the prohibition on intermarriage was not one of taboo so much as one of mere social prejudice, while there was no commensal taboo as in India.[47] In addition to the commensal taboos, what further complicated the connubial restrictions in India was that these were linked with religious sanction and Dharma.In other words, the connubial restrictions as a *Dharma,* became a part of that complex what is called the Indian caste system.And it is this religious integration into the caste system which made the Indian Connubial restrictions more exclusive and rigid than the restrictions on inter-marriage elsewhere."Among classes who marry among themselves, marriage outside caste is prevented by sentiment and not by hard and fast rules.Marriage outside the class in Europe might be rare and invalid, but in India, if it is contracted outside the caste, it is a sacrilege."[48]

It is not only restrictions on intermarriages that were sanctified by religion and Dharma.Also, it is not only religious sanction and Dharma that alone made the Indian caste system the Gordian knot it is.Of this, we will see later.What we want to point out here is that the Indian caste system was no ordinary system.Its constituents were interdependent and interlocked both horizontally and vertically in the social fabric.Within the sub-caste, each constituent of the system (e.g. hereditary functionalism, restrictions regarding commensalism and connubium, pollution, ritualistic taboos, religious sanction and Dharma, etc.) tied its own caste-knot around the-individual; and the several caste-knots so made by the different constituents multiplicated caste exclusiveness and rigidity, because all these served the same overall purpose of the caste system.Individuals bound in such manner joined together to form the sub-caste which, may be called the horizontal network of the caste system.The sub-castes, so made, were further interlocked in a vertical network of similarly constituted sub-castes, arranged in a hierarchical structure of higher and lower sub-castes.It was, again, not a simple hierarchical system based on one or two factors.Here the hierarchical principle was reinforced by a variety of supposed grades of intrinsic purity or impurity inherent in individuals and groups of human beings; in trades, occupations and professions; in articles of food, drink, and of common use; in graded ritualistic and ethical standards; and in graded Dharmic and religious duties and obligations.As an illustration, we will give only one example; as to how untouchability was graded, as if untouchability as such was not low enough."A Nayar may approach a Nambudri

Brahman, but must not touch him; a Tiyan (toddy-drawer) must remain 36 paces off; a Malayan (i.e. Panen, exorcist basket-maker) must remain 'three or four' Paces farther; a Pulayan (cultivator and untouchable) must keep 96 paces from a Brahman.A Tiyan must not come within 12 paces of a Nayar; a Malayan (Panan) must keep 3 or 4 paces farther off, and a Pulayan must still keep his 96 from a Nayar as well as a Brahman." Further, among the untouchables themselves; "A Panan may approach but not touch a Tiyan, but a Pulayan must not even approach a Panan."[49]

The intricate entanglement of the warp and woof of the hierarchical Indian caste system hardly needs further comment.It amply illustrates how wrong it is to evaluate the role of the various factors that contribute to caste formation by viewing them in isolation without taking into consideration the enhanced significance their role assumes when placed in the context of the Indian caste system as a whole.

The third prominent feature of a system, we mentioned, is that the system was a whole acquires much greater grip, momentum and thrust, a greater total resultant force, than the leverage exercised individually by its uncoordinated constituents.The primitive beliefs in taboos, *mana,* soul-stuff, magic purity and impurity never came near (not even where these gained some dimension as in the case of the Pagoda slaves of Burma and *Eta* of Japan) to becoming that propulsive, enveloping and binding force that these became when these were coordinated and systematized into a code and Dharma by the Hindu priests and law-givers.The same is true regarding hereditary functionalism and restrictions on commensalism and intermarriages.As regards its sweep and grip the caste system became a self-expanding downgrading process which gradually enveloped large section of the Aryan people themselves, including the Kshatriyas.It did not spare the Aryan women folk, not even those of the Brahmins.[50] It covered the entire Hindu society, excepting the Sadhus and mendicants, etc., who had broken off all worldly connections.There could be no Hindu without being a member of one caste or the other.[51] A conquered barbarian territory was 'ritually pure' only when the king established the four castes. [52] There were ritualistic barriers against tribes not affiliated with the Hindu association.They were magically defiled and no Hindu temple was open to them.[53] There were codified sanctions against the breach of caste norms and rules, and the caste-committee or panchayat of each caste was itself the jealous guardian for enforcing these sanctions.These caste rules were so elaborate and systematized in such detail that there was no escape from these for any group or individual.Wilson has graphically described how these rules regulated in minutest details the life of an individual from birth to death.[54]

Footnotes:

1. " The term 'caste' is used in this article to denote social categories in which social exclusiveness assumes extremely rigid forms, especially in relation to commensal and connubial restrictions.
2. Hutton, J. H.: *Caste in India,* pp. 133, 183, 188.
3. Ibid., Chap; IX.
4. Ghurye, G.S.: *Caste and Race in India,* Chap. 6.
5. Cited by Sykes, W.H.: J.R.A.S., Vol. 6, No. XII, p. 410.
6. Risley cited by Hutton, pp. 135-6.
7. Risley, cited by Hutton, p. 136.
8. Hutton, p. 136.
9. Hutton, 136; Ghurye, p. 142.
10. Hutton, pp. 140-1.

11. Ibid., p. 142.
12. Cited by Hutton, p. 141.
13. Hutton, pp. 141-2.
14. Hutton, p. 144.
15. Ibid., p. 145.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid., p. 147.
18. Dhella, M.N.: *Zorostrian Civilization,* pp. 18, 195, 296.
19. Senart, Emile; *Caste in India,* p. 114.
20. Ghurye, p. 144.
21. Senart, p. 114.
22. Douglas, R.K.: Society *in China,* pp. 120-1.
23. Litouratte, K.S.: *The Chinese History and Culture,* pp. 579-580.
24. Ping-Ti-Ho: *The Ladder of Success in Imperial China,* p. 7.
25. Ghurye, p. 146.
26. Hutton, p. 147.
27. Hutton, p. 148.
28. Ghurye, pp. 157-9.
29. Hutton, p. 183.
30. Max Weber: *The Religions of India,* p. 106.
31. Ibid., p. 35.
32. Ibid., p. 44.
33. Ghurye, pp. 57, 58, 90-1; Max Weber, p. 60.
34. *Sikh Revolution,* Chap. V.
35. Hutton, p. 173.
36. Ibid., p. 139.
37. Ibid., p. 175.
38. Hutton, p. 174.
39. Muir, J.: J.R.A.S. (1866), pp. 280-1; Senart, pp. 103-4; Gurye, pp. 119-120, 124-5; Bhandarkar, D.R.: *I.A.,* Vol. 40 (1911). p. 37.
40. Ketkar, S.V.: History of Caste in India, p. 121.
41. Hutton, pp. 185-189.
42. Roy, cited by Hutton, p. 189.
43. Modi, cited by Hutton, p. 189.
44. Roy and Abbot, cited by Hutton, p. 189.
45. Hutton, p. 188.
46. Ibid., p. 145.
47. Ibid., p. 137.
48. Ketkar, S.V.: *History of Caste in India,* p. 117.
49. Jonathan Duncan, quoted by Hutton, p. 79.
50. Sikh Revolution, pp. 8-14.
51. Max Weber, p. 29.
52. Ibid., p. 7.
53. Ibid., p. 13.
54. Hutton, pp. 90-1.

CHAPTER II

Three Facets of the Caste System

We are not attempting to detail here all the different features of caste as such. What we want to point out are the three main factors (i.e. Caste ideology, Bhahmins and the Caste society) responsible for constituting and consolidating the castes into the Indian Caste System.

1. The Caste Ideology

The fundamental assumption of the caste ideology is that 'Men were not—as for classical Confucianism— in principle equal, but for ever unequal.[1]' They were so by birth, and 'were as unlike as man and animal.[2] It has to be clearly grasped that this inequality between man and man was in principle, and not merely the result of a gap between man's aspirations and practice that is the common failing of all human organizations, religious or social. Permanent human inequality by birth is the *summum bonum* of the officially declared Brahmanical ideology. This forms the very basis of its social order. Instead of being akin to a universal father. God Himself was made the author of unequal Varnas. Prajapati created him (the Sudra) as the slave of other castes.[3] Moreover, He was the God of the Aryans only, from whom the Sudras were excluded. 'Everyone cannot obtain this (for the gods do not associate every man), but only an Arya, a Brahmin, or a Kshatriya, or a Vaisya, for these alone can sacrifice. Nor should one talk with everybody (for Gods do not talk with everybody) but only with an Arya.[4] 'Order and rank of the castes is eternal (according to the doctrine) as the course of the stars and the difference between animal species and the human race.'[5] Therefore, the key to the caste system is the pre-eminence given by it to the caste-status; and the key to the pre-eminence gained by the caste-status is the sanction it received from the orthodox scriptures, ritualism, old tradition and custom. The last three also had a religious sanction and sanctity.

(i) *Pre-eminance of Caste Status:* The caste-status comprised social status, but it was something more than what is generally meant by social status. Ordinarily, social status depends upon the personal endowments of an individual or a group, as also on wealth and power. These could be additional adjuncts to the caste-status, but the caste-status retained its primacy even without these. Manu declares that whether learned or not, and even when practising undesirable occupations, a Brahmin is a great divinity.[6] Besides, social status is generally variable. With the loss of political and economical power, status consciousness tends to vanish. Old classes have been replaced by other classes; races have been known to lose their identity; occupations have risen and fallen in the scale of social estimation; and group biases and prejudices have disappeared altogether, or have been replaced by others of different kinds. But, here the caste-status was based on birth and placed above political and economic status. The wealthiest Bania was lower in caste-status than the poorest Kshatriya. The Chaturpatti Hindu king was lower in caste-status than his own priest (Purohit) who was economically dependent upon the prince. Gautama lays down that when a king and a Brahmin pass along the same road, the road belongs to the Brahmin and not to the king.[7] Shivaji, the embodiment of the solitary successful Hindu revolt' against the Muslim political domination, had to go about abegging to the Brahmins for the legitimisation of his sovereignty by them. As late as the beginning of the present century, "the Shanan of Southern India, inspite of the wealth they have

acquireded, have no right to build two-storied houses, to wear gold ornaments, or to support an umbrella."[8]

(ii) *Authority of the Scriptures:* From very remote times, it became the cardinal belief of the orthodox religion that the Veda was 'Aspurshaya'[9] (that it was not the work of man), or that these were self-revealed texts. Had this belief been confined purely to the realm of religion, it would have been quite different. But, it was used as the central pillar on which the super-structure of the Caste system was raised and maintained. The Vedic hymns are, by and large, concerned with sacrifices and ritualism, which served to consolidate the position of the sacerdotal class. These hymns also directly extol the priestly class which, as a caste, became inextricably bound up with caste system. Above all, the authority of the Vedas, and of other scriptures (by linking them with the Vedas), was involved to sanctify and declare inviolable the caste system and its retrograde rules.

The oft-cited Purusha Sukta hymn, which is sung by the Rig Vedic and Yajurvedic priests at the time of their principal ceremonies (as if to emphasize its importance), was regarded as a divine ordinance sanctioning the origin of the four castes.[10] The Veda was declared by Manu to be the direct revelation of God (Sruti),[11] and was to be viewed as the sole source of all knowledge, secular as well divine.[12] 'Throughout the earlier part, and even in the body of the Institutes, the Dharma Sastra , of Manu is spoken of as the inspired exponent of the Vedas, almost of equal (p. 18 et al.) authority with them; but in the last chapter of this book is a passage (p. 359, 109) wherein the Vedan-gas, Mimamsa, Nyaya, Dharma Sastras, and Puranas are called the extended branches of the Vedas.'[13] "All outside it (the Vedas), or not derived from it in the Dharma Sastra by the perfect wisdom of Manu, was human, vain, and false. Unbelief in the Veda was deadly sin; and however, in reliance upon heretical books, questioned the authority of the revealed Veda and of the Dharma Sastra was to be treated as an atheist, and driven from the society of the Virtuous.'[14] 'Rejection of the authority of the Vedas, transgression of the precepts of the Sastras, and a universal lawlessness, lead to a man's own destruction. The Brahmin who regards himself as a Pandit, who reviles the Vedas, and is devoted to useless logic, the science of reasoning, who states arguments among virtuous men, defeats them by his syllogisms, who is constant assailant and abuser of Brahmans, a universal doubter and a fool, is to be regarded as a child; people regard that man as a dog. Just as a dog assails to bark and to kill, so much men set to wrangle and to overthrow the sacred books.'[15] 'Abandoning fruitless reasoning, resort to the Veda and the Smriti.'[16] 'One of the few essentially binding duties of Hindu "faith" is not—at least not directly—to dispute their authority (i.e. of the sacred books).[17]

Manu did not rest content with establishing the divine authority of the Vedas, his own work, and that of other scriptures. His object thereby was to sanctify the caste system and the position of the Brahmins. So he decreed that "the teaching of a Brahmin is authoritative for 'man' because the Veda is the foundation for that."[18]

That the authority of the scriptures was used to sanctify the caste-system and other retrograde social laws, hardly needs any elaboration. This point has been the main burden of Manava and other Dharma Sastras. Their inimical approach towards the Sudras, Vaishyas and women is crystal clear. Manu claimed that Brahma enacted the code of laws, and taught it to him (Manu), Manu taught it to Bhrigu, and the latter would repeat it to the sages.[19] He further declared that the soul of one who neglected his caste-duties might pass into a demon.[20] The Gita preaches that, 'according to the classification of action and qualities the four castes are created by me. Know me, non-actor and changeless, as even the author of this.'[21] It further sanctifies hereditary

functionalism thus: "Congenital duty, O son of Kunti, though defective, ought not to be abandoned."[22] According to one passage in the Mahabharata, 'As cisterns for cattle, as streamlets in a field, the Smriti (law-code), is the eternal law of duty, and is never found to fail.'[23] The Dharma-Sutras enjoined that a king has to rely on the Vedas and Dharma Sastras for carrying out his duties."[24]

Whether the Purushua hymn is a later addition or an interpolation, and whether its interpretation is correct or not, and whether the sanctity derived for the Dharma Sastras and other post-Vedic scriptures from the Vedas is real or fake, is beside the point. What one cannot get away from is the hard reality that the scriptural sanctity attached to the Dharma Sastras and the like texts, and to the inviolability of the laws laid down by them, became a cardinal part of the religious belief of Brahmanism, old and new. The Brahmins came to monopolize the interpretation of these scriptures.[25] The Brahmanical interpretation of these scriptures became the main prop for sanctifying and maintaining the caste-system and social reaction. Above all, the Brahmanical interpretation of the scriptures in this respect was neither challenged for thousands of years, nor a single voice raised against it from within orthodoxy. Anybody who dared to differ from the Brahmanical view was declared a heretic, and this so-called heresy was the main plank for combating Buddhism and other liberal trends controverting or doubting the validity of the caste-system or Brahmanism. 'To acknowledge the authority of the Vedas, as demanded of the Hindu, means, *fides implicita* in a more fundamental sense than that of Catholic Church, and precisely because no saviour is mentioned whose revelation could have substituted new law for old.'[26] And, 'Brahmanical and caste power resulted from the inviolability of all sacred law which was believed to ward off evil enchantment.'[27]

(iii) *Hindu Dharma:* In the ever-changing scene of the shifting importance of deities, creeds, racial antipathies and other considerations, there was in Hinduism one factor which was persistent. It was the concept of Hindu Dharma. This concept was synonymous, or very closely interwoven, with the social order of Brahmanism, viz., the caste system (Varna Ashrama Dharma). Like the banks of a stream, this Varna Ashrama Dharma determined the limits within which the current of Indian social life must flow and the direction in which it must move. So long as this current remained confined within the prescribed social limits of the caste system, all varieties and sorts of dogmas, ideas, faiths, creeds, customs and practices were tolerated and allowed to be a part of the Hindu Dharma. But any threat to the frame-work of the social order was frowned upon, condemned, or combated against, depending upon the seriousness of the threat posed.

The concept of Hindu Dharma was the main plank for fighting heresies like Buddhism and Jainism. But what Brahmanism was concerned with was not the divergence from the Vedic religion and practice, because Neo-Brahmanism itself was the result of such a variation in belief and practice. It had virtually broken away from the old Vedic religion. 'Vedas contain nothing about the divine and human affairs fundamental to Hinduism.'[28] The Vedas rather defy the *dharms* of Hinduism.[29] In fact, it is such a get-together to fluid religious ideas, beliefs, cults, etc., that 'at the present time it is next to impossible to say exactly what Hinduism, is, where it begins and where it ends. Diversity is its very essence. .[30]

As such, what was really at stake was not the religious doctrines and beliefs, but the orthodox social order, i.e. the caste system of the Varna Ashrama Dharma as it was called. 'In contrast to the orthodox sects, the heresy of the theophratries consists in the fact that they tear the individual away from his ritualistic duties, hence from the duties of the caste of his birth, and thus

ignore or destroy his *dharma*. When this happens the Hindu loses caste. And since only through caste one can belong to the Hindu community, he is lost to it.'[31]

The above view is further supported by the fact that the hostility of Brahmanism towards different heretic sects has varied almost in direct proportion to the effective threat they posed, not so much to the orthodox creed as such, but to the caste system. From the purely theological point of view, Jainism was no less heretic than Buddhism, but the Jains suffered far less persecution than the Buddhists. It was so because, 'if the necessity arose, Jainism was not unwilling to admit a god of popular Hinduism to this galaxy. Besides, it was also not opposed to the theory of caste. It was thus very much less hostile and more accommodating to Hinduism than other heterodox systems. . . . . The result of this spirit of accommodation was that Jainism has survived in India till today, whereas Buddhism, its twin sister, had to look for habitation elsewhere.'[32] Also, when Buddhism itself had ceased to be a serious challenge to the established social order. Lord Buddha was included in the list of Vishnu's Avtaras, although Buddhism had by no means compromised, even at that period, its essential tenets.

It is significant that Saivism, which had been established throughout India in the third century B.C.[33] (and was the predominant religion in the 7th and the 8th centuries[34] or shared even honours in popularity with Vaishnavism)[35] but which did not stress the observance of caste,[36] and showed comparative independence from Brahmins and Brahmanism, got steadily pushed into the background by Vaishnavism, which was liberal in accepting the caste system and the Brahmins as its ministers.

The above hypothesis also helps us to explain why Brahmanism, which had all along been very particular about sex morality and even upheld celibacy as an ideal, could put up with the Sakatas, with their obscene practices, but rejected the highly ethical Buddhists. It also explains why the doors of Vedic religion, which were closed to Sudras and women so long as they remained in the social field, were opened to them if they became sophists or mendicants, i.e. when they cut themselves away from the general society and their status ceased to be of any consequence to the social order.

It is not our aim to reduce the interpretation of various socio-religious developments in India in terms of a simple formula. We only seek to emphasize that the consideration of preserving the orthodox social order (the caste system) was supreme in determining the direction and development of even the religious systems. This view is further supported by the pattern of assimilation of alien elements into Hinduism. The motivation on the part of those assimilated, whether tribes, classes, sects, or nobles, was the legitimation of their social and economic situation.[37] The precondition for their assimilation was the adoption by them of the Neo-Brahmanical social customs and usages. Two aspects of this process of assimilation are noteworthy. First, both the motivation and the conditions for accepting outsiders had not much to do with religion as such; these were primarily social in their nature. Secondly, the more one accepted the anti-social restrictions regarding occupations, contact, table-community and widow-remarriage, and adopted customs such as endogamy and child-marriage, higher the status one got in the orthodox social order.[38] In other words, conformity with the caste-system was the central criterion for admission to the Hindu-Dharma. The assimilated races, tribes or nobles, found their place only as members of some caste or as new castes.

(iv) *Custom, Ritualism and ceremonialism'.* Custom, ceremonialism, and ritualism do not lag behind in claiming sanction of the sacred scriptures. Custom, says the code of Manu, is transcendent law. "The bridge between speculation on the one hand, and ritual and custom on the other, is not so long in India as it is with us. Both disciplines claim to be founded on the Veda, with nearly the same justice in either case."[39] The Vedas and the Brahmanas, in fact, concentrate upon sacrifice and ritual. Even the Upanisads are a mixture of philosophy, Mantras and ritualism. The importance attached to custom and rituals may be gauged from the fact that a separate body of literature, the Griyasutras (which are, of course, not Mantras), deals almost entirely with these. In the Brahmanas it is the sacrifice that is god-compelling.[40] 'By sacrifice', says the Taittriya Brahmana, 'the gods obtain heaven."[41] According to Atharva Veda, should sacrifice cease for an instant to be offered, the gods would cease to send us rain, to bring back at the appointed hour Aurora and the sun, to raise and ripen our harvests, because they would no longer be inclined to do so and also, as is sometimes surmised, because they could not any longer do so.[42]

The hymns of the Rig Veda take quite a strong line towards the omission of ceremonial obligations. "Indra, who is the slayer of him, however strong, who offers no libations."[43] "The hostile man, the malicious enemy, who pours out no libation to you, O Mitra and Varuna, plants fever in his own heart.[44] "Slay every one who offers no oblations. . . . . ."[45] ". . . the sacrifice shall divide the spoils of the unsacrificing."[46] On the other hand, even the thief, the sinner, or the malefactor, who wishes to sacrifice, is a good man.[47] Hence, the assertion of Manu that a number of Kshatriya races sank among men to the lowest of the four castes on account of their omission to perform holy rites and to see the Brahmins.[48] Perfection, we are told in the Markandeya Purana, can only be attained by the man who does not deviate from the duties of caste.[49] Similarly, children, although the offsprings of a couple in the same caste, were likely to forfeit their caste-status if the obligatory ceremonies were neglected. A special term Vratyas was used to distinguish them from others.[50]

The path of action (Karma-marga), one of the three recognised paths of attaining salvation, which was emphasized by the Vedas and the Brahmanas, was the path of doing mainly prescribed duties of rituals. It was the most widespread of the three, paths. Ritualism was not confined to the religious sphere; it governed all aspects of the life of an individual and circumscribed his out-look and action.

The great importance attached to religious and ceremonial observances enabled the priestly class to entrench itself in the social system to an extent wholly unknown elsewhere. Even in the Rig Vedic time, the presence of a priest was considered an important condition for the efficiency of the ceremonial. Upanayna Ceremony was made absolutely obligatory for the first three castes. Unless performed by the prescribed age, the individual lost his caste. Thus, in addition to the right by birth, initiation, which was called rebirth or second birth, was the door by which one entered the Aryan family. The key to this door was placed in no other hand than that of the Brahmin, because he alone had the right to initiate.

All roads lead to Rome. Ritualism, ceremonialism, and custom also converged towards entrenching the caste order and social reaction. Mutual exclusiveness was predominantly caused not by social, but by ritualistic factors;[51] and "The essential concepts of pollution, commensality and endogamy are ritual rather than economic in nature."[52] Ritual barriers were absolutely essential for caste.[53] 'The caste order is orientated religiously and ritually to a degree not even partially attained elsewhere."[54] That territory only was ritually pure where had been established the four castes.[55] As

already noted, the dharma, which hinges on the ritualistic duties of one's caste, 'is the central criterion of Hinduism."[56]

(v) *Pollution:* The notions about pollution, of which the taboo on food is just one aspect, played the biggest role in extending the caste system and in projecting it in its day to day operation. It has been mentioned that colour-prejudice and racial hatred, perhaps, were responsible for lowering the status of the Sudras. But it was not just that. They were considered to be impure by their very birth as Sudras. Their mere presence defiled the air. The inherent impurity in them could not be shaken off by any means. The story of Matanga, a Sudra, given in the Epic, well illustrates the approach of the caste ideology towards the Sudras. Matanga does penance for centuries to regain his lost dignity. Indra on his throne is moved and promises him exceptional favours; but the one of rise to a higher caste, which the penitent solicited, was impossible. 'Thousands and millions of successive births are necessary to obtain the ascent from a lower to a higher caste', replies Indra.[57] It was, thus, the notion of inherent pollution or impurity which was mainly responsible for stiffening and making permanent the social exclusiveness against the Sudras.

The concept of pollution did not remain confined to the Sudras. As it originated in the fancy of Brahmins and was not subject to any principle, it was diversified and extended in many ways and directions. Human-beings, animals, vegetables, articles of food and of daily use, occupations, etc., were graded in an arbitrarily fixed scale of comparative purity and impurity. What is still worse, this gradation was made an instrument for fixing the social position of individuals and groups in the caste society. The idea of pollution associated with the after-effects of child-birth and the flow of blood at the time of the monthly period of women had much to do with the undermining of their social status. The peasants, who comprised the majority among the Vaisyas, were downgraded simply because ploughing involved the killing of worms. In the classical literature 'the Vaisya is, first a peasant.'[58] Arian describes the husbandsman as respected and as having his rights preserved even during a war.[59] But 'in post-classical times and at present the conception of the Vaisya as a "peasant" has completely vanished.[60] He has been, with a few exceptions, pushed to the borderline of the Sudras. 'For a man to lay his hand to the plough or to cultivate vegetables is. . . . . throughout the high castes, considered to entail derogation.[61] Similarly, honoured Vedic professions, -such as those of the tanner, weaver, smith and chariot-maker came to be confined in later days to the Sudras.[62] Castes came to be downgraded because they took to vocations which involved processes or handling of articles considered to be religiously impure. 'The lowest caste strata was considered to be absolutely defiling and contaminating. First, this stratum comprised a number of trades which are almost always despised because they involve physically dirty work: street cleaning and others. Furthermore, this stratum comprised services which Hinduism had come to consider ritually impure: tanning, leather work.'[63] Then there were other castes which, though a trifle higher in the social scale, are for all that not treated with any respect. The barbers and washermen are looked upon as menials because of the unclean things they have to handle. The potters are also a very low class. The five castes of artisans and the manufacturers and vendors of oil are very much looked down upon. The *Mochis* or tanners are so much despised that other Sudras would hardly condescend to give them a drop of water to drink. This feeling of repulsion is caused by the defilement which is presumed to ensue from their constantly handling the skin of dead animals. "And in all cases the nature of taboo is such, of course, that the contagion of polluted occupations contaminates all members of the caste whatever their individual occupation may be, and to an infinite number of generations."[64]

Not only was impurity or defilement believed to be imparted by direct contact, but it was supposed to be contracted indirectly through objects, and in an extreme case even through sight. This is what led to the castes of untouchables, unapproachables and unseeables. There are villages of Brahmins to which all other castes were strictly refused admittance.[65] Impure castes shunned infections contact with non-members as rigidly as the high castes.[66] As already seen, unapproachability also came to be meticulously graded.

There is a proverb that caste is only a question of food.[67] The Santals, a very low caste in Bengal, have been known to die of hunger in times of famine rather than touch food prepared even by Brahmins.[68] general criterion of the social position of the caste of a person was as to which of the higher castes would accept water or food from him.[69] n fact, the notion of pollution in its application assumed innumerable variations and confronted individuals often in their daily life. The grading of professions, crafts and occupations, of which downgrading of some of them is a corollary, was so much an integral part of the caste system that Nesfield goes to the extent of regarding occupation as the centre around which the caste has grown up. The pressing of oil seeds is stigmatised as a degrading occupation in the Code of Manu because it is supposed to destroy life. This seems to have led to the division of the Teli caste into two. The ones who press oil are treated as untouchables, and the Telis who only seel oil will outcaste a member who should venture to press it.[70] It is not our purpose to go into many details. But, it needs to be stressed that the idea of pollution was given a distinct religious significance. It spread a wide network which directly downgraded existing castes, created new ones, and consolidated social differentiation in the caste society by raising religiously (or magically) tinged insurmountable barriers between different castes.

(vi) *The Theory of Avtaras and Karma:* The Avtara theory, or the theory of incarnations or the descent of God, led to important social implications. Social reaction was tagged on to the fair name of the Avtaras and their authority was invoked to confer divine sanction for the caste-order and social reaction. Lord Rama was said to have cut off the head of a Sudra for the sole crime of indulging in religious rites not allowed to his caste.[71] Lord Krishna was supposed to have asserted that he was the creator of Chaturvarnya.[72] The association of the authority of Lord Krishna and Lord Rama, the popular Avtaras of Vishnu, with the caste order and the reactionary social usages gave great support to these institutions. The Shastras and the other Brahmanical religious literature had, no doubt, already claimed Vedic sanction for these. But Vedism had ceased to be a living force in the post-Buddhist period, except as an authority for owning formal allegiance. But, Lord Krishna and Lord Rama, who as Avtaras were thought to have come in the garb of human beings to uphold Dharma, had become living realities for the vast multitudes who worshipped them. Sanction of the caste order by these Avtaras, therefore, gave fresh sanction to this iniquitous social system.

The Karma theory, as applied by Brahmanism, not only explained the caste origin of individuals and provided for 'the coexistence of different ethical codes for different status groups', but it also benumbed the moral sensitiveness of those who came under its spell. It made them blind to the evident immorality of the caste ethics. For, once the premises of this theory were accepted, 'Karma doctrine transformed the world into a strictly rational, ethically-determined cosmos.'[73] The caste situation of the individual was not accidental. He was born into a caste as merited by his conduct in a prior life. 'An orthodox Hindu confronted with the deplorable situation of a member of an impure caste would only think that he has many a great sin to redeem from his prior existence.'[74] This also led to the corollary that a member of an impure caste thought primarily of bettering his future social opportunities in the next birth by leading an exemplary life according to the prescribed duties of the caste in which he was born. In this life there was no escape from the

caste. There was no way to move up in the caste order. 'The inescapable enrolling karma causality is in harmony with the eternity of the world, of life, and, above all, the caste order.'[75] It was, therefore, senseless to think of overthrowing the system. An individual oppressed by the caste order was not left with any hope whatsoever. 'He too can "win the world", even the heavenly world; he can become a Kshatriya, a Brahman, he can gain Heaven and become a god—only not in this life, but in the life of the future after rebirth into the same world pattern.'[76] "Absolute pre-requisite, however, were strict fulfilment of caste obligations in this present life, the shunning of ritually sacrilegious yearning for renouncing caste."[77] The Bhagavata Purana (Book XI, Chap. x) demanded that the followers of Bhagvata, 'forsaking all desires should act in consonance with their castes'.

In such a scheme of Karma-bound society, men were 'for ever unequal'. Thus there was no "natural" order of men and things in contrast to positive social order. There was no sort of "natural law". . . . . All the problems which the concept of "natural law" called into being in the Occident were completely lacking. There simply was no "natural" equality of man before any authority, least of all before a superworldly god. . . . . it excluded for ever the rise of social criticism, of rationalistic speculation, and abstractions of natural law type, and hindered the development of any sort of idea of "human right".[78]

It is not suggested that the Karma theory was formulated necessarily to justify the caste order and caste-ethics. But, there is no doubt that it admirably served the ends of the caste order. Like the scriptures, religious literature and the epics, it was moulded to the extent necessary for the Brahmanical purposes.

The facts enumerated above leave no doubt that the Indian caste ideology was altogether different from the loose bundle or combination of social prejudices and discriminations, such as we meet in the colour and racial bar among the negroes and the whites in the U.S.A., or in the restricted *Jus connubii* among class societies in general and among the mixed races of mulattoes, quadroons and octoroons in particular, or in the notion of impurity attached to pig and swine-herds in Egypt, or in the elements of untouchability that we find concerning the Pagoda slaves of Burma and Etah of Japan. The Indian caste ideology was not a simple ideology. It was an ideological system, wherein social prejudices concerning hierarchy, colour, race, taboos, purity, impurity and pollution etc., were integrated into one whole to serve the overall purpose of the caste system. Towards this end, Hindu scriptural sanction, Dharma, tradition, custom, ritualism, ceremonialism and the theories of 'Karma' and 'Avtaras' were interlinked and coordinated. "To quit the works and duties of (one's) caste. . . . . is a sin."[79] The most heinous crime was to commit an offence against the caste order.[80] The soul of one who neglected his caste-duties might pass into a demon.[81] Dharma came to mean primarily ritualistic duties, and ritualistic barriers between castes are fundamental to the caste system[82] One's Dharma depended upon the Caste into which the individual was born[83] and was indissolubly connected with his caste duties. Hence, for the duties of one's caste, a special term, 'Varnasrama Dharma', was coined. As such, 'Varnasrama Dharma', the ritualistic duties of castes, became the central criterion of Hinduism.[84] By ignoring his ritualistic duties, namely the caste duties, the individual lost both his Dharma and his caste.[85] Significantly, the codes, which laid the legal basis of the caste society, were entitled as Dharm Shastras. In this way, Dharma was, on the one hand, linked to religious duties, and, on the other, to the caste duties, thus forging another link, apart from scriptural sanction, for endowing religious sanctity to the castes and the caste system. This ideology raised social hierarchy to the level of a religious principle by giving it the sanction of Hindu scriptures, Dharma and other constituents of the caste ideology, which also had religious connotation of one kind or the other. This principle of social hierarchy, in its practical application,

was diversified and codified by Hindu law-givers and priests in such great detail as to make the Indian caste system the most elaborate hierarchical social system evolved by human ingenuity. We have seen above how the Hindu Dharma made the caste system rigid and inviolable. In short, the caste ideology, we repeat, was not a simple ideology, It was an ideological system, different constituents of which were indissolubly inter-linked and coordinated with one another to serve one set purpose, i.e. of the caste order. In fact, this ideological system was the ideological base on which the social superstructure of the caste system was reared and maintained. Rather, we may not be wrong in calling the two systems, (the ideological system and the social system—the caste system) two sides of the same coin.

2. Brahmins

The second facet of the caste system were the Brahmins as a caste. Dr. Bhandarkar writes: "There is hardly a class or caste in India which has not a foreign strain in it. There is admixture of alien blood not only among the warrior classes—the Rajputs and the Marathas—but also amongst the Brahmins. Looked at from the antiquarian or ethnological point of view, the claims of either community (Brahmin or Kshatriya) to purity of blood are untenable and absurd."[86] This conclusion is supported by almost all authorities.[87] Now, the preservation of the supposed purity of Aryan blood in the upper classes is the *raison d'etre* for establishing the castes. It was what led to hereditary functionalism and restrictions on connubium and commensalism. A great human conscious effort was needed to arrest the admixture of Aryan and non-Aryan blood and to establish the myth of *Dvijas* or the twice-born. Similarly, a great conscious effort was needed to dethrone Buddhism and its political sway which had lasted supreme for over one thousand years. These developments were the handiwork of Brahmins. In addition, the Brahmins, as a caste, were the all-time standing kingpin of the caste system in more than one way. They were its ideologues as well as the focal point around which the system revolved.

(i) *As Ideologues:* Undoubtedly, the entire non-heretical post-Vedic literature is the handiwork of Brahmins. They are also mainly responsible for the moulding of non-heretical tradition. All through the centuries, no one from within the orthodox society has ever dared to question this remoulding handiwork of the Brahmins.

The literature of the new form of Brahmanism is all the work of, or inspired by, the Brahmin hierarchy.[88] The fifth book of Aitareya Aranyaka is notoriously spurious.[89] According to one view, even Vedic hymns have been arranged in the Brahmanical interests,[90] and Manu Smriti has been shortened and reactionary new laws introduced in the old version.[91] About the present Mahabharata there is no doubt that it is a redaction of Vyasa's original historical poem, edited by Vaishampayanee and reissued a second time with notes and additions by Sauti.[92] It is inferred that the recasting was done to combat Buddhism, because 'adherence to Dharma and obedience to Brahmins is constantly insisted upon throughout the Mahabharata.[93] Bhagvadgita, in its present form, is also supposed to be the work of different hands, because the contradictory postulates that it contains cannot otherwise be explained.[94] It is shown by internal evidence that this sacred book was, in the Brahmanical interests, interpolated with questionable passages. At one place Lord Krishna is said to preach that 'God distributes recompense without injustice and without partiality. He reckons the good as bad if people in doing good forget. He reckons the bad as good if people in doing but remember Him and do not forget Him, whether these people be Vaisya or Sudra or Women. . . . .'[95] At another place, the same Divine Being is made to say that, 'If each member of these castes adheres to his customs and usages, he will obtain the happiness he wishes for, supposing that he is

not negligent in the worship of God, not forgetting to remember Him in his most important avocations. But if anybody wants to quit the works and duties of his caste and adopt those of another caste, even if it would bring a certain honour to the latter, it is a sin, because it is a transgression of the rule.[96] There is apparent contradiction in the concept of what is just and unjust in these two different stands. Obviously, the latter passage attempts to manipulate ethics in the interests of preserving the caste order.

Puranas too were changed. One undoubted proof of interpolations having taken place is that, although these belong to different periods, 'each and all of the Puranas have each and all of them the names of the whole eighteen recorded in the text.[97]

(ii) *As a Pivotal Point:* Almost all authorities agree that ii is the Brahmin caste, which, like a wheel within a wheel, serves as the axis of the caste-system. It is this caste which sets the guidelines of the system, and determines the direction of its course. It is the Brahmins who have profited most from the system and are mainly responsible for its maintenance and furtherance.

We have mentioned that the key to the caste system is the urge for gaining a position of vantage in the caste pyramid. Undoubtedly, the pivot of caste hierarchy is the recognized superiority of the Brahmin caste. Not only that. The Brahmins came to occupy the central position in Hindu society because caste is essentially a social rank; and the social rank of the castes is determined with reference to the Brahmins.[98] The Brahmin 'reception or rejection of water or food is the measure of the status of any given caste in a given place.'[99] All things considered, what governs precedence is the degree of fidelity with which each caste conforms, or professes to conform, to Brahmanical teaching either as regards marriage or external purity, or as regards the occupations or accessory customs. A 'caste such as might arouse much prejudice and contempt may, in spite of all this, be treated with lasting esteem for the sole reason that it displays superior fidelity to the Brahmanic practices.'[100]

The religious and social authority that the Brahmins came to wield is too well known to need any comment. The recognition of the sanctity of the Brahmin Lavite caste became one of the very few binding factors in the chaotic mass of New-Brahmanical dogma and practice. The respect of some of the Hindus for the Brahmins goes so far that, according to a proverb, to be robbed by Sanavriya Brahmins, who had adopted highway robbery as a profession, was regarded as a favour from heaven.[101]

In the political sphere, too, the Brahmins' influence came to be unchallenged. Even the Epic, which is connected with the nobility and hence tends to attribute to kings the supremacy which is claimed by the law books for the Brahmins, concedes the incomparable grandeur of the sacerdotal class. 'Whereas in other countries the rivalry between the nobility and the sacerdotal class generally resulted in the triumph of the temporal power over the spiritual. . . . . in India reverse has been the case. The caste system, with its water tight compartments, has been always adverse to the establishment of a regular political organization, while the great importance attached to religious rites and ceremonial observance has enabled the priestly class to aggrandize itself to an extent wholly unknown elsewhere. The supremacy of the Brahmins has now become one of the cardinal doctrines of Hinduism.'[102]

The role played by the Brahmins, as a caste, in interlinking the caste ideology and the caste society is thus obvious enough.

3. The Caste Society

The third facet of the caste system was the caste society. Ideologies, to be effective on the practical plane, have to develop corresponding institutions. These institutions, once developed, have, apart from their ideological content, a compulsive mechanism and drive of their own. In the case of the caste ideology, the primary social institution which embodied it was the caste society itself as a whole.

The very constitution of the caste society, its every cell, was built on the principle of caste inequality and hierarchy. The position of each sub-caste, and through the sub-caste that of its every individual member, was fixed permanently by birth in the caste hierarchy. Also it was a social structure which was all-inclusive for those within its fold, and all-exclusive for outsiders. As already pointed out, each and every Hindu had to be a member of one caste or the other. Also to be a Hindu, one had to be born as a Hindu. All outside the Hindu fold were either heretics, malechas, or tolerated as untouchable exterior castes. Anyone once converted to Islam, even though forcibly, could not be taken back in the Hindu society, and any one who partook beef even once, he and his progeny were relegated to the exterior caste status, once for all. So much so, a territory where castes were not established, was declared to be impure.

The caste society was equally comprehensive, rigid and inexorable in its operational aspect. Wilson sums up comprehensively the extent to which caste rules govern every member of any caste. Caste, he says, 'gives its directions for recognition, acceptance, consecration, and sacramental dedication, and vice versa, of a human being on his appearance in the world. It has for infancy, pupilage, and manhood, its ordained methods of sucking, sipping, drinking, eating, and voiding; of washing, rinsing, anointing, and smearing; of clothing, dressing and ornamenting; of sitting, rising and reclining; of moving, visiting and travelling; of speaking, reading, listening, and reciting; and of meditating, singing, working, playing, and fighting. It has its laws for social and religious rights, privileges, and occupations; for instructing, training and educating, for obligation duty, and practice; for divine recognition, duty and ceremony; for errors, sins, and transgressions; for intercommunion, avoidance and excommunication; for defilement, ablution, and purification; for fines, chastisements, imprisonments, mutilations, banishments and capital executions. It unfolds the ways of committing what it calls sin, accumulating sin, and of putting away sin; and of acquiring merit, dispensing merit, and losing merit. It treats of inheritance, conveyance, possession, and dispossession; and of bargains, gain, loan, and ruin. It deals with death, burial, and burning; and with commemoration, assistance, and injury after death. It interferes, in short, with all the relations and events of life, and with what precedes and follows life. . . . . '[103]

Adherence to these rules or usages is normally ensured through the caste members of the locality who know each other intimately. The members, through the caste council (Panchayat) or otherwise, become the guardians of the caste rules. And the irony of it is that 'the lower the caste in the social scale, the stronger its combination and the more efficient its organization.'[104] In other words, the lower castes are more prone to tighten their own shackles.

The infringements of caste rules carried their own censures and penalties which were as varied as the caste rules. But, we shall take here only the case of ex-communication from the caste so as to illustrate the inexorable working of the caste mechanism. O'Malley describes the wretched plight of some high-caste persons who had been ex-communicated in Orissa. No priest, barber or

washerman would render them any service, with the result that 'they had long beards matted with irt, their hair hung in long strands and was filthy in the extreme, and their clothes were beyond description for uncleanliness.'[105] Similarly, Abbe Dubois draws an even more graphic picture of the fate of an ex-communicated man. 'This expulsion from the caste, which occurs in cases of breach of customary usage or of some public offence which would dishonour the whole caste if it remained unpunished, is a kind of civil ex-communication which deprives the person, who has the misfortune to incur it, of all intercourse with his fellows. It renders him, so to speak, dead to the world. With the loss of caste, he loses not only his relations and friends, but sometimes even his wife and children, who prefer to abandon him entirely rather than share his ill-fortune. No one dare eat with him, nor even offer him a drop of water.

'He must expect, wherever he is recognized, to be avoided, pointed at with the finger of scorn, and looked upon as a reprobate. . . . A mere Sudra, provided he has some trace of honour and scrupulousness, would never join company nor even communicate, with a Brahman thus degraded.'[106]

The role of the caste ideology and the Brahmins in the development and consolidation of the caste-system is well known. What needs to be emphasized is the important part played by the rigid social framework, i.e. the caste society, in maintaining and entrenching the system. We referred briefly to the fact that each salient element of the caste ideology (caste hierarchy; scriptural sanction; sanctions of Hindu Dharma, ritualism, ceremonialism and custom; the taboos and pollution; caste connubium and commensalism; the theory of Karma etc.) fastened each and every individual of a sub-caste with its own separate ideological strand of human inequality and social exclusiveness. In other words, a member of a sub-caste was bound down not by one or two, but by several ideological bonds of human inequality and social discrimination.[107] If one keeps in view how difficult it has been to erase such social prejudices even where these were operating as a single factor (e.g. as colour and racial prejudice between the whites and the negroes of the U.S.A., or as taboos against the Pagoda slaves of Burma and Etah in Japan, or as endogamy in casteless societies), the improbability of success in cutting the Gordian knot woven by the multiplicative effect of the various factors of the caste ideology becomes quite apparent. And what made the problem of the caste system still more intricate and intractable was that this composite ideology of caste hierarchy and social exclusiveness was fused with every fibre of the social texture of the caste society.

Every individual in the caste society was not only himself entangled by several tentacles of the caste ideology, but he was fastened to other similarly bound individuals to form a horizontal social network within a sub-caste. In fact the caste bonds were the most predominant, if not the only social bonds, the united members of a sub-caste. The operational efficiency with which members of sub-caste severally and jointly as a group (i.e. as a sub-caste) ensured rigid adherence to the caste norms and rules rendered the sub-caste further inflexible in terms of caste. On the top of it, this horizontal social network of each sub-caste was tied vertically, both ideologically (as the ritual[108], the ethical code[109], and the penal code[110] were hierarchically graded) and organisationally, to other similarly constituted higher and lower sub-castes. In short, the social fabric and the caste ideology were interlocked around every unit of the caste society. This is what made the caste system synonymous with the Hindu society. This is what made the Indian caste system, in its ramified power and influence, more rigid and all-pervasive, as compared to caste-like formations elsewhere. In Risley's phrase, the removal of the caste system would be 'more than a revolution; it would resemble the removal of some elemental force like gravitation or molecular attraction.' His statement might appear somewhat graphic, but what he means to convey is substantially correct.

The very structural make-up of the caste-society, and the ideological stranglehold of the caste ideology which compounded its every unit, left little, if any, room for reforming or reconstructing it on egalitarian lines from within. To take only one item, Max Weber has come to the conclusion that "India's caste order formed an obstacle to this (i.e. commensal fraternization) which was insurmountable, atleast by its own forces."[111] Egalitarian values and egalitarian social formations are the anti-thesis of the caste system and the caste society. For the same reason, there was equally little chance for groups or sections of the caste society to do it independently on their own, so long these continued to function as a part of the whole. Of individuals, we need not speak of, as they were automations, whose fate was indissolubly linked with that of the sub-caste to which they belonged. The only practical way open for forming an egalitarian society was to cut off completely from the caste ideology and the caste society and to build anew, outside it and on a new ideological basis.

The impact of capitalist economy, its culture and values, is no doubt, beginning to erode not only the caste but also the caste system itself. It has spread a general awareness of the inequitable nature of this social formation and given rise to several anti-caste movements within the Hindu fold. But, this should not mislead us into assessing movements of the pre-British era, with which we are mainly concerned, in the light of the milieu and forces generated by the Western culture and civilization with which the British rule brought us into contact for the first time. For one thing, the caste system is now up against not mere ideas and ideologies, but against another well-organised political and economic system. It is a remarkable phenomenon of history that although Islam is outstandingly egalitarian, the impact of Islamic rule for centuries together instead of softening the caste rather hardened it. It was probably because Shariatic exclusiveness and politico-religious persecution associated with the Muslim rule prevented the penetration of Islamic egalitarianism outside the Muslim polity. Above all, Islamic egalitarianism relied mainly on its religious appeal and was not organized as a comprehensive political and economic force (i.e. a system) such as capitalism is. Capitalism is not mere an economic set-up. It is associated also with human rights, political democracy and mass education. The preponderance of money values in all walks of life brought about by the capitalist economy and the rational approach emphasized by the western culture and digging deep into religious and caste affiliations, sanctions of Dharma and the scriptures, and notions of taboos and pollution, etc. If the caste system is still proving a hard nut to crack inspite of this onslaught by another stronger system, (supported as it is by such potent factors as money values, political democracy and mass education), it only buttresses our contention that the only feasible way open to build an egalitarian society in the pre-British period was to rear it outside the caste society.

Footnotes:

1. Max Weber, p. 144.
2. Ibid.
3. Mahabharata, XII, 2295, 2297 (Muir, J.: *I.A.,* vol. 6, p. 252.)
4. Muir: *J.R.A.S.* (1866), p. 281.
5. Max Weber, p. 122.
6. Manu. ix, 317, 319.
7. Ghurye, p. 57.
8. Hutton, p. 122.

9. Barth, M.A.: I.A., vol. 23, p. 360; Phear, J.B.: I.A.; . Vol. 4 (1875).
10. Ya'jnik, J.U.: J.R.A.S.B. (1872), pp. 100-102; Phear, I.A., (1875).
11. Phear, *I.A.* (1875), p. 123.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid., p. 124.
14. Ibid.
15. Muir: *I.A.*j vol. 6 (Mbh. xiii, 2194).
16. Ibid (Mbh, xiii, 13463b).
17. Max Weber, p. 26.
18. Ibid., p. 59; Manu, xi, 85.
19. Phear: *I.A.* (1875), p. 123.
20. Manu, xii, 71, 72; Monier Williams: *J.R.A.S.* (1866).
21. Bhagavadgita, iv, 13; Bhartiya, Vol. ii, p. 441.
22. Ibid., xviii, 48.
23. Mbh. xii, 9259 ff; Muir ; I.A., vol. 6, p. 263.
24. Kane, O.V.: History of the Dharma Sastras, vol. 11, Part 1, p. 363; Jackson, A.M.T.: J & P.A.S.B., vol. 3.
25. Manu, i, 88 ff, X, 76-79, 95.
26. Max Weber, p. 28.
27. Ibid., p. 48.
28. Ibid., p. 27.
29. Ibid.
30. Barth, A.: *The Religions of India,* trans. Rev. J. Wood, p. 153.
31. Max Weber, p. 24.
32. Bhartiya, Vol. ii, pp. 425, 450.
33. Kennedy, J: J.R.A.S. (1907), p. 972.
34. Tara Chand: *The Influence of Islam on Indian Culture,* p. 5.
35. *Bharatiya,* vol. ii, pp. 456-458.
36. Ibid., p. 458.
37. Max Weber, p. 18.
38. Hutton, pp. 115, 129; Senart, pp. 51-2.
39. Earth: *I.A.,* Vol. 24 (1895), p. 66.
40. Crooke, W.: E.R.E., Vol. 6.
41. E.R.E., Vol. 6, p. 693.
42. Barth, p. 36.
43. Muir: *J.R.A.S.* (1866), pp. 286-7.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid., p. 287.
46. Ibid.
47. Mbh., xii, 2320, Muir: *I.A.,* Vol. 5, p. 253.
48. Phear: I.A., Vol. 4 (1875), p. 127.
49. Hutton, p. 124.
50. Senart, p. 95.
51. Max Weber, p. 106.
52. Hutton, p. 119.
53. Ibid., p. 35.
54. Ibid., p. 44.
55. Manu, ii, 23.

56. Max Weber, p. 24.
57. Senart, p. 100.
58. Max Weber, p. 77.
59. *Ariaris Indica. I.A.,* Vol. 5 (1876), p. 51.
60. Max Weber, p. 77.
61. Senart, p. 69.
62. Kosambi, D.D.: Bombay Branch of *J.R.A.S*... vol. 22, p. 38.
63. Max Weber, p. 100.
64. Hutton, p. 129.
65. Senart, p. 43.
66. Max Weber, p. 106.
67. Senart, p. 38.
68. Ibid., p. 39.
69. Hutton, pp. 71, 125.
70. Ibid., p. 89.
71. Senart, p. 100.
72. Bhartiya, ii, p. 441.
73. Max Weber, p. 121.
74. Ibid.
75. Ibid.
76. Ibid., p. 122.
77. Ibid.
78. Ibid., p. 144.
79. Bhagavadgita, XVIII, 47, 48.
80. Crooke: *E.R.E*... Vol. 6, p. 696.
81. Monier Williams,: J.R.A.S. (1866), p. 145; Manu, XII. 71, 72.
82. Max Weber, p. 35.
83. Ibid., p. 25.
84. Max Weber, pp. 24-25.
85. Ibid.
86. Bhandarkar, D.R.: LA., Vol. 40 (1911), p. 37.
87. Muir, J.: U.R.A.S. (1866), pp. 280-1; Senart, pp. 103-4; Ghurye, pp. 119-20, 124-125.
88. Crooke, W.: *E.R.E.,* Vol. 6, p. 695.
89. Barth: *I.A.,* Vol. 23, p. 360.
90. Albrecht Weber: *I.A.,* Vol 30, pp. 268-277.
91. Datta, B.N.: *Journal of Bihar & Orissa Research Society.* Vol. 27.
92. Vaidya, C.V.: The *Mqhabharata, a Criticism,* p. 7.
93. Ibid., pp. 12-13.
94. Utgikar, U.C.: *I.A.,* vol 47, pp. 1-8.
95. Alberuni, vol. i, p. 104.
96. Bhagvadgita, xviii, 47, 48.
97. Sykes, W.K.: J.R.A.S.. Vol. 6, p. 445.
98. Max Weber, p. 30; Senart, pp. 18-19.
99. Hutton, p. 71.
100. Senart, p. 85.
101. *Ibid.,* p. 36.
102. Gait, E.A.: *E.R.E.,* Vol. 3, p. 236.
103. Hutton, pp. 90-91.

104. Gait, *E.R.E.,* Vol 3, p. 239; Hutton. p. 99.
105. Hutton, pp. 95-96.
106. Senart, p. 71.
107. Hutton, pp. 189-190.
108. Ghurye, pp. 45, 46.
109. Max Weber, p. 144.
110. Dharma Shastras.
111. Max Weber, p. 38.

CHAPTER III

The Caste System and the Sikhs in the Period of Ideological Ascendancy

The more lasting, hence more important, achievement of the Sikh movement was that it broke away completely not only from the caste, as such, but also from the caste system and the caste society. In this chapter we would discuss this problem in detail.

1. The Caste Ideology

The Sikh Gurus directly condemned caste and caste ideology. Guru Nanak called caste ideology as perverse. "According to the Hindus, foul is the ablution of the Chandal, and vain are his religious ceremonies and decorations. False is the wisdom of the *perverse;* their acts produce strife."[1] "The Vedas have given currency to the myths that make men reflect upon (human values of) good and evil;. . . such are the illusions created in man."[2] Further, he aligned himself with the lowliest of the low castes. "There are lower castes among the low castes and some absolutely low. Nanak seeketh their company. What hath he to do with the high ones?"[3] The fundamental hypothesis of the caste is that "Men were not—as for classical Confucianism—in principle equal, but for ever unequal."[4] They were so by birth, and were as unlike as man and animal."[5] The Guru declared: "Call every one exalted; let no one appear to thee low;"[6] "O whom shall we call good or evil, when all creatures belong to Thee."[7]

Moreover, the Sikh Gurus, attacked the pillars, referred to earlier, on which the caste ideology rested.

(i) *Caste-Status:* The motivative power behind the caste system was the upholding of the caste-status of the Brahmin and other high castes. The Guru preached: "O unwise, be not proud of thy caste. For, a myriad error flow out of this pride."[8]

Bhai Gurdas writes that Guru Nanak "made the Dharma perfect by blending the four castes into one. To treat the king and the pauper on equal footing, and while greeting to touch the feet of the other (i.e. regard oneself humble as compared to others) was made the rule of conduct."[9] Thus Guru Nanak did away with not only caste-status consciousness but also with the status-consciousness gap between the rich and the poor. For, far from observing pollution and untouchability, everyone actually touched the feet of everyone else while greeting him. Again, "The four castes were made into one, and castes (Varn) and out-castes (Avarn) regarded as noble. The twelve sects were obliterated and the noble glorious Panth (created)."[10] Here the abolition of caste and sects is linked with the creation of the Sikh Panth. In order to emphasize its significance, Bhai Gurdas repeatedly[11] mentions this achievement. The language used by him (its grammatical construction) makes it clear that he was not repeating a precept enunciated by the Guru in his hymns, but a precept actually practised in the Sikh Panth.

Writing about Guru Gobind Singh, Dr. Narang says: 'Of the five who offered their heads, one was a Khatri, all the rest being so-called Sudras. But the Guru called them Panj Pyaras, or the Beloved Five, and baptised them after the manner he had introduced for initiation into his brotherhood. He enjoined the same duties upon them, gave them the same privileges, and as a token of newly acquired brotherhood all of them dined together.

"The Guru's views of democratic equality were much more advanced than the mere equality among his followers could satisfy. In his system, there was no place even for the privileges of the chief or the leader."[12]

(ii) *Scriptural Sanction:* By repudiating the Brahmanical scriptures, Sikhism and the Sikh Panth cut itself away from this perennial source and sanction of caste ideology. "The drum of: he Vedas loudly resoundeth for many a faction. Remember Sod's Name, Nanak; there is none but Him."[13] "Since I have embraced Thy feet I have paid regard to none besides. The Purans of Ram (the God of the Hindus) and Quran of Rahim the God of the Musalmans) express various opinions, but I accept none of them. The Smritis, the Shastras, and the Vedas all expound many different doctrines, but I accept none of them."[14]

Since Guru Arjan established *Guru Granth* as the Sikh scripture, the Sikhs have never owned any other.

(iii) *Hindu Dharma:* The concept of Hindu Dharma covered a wide range of beliefs. On the one hand it was linked to Hindu theology, religious beliefs and usages, and on the other hand, to the caste ideology—the Varna Ashrama Dharma. In fact, it became, in practice, the chief vehicle for providing religious sanction to the caste ideology and the caste system. The Sikh Gurus condemned the caste end of this Dharma. Their break from the other end of Hindu Dharma, i.e. Hinduism, is equally clear. It has not been possible to define precisely what Hinduism is. Crooke sums up: "Hinduism thus provides a characteristic example of the primitive unorganised polytheism, and example probably unique among the races of the modern world.

"This is due to the fact that all such action (attempt at organisation) is essentially opposed to its spirit and tradition. . . . . .

"The links that bind together this chaotic mass of rituals and dogmas are, first, the great acceptance of the Veda, representing under this term the ancient writings and traditions of the people, as the final rule of belief and conduct; secondly, the recognition of the sanctity of the Brahmin Levite caste as the custodians of this knowledge and the only competent performers of sacrifice and other ritual observances, though the respect paid to them varies in different parts of the country; thirdly, the veneration for sacred places; fourthly, the adoption of Sanskrit as the one sacred language; fifthly, general veneration for the cow."[15]

The Sikh Gurus repudiated the authority of the orthodox scriptures and tradition, ridiculed the sanctity of the Brahmin Levite class,[16] condemned the veneration for sacred places,[17] and deliberately used the vernacular for the expression of their ideology. Although the Sikh society has continued to abstain from eating beef, Sikhism has not shared that religious veneration -that Hinduism has for the cow. *Panchagaya* (mixture of cow's excretions), for example, is sufficient to obtain the remission of any sin whatever, even when the sin has been committed deliberately."[18] But Guru Nanak says, ". . . . . The cow-dung will not save thee."[19] When the Hindu hill Rajas offered, through their *purohit* to take a vow by their sacred cow as a token of their guarantee for abiding by their undertaking. Guru Gobind Singh is reported to have replied. "Leave aside this cow, it is only a dumb animal."[20] Again, when the Sikhs under Banda Bahadur were besieged in the village of Gurdas Nangal, and were reduced to extreme conditions: "The Sikhs were not strict observers of caste, they slaughtered oxen and animals and, not having any firewood, ate flesh raw."[21] These

warriors are remembered as heroes of Sikh history, whereas partaking of beef, under whatever circumstances, would have reduced a Hindu permanently to the status of an untouchable.

Thus, the Sikhs without doubt cut off all those links, which according to Crooke, bind one to Hinduism. Besides, this, the Sikh Gurus completely rejected the sectarian Hindu gods and goddesses, Avtaras, ritualism and ceremonialism, idol and temple worship, pilgrimage and fasts, Sanskrit scholasticism, etc. If all these concepts and institutions were subtracted from Hinduism, no essential residue is left which Hinduism can call all its own.

The main plank of Sikhism is uncompromising monotheism and the methodology of Name as the sole means of achieving His Grace and God realization. Excepting these two fundamentals, Sikhism is not wedded to any particular dogma or philosophy. All other beliefs and practices attributable to Sikhism are only subsidiary or contributory. The belief in one universal God is shared by the mystics the world over. There is nothing peculiarly sectarian (i.e. Hindu or Muslim) about it. If anything, this concept of one universal God, and the passionate devotion towards Him as a means of mystic realization, came to be emphasized much earlier in Christianity and Islam than in India. And the emotional heights that this devotional approach reached among the Muslim saints is hardly to be matched elsewhere. Therefore, Sikhism, in these respects atleast, can be said to be nearer Christianity and Islam than Hinduism.

The point we want to make clear is that by cutting itself away from Hinduism, Sikhism delinked itself from that aspect of Hindu Dharma also which was, in day to day action, the main vehicle for providing religious sanction to the Varna Ashrama Dharma. "In contrast to the orthodox sects, the heresy of the theophratries consists in the fact that they tear the individual away from his ritualistic duties, hence from the duties of the caste of his birth, and thus ignore or destroy his *dharma*. . . . . Dharma, that is ritualistic duty, is the central criterion of Hinduism."[22] Rather, the Sikh Gurus issued their own new version of Dharma, which was, atleast as far as caste was concerned, the antithesis of the Hindu Dharma. Guru Nanak "made the Dharma perfect by blending the four castes into one, whereas, in Hinduism , severance from the duties of the caste into which an individual was born led to the abrogation of his Dharma.[23]

(iv) *Pollution:* The last important element of caste ideology we need take note of is the theory of pollution. The notions of pollution, of which restrictions on commensalism were a part, were the most wide-spread expression of social exclusive-ness inherent in the caste system. It is indisputable fact that the taboo on food and drink was its most widely practised feature which invited severe penalties. Of the offences of which a caste Panchayat took cognisance, the 'Offences against the commensal taboos, which prevent members of the caste from eating, drinking, or smoking with members of another caste, or atleast of other castes regarded by the prohibiting caste as lower in social status than themselves, are undoubtedly the most important; for the transgression by one member of the caste if unknown and unpunished may affect the whole caste with pollution through his commensality with the rest.'[24] 'If the member of a low caste merely looks at the meal of a Brahmin, it ritually defiles the Brahmin,[25] and 'a stranger's shadow, or even the glance of a man of low caste, falling on the cooking pot may necessitate throwing away the contents.'[26] There are Indian proverbs that 'three Kanaujias require no less than thirteen hearths', and that 'Bisnoi mounted on a camel followed by a score more will immediately throw away his food if a man of another caste happens to touch the last animal.[27] These proverbs may partly be exaggerations, but these do illustrate the extent to which the taboos on food had taken hold of the Indian life.

All the transgressions of the taboos on food and drink were always punished, because, as noted above, not to punish these affected the whole caste with pollution. In some cases the consequences were quite serious and permanent. 'A separate lower caste (the Kallars) has arisen in Bengal among people who had infracted the ritual and dietary laws during the famine of 1866, and in consequence been excommunicated.'[28]

Underlying the taboos on foods and drinks was the general notion of pollution which was very wide in its sphere of application. Because, it was supposed to be incurred not only by partaking of food and drinks under certain conditions, but by the mere bodily contact with persons of 'certain low castes, whose traditional occupation, whether actually followed or not, or whose mode of life places them outside the pale of Hindu society.'[29] Sweeper castes (from which Rangretas came) were one of these. "According to Barbosa, a Nayar woman touched by a Pulayan is outcaste for life and thinks only of leaving her home for fear of polluting her family.[30] This is, of course, an extreme case. 'Castes lower than a Brahmin are generally speaking less easily defiled, but the principle is the same, and contact with castes or outcastes of this category used to entail early steps to remove the pollution.'[31]

The Sikh Guru's stand on this issue is clear from their hymns given below:

If the ideas of impurity be admitted, there is impurity in everything.

There are worms in cow-dung and in wood;
There is no grain of corn without life.

In the first place, there is life in water by which everything is made green.

How shall we avoid impurity? It falleth on our kitchens.

Saith Nanak, impurity is not thus washed away; it is washed away by divine knowledge……

All impurity consisteth in superstition and attachment to worldly things. . . . . The eating and drinking which God sent as sustenance are pure.[32]

"They eat he-goats killed with unspeakable words,
And allow no one to enter their cooking squares.
Having smeared a space they draw lines around it,
And sit within, false that they are,
Saying, 'Touch not! O touch not I.
'Or this food of ours will be defiled.'
But their bodies are defiled; what they do is defiled;
Their hearts are false while they perform ablutions after their meals."[33]

There was no place in Guru Angad's[34] congregation for any of one who observed caste. Members belonging to castes were treated as equal.[35] Only those who were not afraid of Vedic and caste injunctions came to his congregations; others did not.[36] At the Langar (free Kitchen) all ate at the same platform and took the same food.[37] Guru Amar Das went a step further. No one who had not partaken food at his *Langar* could see him.[38] In his *Langar* there were no distinctions of caste. Lines of noble *Gurbhais* (disciples of the same Guru) partook food sitting together at the same

place."[39] Guru Gobind Singh himself drank Amrit, prepared at the baptism ceremony by the five Beloved ones, of whom four were Sudras. Koer Singh, a near contemporary of the Guru, records that the Guru 'has made the four castes into a single one, and made the Sudra, Vaish, Khatri and Brahman take meals at the same place."[40] All the members of the Khalsa Dal, who were drawn from all castes including the Rangretas dined together.[41]

2. Brahmins

The second great pillar of the caste system was the Brahmin caste. The position of the Brahmins in this system is one of the fundamental institutions of Hinduism.[42] It is one of the Brahmins who were the ideologues of the caste system, and the Dharma was the exclusive product of the Brahmins. 'Dharma, that is, ritualistic duty, is the central criterion of Hinduism,'[43] and the Brahmins were the grand-masters of the ceremonies. Even otherwise, the Brahmins were the kingpin of the caste system. The 'whole system turns on the prestige of the Brahmin.'[44] The 'central position of the Brahmins in Hinduism rests primarily upon the fact that social rank is determined with reference to Brahmins.'[45] The Brahmin reception or rejection of water and food is the measure of the status of any given caste in a given place.'[46]

It has been noted that the Brahmins and Khatris, who did not want to forego their privileged caste status, remained aloof when the Khalsa, with complete equality of castes, was created. In the census of 1881, of the total number of Brahmins only about 7000 were Sikhs. The denial of superiority claimed by the higher castes, which distinguished the teaching of Guru Gobind Singh, was not acceptable to the Brahmins.[47] For this reason the number of Sikh Brahmins was very low, even though the Brahmins were the third most numerous caste in the Punjab, outnumbering all but Jats and Rajputs.[48] The proportion of Brahmins in the population 'steadily changes with the prevailing religion. . . . . it gradually decreases from East to West, being markedly smaller in the central and Sikh districts.'[49] These facts are very significant. 'The Brahmins have no territorial organisations. They accompany their clients in their migrations.'[50] Therefore, the insignificant number of Brahmins in the Sikh population corroborates the well known fact that the Sikhs have no priestly class, much less a hereditary Levite caste having vested interests in maintaining a hierarchical structure in the Sikh society.

By eliminating the influence of Brahmins in the Panth, the Sikh society eliminated the kingpin of the caste system from within its ranks. Max Weber has made a clear distinction between Hindu caste and non-Hindu castes. 'There are also castes among the Mohammadans of India, taken over from the Hindus. And castes are also found among the Buddhists. Even the Indian Christians have not quite been able to withhold themselves from practical recognition of the castes. These non-Hindu castes have lacked the tremendous emphasis that the Hindu doctrine of salvation placed upon the caste, as we shall see later, and they have lacked a further characteristic, namely, the determination of the social rank of the caste by the social distance from other Hindu castes, and therewith, ultimately, from the Brahmin. This is decisive for the connection between Hindu castes and the Brahmin; however intensely a Hindu caste may reject him as a priest, as a doctrinal and ritual authority, and in every other respect, the objective situation remains inescapable; in the last analysis, a rank position is determined by the nature of its positive or negative relation to the Brahmin."[51]

The elimination of the Brahmin Levite Caste, or for that matter of any other hereditary Levite class, from the Sikh ranks made a major contribution in eroding the caste system among them. Because, it is the Brahmins who, in addition to being the ideologues and the vital

coordinating link, provided that purpose and direction which are so essential in the formation and holding together of any system.

3. Separate Society

Break from the caste ideology and getting rid of the Brahmin Levite caste were no doubt vital steps forward for undermining the caste system. But these were by themselves not enough. The greatest hurdle was the social framework of the caste system, i.e. the caste society. For, social exclusiveness, inequality and hierarchism were in-built in its very constitution and mechanism. The anti-caste movements could survive only if these divorced themselves from the caste society. Buddhism organized a monastic society outside the caste ranks, but it left its laity to remain in the caste fold. The result was that, when Brahmanism reasserted itself, the lay followers of Buddhism imperceptibly moved into their caste moorings, leaving the order of monks high and dry, in its isolation. Kabir was far more vocal than Baswa, but the Lingayats established a far more separate identity than the Kabir-panthies; because their deviations (e.g. widow-remarriage, burying the dead and admission of all castes) from the caste usages were very radical. Later, the Lingayats tried to tone down their own radicalism. But, inspite of this, they are, perhaps, more an appendage of the orthodox society than its integral part; because even the toned down Lingayatism is not wholly adjustable in the caste order.[52] Chaitanaya, who was more radical with regard to caste restrictions than the Maharashtra Bhaktas, had both low caste Hindus and Mussalmans as his disciples. In the Kartabha sect, which branched out of the Chaitanya School, there is no distinction between Hindus, Mussalmans and Christians. A Mussalman has more than once risen to the rank of a teacher. The members of the sect eat together once or twice in a year.[53] But, "The goal of Chaitanya was lost when his church passed under the control of Brahman Goswamis."[54] The main body of the followers of Chaitanyas reverted to the caste system; and even its Kartabha section, like the Lingayats, does not assert a distinct entity apart from the caste society. The creed of Kabir attained the stage of only a *Mata* (religious path), although of all the denouncers of caste injunctions he was the most vocal. The Kabir-panth remained a loose combination of those who were attracted by Kabir's religious appeal, by some other considerations (e.g. Julahas (weavers), who constituted a majority of the Kabir panthies, might have been attracted to Kabir because he was a Julaha).[55]

These instances leave no doubt that anti-caste movements-like those of Kabir and other Bhaktas, whose departure from the caste ideology had been confined only to the ideological plane, remained still-born in the field of social achievement. And, those like the Lingayats and the followers of Chaitanya, who, under the influence of a teacher, did adopt certain anti-caste usages, but either they did not want to breakaway a completely from the caste society or did not pursue their aim consistently enough, remained tagged to the caste order in one form or the other. The Buddhist monks alone could escape being swallowed by the caste society because they had made a complete break with the caste order both ideologically and organisationally.

Max Weber writes, 'Once established, the assimilative power of Hinduism is so great that it tends even to integrate social forms considered beyond its religious borders. The religious movements of expressly anti-Brahmanical and anti-caste character, that is contrary to one of the fundamentals of Hinduism, have been in all essentials returned to the caste order.

"The process is not hard to explain. When a principled anti-caste sect recruits former members of various Hindu castes and tears them from the context of their former ritualistic duties, the caste responds by excommunicating all the sect's proselytes. Unless the sect is able to abolish

the caste system altogether, instead of simply tearing away some of its members, it becomes, from the standpoint of the caste system, a quasi-guest folk, a kind of confessional guest community in an ambiguous position in the prevailing Hindu Order."[56]

As pointed out by Max Weber, there were only two alternatives before the anti-caste movements: either to abolish the caste system or be engulfed by it. As the abolition of the caste system at one stroke could happen only through a miracle, the only practical way was to form a society outside the caste system and use it as a base for attacking this system from outside. This lesson of Indian history is very important. The contaminative power of the caste system was so great that it did not spare Indian Muslims and Christians,[57] whom the caste society would not re-admit even if they wished it. Then, how could those anti-caste elements or movements escape, whom the caste society was prepared to assimilate and who did not resist assimilation? The Lingayats and the Chatanayites, with all their radical anti-caste innovations, remained as mere sects of Hinduism as mere appendages of the caste society. Of all the anti-caste movements of Indian origin, only the Buddhists and the Sikhs succeeded in establishing a separate identity from the caste society, and both did it by founding a separate church and a separate social organisation. In other words, the chances of success of any anti-caste movement were in direct proportion to the separate identity it established outside the caste society, not only at the ideological level but also at the organizational level. And the foremost prerequisite for this purpose was a clear perception of this aim, a determined will and a consistent effort to pursue it.

The process of founding a separate society (the Sikh Panth) started with Guru Nanak himself. He began his career as a teacher of men with the significant utterance, "There is no Hindu, no Mussalman." He was asked: "There is one path of the Hindus, and the other of that of Mussalmans, which path do you follow?" He replied, "I follow God's path. God is neither Hindu nor Mussalman."[58] Guru Nanak's reply clearly indicates his complete break with his Hindu past. Further, Guru Nanak took clear organisational steps in shaping a Sikh society on separate ideological lines. He established Dharmsalas in far-flung places inside the country and outside it.[59] These Dharmsalas became the centres where his followers could meet together, practise the Dharma of his concept, and spread his message to others. In addition, he appointed select persons (Manjis) for the purpose of furthering his mission.[60] In his life-time, his followers came to be known as Nanak-panthies, and they had their own separate way of saluting each other (Sat Kartar).[61] The greatest single organisational step that Guru Nanak took was to select, by a system of tests, a worthy successor whom he instructed to lead and continue his mission.

Guru Nanak's successors consistently worked to establish the separate identity of the Sikh Church and the Sikh Panth. They consolidated and extended the institutions of Dharmsala (religious centres), Sangat (congregation of Sikhs), Langar (common kitchen) and Manjis (seats of preaching) all started by Guru Nanak. In addition, Guru Angad invented the Gurmukhi script and Guru Arjan compiled the Sikh scripture. With a distinct organization, separate religious centres, a separate script and a scripture of their own, the Sikhs become an entirely separate church and a new society—the Sikh Panth. The main theme of the Vars of Bhai Gurdas, a contemporary of Guru Arjan and Guru Hargobind, emphasizes the distinct character of Sikh religion, culture and society as contrasted to other religions and sects. He links, as already seen, the creation of the Panth with the abolition of castes and sects. Mohsin Fani, another contemporary of Guru Hargobind, also testifies that the "Sikhs do not read the Mantras (i.e. Vedic or other scriptural hymns) of the Hindu, they do not venerate their temples or idols, nor do they esteem their Avtars. They have no regard for the Sanskrit language which, according to the Hindus, is the speech of the angels."[62]

There were Muslim converts to the Sikh faith but their number was very limited. If nothing else, the fear of death penalty for apostasy prescribed by the Shariat, and which the Muslim rulers of the land were ever ready to impose, was alone enough to prevent their large scale conversions. The Sikh Panth had, therefore, to draw its recruitment almost entirely from the Hindu society. This was also not an easy task. As we have seen how difficult it was to wean away people from their caste moorings and lead them to an egalitarian path. It had to be slow and gradual process, but the successive Gurus stuck to it without deviation until Guru Gobind Singh decided that the movement had reached a stage when it was necessary to create the Khalsa.

The creation of the Khalsa was the acme of the Sikh movement. The Sikhs were militarised not only to fight religious and political oppressions, but also to capture political power for an egalitarian cause. In fact, the capture of political power became, as will be seen, the chief instrument for demolishing the hold of the caste system among the Sikhs. However, what is immediately relevant to our subject is the fact that the Khalsa made a clean break with the caste society. Of the five Beloved ones, who became the nucleus of the Khalsa, there were three Sudras and one Jat-at that time on the borderline of Vaisyas and Sudras. For joining the Khalsa ranks, baptism *(Amrit)* ceremony was made obligatory (Guru Gobind Singh himself undergoing that), and when baptised one had to take five vows.[63] These were: (1) *Dharm Nash,* i.e. to severe connection with all previous religions, Dharma, customs, etc.; (ii) *Karam Nash,* i.e. to consider oneself absolved of all past misdeeds, which cut at the roots of the Brahmanical Karma theory: (iii) *Kul Nash,* i.e. severance of all ties with lineage, which destroyed the fundamental basis of caste, i.e., distinctions based on birth; (iv) *Sharm Nash,* i.e. obliteration of stigmas attached to occupation, which destroyed the functional basis of caste; (v) *Bharm Nash,* i.e. discarding ritualism taboos and notions of pollution, etc. which cut across barriers raised between castes by these factors and which were so essential a feature of the caste system.

At the time of baptism (Amrit) ceremony, the Guru enjoined on all who had joined the Khalsa that they should 'consider their previous castes erased and deem themselves as brothers, i. e. members of one family.'[64] The newswriter of the period sent to the Emperor a copy of the Guru's address to his Sikhs on that occasion. It is dated the first of Baisakh 1756 (A.D. 1699), and runs as follows: 'Let all embrace one creed and obliterate differences of religion. Let the four Hindu castes who have different rules for their guidance abandon them all, adopt the one form of adoration and become brothers. Let no one deem himself superior to others. . . . . Let men of the four castes receive my baptism, eat out of one dish, and feel no disgust or contempt for one another.'[65] These may or may not be the exact words of the Guru's address, but their substance is corroborated by the near-contemporary Koer Singh (1751). He records that the Guru said: 'Many a Vaish (Vaishya), Sudar (Shudra) and Jat have I incorporated in the Panth;[66] and that the Guru 'has made the four castes into a single one, and made the Shudra, Vaish, Khatri and Brahmin take meals at the same place.'[67] According to the same authority, it was a current topic among the people that the Guru Had 'blended the four castes into one", had rejected both the Hindu and Muslim religions and created a new noble Khalsa, where in Sudra, Vaishya, Khatri and Brahmin eat together.[68] Again, the Hindu hill rajas complained to Aurangzeb: "He has founded his own Panth; (has) rejected the Hindu and Muslim faiths and other customs of the land; the four castes are made into one and are known by the one name of Khalsa."[69] What is even more significant is that the creation of the Khalsa was associated with the tearing and throwing away of *Janeo,* the sacred symbol of the twice-born Hindus.[70] The contemporary author of *Gur Sobha* is generally very brief in his comments about

historical events, but he, too, records that Brahmins and Khatries remained aloof at the time of the creation of the Khalsa because it involved discarding their ancestral rituals.[71]

The later Sikh literature of the 18th century, written by different hands and at different times, though differing on points of detail, is agreed on the main issue that the Khalsa broke away from the Caste ideology and the caste society. *Rehetnamas* contain mostly precepts, but these do record the Sikh tradition indicating Sikh culture and the Sikh way of life. "I will weld the four Varnas (castes) into one."[72] "Those who acknowledge Brahmins, their offsprings go to hell."[73] "The Sikh, who wears Janeo,. . . . . goes to hell."[74] "He who shows regard to other religions (Panthan), is a heretic and not a Sikh of the Guru."[75] "He who abides by the six *Darshnas,* he drags along with him his whole family into hell."[76] "Let your whole concern be with the Khalsa, other gods (Devs) are false."[77] "If any baptized Sikh puts on Janeo, he will be cast into hell."[78] "(A Sikh) should severe connection with Mussalmans and Hindus (Musalman Hindu *ki aan mete*)".[79] "(A Sikh) should not acknowledge *(kan na kara),* Brahma and Muhammed, he should obey the words of his own Guru."[80] Chaupa Singh, a contemporary, specifically mentions at three places that Guru Gobind Singh initiated the *pahul* (baptism) ceremony in order to create a separate Panth.[81] "Khalsa is one. . . . . who does not acknowledge Musalman *(Turk)* and Hindu."[82] Kesar Singh Chibber (1769) writes that the Guru created a new Third Panth (Khalsa Panth) by breaking with both Hindus and Mussalmans.[83] Sukha Singh (1797) states the same fact more explicitly: "Sudra, Vaish, Khatri and Brahmin all ate together. The religion of Vedas was rejected. . . . . All the religions of Hindus were discarded and one pure 'Khalsa' was established."[84] One Gurdas Singh wrote about the same time: "Ved, Puran, six shastras and Kuran were eliminated;. . . . . Both the sects (Hindus and Muslims) were engrossed in superstition; the third religion of Khalsa became supreme."[85]

Testimony from non-Sikh sources substantiates the evidence given above from Sikh sources. Mir Ghulam Hussain Khan writes (1783) thus about the Khalsa-Panth: "They form a particular society, which distinguishes itself by wearing blue garments, and going armed at all times. When a person is once admitted into that fraternity, they make no scruples of associating with turn, of whatever tribe, clan, or race he may have been hitherto, nor do they betray any of these scruples and prejudices so deeply rooted in the Hindu mind."[86] The author of Haqiqat (1783) also writes about the same time that the Sikhs were told: "Whoever might join you from whichever tribe, don't have any prejudice against him and without any superstition eat together with him. *Now this is their custom*."[87] Irvine relies on contemporary Mohammadan historians to state that, "In the parganas occupied by the Sikhs, the reversal of previous customs was striking and complete."[88] Khafi Khan writes, "These infidels (the Khalsa) had set up a new rule, and had forbidden the shaving of the hair of the head and beard. Many of the ill-disposed low-caste Hindus joined themselves to them, and placing their lives at the disposal of these evil-minded people, they found their own advantage in professing belief and obedience. . . . . "[89]

The evidence given above from Sikh and non-Sikh sources demonstrates that the separation of the Khalsa from the caste society was not a mere accident, an expediency, or a temporary brain-wave of a leader. It was a regular movement which continued in full vigour, at least during its revolutionary phase. The separate identity of the Khalsa continued to be emphasized even during the period of ideological decline. Bhangu (1841) writes: "All ate together from one vessel; no discrimination was left; the four *varnas* and the four *ashrams; Janeo* and *tikka* (Hindu insignias) were given up."[90] "They (the Khalsa) do not go near Ganga & Jamuna; bathe in their own tank (i.e. at Amritsar); do not worship Ram or Krishna."[91] One of the reasons why the Tat Khalsa departed from Banda Bahadur was that he attempted to introduce Hindu usages in the Khalsa.[92] All this

belies the proposition that the separate identity of the Khalsa was a creation of the Singh Sabha movement under British influence in the late 19th and early twentieth centuries.

4. A new socio-political order

The Khalsa not only broke away from the caste society, but also succeeded to a remarkable degree in giving an egalitarian socio-political orientation to its own. This was, in fact, an acid test and a proof of its separate identity from the caste society as well as its *raison d'etre.*

(i) *Plebeian Base:* The Sikh movement had not only an egalitarian political mission but it had also a plebeian base. It was necessary that the down-trodden castes and classes should be both the architects and masters of their own destiny. When Guru Hargobind declared his intention of arming the Panth, 'Calico-printers, water-carriers, and carpenters; Barbers, all came to his place."[93] Bhikhan Khan had a very poor opinion about the army of Guru Gobind Singh:

> "Subject people have come together, rustic Jats, oil-pressers, barbers, Bhati, Lubana, Leather-dressers. Many Banias. Aroras, Bhats; Sudras, Calico-printers, Jats, carpenters, twelve castes and Sanat (low castes) are joined; these are trained in the use of arrows. They include Kalals and goldsmiths, who do not know how to wield a spear.'[94]

Bhangu has referred to the plebeian and low-caste composition of the Khalsa at several places.[95] When the Tarana Dal wing of the Khalsa Dal was reorganized into five divisions, one of the divisions was under the command of Bir Singh Rangreta.[96] This division continued to participate in the campaigns of the Khalsa right up to the time to the conquest of Malerkotla.[97] In the great battle with Abdali, called Wada Ghalughara, because the largest number of Sikhs in a single battle were killed here, it is specially mentioned that Ramdasias (cobblers) and Rangretas took a prominent part.[98]

The plebeian composition of the Khalsa is corroborated also by evidence from non-Sikh sources. Banda's forces were recruited chiefly from the lower caste Hindus, and scavengers. leather-dressers and such like persons were very numerous among them.[99] The low-caste people who swelled Banda's ranks are termed by a contemporary Muslim historian, as the dregs of the society of the hellish Hindus.[100] Another contemporary Muslim writer says that Banda brought into the forefront the unemployed and worthless people who had hitherto been hidden by the curtain of insignificance.[101] Khan Khan says that, "Many of the ill-disposed low-caste Hindus joined themselves to them (Khalsa),[102]. . . . . ." The author of *Haqiqat* clearly states that Khatries, Jats, carpenters, blacksmiths and grain grocers all joined the Khalsa.'[103]

(ii) *The spirit of equality, brotherhood and fraternization:* More than the form or its composition, it is the spirit which prevails within a movement which reflects its real character. The idea of equality was inherent in the system of the Gurus and the Sikh movement so long it retained its pristine purity. After he had appointed Angad as his successor. Guru Nanak bowed at his feet in salutation. The same custom was followed by the later Gurus.[104] The Sikhs, who had imbibed the spirit of the Gurus, were regarded as equals of the Guru. The collective wisdom of the congregation of Sikhs was of higher value than that of the Guru alone *(Guru weeh visve, sangat iki visve).* Bhai Gurdas repeatedly makes it clear that there was no status gap between the Guru and a Sikh (*Gur chela, chela Guru*).[105] Guru Angad was very much displeased with the minstrels *(Rababis)* who refused to comply with a request from Bhai Budha. The Guru said: 'Regard the Guru's Sikh as myself; have no doubt

about this.'[106] Guru Hargobind, out of reverence for Bhai Budha, a devout Sikh, touched his feet.[107] He told Bhai Bidhichand that there was no difference between him and the Guru.[108] The Sikhs addressed each other as 'brother' (Bhai), thus showing a perfect level of equality among them. In all the available letters written by the Gurus to the Sikhs, they have been addressed as brothers (Bhai).[109] It was in continuation of this tradition that Guru Gobind Singh requested with clasped hands the Beloved Ones to baptise him.[110] This shows that he regarded them not only as his equal but made them as his Guru. This was the utmost limit to which a religious head could conceive of or practise human equality.

The spirit of brotherhood and fraternization is even more difficult to inculcate than the spirit of equality. This new spirit was a natural sequence of the Sikh doctrines and approach. What is important is the emphasis laid on this spirit of brotherhood and fraternization in the Sikh literature and more particularly the extent to which this spirit was practised in the Sikh movement.

As there was no difference between the Guru and the Sikh; the devotion to the Guru was easily channelized into the service of the Sikhs. 'God-orientated service is the service of the Guru's Sikhs, who should be regarded as one's dearest kith and kin.'[111] 'The Guru's Sikhs should serve the other Sikhs.'[112] One of Guru Gobind Singh's own hymns is:

"To serve them (The Khalsa) pleaseth my heart; no other service is dear to my soul.

All the wealth of my house with my soul and body is for them."[113]

The codes of Sikh conduct (Rehatnamas) continue to record this tradition. 'He who shirks a poor man is an absolute defaulter.'[114] 'Serve a Sikh and a pauper'.[115] 'If some among a group of Sikhs sleep on cots and the poor Sikhs sleep on the floor and are not shown due courtesy, the former Sikhs are at fault,[116] 'The essence of Sikhism is service, love and devotion. . . . . (The Sikh) should be regarded as the image of the Guru and served as such.'[117]

Bhalla records that these precepts were actually followed in the Sikh Panth. 'The Sikhs served each other, regarding every Sikh as the Guru's image.'[118] Bhangu writes: 'No body bore malice to any one; the Singhs (Sikhs who had been baptized) vied with each other in rendering service to others.'[119] 'If any Sikh got or brought any eatable, it was never used alone, it was partaken by all the Sikhs. Nothing was hidden from the other Sikhs. All eatables were shared by all members of the Khalsa; if there was nothing to eat, they would say 'The Langar is in trance (Mastana)'. 'One would offer food to others first and then eat oneself. Singhs would be addressed with great love.'[120] 'Guru's Sikh was the brother of each Sikh.[121] During the days of struggle with the Mughals, one Niranjania reported to the Mughal governor against the Sikhs: 'They (non-combatants) would themselves go hungry and naked, but would not bear the misery of the Singhs; they themselves would ward off cold by sitting near fire, but would send clothes to the Singhs; they would grind corn with their own hands and send it to the Singhs; they would twist ropes and send its proceeds to the Singhs. They, who for their living would go to far off places, send their earnings to the Singhs.[122] "All members of the Khalsa Dal 'were issued clothes from a common store. Without concealing anything, they would pool all their earnings at one place. If any one found or brought any valuables, these were deposited in the treasury as common property.[123]

The prevalence of this spirit of equality, brotherhood and fraternization among the Sikhs, is confirmed by evidence from the non-Sikh Sources. Ghulam Mohyy-ud-Din, the author of Fatuhat

Namah-i-Samadi (1722-23), was a contemporary of Banda. He writes that low caste Hindu, termed *khas-o-khashak-i-hanud-i-jahanmi wajud* (i.e. the dregs of the society of the hellish Hindus) swelled the ranks of Banda, and everyone in his army 'would address the other as the adopted son of the oppressed Guru (Guru Gobind Singh) and would publicise themselves with the title of sahibzada ("*Yaki ra b targhib-i-digran-pisar-i-khanda-i-guru-i-maghur gufta b laqub-i-shahzadgi mashur kardah*").[124] Khushwaqt Rai, a contemporary historian of Aurangzeb, writes, 'if a stranger knocks at their door (i.e. the door of Sikhs) at midnight and utters the name of Nanak, though he may be a their, robber or wretch, he is considered a friend and brother, and is properly looked after."[125]

The significance of the spirit of equality, brotherhood and fraternization achieved by the Sikh movement can be realized only if it is contrasted with the caste background in which the change was brought about. Bougle observes: 'The spirit of caste unites these three tendencies; repulsion, the hierarchy and hereditary specialization. . . . . we say that a Society is characterized by such a system if it is divided into a large number of mutually opposed groups which are hereditary specialised and hierarchically arranged; if, on principle, it tolerates neither the parvenu, nor miscegenation, nor a change of profession.'[126] 'From the social and political point of view, caste is division, hatred, jealousy and distrust between neighbours'.[127] Nesfield also comes to the conclusion that the caste system leads to a degree of social disunion to which no parallel can be found in human history. All authorities on caste are agreed that mutual repulsion and disunity, besides inequality and hierarchism, are the inbuilt constituents of the caste system.

(iii) *Abolition of Caste Priorities and Prejudices:* The Chuhras are the 'out-caste par-excellence of the Punjab, whose name is popularly supposed to be a corruption of Sudra.'[128] As such, they were about the most despised caste in the Punjab; mere bodily contact with whom denied a person of a higher caste. On conversion to Sikhism, persons from this caste were given the honorific title of Rangreta in order to raise them in public-estimation, much in the same way as depressed classes are now-a-days called Harijans. A rhyme 'Rangreta, Guru ka beta', meaning 'Rangreta is the son of the Guru', current in the Punjab,[129] is an indication of the status to which the Sikh movement sought to raise them. We have seen how Rangretas (whose touch, had they remained in the caste society, defiled not only the person but also the food he carried) were coequal members of the Khalsa Dal, where they dined and fraternized, without discrimination, with other Dal members drawn from Brahmins, Khatris, Jats and others. When the Taruna Dal (the Youth wing of the Khalsa Dal) was reorganized into five divisions, one of these was under the leadership of Bir Singh, Rangreta. It was bestowed a standard flag (Jhanda) from the Akal Takht in the same manner as was done in the case of the other four divisions.[130] It was thus given an equal status with them. When Ala Singh defeated the army of Malerkotia with the help of the Khalsa Dal and offered horses to honour the Dal, the first to receive the honour, as selected by the Dal, was Bir Singh, Rangreta.[131]

We have taken the case of Rangretas because it is very much illustrative, they being the lowest caste from which Sikhs were recruited. But, it is the Jats, who form the majority in the present day Panth and who have benefited most in the elevation of their social status by joining the Sikh ranks. It is mainly because they were able to retain, unlike the Rangretas, the gains that accrued to them. The present day social status of the Sikh Jats is taken so much for granted that it is seldom that their past prior to their joining the Sikh movement, is recalled. 'In A.D. 836, an Arab governor summoned them to appear and pay jizya each to be accompanied by a dog a mark of humiliation prescribed also under the previous Brahman regime.'[132] 'Alberuni (C. 1030), whose direct experience of India was confined to the Lahore area, took the Jats to be 'Cattle-owners, low Shudra people.'[133] The author of the Dabistani-Mazahib (C. 1655) in his account of Sikhism describes the Jats as 'the

lowest caste of the Vaishyas.'[134] In contrast to this position, 'under the Sikhs the Rajput was over-shadowed by the Jat, who resented his assumption of superiority and his refusal to join him on equal terms in the ranks of the Khalsa, deliberately persecuted him wherever "and whenever he had the power, and preferred his title of Jat Sikh to that of the proudest Rajput.'[135] That this was all due to the Sikh movement becomes clear if the status of Sikh Jats of the Sikh tract is compared with that of other non-Sikh Jats who are his immediate neighbours. About the non-Sikh Jats in the eastern submontane tract, Ibbetson writes in his census report (1881): "In character and position there is nothing to distinguish the tribes I am about to notice, save that they have never enjoyed the political importance which distinguished the Sikh Jats under the Khalsa. . . . . In the Sikh tract, the political position of the Jat was so high that he had no wish to be called Rajput; under the hills the status of the Rajput is so superior that the Jat has no hope of being called Rajput.[136] Similarly, although the Jats of the south-eastern districts of the Punjab differ 'in little save religion from the great Sikh Jat tribes of the Malwa',[137] they remained subservient to the Rajputs upto a recent period of the British Raj. There, 'In the old days of Rajput ascendancy, the Rajputs would not allow Jats to cover their heads with a turban', and 'even to this day Rajputs will not allow inferior castes to wear red clothes or ample lion cloths in their villages.'[138] In the predominantly Muhammadan Western Punjab, the Jat is 'naturally looked upon as of inferior race, and the position he occupies is very different from that which he holds in the centre and east of the Punjab.[139]

We are not giving these quotations in order to approve of the air of superiority assumed by the Sikh Jats, because the Sikh movement aimed at levelling up of the social status of all kinds, and not at substituting the status-superiority of one caste or class for that of another. However, these instances do show how far the movement succeeded in breaking the order of social precedence established by the caste society and in permanently raising the social status of a social group which now forms the majority in the Sikh Panth.

(iv) *Political Power:* The Sikh movement not only raised the social status of the people drawn into the Panth from the lower castes, but also shared political power with them during its revolutionary phase. Irvine writes, on the basis of contemporary Muslim historians, that" in all the parganas occupied by the Sikhs, the reversal of previous customs was complete. A low scavenger or leather-dresser, the. lowest of low in Indian estimation, had only to leave home and join the Guru (Banda), when in a short space of time he would return to his birth-place as its ruler, with his order of appointment in his hand. As soon as he set foot within the boundaries, the well-born and wealthy went out to greet him and escort him home. Arrived there, they stood before him with joined palms, awaiting his orders."[140] "All power was now usurped by the Sikhs, and one Bir Singh, a man of poor origin,. . . was appointed Subedar or governor of Sirhind."[141] In the Missal period ordinary peasants, shepherds (Tara Singh Gheba)[142], village menials (Jassa Singh Ramgarhia) and distillers, (Jassa Singh Kalal), whom the caste society despised, became the leaders. There was not one else from castes higher than these. The common peasantry of the land suddenly attained political power.[143] ". . . . . the whole country of the Punjab. . . . . is in the possession of this community (the Khalsa) and most of their exalted leaders are of low origin, such as carpenters, animal skin-treaters and Jats."[144] Waris Shah, the author of 'Hir & Ranjha', describes the state of affairs in the Punjab of this period:

"Men of menial birth flourish and the peasants are in great prosperity.

The Jats have become masters of our country, everywhere there is a new Government."[145]

All the members of the Khalsa, irrespective of their caste or class, came to be called, as they are even now, Sardars (overlords). This is not to approve of this development, or the feudal nature of the Missal political system, because these were departures from the Sikh ideal of human equality. The point to be noted here is how the Sikh revolution raised the social and political status, not of individuals, but of a large section of the commoners *en bloc*.

This capture of political by the commoners had a great impact, within the Sikh Panth, in removing some social barriers raised by the caste society. It was the taste of political power which made the Sikh Jat feel prouder than the Rajput and the Rangretas as equals to the Sikh Jats. The Rangretas had all along been equal members of-the Khalsa Dal in every respect, but at the time of Missal formation they joined the Missal of Nishanias,[146] which Missal did not carve out a territorial rule of its own. Had the Rangretas also opted for political power on their own, it is quite on the cards that their social status within the Sikh Panth might have been different from what it is. In other words, the Rangretas were not pushed out of the Khalsa 'brotherhood; only they did not avail of the opportunity to capture political power for themselves, which was necessary to maintain their newly acquired social prestige and position in the post-revolutionary period. At any rate, it becomes quite clear that political power was a big factor for levelling up caste barriers. Therefore, the mission of capturing political power by the Khalsa *(Raj karega Khalsa)* was as much an egalitarian social mission as it was a political one. It was not for nothing that the caste ideology and the caste society has been at great pains to exclude the commoners from political power. The egalitarian political and military orientation of the Khalsa should be viewed in this perspective. Those who disapprove of the militarisation of the Sikh movement on religious grounds miss this point. The social status of the lower castes could not be changed without their attaining political power, and that religion was not worth its name which did not strive to change the caste system.

Earlier, we presented evidence to show that the Khalsa cut itself from the caste system by severing connections with the caste ideology. Brahmins and the caste society. This conclusion is further substantiated by the positive evidence given here regarding the socio-political egalitarian character of the Khalsa polity. None of its salient features (i.e. its plebian composition; its spirit of equality, brotherhood and fraternization; the reversal of caste priorities; and capture of political power by the commoners) could even be conceived, much less realised, while remaining within the caste system or the caste society.

Footnotes:

1. Macauliffe, i, p. 379.
2. Guru Granth, p. 1243; trans. by Gopal Singh, Vol. iv, p. 1188.
3. Guru Granth, p. 15.
4. Max Weber, p. 144.
5. Ibid.
6. Macauliffe, i, p. 274.
7. Guru Granth, p. 383.
8. Guru Granth, 1128; trans. by Gopal Singh, Vol. iv, p. 1077.
9. Bhai Gurdas: Var One, Pauris, 23, 25; Var 23, Pauri 20.
10. Ibid, Var 23, Pauri 19.
11. Ibid, 18, Pauri 14; Var 24, Pauri 4; Var 26, Pauri 18.
12. Narang, Gokal Chand: *Transformation of Sikhism*. p. 81.

13. Macauliffe, i. p. 369.
14. Ibid., V, p. 310.
15. Crooke, W.: E.R.E., Vol. 6, pp. 712-3.
16. Guru Granth, pp. 397, 747, 265; Macauliffe, i, pp. 317, 362, 369, 237, 240, 323, 338.
17. Guru Granth, pp. 237, 385, 831, 890, 906, 1153, 1169.
18. Abbe Dubois: *Hindu Manners & Customs,* pp. 195-7.
19. Macauliffe, i, p. 239.
20. *Mahima Parkash,* Vol. 2, pp. 873-6.
21. Khan Khan, iii, p. 763; Irvine, i, p. 315.
22. Max Weber, p. 24.
23. Bhai Gurdas, Var One, Pauries 23, 25, Var 2, Pauri 20.
24. Max Weber, p. 36.
25. Hutton, p. 72.
26. Ghurye, p. 7.
27. Senart, p. 43.
28. Max Weber, p. 36.
29. Hutton, p. 78.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
32. Macauliffe, Vol. 1, pp. 242-43.
33. Ibid., pp. 240-1.
34. Mahima Prakash, ii, p. 37.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid., p. 15.
37. Ibid., p. 102, Rose, H.A.: *A Glossery of the Tribes.*
38. Ibid, p. 102 and *Castes of the Punjab & N. W. & P.,* i, p. 681.
39. Ibid.
40. Koer Singh, *Gurbilas Patshahi Das,* p. 136.
41. Bhangu, Rattan Singh, *Panth Parkash,* pp. 202, 216, 436.
42. Max Weber, p. 30; Senart, pp. 18-19.
43. Max Weber, pp. 24, 25.
44. Hutton p. 49.
45. Max Weber, p. 30.
46. Hutton, p. 125.
47. Ibbetson, sec. 512.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid.
51. Max Weber, pp. 29-30.
52. Tara Chand, pp. 116-120.
53. Ibid, p. 117.
54. Sarkar, Jadunath: *History of Aurangzeb,* Vol. III, p. 302.
55. Rose, Vol. 11, p. 419.
56. Max Weber, pp. 18-19.
57. Gait, E.A.: E.R.E., Vol. 3, p. 239; Hutton, p. 121.
58. *Janamsakhi Meharbanwali,* pp. 10-12.
59. *Janamsakhi Prampra, Antka,* pp. 124, 125, 127, 174.
60. Ibid, pp. 44, 48, 259, 268.

61. Ibid, pp. 106, 110, 121, 124, 127, 131, 132, 133.
62. *Dabistan,* trans. by Ganda Singh: *The Past and Present* (1969), p. 51.
63. Hari Ram Gupta, *History of the Sikh Gurus,* p. 189;
64. Macauliffe, Vol. V, p. 95.
65. Ibid, pp. 93-94.
66. Koer Singh, p. 131.
67. Ibid, p. 136.
68. Koer Singh, p. 136.
69. Ibid, p. 143.
70. Ibid, p. 132.
71. Gur Sobha, p. 33.
72. Nand Lal; *Rehatnama,* edited by Piara Singh Padam p. 47.
73. Ibid, p. 50.
74. Prahlad Singh, Ibid, p. 53.
75. Ibid, p. 55.
76. bid, p. 55.
77. Ibid.
78. Daya Singh; Ibid, p. 64.
79. Ibid, p. 64.
80. Chaupa Singh: Ibid, p. 68.
81. Chaupa Singh: Rehtname, pp. 90, 92, 110.
82. Sahib Singh: Ibid, p. 149.
83. *Parkh,* Vol. 11, 1972 (Punjab University, Chandigarh).
84. Sukha Singh, *Gurbilas,* 133.
85. Varan Bhai Gurdas, Var, 41.
86. *Siyar-ul-Mutakherin,* trans. by John Briggs, p. 73.
87. I.H.Q., March 1942, sup., p. 5.
88. Irvine, W.: *Later Mughals, i,* p. 98.
89. Elliot & Dowson: *The History of India as told by its own Historians,* Vol. vii, pp. 419-420.
90. Bhangu, p. 44.
91. Ibid, pp. 269-270.
92. Ibid, pp. 130-136.
93. Gurbilas Chevin Patshahi, p. 143.
94. Koer Singh, p. 90.
95. Bhangu, pp. 50, 58, 104, 236, 244, 262, 268.
96. Ibid, p. 216.
97. Ibid, p. 469.
98. Ibid, p. 368.
99. Irvine: Later Mughals, pp. 94, 96, 98-99.
100. Fatuhat Nameh-i-Samadi, p. 28.
101. *Asrar-i-Samadi,* trans in Punjabi, p. 7.
102. Elliot and Dowson, Vol. vii, pp. 419-420.
103. *I.H.Q.*. March 1942 sup., p. 6.
104. *Gurbilas Chevin patshahi,* p. 38.
105. Bhai Gurdas, Var, 3, Pauri 11; Var 9, Pauri 8; 16; Var 13, Pauri 1;Var 15, Pauri 16.
106. *Mehma Parkash,* ii, p. 35.
107. *Gurbilas Chevin Patshahi,* pp. 130, 341, 349, 350.
108. Ibid, p. 505; Macauliffe, iv, p. 219.

109. *Hukamnamas.*
110. Kore Singh, p. 131.
111. Bhai Gurdas, Var 5, pauri 2.
112. Ibid, Var 14, Pauri 17.
113. Macauliffe, V, p. 66.
114. Rehatname, edited by Piara Singh Padam, p. 44.
115. Ibid, p. 52.
116. Ibid, p. 97.
117. *Prem Sumarg Granth,* edited by Randhir Singh, pp. 17-19.
118. Mehma Parkash, ii, p. 136.
119. Bhangu, p. 212.
120. Ibid, pp. 261, 436.
121. Ibid, p. 86.
122. Ibid, 269.
123. Ibid, p. 215.
124. Cited by Gurbax Singh, *Punjab History Conference* (Dec. 1973), Proceedings, pp. 55-56.
125. Sujan Rai Bhandari: *Khulasat-ut-Twarikh* (trans. in Punjabi by Gill), p. 81.
126. Essays on the Caste System by Celestin Bougie (trans. by D.F. Peacock), p. 9.
127. Ibid, p. 10, (Cf Sheering: *Hindu Tribes & Customs,* 111, p. 218, 235.).
128. Rose, Vol. ii, p. 182.
129. Ibbetson, sec. 598.
130. Bhangu, p. 216.
131. Ibid, p. 469.
132. Irfan Habib: *Punjab Past & Present* (1976), p. 95; Rose, ii, p. 359.
133. Ibid.
134. Ibid, p. 97.
135. Ibbetson, sec. 422; Rose, i, p. 12.
136. Ibid, sec. 437.
137. Ibid, sec. 439.
138. Ibid, sec. 440.
139. Ibid, sec. 428.
140. Irvine, pp. 98-99.
141. Irvine: J.A.S.B. (New Series), Vol. 63 (1894). p. 124.
142. Prinsep, Henry, T.: *Origin of the Sikh Power in the Punjab,* p. 24.
143. Cunningham, J.D.: *A History of the Sikhs*, p. 159.
144. Syed Ghulam Ali Khan: *Imdud. Saadat,* p. 71.
145. Cunningham, p. ix.
146. Rose, H.A.: *A Glossary of the Tribes & Castes of the Punjab & N.W.F.P.,* Vol. i, p. 706.

CHAPTER IV

The Caste System and the Sikhs in the Later Period[1]

We have seen in the I-Section that the Institution of Caste in India derived its strength not only from a large number of its constitutive individual elements, but that its almost impregnable rigidity flowed from the co-ordination and integration of these elements into a hidebound system. Therefore, its main strength lay not only in the contributory factors, as such, but also in the reinforced structural and operative power of the system as a whole. It has been seen that Sikhism made a planned attack to break both the totality of the integrated caste system and the individual pillars on which it was based.

Partly because religious or radical movements never remain at their original ideological level for long, but mainly because of the large influx of proselytes from the caste society, who had retained some of their caste prejudices and usages in the Missal and later periods, some aberrations did creep in the Sikh Society during this time. But, what we wish to emphasize here is that, even in the Missal and post-Missal periods, the Sikhs never accepted either the validity of the caste system or that of its constitutive pillars. We again draw attention to the three facets of the caste system, namely the Caste ideology, the Brahmins, and the caste society.

The Main components of the Caste Ideology, we pointed out are:
i) The pre-eminence of the caste-status with the Brahmins as the point of reference;
ii) The Authority of Scriptures;
iii) Hindu Dharma;
iv) Custom, ritualism and ceremonialism; and
v) pollution

Even in the Missal and later periods, the Brahmins never became a point of reference in the Sikh society in regard to social status or hierarchy, or for that matter for any purpose whatsoever. The Sikh have never owned allegiance to any scriptures other than Guru Granth Sahib, or to any Dharma other than the Sikh Dharma. The Guru Granth completely repudiates ritualism and ceremonialism, and the Sikhs do not subscribe to the theory or religious sanction underlying the Brahmanical ideology of pollution.

As regards the second and third facets of the caste-systems there is no Brahmin or any other sacerdotal class among the Sikhs, and the Sikh Panth has remained a separate entity from the Hindu Society. Our study in this section reveals that whatever notions and practices regarding connubium commensalism and the village hierarchy that have remained with the Sikhs in the Missal and post Missal periods as a heritage from their previous connection with the caste society, have no point of reference with any of the three facets of the caste-system, namely the caste ideology, the Brahmins and the caste society. What remains, therefore, to be considered is, to what extent some of the prejudices and practices inherited from the caste society by the Sikhs in the later periods have been shed off or modified at various levels of the Sikh Society.

(A) At Panthic Level: Let us first consider the large scale conversions from Hindu ranks to the Sikh society that took place during the Missal and post-Missal periods. Polier (1780) wrote: "The Siques then began to increase greatly in number. . . . . all that came, though from the lowest

and most object castes, were received, contrary to the Hindu customs which admit no change of caste, and even Mussalmans were in the number of converts."[2] Griffin tells us that "the Seiks receive proselytes of almost every caste, a point in which they differ most materially from the Hindus."[3] Hugel describes the Sikhs of his time as "the descendants from all the lowest castes of Hindus from which they have been proselyted."[4] These European accounts deal with the times of the Missals and Ranjit Singh. What is even more significant is that this trend continued in the British period. "From 1881, when there had been 1,706,195 Sikhs, to 1921, when there were 3,110,060 Sikhs, there had been a tremendous upsurge inconversion."[5] And these converts came from the higher as well as the lower castes of Hindus. Between 1881 and 1891, "Sikhism was attracting converts from Hindus of the Khatri, Arora, Lubana, Sunar, Tarkhan, Chuhra and Maihtam castes",[6] and "the most remarkable increase by conversion had been among the Chuhra Sikhs."[7] "Between 1901 and 1911 there were large-scale conversions to Sikhism among the Chuhras and Chamars. Hinduism lost some 158,806 Chuhras and 169,103 Chamars in this period."[8]

This consistent trend of conversions to Sikhism from "the lowest and most abject castes" of the Hindus was, as also noted by Polier and Griffths, a radical departure from the caste ideology and which admit "no change of caste". Proselytization from Mussalmans was equally unthinkable to the caste ideology and the caste society. The very fact that converts to Sikhism were coming in large proselytization numbers from Hindu ranks is enough to show that this despite some of the caste traits and customs retained by the proselytes, was a movement, in its overall effect, leading away from the caste society, and certainly not towards it. And, as regards Brahmins, they are no where in the picture. In maintaining its vital distance from the caste ideology, the Brahmins and the caste society, the Sikh Panth continued to function, on the whole, outside the orbit of the caste system even in the post-Khalsa period.

The institution of *Langar* (community kitchen) was another factor that kept alive, at the *Panthic level,* the anti-caste heritage of the earlier period. To what extent, in which sections, and at what levels of the Sikh population, the commensal restrictions of the caste society were retained during this period is not quite clear. Forster (1718) and Malcolm (1812) have observed that the Sikhs retained some Hindu commensal prejudices. As against it, we have the explicit statements of Ghulam Hussain Khan and the author of Haqiqat (both in 1783), already referred to, that the Sikhs do not "betray any of those scruples and prejudices so deeply rooted in the Hindu mind"[9] and that they eat together with proselytes from whatever caste he might come, and "now this is their custom."[10] There is no doubt that the institution of *Langar,* where people from all caste dine together without discrimination was started by Guru Nanak himself and has since then continued without any change in its constitution. Malcolm testifies to it indirectly when he writes that upon particular occasions, such as *Guru-mat (Gur-mata),* the Sikhs "were obliged by their tenets and institutions to eat promiscuously."[11] Moreover, this position can be easily verified, as hundreds of people partake food daily, without any discrimination whatsoever, in the *Langars* attached to the principal Gurdwaras, and thousands of them interdine in the *Langars* when there are large Sikh gatherings called *Jormellas* or *Dewans* held anywhere outside the Gurdwaras. In fact, the institution of Langar was created for levelling up all kinds of distinctions. To the present day, the women and children eat first and are served there by men as a symbol of humility."[12]

The significance of partaking food, even though occasionally, in the *Langar,* as distinct from taking *prasad* in a temple, in which people drawn from all castes, including the out castes, join can only be grasped if it is viewed against the backgrounds of the caste ideology and the usages of the caste society. In Hutton's opinion, taboo on food[13] "is probably the keystone of the system."

"Stranger's shadow, or even the glance. . . . . of a man of low caste, falling on the cooking pot may necessitate throwing away the contents."[14] Food has to be cooked "with the precautions of magic ceremony"[15] "the eating of grain, cooked with water, is of the nature of a sacrament."[16] "If the member of a low caste merely looks at the meal of a Brahman, it ritually defiles him."[17] It "is one of the constitutive principles of the castes that there should be atleast ritually inviolable barriers against complete commensalism among different castes."[18] Of the offences of which a caste Panchayat took cognisance, the "offences against the commensal taboos, which prevent members of the caste from eating, drinking or smoking with members of another caste, or atleast of another castes regarded by the prohibiting caste as lower in social status than themselves, are undoubtedly the most important; for the transgression by one member of the caste if unknown and unpunished may affect the hole caste with pollution through his commensality with the rest."[19] The Santals, a very low caste in Bengal, have been known to die of hunger in times of famine rather than touch food prepared even by Brahmins.[20] "A separate lower caste (the Kallars) has arisen in Bengal among people who had infracted the ritual and dietary laws during the famine of 1866, and in consequence been excommunicated."[21] "At the time of the famine, the strict castes were not satisfied with the possibility of cleansing magical defilement by ritual penance. Yet under threat of excommunicating the participants. . . . . they made certain that often a sort of symbollic *chamber separee* was created for each caste by means of chalk lines drawn around the tables and similar devices."[22]

Needless to say that, in the *Langar,* people from all castes, including the Mazhabi Sikhs, can, and do, take part in preparing the food, and nobody bothers as to how the food is cooked and who serves it. Nor is there the least notion of being defiled by eating in a row with others. The question of such defilement being carried to others, or cleansing it by ritual pensance, therefore, does not arise.

In the political field, when the Sikhs regained their national consciousness, S. Kharak Singh (from an Ahluwalia family) was called the 'uncrowned king' *(betaj badshah) of* the Sikhs during the Akali movement, and 'master' Tara Singh (From a Khatri family) remained the leader of the Akali party till his death. These facts, along with the large scale conversions to Sikh ranks from the lower castes and the continued functioning of the institution of *Guru Ka langar,* show that the allegiance and adherence to the Sikh ideals at the Panthic level was not questioned either in theory or in practice.

(B) *Jat Sikhs vis-a-vis Khatri Sikhs, Arora Sikhs. Ramgarhia Sikhs, etc.:* The number of Khalsa guerillas was at one stage reduced to about 2,000 persons,[23] and Khushwaqt Rai (1811) estimated the number of the Khalsa to be about 200,000.[24] In the 1881 census, there were 1,126,861 Jat Sikhs, 263,479 Tarkhan Sikhs, 37,917 Arora Sikhs, and 35,521 Khatri Sikhs.[25] Later, the Ramgarhia Sikhs were demarcated from the Tarkhan Sikhs by the census authorities, and in 1921 there were 68,000 Ramgarhia Sikhs as against 140,000 Tarkhan Sikhs.[26] In the same census, the number of Arora Sikhs rose to 118,000 and that of the Khatri Sikhs to 63,000.[27] Between 1881 and 1931, the total number of Sikhs increased from 1,853,426 to 4,335,771.[28]

These figures show that a great accession of numerical strength to the Sikh ranks took place during the post-revolutionary periods of the Missals, Ranjit Singh and the British rule. It is not surprising, therefore, that the proselytes at this time, on joining the Sikh ranks, did not shed off all of their prejudices and proclivities inherited from the caste ideology and the caste society. Moreover. there was a tendency on the part of some sub-castes and tribes within certain areas, to change religion *en bloc.* It happened also in the case of conversions to Islam. This process further helped to

retain, to an extent, the social distinctiveness and some old patterns of social behaviour of such groups within the newly adopted religious societies. What we find, however, is that the Jat Sikhs, Khatri Sikhs, Arora Sikhs and Ramgarhia Sikhs, despite the above mentioned limitations, do not constitute, in their relations with one another, either a caste or a hierarchy in the Brahmanical sense. It has to be made clear that we do not deny that those elements, who joined the Sikh society from the Hindu ranks in large numbers during the post Khalsa period, did retain in varying degrees their heritage of caste-like prejudices and customs. What we are aiming at is to bring out that one of the lasting achievements of the Sikh movement was that it cut off the Sikhs from the caste system and its society, and these proselytes despite their caste heritage, did not revert to that system or society. For a grasp of the full significance of this development the reader is reminded to bear in mind the vital distinction between caste, as such, and the caste system that we emphasized in the first section. There is a marked difference in the potential reactionary tenacious power that social exclusiveness oversizes in the two cases. And, also, for making this distinction clear, it is necessary to keep in view the difference between the meaning of the term caste in the ordinary sense (when applied indiscriminately where there are barriers on intermarriages between mutually exclusive groups, which arise from a variety of prejudices even in societies which are free from the Indian type of caste) and the meaning of the term caste in the Brahamanical sense.

We have seen that the Sikh Jats whose brethren in the Hindu Society were assigned a social position on the borderline of Vaisyas and Sudras, became, as a consequence of the Sikh Movement, the ruler of the land and regarded themselves as superior to the Rajputs. Ethine K. Marenco, who in her book '*The Transformation of Sikh Society*' has given a wealth of sociological data about the Sikh society in the 19th century and the 20th century upto 1947, goes so far so say that there was a reshuffling of the caste hierarchy among the Sikhs, where the Jat Sikhs came at the top and became the point of reference for other Sikh castes.[29] This inference is however neither accurate[30], nor is it applicable to the Sikh Society as a whole, but it does recognize that the Brahmins were not the kingpin of the Sikh society.

As regards commensalism, we referred to Max Weber's opinion that "it is one of the constitutive principles of the castes that there should be atleast ritually inviolable barriers against complete commensalism among different castes,"[31] and to Hutton's view that "Caste endogamy is more or less incidental to the taboo on taking food and this taboo is probably the Keystone of the whole system."[32]

I.P. Singh conducted a sociological study (1959, 1961) of two Sikh villages[33], Dalake in Amritsar district and Nalli in Ludhiana district. According to his findings, all Sikhjats, excepting the Mazhbis, interdine.[34] Marenco's own assessment is that, "Commensal taboos were not as stringent among the Sikhs as among the Hindus, but there was still a large gap between Jat Sikh and Mazbi Sikh.[35] So on this account, the Jat Sikhs, Khatri Sikhs, Arora Sikhs, Ramgarhia sikhs, in fact all Sikhs who interdine, cannot be regarded as castes in the Brahmanical sense.

The problem of inter-marriages between Jat Sikhs, Khatri Sikhs, Arora Sikhs and Ramgarhia Sikhs, though more intractable, is basically not different. In the first place, there are no "statistics for inter-east marriages of the Sikhs for different periods[36]" Instances of inter-caste marriage among Sikhs from these castes are not uncommon. Marenco herself has also given two instances, of Udasis and Kesh Dhari Sikhs. "In many cases the Jat Sikhs intermarried with Udasis. . . . . The last point is of particular interest. Since the Udasis included Khatris of the Bedi section, as well as members of other castes, this means that the Jat Sikhs were marrying outside the Jat Sikh caste in 1901. Taboos

against marriage with other castes were generally weaker among the Jat Sikhs than among the Hindus."[37] Again, "It will be remembered that there was a hypergamous relation between Kesh Dhari Sikhs, generally converts from the Jat or lower Hindu and Muslim castes, and the Sahaj Dhari Sikhs, generally Khatri and Arora Sikhs. The orthodox Kesh Dhari Sikhs took wives from the Sahaj Dhari Sikhs, but would not give them their daughters. . . . . A Jat Sikh, seeking a husband for his daughter, looked for a member of a Kesh Dhari Group, as a son-in-law. That son-in-law might be of the Jat Sikh caste or not, since the Jat Sikhs were known to marry outside their caste more readily than Jat Hindus."[38]

Secondly, although it is important to note the number of intermarriages that take place among these groups, what is even more significant is whether there are any Brahmanical connubial taboos in this respect among them "Among classes who marry themselves, marriage outside the class is prevented by sentiment and not by hard and fast rules. Marriage outside the class in Europe might be rare and invalid, but in India, if it is contracted outside the caste, it is a sacrilege."[39] Not only it was a sacrilege, it was visited by severe penalties. A large number of lower castes were formed on account of persons of higher castes marrying into lower castes. Before labelling, on connubial grounds, Jat Sikhs, Khatri Sikhs, Arora Sikhs and Ramgarhia Sikhs as Brahmanical castes, it is necessary to establish that intermarriages between them are inhibited not merely by an old but dying prejudice that they carry along with them from their caste heritage, but by the hard and fast rules of the caste society, according to which "members of different castes *must* marry only within their castes." In the caste society, the infringement of connubial rules involves severe sanctions and penalties. In the Sikh society, there is no evidence that any *Panchayats* impose any such penalties. The question of such collective punishment by the Sikhs does not arise as it is against the Sikh religion.

In our view, nor do the Jat Sikhs, Khatri Sikhs, and Arora Sikhs constitute a hierarchy, because a hierarchy pre-supposes demarcation of higher and lower grades, and also some degree of fixation of their relative positions either by their own voluntary acceptance or due to outside pressure. As a consequence of the Sikh revolution, the Jat Sikhs do not recognize anybody as their social superiors;[40] and "the Khatri Sikhs did not have the elevated status of the Jat Sikhs in the Sikh caste hierarchy."[41] On the other hand, "Khatri Sikhs probably considered themselves above the Jat Sikhs in status,[42]; and "One cannot ignore, of course, the feeling of superiority that the Khatri Sikhs felt towards the Jat Sikhs. . ."[43] There is apparent contradiction in these statements. This paradox is resolved if one faces the reality that none of the two groups regarded itself as inferior to the other—the Jat Sikh because of his new position, and the Khatri Sikh because of his wealth, education and the consciousness that the Jats had once been his inferior in the Indian caste hierarchy. We bracket the Sikh Aroras with Sikh Khatris in this respect, as they claim Khatri origin and are more or less similarly placed. There was no outside pressure either to fix the Khatri and Arora Sikhs into a lower position. With the development of the modern economy, it is the commercial and artisan castes which moved to the towns and cities in large numbers.[44] The peasantry, by and large, continued to stick to their land. The result was that Jat Sikhs were sparsely dispersed in the urban areas, where the Khatri and Arora Sikhs were largely located. Moreover, in a money economy, it is wealth which matters, and this was, as compared to the Jat Sikhs, more in the hands of Khatri and Arora Sikhs.[45] There are, therefore, no grounds for inferring that the Jat Sikhs, Khatri Sikhs and Arora Sikhs constitute a hierarchy. The question of their being a Brahmanical caste hierarchy between these groups, or there being a re-shuffling of caste hierarchy in favour of the Jat Sikhs, therefore, does not arise.

Ramgarhia Sikhs do not appear, as alleged, to be a sub-caste of Tarkhan Sikhs, as there are no commensal or connubial barriers between the two as evidenced by the extensive family ties between them. Any Tarkhan Sikh who leaves his rural surrounding and chooses to call himself a Ramgarhia Sikh automatically becomes one. Tarkhan Sikhs enjoyed phenomenal prosperity,[46] and in 1911 the bulk of the Tarkhan Sikhs were not involved in carpentry.[47] In fact, the Ramgarhia Sikhs, as a group, are more affluent than the Jat Sikhs. Ever since the formation of the Ramgarhia Missal, the Ramgarhia Sikhs have regarded themselves as peers of the Jat Sikhs, and their prosperity has added to their pride and social status. The Ramgarhia Sikhs have never been denied access to Gurdwaras (Sikh temples), but sometimes they build their own in order to assert their independent status. In short, the Ramgarhia Sikhs do not accept the Jat Sikhs as superior to them. Also, the Jat Sikhs are not in a position to lord over them, as the Ramgarhia Sikhs are concentrated in towns and cities, where they form, in many cases, compact colonies of their own. There is, therefore, neither acceptance of any hierarchy by the Ramgarhia Sikhs, nor any outside pressure to force them into one.

(C) *Urban Artisans & Menials:* Out of a total of 1,853,426 Sikhs in 1881, the number of artisan and menial castes among the Sikhs, other than the Tarkhans, was Lohar Sikhs, 24614; Jhinwar Sikhs 21,754; Nai Sikhs 21,500; Chimba Sikhs 17,748; Sunar Sikhs 14,046, Kumhar Sikhs, 11,947 and Kalal Sikhs 8,931.[48] In the other words these categories do not constitute any caste problem of major social significance. Of these, Kalal Sikhs, although assigned a lower position than most of the artisan castes by the Indian caste system, raised their social status, like the Ramgarhia Sikhs, by capturing political power when they formed the Ahluwalia Missal. Since then they have taken to service, primarily in the army and the police,[49] and have shaken off their dependence upon any social hierarchy. The other artisan castes of the Sikhs migrated to the. . cities in large numbers,[50] where, being in small numbers and being widely dispersed, can hardly be treated as compact groups. In the villages, too, they are similarly dispersed. As already noted, Sikhs derived from all castes, excepting the Mazhbis, interdine. Therefore, the Sikhs from artisan and menial categories face no social discrimination excepting that they find reluctance on the part of Jat, Khatri, Arora and Ramgarhia Sikhs to intermarry with them. Such intermarriages are not so common, but they are not insignificant either, the writer himself having, attended such marriage ceremonies on a number of occasions.

(D) *At the Village Level:* The constitution of village hierarchy in the Sikh villages is a heritage from the remote past, as is evidenced by the fact that, in the Indian Punjab, it is, more or less, similar to the one found in the Pakistani Punjab, which owned Islam at a very early date. In both the cases, the peasantry, whether Jat, Baloch or Pathan, is at the top of the hierarchy, and the artisans and menials are arranged in different lower grades, though under different names in some cases. When Muslim, a Jhiwar is known as Mashki, a Chamar (Cobbler) as Mochi, and a *Chuhra* (Sweeper) as Mussali. The point to be noted is that the social and occupational status of these Muslim artisans and village menials has remained much the same as it was before conversion to Islam, despite the long duration of the impact of both Islam and the Muslim rule. It is, therefore, too much to expect drastic changes in the hierarchy of the Sikh villages, or in the social status of the artisans and menials who embraced Sikhism at a very late date during the post-Khalsa period. In fact, there is, in many respects, a difference in the social status of the Sikhs drawn from the artisan and menial castes as compared to even their Muslim counterparts in the Pakistani Punjab. But, we shall confine ourselves, for the purpose of our thesis, to finding out in what respects and how far the gradation in the Sikh villages differs from the corresponding hierarchy of the Indian caste system?

There is no statistical data to determine the extent upto which the artisan and menial castes have improved their social standing within the village by becoming Sikhs. But the very fact that quite a large number of artisan and menial castes left Hindu ranks and embraced Sikhism during the post-Khalsa period shows that there was a clear advantage in doing so. Chimba Sikhs, Jhiwar Sikhs and Labana Sikhs (all from exterior castes) had hypergamous relation with their Hindu counterparts,[51] and the practice of this hypergamy was a step for breaking off from the parent castes.[52] Hutton points to the low position of the Dhobis and Chimbas who washed clothes.[53] The fact that a washerman's pursuit brings him into contact with menstrually poluted clothes is enough to make him an outcaste no less than the scavenger who removes night soil or dead bodies.[54] The Sikh Chimbas are not at all treated as out-castes. In another important field, the Sikhs from artisan castes have clearly improved their social position in the villages, because all the Sikh castes in the village, except the Mazhabis,[55] interdine. Secondly, the Sikh Jats have hypergamous relations with the lower castes of the villages. These are two basic departures from the two 'Constitutive principles' of the Indian caste system. Also, these Sikhs share absolute religious equality with the Jat Sikhs, whether in the village or outside it. These facts are enough to show that the Sikhs from artisan and menial castes have not that degree of social stigma attached to them as their counterparts have in the caste society. However, the fact remains that the Sikhs, from artisan and menial castes, so long they remain in the village, do have some social inferiority left as a hangover from their heritage of the caste society. But, there is no doubt that the Sikhs from artisan and menial castes have travelled a long distance away from the corresponding social position of their counterparts in the Indian Caste hierarchy, where they are regarded and treated as Sudras with all the well-known religious and social attendendant humiliations, discriminations and disabilities.

The real tough problem, both in its dimensions and quality, is that of Chamar Sikhs and Mazhabi Sikhs. The Chamar Sikhs and Mazhabi Sikhs constitute quite a big segment of the population in the Sikh villages. In the village gradations, they are at the lowest level, but there is no stigma of pollution in the Brahmanical sense against them. We will discuss mainly the case of Mazhabi Sikhs, as it covers that of Chamar Sikhs also, who are, in fact, a step higher than Mazhabi Sikhs according to the Brahmanical Caste hierarchy.

We again refer to the field studies of I.P. Singh (1959,61). According to him, though Mazhabis (Sikh converts from Chuhras who are the out-castes *par excellence* of the Punjab) live in a separate hamlet and have a separate well, 'yet no miasma of tuch pollution is attributed to them.' They sit among others in the temple. All Sikh *jatis,* excepting the Mazhabis, interdine. One of the granthis, the religious functionaries, of the village Daleka is a Mazhabi and is given the same respected position as is given to other granthis in the village. Though marriage is generally within the *Jati,* women may be brought in from *lower jatis.* They face little disadvantage on that account and their children suffer none. Complete abolition of *jati* division among Sikhs is still urged by itinerant preachers. On one such occasion, a Mazhabi rose to ask whether anyone in the audience would receive his daughters into their families in marriage. "Practically everybody in the audience, consisting of all castes, raised his hand". But when he asked who would give girls in marriage to his sons, no one volunteered."[57]

Let us see the points, one by one, in the order raised by I.P. Singh.

The Mazhabi Sikhs "live in a separate hamlet and have a separate well." This village configuration is inherited from the remote past and could not, and cannot, be changed without a

major resettlement and re-allotment of property, even if the Mazhabi Sikhs are accorded equal social status in the village community.

"No miasma of touch pollution is attributed to them (Mazhabi Sikhs)."[58] This is a major advance from the position of their counterparts in the caste society. "Similar purification is, strictly speaking, necessary as a result of contact with certain low castes whose traditional occupation, whether actually followed or not, or whose mode of life places them outside the pale of Hindu society. Such castes are those commonly spoken of as outcastes or untouchables.[59] Among these outcastes, Hutton counts Chamar, Dhobis, Doms and Sweeper castes. "Some castes that are themselves low are especially strict in keeping untouchables at a distance. . . . . Eleven will not touch a Bhangi (sweeper), seventeen will not touch a Chamar. . . . . sixteen will not touch a Dhobi. . . . . ."[60]

"They (Mazhabi Sikhs) sit among others in the temple", which means they are accorded religious equality. This is certainly the case at the Panthic level, where some of them become religious functionaries in the historic shrines controlled by the Panth through the S.G.P.C. The position of Mazhabi Sikhs at the religious and Panthic levels in this matter is totally different from that of the outcastes obtaining in the Hindu society. The Akali movement started when the Sikhs forced the *pujaris* at the golden temple, Amritsar, who were backed by Govt. to accept the *prasad* (the sacred food) offered by the Mazhabi Sikhs. The whole Panth backed this movement, and nobody dare challenge the religious equality accorded to the Mazhabi Sikhs in the gurdwaras ever since their control was taken away from individual Mahants. In the caste society, on the other hand, the hold of the caste orthodoxy is most entrenched at the highest religious level. It was mentioned in the Indian Parliament on March 8, 1984, that Mrs. Indira Gandhi (the Prime Minister of India) was not allowed entry into his Math (religious headquarters) by the Shankracharya simply because she had been married to a Parsee. Hutton has given a number of instances of which we give one. "In temples there are (or have been) regular scales of distance beyond which certain castes must remain… No Izhavan or Tiyan (outcastes) must come within 225 ft. of the curtain wall of the temple of Guruvayur in Malabar."[61] Mahatma Gandhi, with all his prestige, was unable to carry the Hindu society with him, and had to be content with advising the exterior castes not to attempt to gain entry to Hindu temples, as God resided in their breasts.[62] Such attempts to obtain entry by exterior castes actually led to communal violence between the caste Hindus and the outcastes at several places.[63]

"All Sikh Jatis, excepting the Mazhabis, interdine" (I.P. Singh) The main Brahmanical ideological consideration underlying absolute commensal taboos against the outcastes is the idea of impurity supposed to be inherent in them, and the way this supposed impurity is imparted to others through mere contact with them or through partaking food and drinks at their hands or in their company. Not only is the idea of pollution by touch absent among the Sikh Jats against Mazhabi Sikhs, but at the Langars the Jats actually take food prepared and served by Mazhabis; and the question of any stigma or penalty on that account does not arise at all, because the Sikh scriptures and Khalsa tradition frown upon it. In the caste society, what to speak of Jats, even the artisan and menial castes would not even entertain the idea of dining with sweepers at any place and under whatsoever circumstances. The reluctance of the Sikh Jats to interdine with the Mazhabi Sikhs at the village, although they do so knowingly at the *langars,* appears, therefore, as more a question of maintaining their social prestige in the locality, rather than unlike the caste society, that of taboo sanctified by the Hindu Dharma.

I.P. Singh writes that among Sikh Jats there is readiness to accept Mazhabi brides.[64] This automatically means preparedness to abrogate commensal barriers with respect, atleast to their Mazhabi brides, and this fact further supports the view we have expressed above. Evidently, the position of Mazhabi Sikhs is decidedly better than that of their counterparts in the caste society, where the outcastes are outside the pale of Hinduism and are not admitted to the Hindu society, "This social bar tends to foster conversion to the Sikh faith, to Islam, or to Christianity, though even after conversion the social stigma does not vanish at once."[65] "But it is not uncommonly the case that the open adoption of a definite faith, the substitution of Islam or Sikhism for that half-Hindu half-aboriginal religion which distinguishes most of these outcaste classes, is the first step made in their upward struggle."[66] The Ramdasias or the Sikh Chamars "occupy a much higher position than the Hindu Chamars."[67] In the Karnal district the mere touch of a leather-maker, washerman, barber, dyer, sweeper, defiles food.[68] [69] For the U.P. Peasant, "Nothing is worse than to lose your caste, to sit with a sweeper or to touch an impure person."[70] The workers in leather "are looked upon in detestation by orthodox Hindus and the sweepers are "regarded as the very dregs of impurity."[71] Mareno points out that the Chamar and Chuhra Sikhs had more literates than the Chamar or Chuhra Hindus,[72] and among "Chuhras of the three major religions, the Chuhra Sikhs were more frequent in dropping their traditional occupation than the Chuhra Muslims or the Chuhra Hindus. The Chuhra Sikhs also had larger numbers of people turning to agriculture",[73] which helped them in raising their social status. Mareno ascribes this elevation of the social status of the Mazhabi Sikhs partly to British patronage in enlisting them in the army. What she does not take note of is that the British followed the precedent set by Ranjit Singh, for whom the door for recruiting Mazhabi Sikhs in his army was opened by the tradition of the Sikh revolutionary struggle in which the Rangrettas had taken part as comrades in arms with their other Sikh brethren. Secondly, the number of Chamar Sikhs, who joined the Sikh society in larger numbers than Mazhabi Sikhs,[74] and whose social status was also raised on becoming Sikhs, in the imperial Army (1911) was only twenty four.[75]

(E) *Progress measured in relative terms:* Human progress is imperceptibly slow and marked by many vicissitudes. It cannot, therefore, be measured by absolute standards, and should be assessed in comparative terms.

We hardly need to recall how the Sikh revolution transformed the Sudra Jat to a Sikh Jat who regarded his status as higher than that of the Rajput. "The position of the Jats in the Hindu hierarchy varied from their position in the Sikh hierarchy. Within the framework of the Hindu caste hierarchy, the Jat Sikhs would be considered along with Jat Hindus, as belonging to the traditional classification of Sudra. Within the Sikh caste hierarchy the Jat Sikhs were at the top of the ladder."[76]

"Intermarriage between groups of Sikhs derived from Hindu castes was considered to be much freer than in the case of Muslim groups converted from Hindu castes, and of course, neither group fully observed the Hindu rules regarding inter-caste marriage."[77]

"The Jat Sikhs were known to marry outside their caste more readily than Jat Hindus."[78]

"Among the Jat Sikhs. . . there was no bar to marriage with women of lower castes. Rose informs us, and the sons would succeed equally."[79] As against it, the Hindu Jats of the Meerut Division avoid hypergamous relations with lower castes. If the caste of women is known to be low, this fact is kept secret. In the Brahmanical system, hypergamy leads to a lowering of the social status of the offspring, and the sons of Jats from *'mol-lana* marriages' in the Meerut Division are regarded lower than the sons of regular marriages."[80]

The Jat Sikhs do not have a rigid system of hypergamy in regard to their exogamous groups, the Jat Hindus have.[81]

By adopting the outward symbols of Guru Gobind Singh, "the lower caste converts attempted to avoid the disabilities of their original caste groups and to move upward, through corporate caste mobility."[82]

The Tarkhan Sikhs may be said to have made the greatest strides ahead as compared to the Tarkhan Muslims or Tarkhan Hindus[83]: and the Tarkhan Sikhs and Kalal Sikhs, compared to Tarkhan and Kalal Hindus and Muslims were generally the most literate.[84] On the other hand, there was a tendency to move backwards, in the caste society. "Till quite lately Jats and the like would smoke with him (Tarkhan) among latterly they have begun to discontinue the customs."[85]

"The Chuhra Hindu occupied the lowest place in the social scale. He was avoided by all and his touch was considered as pollution. When converted to Sikhism, he was still a village menial, but he was no longer the remover of night soil. By taking the *Pahul* (baptism), wearing his hair long and abstaining from tobacco, the Chuhra convert might change his standing in the hierarchy."[86]

"By changing their name to Ramdasias, the Chamar Sikhs could alter position in the Sikh caste hierarchy, becoming Sikhs and refusing to marry or interdine with Chamar Hindus."[87]

"While the Sikhs were becoming literate, their women were becoming particularly so. This was in accordance with the generally higher position of Sikh women, compared to their position in Hindu or Muslim society."[88] Ibbetson *(Punjab Castes,* sec. 340) corroborates our over-all view on this point as follows: —"As in all other countries and in all other nations, the graduations of social scale are fixed; but society is not solid but liquid, and portions of it are continually rising and sinking and changing as measured by that scale; and the only real difference between Indian society and that of other countries in this respect is that the liquid is much more viscous, the friction and inertia to be overcome infinitely greater, and the movement therefore far slower and more difficult in the former than in the latter. This friction and inertion are largely due to a set of artificial rules which have been grafted on the social prejudices common to all communities by the peculiar form which caste has taken the Brahmanical teachings. But there is every sign that these rules are gradually relaxing. Sikhism did much to weaken them in the centre of the Punjab, while they can hardly be said to exist on the purely Mohammadan frontier". In this context, the extract to which the proselytes drawn from the caste society in the post-revolutionary period, have been able, as compared in some respect, even to their Mohammadan counterparts in the erstwhile Punjab, to shed off their Brahmanical past is no mean achievement.

Finally we like to point out that whatever caste-like aberrations crept among the Sikhs in the post-revolutionary period are in no way a reflection upon the Sikh Revolution itself. Rather, if used as hind-sight, these shortcomings high-light the accomplishments of the movement in its revolutionary phase. The caste like prejudices are so deep-rooted and tenacious in our historical culture that they are receding at a snail's pace even under the impact of such a powerful another system as the capitalist system (with all its array money-values, technological development, democratic set-up, and mass education, etc.). And rather than surrendering before the new system of its culture, the caste is putting its own stamp on the distorted versions of democracy and

nationalism of which the capitalist system has given rise to in India. Seen in this light, were not the achievements of the Sikh Revolution in this field, so many centuries earlier, truly remarkable?

Footnotes:

1. The Terms such as Jat Sikhs, Khatri Sikhs, Mazhabi Sikhs, etc. are invalid according to Sikhism, but we are using them in this article only for the sake of convenience.
2. *Early European Accounts of the Sikhs,* edited by Ganda Singh, p. 192.
3. Ibid, p. 228.
4. Hugel, Baron Charles: *Travels in Kashmir & Punjab*, p. 20.
5. Census of India, 1921, Vol. XV, Part i. Report, pp. 184, 345 (Marenco, p. 135-7).
6. Marenco, p. 154 (Census of India Report, 1891, Vol XIX, Part 1, pp. 96, 335).
7. Marenco, p. 254.
8. Ibid, p. 256, Census of India, 1911, Vol. XIV, Part 1, Report, pp. 368, 340,163.
9. *The Siyar-ul-Mutakherin,* trans, by John Briggs, p. 73 (Read alongwith the foot-note on the second page).
10. *Haqiqat: Indian Historical Quarterly,* March 1942, Sup., p. 5.
11. Malcolm, pp. 159, 160; cited by Marenco, p. 44.
12. Marenco, p. 24.
13. Hutton, p. 71.
14. Ibid, p. 72.
15. Ibid, p. 73.
16. Ibid, p; 74.
17. Max Weber, p. 36.
18. Ibid.
19. Hutton, p. 103.
20. Senart, p. 39.
21. Max Weber, p. 36.
22. Ibib, p. 37.
23. Haqiqat: I.H.Q., March 1942 Sup., p. 17.
24. *Tarikhi-Punjab-i-Sikhan,* pp. 63-64.
25. Marenco, p. 176.
26. Ibid, p. 162.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid, p. 140.
29. Marenco, pp. 2.
30. It is not accurate if by reshuffling is meant that the frame-work of the caste system remains intact and there is only some rearrangement of caste elements within its structural limits. We have seen that, even m the post-revolutionary period, the Sikhs remain cut off from the main features of the caste system by disowning the caste ideology and the Brahmin and by keeping their distance from the caste society. Moreover, as will be seen presently, no social hierarchy, much less a caste hierarchy, between Khatri Sikhs, Arora Sikhs, Ramgarhia Sikhs and Jat Sikhs. At the village level, too it is doubtful whether the social hierarchy in the Sikhs villages can be called a caste hierarchy in the Brahmanical sense because a similar hierarchy, based primarily on occupations, exists in the over overwhelmingly Muslim Jat Villages of the Pakistani Punjab, and it is a most point whether the Jats themselves partake more of a tribe or a caste.
31. Risley, Sir Herbert: *The People of India,* p. 75.

32. Hutton, p. 72.
33. We have not come across any other 'field study' up to date relevant to our subject.
34. Singh, I.P.: Cited by Mandebaum, D.G.: *"Society in India,* ii, pp. 539-543.
35. Marenco, p. 144.
36. Marenco, pp. 118-9.
37. Marenco, p. 157.
38. Ibid, pp. 167-168.
39. Ketkar, S.V.: *History of Caste in India,* p. 117.
40. Marenco, p. 121.
41. Ibid, p. 167.
42. Ibid, p. 114.
43. Ibid, p. 141.
44. Ibid, p. 89.
45. Marenco, p. 158, 168, 170.
46. Marenco, p. 172.
47. Ibid, pp. 205-6.
48. Marenco, pp. 176-177.
49. Ibid, pp. 200-204.
50. Ibid, p. 89.
51. Ibid, pp. 210, 273.
52. Ibid, p. 273.
53. Hutton, p. 129.
54. Hutton, p. 129.
55. I.P. Singh.
56. Rose, ii, p. 361.
57. I.P. Singh, Cited by Mandebaum D.G.: *Society in India,* ii, pp. 539-543.
58. Ibid.
59. Hutton, p. 78
60. Binglay, A.H.: *History, Caste and Culture of Jats and Gujars,* p. 102.
61. Hutton, p. 82.
62. Hutton, p. 202.
63. Ibid, p. 303.
64. Singh, I.P.
65. Hutton, p. 204.
66. Ibbetson, p. 268.
67. Ibbetson, p. 300.
68. We have not been able to find any other data pertinent to our subject either in the Punjab Govt. Administration Reports or district Gazzetters of the predominantly Hindu area of erstwhile Punjab (now in Haryana), excepting a bold, but significant, statement of the fact that the influence of Hinduism increased as one moved towards Delhi Ibbetsoa, *Punjab Castes*, sec 348, supports this assessment that Brahmanic influence "is markedly strongest in the Delhi territory."
69. *Gazetteer of the Karnal Distt.,* 1918, p. 89.
70. Blunt, E.H.H.: *The Caste System of Northern India,* p. 244.
71. Crooke, W.: *The North- Western Provinces of India: Their History, Ethnology and Administration,* p. 206.
72. Marenco, p. 279.
73. Ibid, pp. 285-6.
74. Ibid, p. 176.
75. Ibid, p. 200.

76. Marenco, p. 141.
77. Hutton, J.H.: *Census of India,* 1931, Vol. 1, Part 1, Report, p. 430; Marenco, pp. 166-7.
78. Marenco, p. 168.
79. Ibid, p. 118.
80. Pardhan, M.C.: *The Political System of Jats of Northern India,* pp. 84-85.
81. Marenco, p. 117.
82. Ibid, p. 153.
83. Marenco, p. 205.
84. Ibid, p. 221.
85. Ibbetson, sec. 627.
86. Marenco, p. 130.
87. Ibid, p. 131.
88. Ibid, p. 170.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The anti-caste achievements of the Sikh movement during its revolutionary period of the Gurus and the Khalsa Dal stand out in bold relief. No Indian movement, other than the Sikh revolution, made the Khatries, Aroras, Jats, artisans, village menials and the outcastes (Chamars and sweepers), forget their caste hierarchy and merge on equal terms into a genuine brotherhood of the Khalsa; or shared political power with 'the lowest of low in Indian estimation', as was done under Banda; or enabled the Jat (on the border line of Vaisyas and Sudras) to regard his social status as higher than that of the Brahmin and the Rajput; or raised Jats, shepherds, artisans (carpenters) and the despised caste of Kalals to be the rulers of the land. These achievements compare favourably even on the world map, if it is kept in view that the social stigma attached to the outcastes in the Indian society was far worse than that from which the Negroes in the U.S.A. or the slaves elsewhere suffered.

As regards the post-revolutionary period, any assessment of the problem of caste vis-a-vis the Sikhs would remain lopsided unless a few pertinent considerations are taken into account.

It is a part of the dynamics of ideological mass upsurges that they have never lasted long; and, after reaching ideological peaks, they have always tended to revert back to the human level they started from. As their own shadows, revolutions have invariably been followed by counter-revolutions. It is due to the limitations of human nature and environmental hurdles that the transformation of human society in terms of its idealistic goals has been extremely slow, despite all the religious and other progressive movements that have taken place. In fact, the progress is so imperceptible that many sceptics doubt whether there has been any transformation of human nature at all. Social exclusiveness and other distinctions have reasserted themselves again and again, in one form or the other, and the establishment of a classless society, or a society free from the taint of social distinctions and discriminations, remains a distant dream.

In the above context, we draw attention to three points. If humanity is to ever progress towards its humanistic goals, there is no other alternative but to continue to strive towards them even though inching forward imperceptibly. Hence, it is the overall contribution, even if small, which a revolutionary movement makes towards human progress that matters more than its short-comings, or than what it fails to fulfil. The social discriminations against the Negroes prevailing at present in the U.S.A. should not blind us to the ennobling spirit of Christianity that inspired the opening of a new chapter in the social and political liberation of the Negroes there and the slaves elsewhere. Similarly, the institution of slaves survived in the Muslim world, but one must not on that account ignore one of the greatest egalitarian, social revolutions brought about by Islam in the history of the world. And, in the Indian caste context, it is no mean permanent achievement of the Sikh Revolution that the Sikh Panth remains cut-off from the most reactionary and rigid social system known to mankind. Here we have to recall again that there is a vital difference between the reactionary social force of unorganised castes or caste-like elements as such, and the potent power these become when they get woven into a system like the Indian caste system. Money economy was introduced centuries ago, but the dimensions, the range, the grip and the momentum it assumed, when it got mobilized into the modern capitalist system, could not even be imagined earlier.

Secondly, the revolutionary movements do leave behind, sometimes atleast, some residue of progress even in their post-revolutionary periods. But this residuary progress, being impalpable, due to the limitations of human nature and environmental factors, is measurable only in relative terms and not by absolute standards. We have found in our study that even the present-day Sikhs do not own the Hindu scriptures (which sanctify caste and the Levite Brahmin caste (which is the kingpin of the caste system). Whereas the Hindu temples and *Moths* are the strong holds of the caste ideology and practices, there are no religious commensal or any other social distinctions at the Panthic level. There is also no social hierarchy between Khatri Sikhs, Arora Sikhs, Jat Sikhs and Ramgarhia Sikhs. At the village level, too, the Sikhs drawn from artisan, menials and outcaste categories are decidedly well-placed socially when compared to their brethren in the corresponding Hindu social categories. Considering the slow progress man has made in shedding his prejudices, these contrasts are quite significant.

Thirdly, revolutionary movements are a perennial source of inspiration for generations to come. This legacy of theirs is invaluable for human progress, as it has, time and again, given birth to progressive revivalist movements in the societies which owned such revolutions. We noted that the number of Sikhs swelled from 2,000 guerrillas to 200,000 in 1811, to 1,853,426 in 1881 and to 4,335,771 in 1931. Obviously, this phenomenal increase was due to the large number of proselytes from the caste society. As this overwhelming proselytiszation took place during the post-revolutionary period, when mundane consideration had come to have an upper hand over the ideological pull, the caste prejudices and discriminations brought along from the caste society were retained by these proselytes more firmly. It was this spill-over of caste elements that the revivalist Singh Sabha movement had to contend with. And, the Singh Sabha movement could succeed, to the extent it did, in ladling off the caste-scum from the Sikh because it was inspired by the Sikh ideology as well as helped by the Sikh tradition that the Sikh Panth had a distinct identity of its own, separate from the caste society. The main thrust of this movement, as is well known, was *ham Hindu nahin,* i.e. we (Sikhs) are not Hindus. Whatever relative contrast in caste prejudices and distinctions between Sikh social categories and the corresponding Hindu caste categories we noted was due mainly to the revival brought about by the Singh Sabha movement. Because, the other anti-caste forces (the influences generated by the capitalist system and the Western culture) undermining caste were, and are, equally operative in both the cases. Rather, the Hindu regions of Haryana and Meerut division came under the influences of these forces earlier than the Sikh areas because of their prior conquest by the British.

The history of caste in India is crystal clear. In order to clinch the argument, we take the liberty of quoting Max Weber again. He writes; "Once established, the assimilative power of Hinduism is so great that it tends even to integrate social forms considered beyond its religious boarders. The religious movements of expressly anti-Brahmanical and anti-caste character, that is contrary to one of the fundamentals of Hinduism, have been in all essentials returned to the caste order."[1]

When Indian Christians and Indian Muslims, who are beyond the religious borders of Hinduism, could not escape their caste predilections, evidently, no anti-caste movement, which remained socially nearer the caste society, could escape integration into the caste order. In fact, the nearer it was to the caste society, the more readily it was absorbed.

To quote Max Weber again, "The process is not hard to explain. When a principled anti-caste sect recruits, former members of various Hindu castes and tears them from the contest of their

former ritualistic duties, the caste responds by ex-communicating all the sect's proselytes. Unless the sect is able to abolish the caste system altogether, instead of simply tearing some of its members, it becomes, from the standpoint of the caste system, a quasi-guest community in an ambiguous position in the prevailing Hindu order."[2] In other words, as the total abolition of the caste system could happen only through a miracle, the only alternative to integration in the caste order for the anti-caste movements was to break-away, as completely as possible, from the caste society.

Basawa, Chaitanya, Kabir and other radical Bhaktas, somehow, did not pay heed to this lesson of history that mere ideological break was not enough. To escape integration into the caste system, it was equally necessary, to break away from the caste society as well. As explained by Max Weber, the consequence was that their radicalism and their followers were easily, but irrecoverably, sucked in by the assimilative process[3] of the caste system. The Sikh Gurus, on the other hand, broke away completely from the caste system, both ideologically and organisationally, by creating the Sikh Panth outside the caste society. It was this traditional heritage that inspired and nourished the anti-caste Sikh revival under the Singh Sabha movement. That heritage the followers of radical Bhaktas did not possess.

Footnotes:

1. Max Weber, pp. 18-19.
2. Ibid.
3. *The Sikh Revolution,* pp. 83-84.

SECTION TWO

CHAPTER I

The Jats and Sikh Militarisation[1]

A recent work on the subject mentions that "the arming of the Panth could not have been the result of any decision by Guru Hargobind", and that, "the growth of militancy within the Panth must be traced primarily to the impact of Jat cultural patterns and to economic problems which prompted a militant response."[2] This proposition raises three issues—the question of leadership and initiative, the impact of Jat cultural patterns and economic problems. Here we will deal with three questions one by one.

1. The Question of Leadership

On this issue, it has to be seen whether effective leadership and initiative lay with the followers of the Gurus or the Gurus themselves. There is not a shared of evidence to suggest that any of the succeeding Gurus was nominated in consultation with, or at the suggestion of, the Sangat (the Sikh followers). The choice of the successor was always a personal decision of the nominating Guru. The faithful were expected to accept the nomination without any reservation. Even when the nomination of the ninth Guru was vaguely indicated by the word 'Baba Bakale'[3], the devout Sikhs diverted all their attention to finding out the intended Baba at Bakala. It was the founder Guru, Guru Nanak himself, who had arrived at the decision that, in order to carry forward his mission, he must have a successor. Evidently, the choice of the successor was the most important decision of the Gurus, who, whenever necessary, applied extremely rigorous tests before making the final selection. Those who, for whatever reason, did not accept the nomination, had to opt out of the main current or were discarded, as it happened in the case of the Minas, the Dhirmalias and the Ramrayyas. No deviation from the avowed ideology was ever tolerated. Baba Atal, a son of the sixth Guru, is said to have shown a miracle. It being against the Sikh ideology, the Baba was given such a stern reprimand by the Guru for his lapse that he had to give up his mortal coil. Ram Rai, who merely misquoted the Guru Granth in order to please Emperor Aurangzeb at Delhi, was completely disowned by his father, the seventh Guru. It would, therefore, be too simplistic to suggest that the fifth Guru, who laid down his life for the sake of the faith and its ideology but did not agree to change an iota of the Sikh scriptures, would choose a person who would follow an ideological line different from him; or that the sixth Guru, who had made his own son lose his life for an ideological error, would himself allow any distortion of the ideology so as to accommodate his Jat followers.

The entire Sikh history is a refutation of the assumption that the Gurus, even though not elected or selected by the Sikhs, were mere figure-heads, had no clear-cut objectives and plans for the community of which they were the accredited and unchallenged leaders, and were stampeded into unauthorised action by the will, predilections or the leanings of their followers. A glance, at the landmarks of the Sikh history will further clarify this point.

The turning points in Sikh history during the Guru period were: (i) the break with the Indian ascetic tradition, (ii) the building of a society not based on the caste structure, and (iii) the

militarisation of the Panth. All these changes were so radically opposed to the Indian religious tradition that it would be futile to suggest that a mere chance combination of ideologically indifferent elements and circumstances placed in juxtaposition could have achieved them. Only a purposeful and determined leadership could have brought about the said departures.

The decision to eschew asceticism was taken by Guru Nanak at a time when there was practically no organised Sikh *Sangat*. Kabir also preached against asceticism. Why, then were there no marked social and political growths among Kabir-Panthies similar to those of the Sikhs? This difference lay in the systematic work that the Sikh Gurus did for their ideals, as is instanced by the third Guru having deliberately separated the Sikhs from the passive recluses. Similar is the case regarding the caste system.

Kabir was unequivocal against the system of castes, but the Kabir-Panth never developed into a social entity distinct from the caste-ridden Hindus; because he showed no purposive drive or the will to organise a separate Panth outside the caste society as Guru Nanak and his successors did. The Kabir-Panth did not have to surmount more difficult circumstances than the Sikhs in overcoming caste prejudices. It is Guru Nanak who started the institution of a common kitchen for all. But, it is only the third Guru who made it obligatory for everyone to partake food from the *Langar*. This calculated but cautious approach is indicative of the hesitation or opposition expected from their rank and file to the Gurus' new line of thinking. When the tenth Guru, after quite a long interval of preparation by the previous Gurus, decided to break away completely from the caste society and created the Khalsa, there were dissensions and disputes among the Sikh ranks.[4] But, it was entirely because of the initiative, guiding influence and drive of the Gurus that the movement, despite all opposition, never swerved from its ideals.

The arming of the Sikh community was the third turning point in the Sikh history. This was a necessary sequence of Guru Arjan's decision to 'defend his faith by the open profession thereof, to raise the institution of the 'True Emperor', and to help the rebel Khusro. And yet there is an unwarranted conjecture that what Jahangir was really concerned about was the growing Jat following of the Gurus, and that the reason given by Jahangir himself in his autobiography for ordering the execution of the Guru should be discounted.

2. The Arming of the Panth and Jats

It is an accepted fact that there was a rift in the Sikh ranks at the time of Guru Arjan's succession. It is nowhere known, however, that those who opted out in favour of Prithi Chand excluded Jat Sikhs. Not far from Amritsar, at Jandiala, was the religious headquarter of Handalias, a schismatic sect of Sikhs, who were themselves Jats and had Jat following.[5] But, neither Prithi Chand nor Handalias, both of whom had setup separate Guruships in opposition to the Sikh movement, ever came into' conflict with the administration. On the other hand, they cooperated fully with the authorities. Prithi Chand was instrumental in the persecution of Guru Arjan, and, in later history, the Handalias became active agents for the persecution of the Sikhs.[6] 'The gurus of this sect (Handalias of Jandiala) took service with Ahmad Shah and drew terrible vengeance on themselves from Charat Singh when he attacked Jandiala in 1762. If the mere intrusion of Jat elements into the Sikh ranks could arouse the fears of the authorities, it should have done so in the case of Prithi Chand and Handalias too; because there is no evidence to indicate that the Jat followers of these two sects were less armed than the Jat followers of the Gurus. But, the real difference was that one party chose the path of challenging the political authority of the day, while

the other was interested in mere ritualism, without the socio-political concerns of the Sikh faith. That Guru Arjan made his momentous choice deliberately, and that it was his own, is established by the fact that he told Jahangir that he was a worshipper of the Immortal God and recognized no monarch save Him. The Sikh of Lahore wanted to compromise with the authorities by paying the fine on his behalf but he forbade them to do so.[7]

If arming the Panth was at the instance of the Jats, then why did Bhai Budha, himself the most leading Jat, remonstrate with Guru Hargobind when he found him insisting on the militarisation of the Sikhs?[8] According to Mcleod, the enrolment of Jats in large numbers to the Sikh ranks is supposed to have begun in the time of Guru Arjan. He was Guru for nearly twenty five years. Why this arming of the Panth, which Mcleod assumes must have preceded Guru Hargobind's decision, was taken notice of by Jahangir and his subordinates in the last nine months of the Guru's life and not earlier by Akbar or his administration? Akbar had liberal views on religious matters, but he could not have been less alive to any potential threat to his political authority.

Nor is there any basis for preserving that the Jats were armed but the Khatris were not. Ibbetson writes: 'The Khatri occupies a different position among the people of the Punjab from that of other mercantile castes. Superior to them in physique, in manliness and in energy, he is not, like them, a mere shop-keeper, but a direct representative of the Kshatriya of Manu.'[9] It is true that the Khatris of the present times have taken more to trade. 'They are not usually militant in their character, but are quite capable of using the sword, when necessary.'[10] Nothing prevented the Khatris from bearing arms in the earlier troubled times we are dealing with. When the Taruna Dal branch of the Khalsa Dal was reorganized into five divisions, two of these were headed by Khatris and one by a Ranghreta.[11]

Nor was Guru Hargobind's decision to arm the Sikhs taken casually or accidentally. In the first place, it was done under the specific instructions of Guru Arjan.[12] Secondly, at the very time of his installation as the Guru, it was he who directed Bhai Budha to amend the ceremony followed on such occasions and adorn him with two swords of Miri and Piri signifying the blending of religious and temporal authority. It was not customary for the *Sangat* to suggest changes or innovate ceremonies, much less a radical departure such as this one. He followed this up by founding the 'Akaal Takht', a seat of temporal authority as distinct from the place of worship alone, and set up two flags fluttering before it, one distinctly signifying religious and the other temporal authority. Such steps amounted to the declaration of a parallel government and marked an open change in the external character of the movement. Here we have the indisputable authority of Bhai Gurdas, the Guru's contemporary, that far from persuading the Guru to take these steps, there were grumblings among the Sikhs against the line taken by the Guru.[13] Even Bhai Budha, chief among the Sikhs and the Jats, initially argued against it with the Guru. There is no mention, whatsoever, that the other Jats among the Sikhs supported the Guru on this issue, or that Sikhs ever grouped themselves on caste lines to deliberate on any subject. The Masands, leaders of the local Sangats, approached the Guru's mother to dissuade the Guru from inviting trouble from the rulers. By inference, had those among the Sikhs, who were opposed to Guru Hargobind's policy of militarisation, been consulted, they would not have supported Guru Arjan in bestowing his blessings on Prince Khusro, as that would have invited the Imperial wrath. As the interval between these events is not long, it is reasonable to suppose that the composition of the *Sangat* could not having changed materially. The incident of the hawk also indicates that the initiative for challenging the political authority came from the Guru.

As to the creation of the Khalsa, Sainapat, a contemporary, and Koer Singh, a near contemporary, expressly state that the tenth Guru's step was opposed by many members of the higher castes.[14] The dramatic manner, in which the nucleus of the Khalsa, the five Beloved Ones, was chosen,[15] shows how Guru Gobind Singh had kept his counsel to himself. A surprise was sprung on the *Sangat*. Far from influencing or pressurizing the Guru to found the Khalsa, only five among all the Sikhs came forward to offer their lives, and the total number of others who were also initiated on that day was twenty-five only.[16] The creation of the Khalsa caused a serious rift among the Sikh ranks, but the Guru did not deviate from his plan. At Anandpur, on another occasion, he allowed those who wanted to discontinue the military struggle (Bedavias) to depart, while he stuck to his plan. Again, at a time when he had lost his army and had no visible chance of success left, and when some Sikhs suggested to the Guru at Muktsar to discontinue the struggle against the state and offered to bring about conciliation between him and Aurangzeb, the Guru chided them for their presumptuousness in trying to advise the Guru.[17]

These glaring facts should be enough to show that the initiative and determination for carrying on the armed struggle against the established state was invariably that of the Guru and not that of his followers. The working of a movement or a system cannot be evaluated merely by taking into account the objective or environmental factors. The Indians far outnumbered the British in the administrative machinery of the Government of India; and even in the army the ratio of the Indian soldiers to the British soldiers was roughly three to one. But, one cannot conclude from this alone that the Indians were in effective control of the Government of the country. For the purpose of any assessment, the directive purpose and the levers of power have to be correlated with the objective conditions.

3. The Jats and Arms

It has been assumed by some scholars that the Jats who used to come to Guru Arjan to pay homage must have come armed. In the first place, it was no Indian religious custom to go armed to any holy person. Rather, the general practice was, as a mark of respect, to disarm oneself beforehand. In fact, Ghulam Hussain Khan asserts that upto the time of Guru Gobind Singh 'the Sikhs wore only religious garb, without any kind of arms.'[18] Nor is it established that the bearing of arms was a Jat peculiarity. If the Mughal policy was to disarm the population, it would not have left the Jats out. If not, why other elements of the population, especially Khatris and those who later became Mazhabi Sikhs, did not also bear arms? In all probability, the exploited class of peasants were, by and large, unarmed. Arrian noted that husbandmen are not furnished with arms, nor have any military duties to perform.[19] The revenue and other demands on them were so excessive that they were compelled to sell their women, children and cattle to meet them. 'The peasants were carried off, attached to heavy iron chains, to various markets and fairs, with their poor, unhappy wives behind them, carrying their small children in their arms, all crying and lamenting their evil plight.'[20] When these peasants resisted, their uprisings misfired, because 'the purely peasant uprising of a few villages would, perhaps, have contrasted pitifully with the military efforts of even the smaller Zamindars.'[21] All this points to the probability that the common peasants were unarmed. There is, therefore, no reason to believe that the Jats who came to the Guru were differently placed. When the Sikh visitors to Guru Gobind Singh complained that they were harassed on their way by Muhammadans, the Guru advised them to come armed. That is, probably, also the reason why Guru Gobind Singh in his letters (Hukamnamas) lays special stress that his Sikhs should come armed to Anandpur. The 'Rehitnamas' also insist that the Khalsa should remain always armed.[22]

4. Aims and Objectives

There is another aspect which needs elucidation. What was the motive force, the urge, which led to the militarisation of the Sikhs?

The Sikh ideology clearly involved the finding of solutions for the multifarious socio-political problems posed by the times. It is, therefore, important to understand that in the matter of identifying the motivation, the ideology of a movement would normally furnish the closest clue for investigation and verification. In any case, there is no ground for ignoring this approach and instead for putting a premium on random speculation. A good deal of misunderstanding about the Sikh history could be avoided if the prejudice against the religious duty of fighting just political battles and the use of force for a just cause are shed. The Gurus did not 'dabble in polities' casually or accidentally, as some historians have put it; they regarded it as their duty to fight not only social injustice but also political oppression. Guru Arjan could have chosen to remain indifferent to political affairs. Similarly, Guru Hargobind could have avoided the setting up of a parallel political authority. Further, why did Guru Har Rai, if he was not working for a set objective, offer military help to Dara Shikoh, knowing full well the consequences that followed a similar step taken by Guru Arjan? Again, Guru Tegh Bahadur deliberately did not follow Aurangzeb's advice to disarm his followers.[23] Instead, he embraced martyrdom to save the oppressed Kashmir! Pandits, because the resolve to resist religious persecution and combat political oppression was a part of the Guru's programme. Guru Gobind Singh leaves no doubt about his mission of life: "I too birth in order to spread faith, save the saints, and extirpate all tyrants."[24] That his Sikhs also understood it to be so, is shown by the contemporary Sainapat, who wrote that the purpose of creating the Khalsa was 'to destroy the evil-doer and eliminate suffering.'[25] The near-contemporary Koer Singh also recorded that the Guru was born to destroy the Mughals (The tyrants of the times).[26] Even the later Sikh writings unanimously speak of this being an objective of the mission.[27] Sainapat twice makes a very significant remark that, while founding the Khalsa, the Guru at last revealed what had till then been kept a secret.[28] This indicates that the creation of the Khalsa was a pre-planned objective of the mission. All these signposts that charter the course of the Sikh movement, extending over a long period, drive one to the conclusion that the Gurus were working with the set aim of combating social and political injustice and of remoulding the social structure.

5. The Role of Jats

Before discussing the role of Jats, we should like to make one point clear. Leaving aside its interactions with the external factors, the Sikh movement in its internal development was essentially the product of the Sikh ideology. But mass movements, especially those which set before them the objective of capturing political power, cannot afford to admit only ideologically conscious members. Such persons are always in a minority. So long as the Gurus were alive, there was no question of views and interests contrary to the Sikh doctrine coming to the surface, because the word of the Guru was final. After them, there was an interplay of action and reaction between the ideologically conscious and less conscious elements, within the Sikh movement. Like all such movements, the Sikh movement may also be roughly divided into two phases, the period of ideological ascendancy and that of its decline. In the first phase, the Khalsa period, Sikh ideology remained supreme in determining the character and the direction of the movement. In the second phase, the period of Missals and Ranjit Singh, the hold of ideology on individuals and the movement, as it always happens, relaxed. With the passage of time, regression in the ideological level is not peculiar to the

Sikh movement. Revolutions have always been haunted by reaction. What we seek to emphasize is that it would be wrong to judge the history of the Khalsa phase of the Sikh movement in the light of later developments. That would be putting the cart before the horse. During the period of the Gurus, and for most part of the eighteenth century, it was the Sikh ideology that influenced the Jats and the other elements who joined the movement, and not the Jat character that moulded the movement during its revolutionary phase.

It has been assumed that the Jats must have joined in large numbers because Guru Arjan established some religious centres in the rural areas of Majha. But, there is no data to infer this, or that the Jats were the prominent element among the Sikhs when Guru Hargobind decided to militarise the movement, or that the Jats used to come armed when they came to pay homage to the Gurus. The Jats are well known for their indifference towards deep religious affairs.[29] The short interval of time between the opening of these centres and the time when the influx of Jats into the Sikh ranks is supposed to have aroused Jahangir's misgivings is not such as to favour the theory of large scale enrolment of the Jats in Sikhism. Bhai Gurdas has given the names of about 200 prominent Sikhs of Guru Arjan. Of these, ten were Brahmins, eight Jats (including two whose caste is given as Jatu, which is a Rajput sub-caste), three fishermen, three calico-printers, two chandals, two brick-layers, two Bhatts, one potter, one goldsmith and one Mohammadan. The rest either belonged to the Khatri and other castes connected with commerce, trades, etc., or did not have their castes specified.[30]

The above figures indicate clearly the caste-wise composition of Guru Arjan's important Sikhs. The constitution of the general *Sangat* is not likely to have been materially different when Guru Hargobind became the Guru and started militarisation. The number of Khatris and castes connected with commerce, professions, etc. is many times more than the combined number of Jats and lower castes. Among the latter category, the low castes out-number the Jats. The conjecture about Jats having joined Guru Arjan in large numbers is contradicted even by Mohsin Fani, who says: 'Some Sikhs of the Guru do agricultural work and some trade, and a multitude takes up service.'[31] These figures, thus, knock out the bottom of the assumption that the setting up of rural centres increased the proportion of Jats among the Guru's followers to such an extent as to cause apprehensions in Jahangir's mind. Besides, as already, stated, it would be going beyond the limits of historical propriety to reject the autobiographical testimony of Jahangir about his motives for ordering Guru Arjan's execution and instead to impute a conjectural motive to the emperor for his action.

Bhai Gurdas's testimony about the reaction of the Sikhs against the Guru's steps for militarisation has already been indicated. He does not mention many Jats in his enumeration of important Sikhs of Guru Hargobind. True, Mohsin Fani says that many Jats joined as the Guru's followers. This author was twenty years younger than Guru Hargobind, who was eleven years old when he became the Guru, took the decision to arm the Sikhs, built the Akaal Takhat and started the construction of Lohgarh fort. In view of his earlier observation about the Jats being in a minority in the time of Guru Arjan, Mohsin Fani's statement that the Jats joined as the followers of Guru Hargobind refers evidently to a period subsequent to the latter's decision to militarise the Sikhs. This would correspond to the evidence noted by Macauliffe that, on learning of the military preparation initiated by Guru Hargobind, five hundred warriors from Majha, Doaba and Malwa regions volunteered their services to the Guru.[32] Moreover, Moshin Fani's evidence has no weight compared to the authentic, reliable and contemporary evidence of Bhai Gurdas. In fact, the adversaries of Guru Hargobind derisively called his forces weak because they were composed of

barbers, washermen, cobblers, and the like.[33] In any case, how could a minority group make its impact felt to such an extent as to change overnight the very direction of the movement? It has already been made clear that the vital decisions were always made by the Gurus themselves. The *Sangat* never forced the Gurus to action. But, supposing, for argument's sake, that Guru Hargobind wanted to take into account the views of the *Sangat* in making his momentous decision, that opinion could naturally have been of the leading Sikhs, of whom Jats, according to Bhai Gurdas, formed a negligible minority. And it would be illogical to suggest that these few Jats, even if they had views different from those of other non-Jat Sikhs and the Guru, could impose their will on the rest on such a crucial and ideological issue. Actually, the Guru, according to Bhai Gurdas, stuck to his decision, despite the opposition from Baba Budha, the most revered Sikh, his mother, the Masands, and some others.

From the time of Guru Har Rai to that of Guru Gobind Singh, there was no overt military activity except that of maintaining some armed men. Before founding the Khalsa, Bhikhan Khan, an opponent of the tenth Guru, spoke contemptuously of his forces being composed of low-caste men.[34] Almost all the participants whose names are recorded in connection with the battle of Bhangani (i.e. pre-Khalsa period) were non-Jats.[35] The first three well-known martyrs from amongst the Sikhs, during Guru Tegh Bahadur's time, were Bhai Mati Das, Bhai Sati Das and Bhai Dyala, all non-Jats. Out of the five Beloved Ones (the Five Pyaras), only one was a Jat, and he too belonged to Hastinapur, outside the Punjab. According to Koer Singh, Guru Gobind Singh said: "Vaisayas, Sudras and Jats I have incorporated in the Panth."[36] Of the twentyfive Muktas mentioned by Koer Singh, three were Bhatias, five Khatris, four Aroras, three Lubanas, and two water-carriers.[37] The castes of the rest are not given. The forty men at Chamkaur included five Bhatias, four Aroras, some Khatris and Kalals (distillers), two Rangretas (sweeper caste), two Brahmins, Sangat Singh of the Trans-Indus areas, sons of the Guru and the Guru Himself.[38] Those who took part in Banda's campaign, at least in its initial stage, were recruited chiefly from the lower caste Hindus.[39] About Sarhind's conquest by Banda, Irvine writes, 'The scavengers and leather-dressers and such like persons', who were very numerous among the Sikhs, committed excesses of every description.[40]

In the face of all this, there is no basis for suggesting, much less for asserting, that the growth of militancy within the panth could be the result of the impact of the so-called Jat cultural patterns. Besides, it is not understood how these so-called Jat patterns could be so powerful as to submerge established ideological considerations and the views of the large majority of the influential participants in the Sangat. Whether or not the original Jat patterns of culture, or Jat traits, corresponded to the characteristic features of the Sikh movement, will be seen hereafter.

6. The five K's

Another hypothesis advanced is that the Khalsa accepted the five symbols (the five K's) under the influence of Jat cultural patterns. Unless the Jat cultural patterns are identified and correlated with the five 'K's or other characteristics of the movement, this view remains conjectural. For, there is no evidence to suggest that the five K's were distinct and characteristic Jat features. Mcgregor writes of the people of the Punjab who opposed Alexander when he crossed the Ravi: "Some had darts, others spears and axes. No mention is made of bows and arrows, so generally employed by the Sikhs of the present day, as weapons of war."[41] No mention is also made of the weapons used by the Jats in their encounters with Mahmood Ghaznavi, Timur and Babar. If the Kirpan (the sword) was ever used as a weapon by the Jats, Manu had specified it as Kshatriya's weapon much earlier, and its use in Indian history was more conspicuously associated with the

Rajputs. In fact, any group resorting to militancy would adopt the weapons current in the times. Then why trace the adoption by the Khalsa of this 'K' (Kirpan) to the Jat cultural patterns?

Another important 'K' is the Keshas (hair). Alberuni noted that one of the strange customs that differentiated the Hindus from the people of his own country was that the Hindus 'do not cut any of the hair of the body.' 'Formerly the whole population (of Dogars), as is the case with the poor classes still, wore their long hair over their shoulders without any covering either of sheet of turban. This shows that the keeping of hair was, if it ever was, not a Jat peculiarity. Anyhow, the point is not about keeping the hair as such, but about the sanctity that came to be attached to them; so that the Singhs would give up their lives rather than allow these to be removed.

Rose writes: 'The Jats of the Punjab cannot be said to have any distinctive tribal cults. When Muhammadans or Sikhs they follow the teachings of their creeds with varying degrees of strictness. When Hindus they are very often Sultanis or followers of the popular and wide-spread cult of Sakhi Sarwar Sultan. …… The only distinctive Jat cults are tribal. . . Among the Hindu and Sikh Jats, especially in the north-central and central Districts, a form of ancestor worship, called *Jathera,* is common.[42] Sikhism which transcends tribal consciousness and customs, is opposed to all forms of ancestor-worship, and the position of the non-Jats was not so subservient in the Panth as to enable the Jats to impose their cultural patterns, if any, on the Panth against known Sikh tenets. In any case, this Jathera-worship, or any other similar tribal cult, can in no way be linked with the sanctity attached by the Sikhs to any of the five 'K's. About the Sultani cult, the District Gazetteer of Amritsar (1892-93, p. 50) records that 'Sikh Jats freely intermarry with Sultani Jats, but will not eat cooked food from their houses, or share any food with them. Even in one family, a member who has become a Sikh will eat separately from other member who has remained a Sultani. This further illustrates that Sikhism, far from borrowing Jat cults, was a force which worked to draw the Jat Sikhs away from the cults prevalent among the Hindu Jats.

Had there been any substance in Mcleod's conjectural hypothesis, how would one explain the total disappearance of these cultural symbols, supposed to have been borrowed by the Sikhs from Jats, from amongst the non-Sikh Jats of the Punjab and the neighbouring states? How, during the days of the general persecution of the Singhs, only the Khalsa of genuine faith retained their hair at the cost of their lives, while other Jats, who joined them for temporary gains, had no compunction to remove these in order to save their skins? How, in the modern times, the Jats among the Sikhs, comparatively speaking, have become lax in keeping their hair and the non-Jats Sikhs have grown strict in their adherence to these symbols? Further, whether the five 'K's were borrowed by the Panth from the Jats or not is not the relevant point; because symbols by themselves do not lead to anything, much less to militancy. Revolutionary movements are not made by the symbols; it is such movements that give meaningful significance to them.

Unfortunately, the above hypothesis completely misses the significance of the prescription of the five 'K's. The Guru's step was clearly aimed not only at carving out a new community, distinct from the others, with its own cultural patterns, socio-religious ideology, and approach to life, but also at cutting away the members of this community from their previous moorings and affinities so as to avoid reversionary trends. That is why, at the time of the baptism ceremony, one of the injunctions enjoins the baptised Sikhs to destroy all connections with previous religious systems, customs, rituals, occupational stigmas, etc., There is a clear record of the Guru's determination to create a new and distinguishable people. On being told that few Sikhs appeared to have stood by Guru Tegh Bahadur at the time of his martyrdom because there was no distinguishing mark on a

Sikh, the Guru is reported to have said: "I will assign such distinguishing marks to the Sikhs that a Sikh present even among thousands will not be able to conceal himself."[43] The Khalsa were, thus, given a new uniform which nowhere existed before.

Undoubtedly, the contribution of the Jats, with their fighting qualities, to the Sikh struggle is very valuable, but, the contribution of the castes lower than the Jats has also been quite significant during the Khalsa or the revolutionary phase of the movement. If the inspiration of the Sikh ideology could turn these people, who had been rendered spineless by the caste system for centuries, into a fighting class, the Sikh movement needed no goading from the Jats for its militarisation. Also, if the bearing of arms and martial qualities are the only requirements for shaping a revolutionary movement, why could not the Jats produce one elsewhere?

7. Response to Economic Problems

It has also been suggested that the militarisation of the Sikh movement was the result of the economic pressure. Agrarian troubles were no doubt one of the factors for the downfall of the Mughal empire. Religious prosecution of non-Muslims was another reason. Rattan Singh Bhangu has not ignored the fact that those who were oppressed by the State or the Administration joined the Khalsa.[44] But the question is, why, in the Punjab, the Khalsa alone became the centre of resistance? Why did the Kashmir! Pandits travel all the way to Anandpur? Why did the Jats of Haryana, who were in no way less oppressed, build no resistance on their own? If economic causes or religious persecution alone, without an ideology, an oriented leadership and an organization, could give rise to movements, then there should have been a general revolt throughout the length and' breadth of the country. But nothing of the kind happened.

There were, in broad terms, four types of peasant upheavals. Firstly, there were the uprisings which the common exploited peasants undertook on their own. These were sporadic and unorganised, and instead of bearing any fruit invited further oppression and misery. Secondly, there were peasant revolts built around the leadership of Zamindars, as distinguished from Jagirdars, which were localized affairs. These, when successful, either served the personal ends of the local Zamindars or ended merely in plunderings. If the Zamindars could unite for a common purpose, they would have become a force to reckon with, because the total number of their armed retainers, as estimated by Abul-Fazl, was 44 Lakhs. The third category was the successful revolt of Bharatpur Jats. It had only the limited objective of establishing the rule of a Jat family. The fourth category comprised the Satnami revolt and the Sikh movement, where in, along with the peasants, the other lower castes also played a major role. Here also, the Satnami revolt was in the nature of an ephemeral flare-up.[45] It collapsed suddenly and did not carry on any sustained struggle, because it lacked ideology, pre-planned objectives and a determined leadership. It was only in the Sikh movement that we find the combination of objective conditions with a distinct ideology, clear cut revolutionary aims to be achieved, and an inspired and determined leadership. This is the reason why its course and character were different from those of others and lasted for over three generations even after the demise of Guru Gobind Singh. It is, therefore, idle to trace the source of a revolutionary movement, divorced from its ideology and leadership, to sheer economic causes.

8. The Devi Cult, the Jats and the Khalsa

Another conjecture made by some of the Western scholars is that the synthesis of the Devi cult with the Jat culture had much to do with the evolution of the militancy in the Panth, in inspiring it to deeds of valour and in playing a determining role in its history.[46]

This suggestion is self-contradictory. For, while, on the one hand, it completely ignores the basic role played by the Guru's ideology in the development of militancy in the Panth and the creation of the Khalsa, on the other hand, it banks on an alien religious inspiration that goaded the Jats to militarize the movement and to fight zealously for socio-religious causes. In other words, the argument concedes that the Jat culture, left to itself, was incapable of galvanizing the Jats for a purposeful military action. The assumption is not only very conjectural, but misses all the established facts:

(i) Guru Hargobind went to Kiratpur after having finished all his battles in the plains. So the question of Jat Sikhs or Guru Hargobind getting inspiration from the Devi cult becomes an anachronism.

(ii) When Guru Hargobind was at Kiratpur, one Sikh named Bahiro cut off the nose of the Devi's idol. When the hill Raja complained to the Guru of this, the Sikh's answer was, how the Devi, that could not protect herself, could save others.[47] This indicates what respect the Sikhs had for the Devi.

(iii) The news-writer, who reported to the emperor about the founding of the Khalsa, specifically mentioned Durga as one of the deities which the Guru forbade the Sikhs from paying homage to. [48]

(iv) The various forms of Devi are the consorts of Siva; hence Devi-worship cannot be advocated by one who decries Siva worship. There are many verses of Guru Gobind Singh to this effect. [49]

(v) If the number of important temples built and fairs held in honour of the various forms of Devi are an indication of the prevalence of the Devi cult, it should be the least common among the Jats of the Sikh region because such temples and fairs are the most common in the hilly tracts of the Himachal. Next comes Haryana. But in the Sikh Jat tract there are only two such important temples. The votaries of one of them at Batala are confined to a sub-caste of Khatris;[50] while, the second one, the Bhaddar Kali temple at Niazbeg, is about 7 miles from Lahore and has only a local reputation.[51] The fair which was held there was attended by people who collected from Amritsar and Lahore towns and the neighbouring villages.[52] As this part of Lahore district is not a Sikh majority area (for that reason it forms a part of Pakistan), it is not unreasonable to surmise that the number of the Jat Sikhs attending this fair was never significant. As against this, there are many important Devi temples scattered all over the eastern districts (i.e. Haryana).[53] Rose, who has not omitted to note even petty cultural practices like those of the Sikh water-carriers worshipping Bhairo,[54] makes no mention that Sikh Jats worship Devis.

If the cult of Devi had inspired the Jats who visited Anandpur, how is it that it disappeared altogether from among them afterwards? If the Sikh water-carriers, who form a microscopic minority among the Sikh population, could retain Bhairo worship, why could not the Jats retain Devi worship? Also, if the Rajputs of hilly Punjab, which is the home of Devi cult, and the Hindu

Jats of Haryana, where the Devi cult is wide spread, could not be inspired by it to take up arms for higher religious or political ends how is it that it inspired only the Sikh Jats, whose visits to Kiratpur or Anandpur to pay their respects to the Guru were very short and occasional?

Footnotes:

1. It is against the Sikh religion to differentiate Sikhs in terms of castes, but we are constrained to do so in order to meet arguments from scholars who have tried to explain militarisation of the Sikh movement because "Jat cultural patterns." Therefore, wherever we indicate the caste of a Sikh, it should be taken to mean the original stock from which he was derived.
2. Mcleod, W.H.: *The Evolution of the Sikh Community,* pp. 12, 13.
3. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion,* iv, p. 329.
4. *Sri Gur Sobha,* pp. 28, 33, 43-46.
5. *Punjab District Gazetteer, Amritsar District,* 1914, 1932.
6. Ibid; Bhangu, p. 269; Rose, i. p. 702.
7. Macauliffe, iii, pp. 91-92.
8. Ibid, iv, p. 4.
9. Ibbetson, *Punjab Castes,* sec, 539.
10. Ibid.
11. Bhangu, *Prachin Panth Parkash,* p. 216.
12. Maculiffe, iii, p. 99.
13. Bhai Gurdas, Var. 26, Pauri, 24.
14. *Sri Gur Sobha.* p. 33, Koer Singh, pp. 132-3.
15. Koer Singh, *Gurbilas Patshahi Das,* pp. 127-128.
16. Ibid, p. 134.
17. Bhai Santokh Singh: *Sri Gur Pratap Suraj Granth,* edited by Bhai Vir Singh, Vol. 14, p. 6027.
18. *The Siyar-ul-Mutakherin,* trans. by John Briggs, p. 75.
19. M'Crindle, J.W.: *I.A.,* Vol 5 (1876).
20. Manrique: 11, p. 272; Bernier, p. 205 (cited by Irfan Habib: *Enquiry,* No. 2 (1959), Delhi, p. 89).
21. Irfan Habib, *Enquiry,* No. 2, p. 92.
22. Rehatname, p. 45.
23. Haqiqat: *I.H.Q.,* March 1942 sup., p. 4.
24. Macauliffe, v, p. 301.
25. *Sri Gtir Sobha,* p. 21.
26. Koer Singh, p. 67.
27. Bhai Gurdas, *Var* 41: *Rehatname,* pp. 47, 115, 117.
28. *Sri Gur Sobha,* pp. 21, 32.
29. *Jullundur District Gazetteer,* 1904, Part A, p. 121, Crooke, W.: *Races of Northern India,* p. 93; *Gurgaon Distt, Gazetteer,* 1883-84, p. 41.
30. Bhai Gurdas, *Var* 11.
31. *Dabistan,* trans. by Ganda Singh: The *Punjab Past and Present.* Vol. iii (1969), p. 53.
32. *Curbilas Chevin Patshahi,* p. 143; Macauliffe, iv, p. 4.
33. Macauliffe, iv. pp. 107, 197.
34. Koer Singh, p. 90.
35. *Bichitar Natak.*
36. Koer Singh, p. 131.
37. Ibid, p. 134.

38. Ibid, p. 196.
39. Irvine, W.: *Later Mughals,* i, p. 94; Khafi Khan; Elliot and Dowson: The *History of India as told by its own Historians,* Vol. vii, p. 419.
40. Irvine, i, p. 96.
41. M. Gregor, W.L.: The *History of the Sikhs,* pp. 22-3.
42. Rose, *A Glossary of Tribes, etc.,* ii, p. 371.
43. Mcleod, W.H.: *The Evolution of the Sikh Community,* pp. 98-100.
44. Bhangu, Rattan Singh: *Prachin Panth Parkash,* pp. 49, 305.
45. Sarkar, Jadunath: *History of Aurangzeb,* iii, pp. 298-301.
46. Mcleod, p. 13.
47. Macauliffe, iv, p. 218; *Dabistan,* pp. 66-68.
48. Macauliffe, v, p. 94.
49. Ibid, pp. 262, 307.
50. Rose, i, p. 326.
51. Rose, Vol. 1, p. 323.
52. *Gazetteer of Lahore District* (1883-84), p. 60.
53. Rose, Vol. 1, pp. 323-24, 350-55.
54. Ibid, p. 317.

CHAPTER II

Wider Context

It is a normal procedure of historiography to view movements in the broader historical and social perspective of their times. To judge certain features of a movement in isolation, by not coordinating them with the context of the movement as a whole, or by divorcing them from their historical background, is bound to lead to a distorted image. The protagonists of the hypothesis that the Sikh movement, in its genesis and development, was a product of the Jat traits, have signally failed to adopt the normal methodology accepted by historians. In fact, they have not even attempted to correlate the Jat characteristics, which are supposed to have played such a determinative role, with the initiation and the growth of Sikh militancy. The role of Jat characteristics in the Sikh movement assumes an appropriate perspective only if it is viewed in the light of the traits and political activities of the peasantry in general and of the Jats of regions other than that of the Sikh tract in particular. Also the positive or negative relationship of Jat characteristics, if any, with the main features of the Sikh Revolution has to be proved or disproved. In this section, we propose to do this, under the following heads: 1. Organization; 2. Lack of Solidarity; 3. Egalitarianism; 4. The Sikh Egalitarian Revolution; 5. Lack of political initiative and aspirations among peasants and Jats; 6. Ideology; 7. Conclusion.

But, before we come to that, we should be absolutely clear on one point. We are concerned only with the revolutionary Sikh movement. The fallacy of those, who argue that the militarisation of the Sikh movement was initiated and reinforced by the influx into it of a large number of Jats, arises in no small measure from their logic which fails to distinguish between the revolutionary and post-revolutionary phases of the movement. They try to judge the former in the light of the latter. By following a similar line of thinking, one can as well not demarcate between the remarkably egalitarian era of Prophet Muhammed and his immediate deputies on the one hand and on the other, that of the Muslim polity when it degenerated into a full-fledged autocracy; or between the stirring events of the French Revolution proper, and its sequel the Bonaparte regime; or, for that matter, between the revolutionary and post-revolutionary phases of any revolutionary movement. Ups and downs are common to all ideologically inspired upsurges, because of the inherent human limitation and environmental hurdles. Progress towards idealistic human goals has never been linear; counter-revolution has followed revolution. There is a marked behavioural contrast when an individual, or a group, or a movement, is inspired by ideological pursuits, and when it is governed by mundane considerations. The study that is presented hereafter bears this out. There is a world of difference between the Jats who joined the Sikh revolution under the inspiration of the Sikh ideology and those who did not; or, within the same movement, between those who were ideologically motivated and others who were not; or between the same individual or a group, at different periods, when it had the ideological inspiration and when it lost it. Otherwise, there is not much of a basic difference between the character of one Jat and another, or, for that matter between that of human-beings the world over. Therefore, it would be as illogical to interpret the Sikh Revolution in terms of its period of decline as it would be to ascribe the rise of waves in an ocean to the very gravitational forces that bring them down to their original level.

1. Organisation

Organizations are the channels through which the ideologies of movements flow, and these also help to give the movements their shape and direction. The structural frame-work of a movement can, therefore, be a quite useful clue in reflecting its content. Let us compare the Jat typical organization with that of the Khalsa and see in what way it supports our conclusions.

(a) *Jat organization*

'The Jats are a tribe so widespread and so numerous as to be almost a nation, counting 7,086,100 souls, having community of blood, community of language, common tradition and also a common religion for not less than 1,500 years.[1] Ethnic affinity and community of language, tradition and religion are great potent factors in creating and strengthening social cohesiveness. But, in the case of Jats, the term 'Jat' represented more a common denomination rather than a commonly shared social or political solidarity. They never approached even that degree of amorphous awareness of common nationality which the Marathas had all along before Shivaji gave it a definite shape. Recorded history upto the time of Gokala, Raja Ram and Churaman does not indicate any joint political venture on the part of the Jats beyond the tribal or clannish level. In fact, the tribal ties had loosened long ago. What did bind effectively together the Jat groups emotionally, socially or politically, where and when it did, were the ties of the clan, the sept or the *gotra* among them.

The most prominent and effective unit of social organization among the Jats that is recorded is the *Khap* (Khap may be approximately defined as a group of villages occupied by a single Jat clan within a contiguous area.) in the Merrut division, where the clannish feeling among Jats is considerably strong.[2] Here most of the Jat clans have their own *Khaps*[3], which have their own *Khap* councils. These councils have only adjudicative authority and meet when called upon to deliberate or decide upon specific issues. The judges on these councils are elected for a particular meeting and purpose, and do not hold office on a permanent basis or for a prescribed term.[4] No single person or body of persons is vested with executive or administrative authority over the whole clan.[5] It does not belong to individual leaders either, and usurped authority is practically non-existent.[6] During the time of Muslim religious persecution ,these *Khaps* became champions for protecting religious faith;[7] and raised large standing armies for that purpose[8] and for protecting the area from outside invasion[9]. Although these *Khaps* councils 'never succeeded completely in defending the political freedom of the *Khaps* of the Meerut Division, they did succeed in getting some kind of political recognition from the Delhi Court, several concessions in the field of internal autonomy, religious freedom and relief from various kinds of taxes.[10] But, what is of importance for our consideration is that these *Khap* councils remained absorbed with their local problems and never ventured into the field of establishing a political domain of their own, even at a time when the Mughal Empire was tottering and falling towards its fall and even when European adventurers were carving out, single-handed, their principalities in the nearby region.

Outside the Meerut division, in the adjoining area on the other side of the Jamuna, a primary sub-division of tribes in the Karnal district is into *thapas* or *thambas*.[11] In the Rohtak district, within the *pargnas* were the *tappas,* the boundaries of some of which followed closely the distribution of tribes.[12] However, in the Karnal and Rohtak districts, there is no record of these *thapas, thambas* or *tappas,* or of any other common councils beyond the village level having even adjudicatory functions corresponding to those of the *Khap* councils. The people belonging to these *thapas* or *tappas* met only for ceremonial purposes. Beyond that towards the West, *thapas,* or *thambas* or *tappas,* or some such clannish assemblies other than the village *panchayats,* are not mentioned at all. 'Large tracts of country, each occupied by villages of one *got,* are not formed here (Jullundur district) as they are in other parts of the country.'[13] 'To the east of the district (Ludhiana), and especially in the Samrala

tehsil, the multitude of "Gots" amongst the Hindu Jat is a very remarkable feature. Not only do adjoining villages belong to different "Gots", but inside each village will generally be found two or three Pattis of distinct origin. . . . . To the south and west, on the other hand, we do find that the Jats in some instances came in bodies; and villages belonging to the same "Got" lie in groups or within short distances from each other. . . . . But the rule throughout the district is the variety of "Gots", and the few groups of villages that there are, belonging to one "Got", are the exception."[14] It is only in the Ferozepur district that the Jats of Sidhu and Brar *gots* occupy large contiguous areas; but here the Jat clans were in a state of continuous flux, engaged in ousting one another and leaving little time for any stable social organization to strike roots in the soil. One branch of the Sidhu Brars rapidly gained a footing in the south of Gill country, and 'drove the former inhabitants northwards, taking possession of their principal places.' [15] There was a long struggle for possession of the country between the Brars and the Bhattis. 'The Man Bhullars greatly oppressed the Brars in the *tappa* (Name given to a tract of the district.). Duni Chand appealed to Guru Har Rai who lived at Gurusar. The guru advised the Bhullars to make peace. The descendents ofMohan, despite continued struggle with the Faridkot Brars, retained possession of the Bagha territory[16] 'The Mohanbi branch of the clan (Brars) are said to have founded Mahraj about the year 1650 after struggle with the Mans and Bhullars, who then held that tract. The second influx seems to have taken place some fifty years later when the Gills were driven out of the Bagha Purana *ilaka* and their city of Danda Manda was destroyed.'[17] About the position of *the gots* of jats in Amritsar district, we shall refer to it later.

Two important points emerge from the facts stated above. The most highly evolved typical Jat organizational social unit, the *Khap,* had no political ambitions. At the most, it was concerned with the preservation of internal harmony and the rights of its members, or defence from outside aggression. Secondly, as one proceeds to the Punjab proper, even this *Khap, thamba* or *tappa* type of social organization is absent. 'The Jats of Karnal are notorious for their independence, acknowledging to a less degree than any other caste the authority of the tribal headman.[18] Describing the Jat of the Sikh tract in the Punjab, Ibbetson writes: 'The Jat is of all the Punjab races the most impatient of tribal or communal control, and the one which asserts the freedom of the individual most strongly.'[19] In other words, there are no signs of any shared motivation which could urge the Jats for sustained joint action, much less for a political adventure. And the Jats of the Sikh tract lacked even the *gotra* solidarity beyond the village level.

(b) *Sikh Organization*

Guru Nanak spent most of his time in missionary tours to far flung places within the country and outside it. He could not have completed his extensive itinerary had he remained for long at one place. In other words, he could not have come in long contact with many people in one limited region. It is only towards the fag end of his life that he settled at Kartarpur, which became the first permanent centre to which the disciples of the Guru were drawn. The latter Gurus established similar permanent centres, but the main organizational pattern of the Sikh Panth throughout the Guru period appears to have remained much the same. The Sikhs were scattered here and there like tiny dots in the vast mass of non-Sikh population. They had their local centres called Dharmasalas, later called Gurdwaras, where they would meet for religious functions; and went only occasionally to pay their homage to the Gurus at any of their permanent centres or wherever the Gurus happened to be. The Sikh congregation which met at a Dharmasala was called a *Sangat.* and this Sangat was the biggest local unit of the Sikh organization. These *Sangats* were connected with one another more through the Gurus or their deputies in the illaqa, the Masands, than through direct contact with one another.

There were no mass conversions to Sikhism during the revolutionary period of entire clans, or of the population of contiguous area, as it happened in the case of Islam in Sindh, Pakistan, Punjab and Bangla Desh. This is clear from the fact that, before the large scale migration of people on the creation of Pakistan disturbed the previous equilibrium of population in the Punjab, the Sikhs were in absolute majority only in the Moga tehsil of Ferozepur district. The reason is obvious. Mass conversions to Islam took place either under pressure of the Muslim administration, or due to the allurement of becoming the coreligionists of the rulers. Sikhism at that time held out no such prospects. It was a rebel religion. To become a Sikh was to invite hostility both of the caste society and of the established political order. Therefore, by and large, only those people joined the Sikh ranks for whom the Sikh religion and its ideology had a special appeal.

Bhai Gurdas has given the names of about 200 prominent Sikhs upto the time of the Sixth Guru in the *Var* Eleven. In a number of cases he has given their places of residence as well. He mentions only two regions, Kashmir and Punjab, and not a part or a contiguous area of the latter, like Manjha or Malwa, but the Punjab as a whole. Besides these regions, he names 26 places (mostly towns) to which those Sikhs belonged, including such far flung places as Kabul, Lahore, Patti, Sarhind, Thanesar, Delhi, Agra, Gwalior, Ujjain, Buhranpur, Gujarat, Lucknow, Paryag, Jaunpur, Patna and Dhacca (Dacca in East Bengal). Another significant feature of the break-up of Bhai Gurdas's figures is that the group of Sikhs shown as belonging to a particular place are not shown as derived from only one caste or clan. If his *pauris* (stanzas) are taken as separate units, either the clans or castes are not mentioned at all, or the Sikhs mentioned in one stanza *(pauri)* are in composite groups derived from different castes. Bhai Gurdas's figures no doubt relate only to prominent Sikhs and these may also be approximate. But, these do support the view that people joined the Sikh ranks more as individuals rather than as clusters of castes or clans; and that the Sikhs, who were not very numerous, were spread over a large part not only of the Punjab but of India. In other words, what bound the Sikhs together, in the Sikh Panth was the primacy of the Sikh ideals rather than any caste, clan or regional interests and sentiments.

The militarisation of the Sikhs by Guru Hargobind is an important land-mark in the history of the Sikh movement, but the Guru's battles were more in the nature of rehearsal for the events to come. The real organizational base of the revolutionary struggle was laid down by the creation of the Khalsa; recruitment to which was strictly on an individual and voluntary basis, and limited to individuals who swore by the Khalsa ideals. No caste or clan loyalties were involved; because no one could become a member of the Khalsa brotherhood without being baptized, and no one could be baptized without taking the five vows which required the rejection of previous faiths *(Dharm-nas)* as well as caste and clan affiliations and practices *(Kul-nas* and *Karm-nas). Kul-nas* meant the obliteration of all previous lineage affiliations based on family or clan; and "Karm-nas' meant obliteration of distinctions based on occupations. *Karm-nas* together with 'Kul-nas' disavowed all caste distinctions based on occupation and heredity. In actual working also, as we shall see, the Khalsa was constituted of people drawn from all castes, clans and regions, including "The lowest of low in Indian estimation".

The third major stage in the growth of the Sikh organization is the formation of Misals. The Misal period coincides with the weakening of the hold of the Sikh ideology within the Panth. But, even then the Misals were not formed on the basis of caste or clan affiliations. There is not one Misal which is named after the name of a caste or a clan, and members of all Missals were' free at all times to leave one Misal and join another at their own sweet will. *Manjha* (that part of the present

Amritsar district lying south of the old Mughal G.T. Road which passed through Govindwal, Taran Taran and Sarai Amanat Khan to join Lahore) was the heart of the Sikh Revolution. The Sandhu Jats are the strongest *got* in the district and muster especially strong in the south-west corner of Taran Taran pargana.[20] But, this is the part of the Manjha which was in the control of the Bhangi Misal whose leaders belonged to Dhillon *got*,[21] a *got* which is less numerous in the district than the Sandhus.[22] The Ahluwalias originally belonged to the despised Sudra caste of *Kalals,* or distillers of spirit, and they were in microscopic numbers (only 2121) in the Amritsar district.[23] Yet, their Misal occupied a part of *Manjha*.[24] Similarly, Ramgarhias (so named because the leader belonged to Ramgarh) belonging originally to the carpenter caste, held an important part of the Amritsar districts[25]; although they formed a minority among the Sikhs, and were thinly spread as village artisans over the whole rural Sikh tract with a few families being located in almost every village. All these developments could not have taken place had clannish or caste sentiment been the basis of Misal organization. This also coincides with the position, which has been noted, that there were no organizations beyond the village *panchayats* among the Jats, whether Sikh or non-Sikh, in the Sikh tract, corresponding to the *Khaps, thambas,* or *tappas* in the Meerut Division and the Haryana region.

(c) *Comments*

With the loosening of tribal ties, which happened long ago, the highest form of effective organization retained by the purely Jat consciousness was at the *gotra* level. The history of the Jats does not reveal any other form of organization. Where and when the *gotra* affiliation weakened, as it happened in the Sikh tract, this development further helped the process of rendering the Jats a socially and politically incoherent mass. The Jat, as a Jat, knows no other bond to articulate his Jat consciousness. There is not one instance throughout the Sikh movement, including its post-revolutionary phase, when the Jats within it joined hands together on *gotra* or Jat lines. Further, we have seen that people, (whether Jat or non-Jat were drawn to the movement by its ideology as individuals rather than as clusters of castes or clans. They had to take the vows of *Kul-nas* and *Karm-nas* when they were baptized into the Khalsa brotherhood. In the face of all this, it becomes difficult to comprehend how the mere presence in the movement of Jats in the large numbers (assuming this to be so for the sake of argument) enabled them to develop a comprehensive *supra-gotra* Jat consciousness, which would have been indispensable for giving the movement, as alleged, a definite turn, and then maintaining that new direction despite several ups and downs. Such a phenomenon, if it did happen, has to be delineated and not just assumed, especially because it is incongruous with the history of the Jats. There is nothing common between the Jat units of organization, based on *gotra* and regional contiguity, and the Sikh *Sangats*, comprising members drawn from all castes and widely dispersed in northern India. Similarly, there is no organizational correspondence between the Jat *gotra* organization and the Khalsa, whose doors were always open to all, irrespective of the considerations of caste or clan. At the time of the creation of the Khalsa, there was only one Jat among the five Beloved Ones; and, at the time of the reorganization of the Taruna Khalsa Dal, only two of the five divisions were headed by leaders drawn from the Jat stock. At one time, the leader of the entire Khalsa body was Banda, and, at another time, Jassa Singh Kalal, both non-Jats. We have noted that there were no *gotra* organisations among the Jats of the Sikh tract and that the Khalsa had no organisational roots in the Jat *gotra* affiliations. Therefore, it becomes highly conjectural to assume that Jat consciousness managed to turn Sikh militancy according to its own proclivities, or to its own advantage without having effective control either on the leadership, or the organizational composition and set up of the Khalsa. Not only the Jats, but the peasantry in general, left to themselves, have no where else, as it will be seen, have shown much aptitude for political initiative or ambitions.

2. Lack of Solidarity

The spirit of factiousness among the Jats is proverbial. It is probably a hang-over of their tribal heritage; for, in defining a tribe, it is the sharing of blood-feuds which is given pride of place. 'Gurgaon belongs to that part of the Punjab where the, true village community has survived in a much more complete form than elsewhere.[26] In the Rohtak district, 'The village communities are of as perfect a type as any in India. . . . . .'[27] This could lead to a false impression of Jat solidarity beyond the village level as well. The facts speak otherwise. In Gurgaon district, during the Mutiny, 'no sooner was the pressure of our (British) rule removed, than old feuds, which had apparently long been buried, burst into life.' There was a long standing strife between a tribe of Jats, known as Surot, and another tribe of Jats known as Rawats. All the villages of the Chirkot clan (a Meo clan) and some of the other villages of the neighbourhood were divided into two factions.[28] In the Rohtak district, during the Mutiny, 'The people gave themselves upto the enjoyment of fierce feuds. The Dahiya and Dalol Jats in Sampla engaged in perpetual quarrels; The Ahlawat Jats attacked Sampla. In Guhana, Ahulana attacked Samri and Barodeh; Madinah attacked Kathurs; Butanah destroyed Naran Khera; Sanghi & Khirwali were engaged in one continuous skirmish; the Mehim villagers, now in Hissar, made a general attack on those on the present west border of Rohtak; and the Ranghars plundered every one indifferently. . . . . for three whole months the district presented one long scene of mad rioting.'[29] In Karnal district, 'Every village was protected by brick forts and surrounded by a deep ditch and. a wall of some sort; every village was at deadly enmity with its neighbours; and there are several instances where two contiguous villages, in memory of a blood feud dating from the Maratha times, refuse to drink each other's water, though otherwise on friendly terms.'[30] This is about the region where the village communities were perfect and clannish ties strong,[31] and where there existed some sort of ceremonial ties between members of the same *thapa or tappa.* Regarding the spirit of factionalism among the Jats in the Sikh tract, the author of *'Robber Noblemen'* has built round it a whole thesis for her book; and we have already referred to a continuous struggle between Jat clans in the Ferozepur district for the possession of land there.

As against it, there is not a single instance mentioned during the long revolutionary phase of the movement (a period of about 275 years starting from the missionary tours of Guru Nanak upto the establishment of the Misals), where there was any grouping of Sikhs along caste or clan lines, or of factionalism among them on caste or clan basis. On the contrary, there was exemplary fraternization among Sikhs drawn from all castes and clans (as seen in the preceding article). In fact, the Khalsa could not have achieved the military and political success it did without a commonly shared sentiment of solidarity among its members, because this solidarity was even more necessary than the organisational set up for the success of its mission. This fraternal solidarity within the Sikh Panth or the Khalsa, attested by many non-Sikh authorities, could by no stretch of imagination be reconciled with one of the most prominent traits of the Jats—their traditional factionalism.

3. Egalitarianism

Besides their martial qualities, it is the egalitarian spirit among the Jats which has misled historians to characterize the Sikh movement in terms of Jat traits. They have failed to grasp that there is a qualitative difference between Jat and Khalsa egalitarianisms.

(a) Jat Egalitarianism

The egalitarian spirit of the Jats is undoubted. It is recognized from the time of the earliest historians, who took notice of them, to the time of the British administrators who are unanimous in

their opinion on this point. This spirit of equality among Jats was reinforced by the *bhaichara* system of land tenure. In this system "land was equally divided among the lineages of the founding ancestors or original conquerors. This system of land tenure was a Jat idea, because Jats did not acknowledge the right of their chiefs to the sole proprietorship of the land conquered and colonized by them."[32] 'Not only does the *bhaichara* land tenure system maintain the egalitarian structure of Jat society in the economic field, but the concept of *bhaichara* is extended to the kinship, social and political.'[33] However, this egalitarianism of the Jats was confined only to within their own ranks. Otherwise this too, acquired important qualifications.

(i) *Attitude towards higher castes*

The Jats, and the Indian peasantry in general, submitted to the Brahmanical caste hegemony and non-Jat rule without ever questioning its validity. Their very profession, tilling the land, was held as degrading. 'Chach, the Brahman usurper of Sind, humiliated the Jats and Lohanas. He compelled them to agree to carry only sham swords; to wear no undergarments or shawl, velvet or silk. . . . . ; to put no saddles on their horses; to keep their heads and feet uncovered; to take their dogs with , them when they went out. . . . . .'[34] Muhammad bin Qasim maintained these regulations.[35] Amran, the Barmecide governor of the Indian frontier, summoned the Jats to Alrur, where he sealed their hands, took from them the jizya or poll-tax and ordered that every man of them should bring with him a dog when he waited on him.[36] The Jats were content to cultivate their fields and admitted the aristocratic Rajputs to be their social superiors.'[37] Rohtak district is regarded as the Jat region *par-excellence.* Here, "in the old days of Rajput ascendancy, the Rajputs would not allow the Jats to cover their heads with turban, nor to wear any red clothes, nor to put a crown *(mor)* on the head of their bride-groom, or a jewel *(nat)* in their women's noses. They also used to levy seigniorial rights from virgin brides.'[38]

(ii) *Towards lower castes*

The attitude of the Jats towards castes lower than them is equally revealing. In the Jat area of Meerut Division, the chamars are the most numerous caste group. 'The attitude of the Jats is unbending, and they try to humiliate and exploit the Chamars by word and deed whenever they find an opportunity.'[39] In U.P., previous to the British rule, 'the village menials were little better than serfs, *ascripti glebae,* at the mercy of the leader of the village body.'[40] The sweepers 'are regarded as the very dregs of impurity,'[41] and for a peasant 'nothing is worse than to lose your caste, to eat with a sweeper or to touch an impure person.'[42] In Gurgaon district, the lowest of menial tribes live outside the village.[43] In the district of Karnal, Jat, Gujar or Ror do not, as a rule, eat or drink with any of the menial castes; and leather maker, washerman, barber, dyer and sweeper are regarded as absolutely impure.[44] The position of chamars in Ludhiana district very nearly approaches that of servitude,[45] and the Mazhabis are kept at a distance by most Sikhs of other castes.[46]

Thus, the Jats maintained their spirit of equality only within their own ranks. But, in their attitude towards castes higher and lower than them, they conformed to the hierarchical pattern of the caste system. In other words, they had no qualms in submitting to the higher castes and in dominating the lower ones.

(b) *Sikh egalitarianism*

The spirit of equality, fraternization and brotherhood among the Sikhs and the Khalsa, and consequently among those Jats who joined the Khalsa ranks after owning the Sikh ideology, was altogether different from others who remained aloof. Bhangu records about the Khalsa Dal that the 'Guru's Sikh was the brother of every other Sikh.'[47] "All members of the Khalsa Dal 'were issued

clothes from a common store. Without concealing anything, they would pool all their earnings at one place. If any one found or brought any valuables, these were deposited in the treasury as common property."[48]

This spirit of equality, brotherhood and fraternization prevalent among the Sikhs (of which we have given sufficient evidence from Sikh and non-Sikh sources[49] in the preceding article) was different from Jat egalitarianism, because it was equally shared by all members of the Khalsa drawn from the highest to the lowest castes. Nor was this egalitarian of the Sikhs born either of the Jat clannish sentiment or of the social and economic structure of Jat *bhaichara.* In the period of Sikh history we are dealing with, the Sikhs, as already noted, were either very sparsely and widely located in the general non-sikh population, or they came together in roving militia bands. In other words, the *bhaichara* system of the Jat type could never be visualized among them. Therefore, the Khalsa egalitarianism was not at all related to the Jat polity in any way. It was the product of the Sikh egalitarian ideology which embraced all persons without any distinctions of caste or clans. Unlike the Jat egalitarian, there was no dichotomy in the Sikh egalitarian approach towards the higher or the lower castes. Consequently, there is no ground either for confusing Sikh egalitarianism with Jat egalitarianism or for tracing the source of the former to the latter.

4. The Sikh Egalitarian Revolution

There is no doubt that Jats are a martial race. Probably, this is another major reason which has misled some historians to infer that the militarisation of the Sikh movement, its development and direction, must be due to the Jats joining it in large numbers. What they have ignored is that it is primarily the goals a movement pursues which determine its content and character. If militancy alone is to be the criterion for judging movements, one would be led to see no difference in the historical significance of the Pindari excursions, the establishment of the Bharatpur *raj* and the Maratha national expansion. The Pindaris became a bigger military force, and overran a much larger area, than the Bharatpur Jats ever did. The contemporary British officials, Malcolm and Stewart, were amazed at the varied military qualities of the Pindari leaders.[50] Lord Lake was even prepared to elevate Amir Khan to the position of a ruler of a state provided he accepted British protection,[51] Metcaife expressed concern to Lord Minto regarding Amir Khan establishing his sway over Udaipur and Indore.[52] But these Pindarics, who had more men at arms than the Bharatpur Jats and showed more skilful military leadership and tactics, did not establish any independent state of their own, like the Bhartpur State, which they could very well have done. It was simply because their main objective was organized banditry and sensuous pleasure and not political power. Similarly, a British Governor-General's note clearly brings out the contrast between a people inspired by an ideology and a militia held together by self-interest alone. The Marathas, it says, 'were a nation fighting against oppression and religious persecution, hence bound by the strongest reciprocity of feeling to each other; the Pindarics are an assemblage of all tribes and religions, who unite because it suited their convenience and will separate when it ceases to do so.'[53] The Marathas were, in addition, swayed by a commonly shared sentiment of Maratha nationality, and their political and military expansion assumed the biggest dimension in that period of Indian history. But, the Marathas and the Bharatpur Jat movements cannot be compared to the Sikh egalitarian movement, as the former two were bound down to the caste ideology and circumscribed by the feudal orbit. These examples make it clear that it is highly misleading to trace the genesis and growth of movements without correlating them to their social and political objectives and goals. Nowhere else do we find, as we shall see, among the peasant revolts or revolution within India or outside it, a parallel development, at peasant initiative, comparable to the Sikh egalitarian social and political revolution.

(a) Egalitarian Political Revolution

The Sikh movement was an egalitarian revolution, social as well as political; but it is its political aspect which has a direct bearing on our subject. It is true that the egalitarian political aims of the Sikh revolution were not fully realized, as it has happened in the case of so many other revolutions, but what it did actualise far exceeds the ultimate achievements of the French Revolution. Its achievements do indicate, atleast, the egalitarian character and direction of the movement. We have to repeat Irvine's writing that: 'In all the parganas occupied by the Sikhs, the reversal of previous customs was striking and complete. A low scavenger or leather dresser, the lowest of low in Indian estimation, had only to leave home and joint the Guru (Banda), when in a short space of time he would return to his birth-place as its ruler, with his order of appointment in his hand. As soon as he set foot within the boundaries, the well-born and wealthy went out to greet him and escort him home. Arrived there, they stood before him with joined palms, awaiting his orders. . . . . .'[54] "All power was now usurped by the Sikhs, and one Bir Singh, a man of poor origin, belonging to pargana Haibetpur Patti in the Barri Doab, was appointed Subadhar or governor of Sir-hind.[55] This happened within eighteen months of Guru Gobind Singh's death, i.e. very close to the Guru period when the Khalsa for the first time achieved political power temporarily. The next sixty years or so were spent in the revolutionary struggle against the Mughals.

During the Missal period when political reaction had overtaken the movement, ordinary peasants, shepherds (Tara Singh Gaiba), village menials (carpenters) and distillers (a despised caste) became the leaders of Misals. There was not one from castes higher than these. The common peasantry of the land suddenly attained political power.[56] Khushwaqt Rai has written in his history *'Tarikhi-i-Sikhan'* (1811): ". . . . . men disappeared and God's own country was captured by an ass; the sect of Singhs took possession of the country of the Punjab. Since then upto this time, the whole administrative machinery of the country is in disarray, and the normal system of governance, official codes, the set up of levies and awards. . . . . and the allowances occurring from estates bestowed by Kings and nobles, were abolished for the people. The lowest of the low-bred and the meanest of the mean people got elevated to high government positions. The nobility and grandees retired to secluded places on account of the elimination of their tribe."[57]

Here is a translation of one extract taken from *'Imadud-Saadat'* written by Syed Ghulam Ali Khan: "To cut the matter short, at present, the whole country of the Punjab. . . . . is in the possession of this community and most of their exalted leaders are of low origin, such as carpenters, animal skin-treaters and Jats."[58] The author of Haqiqat writes (1784-85): *'Sikhan b istiklal-i-tamam mulk-ra abad khardand w firqa-i-sipahi w ashraf hama ra wiren sakhtand wahl rayyat w-i-hirfa ra razi kardand.')* 'On attaining power the Sikhs repopulated the whole country. They dispersed the ashraf (the privileged feudal classes), and the firqa-i-sipahi (the soldier class represented by Mansabdars and faujdars) and conciliated the rayyat (the tillers of the soil) and the ahl-i-hirfa (the artisans and the craftsmen, i.e. the working classes)'.[59] According to the same author, the Guru 'sought to uplift the: *qaum-i-arazil,* i.e. the downtrodden. He was keen on inflicting khift (humiliation) on the *mardum-i-avvan* (the privileged classes.)[60] The author of *Asrar-i-Samdi* states, though in a hyperbolic style, that there was not a single amir (rich man or noble) in Hindustan whom Banda spared.[61] This statement tallies with that of Bhai Gurdas, the second, that the Khalsa scattered to the winds the Zamindars and the *amirs.*[62]

Even when feudalistic tendencies had started setting in the Missal system, there were 'at no stage of Sikh feudal history, a haughty noblesse, as in Rajputana or medieval Europe. . . . . The

Punjab system was not feudal in the European sense. The all-pervading sense of brotherhood and a super-added theocratic outlook would not, atleast in theory, allow distinctions of rank.'[63] The leaders of the Missals were more *de jure* than *de facto* chiefs, because their followers were mostly friends and volunteers who regarded themselves as their companions and partners.[64] Forster observed that an ordinary member of the Khalsa did not regard himself as anybody's servant except his Guru's.[65] The Sikh society was very much circumspect in safeguarding its internal equality.[66] This was the reason why Ranjit Singh had to camouflage his monarchy. He knew that he 'merely directed into a particular channel a power which he could neither destroy nor control.'[67] 'Free followers of Gobind could not be observant slaves of an equal member of the Khalsa. Ranjit Singh concealed his motives and 'everything was done for the sake of the Guru, for the advantage of the Khalsa and in the name of the Lord.' He never installed himself on the throne as a king.[68] In the very first public Darbar he declared that his government would be styled as the *Sarkar-i-Khalsa.*[69] After Ranjit Singh, effective political power did not remain in the hands of his descendants or chiefs. The elected army panchayats usurped executive authority under the designation of *'Panth Khalsa Jeo*'.[70]

As against it, what the French Revolution achieved was the establishment of a bourgeois Republic. At no stage, common peasants and the *sans-culottes,* much less social strata lower than these, came near to wielding political power directly or indirectly. Guru Gobind Singh 'opened, at once, to men of the lowest tribes, the prospect of earthly glory.[71] 'Grocers, carpenters, oilmen. . . . . rallied into bands. . . . . so well Gobind amalgamated discordant elements for a time.'[72] In the French Revolution, even the *sans-culottes,* who were in the vanguard or revolutionary insurrection, would not join on equal terms, the fair-sex, the wage-earners, the homeless and the like.[73]

(b) *Plebeian Base*

The Sikh movement had not only an egalitarian political mission, but it had also a plebeian organizational base. It was necessary that the downtrodden castes and classes should be both the architects and masters of their own destiny; Bhangu writes:

> 'Sovereignty cannot be had without armed struggle;
>
> The Guru initiated the armed struggle. . . . . .
>
> "The Guru gave sovereignty to the poor. . . . . and
>
> The seven Sanat (lowest castes) and twelve low castes, who know nothing of politics.
>
> The world calls them rustic Jats, Bawas, Kirars, Khatries Iron-smiths and carpenters of the low castes.
>
> The Guru showed benevolence to the despised calico-printers, Kalals and the low-caste Gujars, Ahirs, Kambohs and Soods whom no one took into any account.
>
> The Guru thought that water-carriers, barbers, Aroras, Potters, Sainis, goldsmiths, sweepers (Chuhras), leather-workers.
>
> Bhats, Brahmins, beggars, Bahoroopias, Lubanas and potters—all downtrodden should be given sovereignty;[74] they would remember the gift of the Guru'

The Sikhs and their armies were neither constituted of, nor dominated by one caste. These were drawn from ideologically inspired persons of all castes, mostly from the down-trodden ones. Painda Khan reported to Emperor Shah Jahan that, "Barbers, washermen, pedlars, strolling minstrels and similar unwarlike-people compose what he (Guru Hargobind) calleth his army"[75]

Bhangu has referred to the plebeian composition of the Khalsa at several places.[76] When the Taruna Dal wing of the Khalsa Dal was reorganized into five divisions, one of the divisions was under the command of Bir Singh, Rangreta.[77] This division continued to participate in the campaigns of the Khalsa right up to the time of the conquest of Malerkotla.[78] Regarding the great battle with Abdali, called Wada Ghalu Ghara because the largest number of Sikhs in a single battle were killed here, it is especially mentioned that Ramdasias (Cobblers) and Rangretas took a prominent part in it.[79]

The plebeian composition of the Khalsa is corroborated by evidence from non-Sikh sources. Banda's forces were recruited chiefly from the lower caste Hindus. Scavengers, leather-dressers and such like persons were very numerous among them.[80] The low-caste people who swelled Banda's ranks are termed by a contemporary Muslim historian as the dregs of the society of the hellish Hindus.[81] Another contemporary Muslim writer says that Banda brought into the forefront the unemployed and worthless people who had hitherto been hidden by the curtain of insignificance.[82] Khan Khan says that 'these infidels (Sikhs) had set up a new rule, and had forbidden the shaving of the hair of the head and beard. Many of the ill-disposed low-caste Hindus joined themselves to them, and placing their lives at the disposal of these evil-minded people, they found their own advantage in professing belief and obedience, and they were active in persecuting and killing other castes of Hindus.[83]

Irvine writes: 'After the Khatri and the Jat peasants, the most noticeable components of the Sikh body are the lower caste artisans and men of the outcaste or menial tribes. This fact attracted the notice of the Muhammadan writers, as we see in our account, taken from them, of the disturbances following on the death of Guru Gobind Singh.'[84] Polier write (1780 A.D.) that 'the Siques then began to increase greatly in number. . . . . .' all that came, though from the lowest and most abject castes, were received, contrary to the Hindu customs which admit of no change of caste, and even Mussalmans were in the number of converts.'[85] Griffths (1794) tells us that 'the Seiks receive Proselytes of almost every caste, a point in which they differ most materially from the Hindoos.'[86] A German traveller, Hugel describes the Sikhs of the times as 'the descendents from all the lowest castes of Hindus, from which they have been proselyted.[87] These early accounts of the Europeans are all the more valuable, because, as already pointed out, these deal with the times of the Misals and Ranjit Singh, when the Sikh revolution had receded.

(c) Collective leadership

The leadership of a movement has always an important bearing in determining its direction. Corresponding to the egalitarian political mission of the Khalsa and its plebeian base, the leadership of the movement, after the Gurus, also devolved on the Khalsa Panth as a whole. This collective leadership of the Khalsa has an added significance. This, together with the plebeian base of the movement, was meant to ensure that, as far as possible, the movement should not come to be dominated by a caste or a group, and should pursue its egalitarian mission of capturing political power by all those, without any distinction, who subscribed to the Khalsa egalitarian ideals. The initiative for this development was taken by Guru Gobind Singh himself.

We refer to Narang again because 'it is lie who clearly states the significance of the initiation (baptism) ceremony of the Khalsa: "Of the five who offered their heads, one was a Khatri, all the rest being so-called Sudras. But the Guru called them Panj Pyaras, or the Beloved five, and baptised them after the manner he had introduced for initiation into his brotherhood. He enjoined the same duties upon them, gave them the same privileges, and as a token of newly acquired brotherhood all of them dined together.

'The Guru's views of democratic equality were much more advanced than the mere equality among his followers could satisfy. In his system, there was no place even for the privileges of the chief or the leader. No leader, he believed, could be fit to lead unless he was elected or accepted by the followers. History shows that individuals or classes in enjoining a religious or sacerdotal superiority have been only too loath to forego even a particle of their privileges. But the Guru, though regarded by his faithful followers as the greatest of prophets, was made of a different stuff, and had too much political insight to stand on an exclusive eminence apart from his followers. Therefore, when he had initiated his first five disciples, his beloved five, he was initiated by them in turn, taking the same vows as they had done, and claiming no higher privileges than those he allowed them. Soon after he called a meeting of all his followers and announced his new doctrine to them."[88] One day before the death of Guru Gobind Singh, the Sikhs asked him as to whom they were to follow after him. The Guru replied that he was personified in the Khalsa and that he had conferred the leadership on the Khalsa body itself.[89]

The fact that the leadership of the movement devolved on the Khalsa Panth as a whole became an article of living faith with the Sikhs. In this connection, the episode of Banda's nomination as leader and his subsequent parting of company with the Khalsa is very illustrative. The Khalsa agreed to follow Banda only on the condition that he would not aspire to sovereignty. The Guru instructed Banda to abide by the Khalsa and appointed select Sikhs as his advisers. After his military success, Banda aspired to become a Guru and a sovereign. On this Tat Khalsa (the genuine Khalsa) parted company with him, because the Guru had given:

'Banda service and not sovereignty;

The sovereignty had been given to the Panth by the Guru *(Sacha Padshah)* himself.'[90]

After Banda, Kapur Singh was elected as the leader of the Khalsa. He was elected because he was in those days, engaged in doing the humble services like fanning the daily congregations of the Khalsa. Kapur Singh

'Showed great respect towards the Singhs;

Did nothing without taking the Panth into confidence.'[91]

With the end of Kapur Singh's era, the revolutionary spirit started waning. His successor was Jassa Singh Kalal. Jassa Singh struck coin in his own name when the Khalsa conquered Lahore for the first time. This was so much against the spirit of collective leadership of the Khalsa, that a special convention was held, where it was decided to recall that coin from circulation.[92] In its place, another coin struck in the name of the Guru was substituted. Polier (1780) observed, 'As for the Government of the Siques, it is properly an aristocracy, in which no pre-eminence is allowed except

that which power and force naturally gives; otherwise all the chiefs, great and small, and even the poorest and most abject Siques, look on themselves as perfectly equal in all the public concerns and in the greatest Council or Goormatta of the nation, held annually either at Ambarsar, Lahore or some other place. Everything is decided by the plurality of votes taken indifferently from all who choose to be present at it.'[93] Forster also gives a similar account. 'An equality of rank is maintained in their civil society, which no class of men, however, wealthy or powerful, is suffered to break down. At the periods when general council of the nation were convened, which consisted of the army at large, every member had the privilege of delivering his opinion, and the majority, it is said, decided on the subject in debate.'[94]

"All Sikhs were theoretically equal; their religion in its first youth was too pure a theocracy to allow distinctions of rank among its adherents."[95] It became an article of faith with the Khalsa that wherever five of the Khalsa, committed to Sikh ideals, met to take a decision, the Guru was present there in spirit to guide them. It was to this level that the leadership was spread. It was this spirit and faith which sustained the movement when the Khalsa guerrillas were split up and scattered into small groups without a central or common leadership. Writing on the election of Kapur Singh as a leader, Arjan Das Malik comments: 'It is a paradox of Sikh history that a man who was elected in this cavalier fashion later proved to be the most competent leader that the Sikhs could ever had. This can be explained only in one way. Such was the uniform high standard of motivation and training that each one of the Khalsa was as good a commander as he was a soldier.'[96] Thus, it was the wide consciousness of the egalitarian issues at stake and the extension of the sense of responsibility and leadership to a broad base that gave consistent direction and tenacity of purpose to the Sikh Revolution. The Mughal authorities had come to believe more than once that they had exterminated the Khalsa to the last man; but the Khalsa 'always appeared, like a suppressed flame, to rise into higher splendour from every attempt to crush them.'[97]

We have purposely dealt at some length with the subject of the political goals of the Khalsa, its egalitarian base and the nature of its leadership, as these questions are vital for understanding the character of the Sikh militancy and need to be emphasized. The issue, whether or not the Jat traits and culture determined the direction and development of the Sikh militarisation, cannot be properly assessed by divorcing it from the political colour and content of the Sikh movement. The history of the peasants in general, and that of the Jats in particular, does not favour the hypothesis propounded by Dr. Mcleod and others. Let alone the Jats, nowhere else do we find among the peasant revolts or revolutions, within India or outside it, any social or political development, at peasant initiative, comparable to the Sikh egalitarian social and political revolution.

5. Lack of Political Initiative and Aspirations Among Peasants

(a) Outside India

Engels mentions two main causes for the failure of the German Peasant wars, perhaps the greatest peasant upheaval in history. The peasant masses never overstepped the narrow relations and the resulting narrow outlook.[98] Consequently, the peasants of every province acted only for themselves, and were annihilated in separate battles one after another by armies which in most cases were hardly one-tenth of the total number of the insurgent masses.[99] Secondly, they were not indoctrinated enough, with the result that the bulk of the peasants were always ready to come to terms with the lords who exploited this weakness of theirs,[100] and were also readily demoralized when they met a strong resistance or a reverse.[101]

Eric R. Wolf, who in his book 'Peasant wars of the twentieth Century' covers a case study of six countries, does not present a different picture.

The insurrection in Mexico was "an agrarian revolt in gestation".[102] One of the prominent features of the Zapatista revolution was 'the participation from the first of dis-affected intellectuals with urban ties.'[103] About the Russian Revolution, we need quote only Lenin. 'While workers left to their own devices could only develop trade-union consciousness and peasants only petty-bourgeois demands for land, it would be the guiding intellectuals who would lead the revolution on behalf of the workers and the peasants.'[104] The very basis of the concept of the 'Dictatorship of the Proletariat' is that the peasantry is suspect in the role of a revolutionary vanguard. In China, 'Peasant mobilization thus proved impossible without political and military leverage.'[105] It was the Communist Party that provided it. And the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party were drawn most frequently from a relatively thin upper layer of the Chinese population—the sons of landlords, merchants, scholars or officials. All of them had higher education, and most of them had studied abroad.'[106] In Vietnam, too, it was the Communist party which roused and organized the peasants. Troung Chinh pointed out in 1965 that, 'our party was born in an agrarian country where the working class was numerically weak. In the great majority, our cadres and our militants originated in the petty bourgeoisie.'[107] The Cuban revolution was a great gamble by a group of determined educated revolutionaries which paid off. "None of us", writes Guevera (quoted in Draper, 1965, p. 68), "none of the first group who came in the "Granma" (the landing boat), who established in the Sierra Maestra and learned to respect the peasant and worker while living with them, had worker's or peasant's backgrounds.'[108]

Wolf comes to the weighty conclusion that, in all the six cases of peasant wars he studied, there was a fusion between the alienated intellectuals, what he calls "rootless" intellectuals, and their rural supporters. "Yet this fusion is not affected easily. . . . . The peasant is especially handicapped in passing from passive recognition of wrongs to political participation as a means of setting them right. First, a peasant's work is most often done alone, on his own land, than in conjunction with his fellows. . . . . Second, the tyranny of work weighs heavily upon a peasant; his life is geared to an annual routine and to planning for the year to come. Momentary alterations of routine threaten his ability to take up the routine later. Third, control of land enables him, more often than not, to retreat into subsistence production should adverse conditions affect his market crop. Fourth, ties of extended kinship and mutual aid within the community may cushion the shocks of dislocation. Fifth, peasant interests— especially among poor peasants—often cross-cut class alignments. . . . . Finally, past exclusion of the peasant from participation in decision making beyond the bamboo hedge of his village deprives him all too often of the knowledge needed to articulate his interests with appropriate action,: Hence, peasants are often merely passive spectators of political struggle. . . . . .'[109]

To quote Wolf again: 'But what of the transition from peasant rebellion to revolution, from a movement aimed at the redress of wrongs, to the attempted overthrow of society itself? Marxists have long argued that peasants without outside leadership cannot make a revolution; and our case material would bear them out. When the peasantry has successfully rebelled against the established order—under its own banner and with its own leaders— it was sometimes able to reshape the social structure of the country side closer to its heart's desires; but it did not lay hold of the state……'[110]

In the French Revolution, too, the peasantry of France played only a secondary role, which was limited to localized action against landlords. Of the Revolution's reverberations out-side France in Europe, Roberts writes: 'The third widespread response was that of the rural population of almost every country; whatever the theoretical benefits they might derive from the implementation of French legislation, they nearly always turned at some point to open resistance, sporadic though it might be. Except in northern Germany, the peasantry were everywhere in Europe the most persistently alienated of the Revolutions' potential supporters, whatever the benefits the new order might appear to bring them at first sight. . . . . It was among the better-off and the urbanized that the supporters of the French Revolution were to be found, not in the countryside which they formally liberated from 'feudalism'.'[111]

We are not out to establish a theoretical theorem, having universal validity. But, there are certain uniform lessons that flow out from the practical experience of so many revolts or revolutions cited above in which the peasants participated. Left to themselves, the peasants are concerned more with their narrow interests and problems rather than with broader political issues. Nowhere did they initiate a political revolution. In fact, it was extremely difficult to rouse them for political action. When and wherever they participated in political revolts or revolutions, on their own, they did so primarily for their own parochial ends. Secondly, everywhere the peasants needed sufficient ideological -indoctrination; and the initiative for such an indoctrination in all these cases came from outside the peasants' own ranks, usually from the intelligentsia. These lessons are quite important for evaluating the role of Jats in the Sikh movement.

(b) Among Jats

The peasants in India were, in addition, torn asunder by prejudices and inhibitions of the caste system. Because of the complete grip of the caste ideology, it was beyond the sphere of the peasant, the Vaisya, either to do fighting or aspire for political leadership or rule. This sphere was the monopoly or privilege of the Kshatrya only. Accordingly, how they, by and large, meekly submitted to the oppression and humiliation inflicted by the rulers, we need not go into. Let us come directly to the Jats, a militant section of the Indian peasants.

The Jats form the majority in Sindh; they are three times more than the Rajputs in the Punjab, and are approximately equal to the number of Rajputs in Bikaner, Jaisalmer and Marwar. Yet, "fragmentary notices of the Jats occur in the Muhammadan historians of India."[112] It was so because they were politically inconsequential. As against them, the pages of Indian history are full of Rajput exploits.

A deputation of Jats and Meds, waited upon King Dajushan and begged him to nominate a King, whom both tribes would obey. Accordingly, Dajushan appointed his sister to rule over them and they voluntarily submitted to her.[113] Bikaner sources tell us that, 'In recognition of the fact that the Jats had been original masters of the country and in memory of their voluntary submission to Rajput rule, the Bikaner rulers instituted a ceremony in which each new ruler of the Rajput dynasty had a special symbol put on his forehead by one of the Jat Chiefs who thus invested the new ruler with the rights of a sovereign.'[114] Similarly, the Minas voluntarily accepted the Kacchewas as their rulers.[115] The Minas are not Jats, but this example also serves to show how people at the tribal level, without political aims, were an easy prey to politically ambitious minorities. The *Khaps* in the Meerut Division, as we have seen, had quite sizable private armies, but their role was purely defensive. The Rohtak district was situated, at one time, on the border of the Maratha and the Sikh spheres of political control, and was overrun by one party or the other. The strong Jat villages of Rohtak

district perpetually defied both the Marathas and the Sikhs, and George Thomas could collect his revenue only by means of a moveable column constantly marching about the country.[116] But this Jat defiance never gathered momentum beyond the village level in order to assert the political independence of their region.

"From the earliest times, the Jats have been remarkable for their rejection of the monarchical principle and their strong partiality for self-governing commonwealths. One of the names by which they were known to the ancients was Arashtra or Kingless."[117] Their heads were tribal chiefs rather than rulers. The one time exception of Jat monarchical principality of any consequence that we come across in recorded history is that of Bharatpur, if, of course, we ignore the small unit of Dholpur. Its founder was Churaman. He was not inspired by any lofty ideals, nor was any of his successors, who consolidated the Bharatpur State. Churaman helped Emperor Bahadur Shah in his campaign against the Sikhs at Sadhaura and Lohgarh[118] and finally submitted to Emperor Farrukh-siyar, agreeing to pay a penalty of fifty lakhs of rupees.[119] Similarly Suraj Mal was a pure opportunist. He turned, for personal reasons, against the Syed brothers, to whom he owed so much for his rise to power. When the magnificent army under Sadashiv Rao went to meet Ahmed Shah at Panipat, "the crafty Suraj Mal, professing to be disgusted with the arrogance of his allies, withdrew his forces from Sadashiv's camp.'[120] 'Major Thorn says that Suraj Mal received Agra from Ahmad Shah as the reward of his neutrality during the struggle at Panipat.'[121] At any rate, it is a fact that Suraj Mal dispossessed the Maratha governor of Delhi of his treasure when he was fleeing through the Jat territory.[122]

It is only in the Jat uprisings under Gokala and Raja Ram that we find the Jats motivated by considerations other than those of plunder or personal again. These were however, short-lived religious outbursts not based on Jat sentiment but directed against blatant outrage of local Hindu sentiment by Muslim rulers, which began and ended with the persons of Gokala and Raja Ram. By no means were these sustained movements, much less revolutionary ones. Movements are built around fixed long-range objectives and need organization, determined leadership and tenacity of purpose to achieve those objectives. The Jats lacked all these. It was for this reason that, although the Jats around Mathura and Agra remained a constant thorn in the body of the Mughals and several expeditions were sent to curb their marauding propensity, their restless spirit never assumed the dimensions of a purposeful anti-Mughal or anti-Muslim movement. The same fate overtook, and for similar reasons, the Satnami revolt. Although there was a continuity in the restive spirit of the Jats, there was no ideological continuity between the Jat revolts under Gokala and Raja Ram on the one hand and the political adventures of Churaman and Suraj Mal on the other. The overriding motivation of Churaman and Suraj Mal, as is shown by their opportunistic compromises with the Mughal rulers, was to carve out a dynastic principality. They stepped in to fill the vacuum created by the death of Raja Ram, not to continue his anti-Muslim upsurge, but to exploit Jat restiveness for their own personal ambitions. Quite in tune with the peasant trait the world over, and in addition having been brain-washed by the caste ideology, the Jats, as a body, could not, in any of the cases cited above, evolve enduring political goals, much less revolutionary egalitarian ones, of their own. Their martial qualities were, therefore, at the disposal of any one who was skilful enough to manipulate them. It could be Churaman & Co., for whom the weakening of the Mughal authority and the disappearance of political sanction behind the caste system had opened the way for aspiring to political power. It could be the British, who used the 7th Jat Light Infantry, recruited from Haryana, to crush their own kith and kin when the Jats of that region rose against the British in 1809.[123]

6. Jat Socio-political Heritage and the Sikh Revolution

There is, in fact, no common ground for comparing the Sikh movement with any other political adventure or revolt in which the Jats participated. It was not a feudal venture like that of Churaman and his successors. Guru Gobind Singh was not interested in political power for himself,[124] and he devolved the leadership of the movement on the Khalsa when his own sons were still alive. Unlike the Jats of the Bharatpur region, the Khalsa did not blindly follow a leader like Churaman or Suraj Mal, to help him establish a dynastic rule or to share in his plunder. The Khalsa parted company with Banda when he aspired for sovereignty, and made Jassa Singh Ahluwalia withdraw the coin that he struck in his name. Even under the Misals, the Sikh polity had more characteristics of a commonwealth than those of personal rule. It was also qualitatively different from the ephemeral Jat religious uprisings under Gokala and Raja Ram. It was a revolution, and an egalitarian revolution at that. There is a fundamental difference between ordinary revolts or rebellions, which do not challenge a social or a political system itself but only seek changes or adjustments within its framework. The Sikh movement was an egalitarian social and political revolution, which aimed at the establishment of an egalitarian society in the place of the caste order and at the capture of political power by the people themselves. Such revolutionary aims were not owned, at that period, by the peasantry of any country outside India, much less could these be even conceived here in a society ridden by caste and politically dominated by foreign feudal. It is the goal, the ideological inspiration, of a movement which determines its quality and its direction, and it is the organizational base of that ideology and the tenacity of purpose associated with it that in a great measure constitute its internal strength. For the lack of ideological goals, the Jats remained either an inert political mass, or their religious fervour misfired, or their valour became a hand-maid of feudal interests. It is the Sikh ideology which welded the Jats or non-Jats who joined the movement, into a political force that uprooted the Mughal domination and made the tillers of the soil and the hewers of wood the political masters of the Punjab.

It was seen in the first section that the militarisation of the movement was initiated by the Gurus themselves in pursuance of the Sikh mission, and it was not done under the influence or pressure of the Jats who joined it. The discussion we have carried on above amply demonstrates that the political and militant development of the movement was directed by its egalitarian goals, which were also fixed by the Gurus. Far from taking a hand in shaping the political goals of the Khalsa, the Sikhs, whether of Jat or non-Jat origin, felt, in the beginning, that they were unequal to the task of wresting sovereignty from the Mughals. The plebeian composition of the Khalsa and its collective leadership were intimately linked to its egalitarian goals. Without these, it is quite probable that, in the absence of the Gurus to steer the course of the movement, it might not have implemented its egalitarian programme to the extent it did. And, the Khalsa acquired a dominant plebeian base because it was Guru Gobind Singh who called upon the 'sparrows' to kill the 'hawks', i.e. called upon the downtrodden to carve out their own political destiny. The plan for evolving the collective leadership of the Khalsa was also initiated by the Guru. The Sikh cosmopolitan egalitarianism (whose doors, as we have noted, were open in theory and in actual practice to the lowest of the low, and where any one who chose to be present in the Khalsa General Assemblies, the Sarbat Khalsa, could have his say & exercise his right in the making of decisions)[125] was qualitatively different from the Jat parochial egalitarianism. The Jat political consciousness, under the spell of caste ideology, could not have even conceived of evolving egalitarian political goals of the type in which they had to share power with the artisans (carpenters) and Kalals, much less work under their leadership. Nor could Jat parochial egalitarianism could have adjusted itself to a cosmopolitan egalitarian organization in which the out-castes (the Rangrettas) were equal and honourable members. There is, therefore, no basis for assuming that, without having a hand in

determining the Khalsa political goals and without exercising control over its organization and leadership, the Jats, as such, could shape the growth and the development of the movement, during the long period of its revolutionary phase (i.e. from the start of Guru Nanak's missionary tours to the establishment of Missals, a period of 275 years approx.), according, to their own traits and proclivities.

7. Ideology

Lefebure has given expression to a very important political axiom. "For the last half century, students have applied, themselves, and rightly so, to the task of showing how the revolutionary spirit originated in a social and economic environment. But we should commit no less an error in forgetting that there is no true revolutionary spirit without the idealism which alone inspires sacrifice."[126] About the French Revolution, Rude writes: ". . . . . it needed more than economic hardship, social discontent, and the frustration of political and social ambitions to make a revolution. To give cohesion to the discontents and aspirations of widely varying social classes there had to be some unifying body of ideas, common vocabulary of hope and protest, something, in short, like a common 'revolutionary psychology.'[127]

If a common 'revolutionary psychology' was needed to give cohesion to the various classes in the French Revolution, a 'unifying body of ideas' was much more indispensable for welding the mutually antagonistic castes which joined the Sikh Revolution. Moreover, the Sikh revolutionary struggle passed through a prolonged period of guerrilla warfare the like of which few other movements have experienced. A general massacre of the Sikhs was launched about five times and the Mughal authorities came to believe that they had annihilated Sikhs almost to the last men. Forster writes: "Such was the keen spirit that animated the persecution, such was the success of the exertions, that the name of a Sique no longer existed in the Mughal dominion."[128] Yet, at every attempt to crush the movement, it arose. Phoenix like, from its ashes till it uprooted the Mughal rule from the region and established its own.

Arjan Das Malik has quoted authorities and given illustrations to show that sustained guerrilla warfare is not possible without an ideological inspiration, ". . . . . a guerrilla is. . . . . an intensely motivated and highly dedicated soldier who has a keen sense of issues at stake and understands the nature of war he is fighting. His strength lies inside, in the moral considerations which 'make three-fourths of him'."[129]

What was the ideological inspiration that inspired the Sikh revolutionaries? Let history speak for itself.

William Irvine writes about Banda and the band of 'his followers when brought as prisoners to Delhi: All observers, Indian and European, unite in remarking on the wonderful patience and resolution with which these men underwent their fate. Their attachment and devotion to their leader were wonderful to behold. They had no fear of death, they called the executioner Mukt, or the Deliverer. They cried out to him joyfully "O Mulct; kill me first."[130]

The English ambassadors in Delhi at that time reported to their head that about 780 prisoners had been brought to the place along with Banda and that one hundred of them were beheaded each day. 'It is not a little remarkable with what patience they under-go their fate, and to the last it has not been found that one apostatised from his new formed religion.'[131]

Khafi Khan writes, "Many stores are told about the wretched dogs of this sect, which the understanding rejects; but the author will relate what he saw with his own eyes. When the executions were going on, the mother of one of the prisoners, a young man just arrived at manhood. . . . . pleaded the cause of her son with great feeling and earnestness before the emperor and Saiyad Abdullah Khan. . . . . Farrukh Siyar commiserated this artful woman, and mercifully sent an officer with orders to release the youth. That cunning woman arrived with the order of release just as the executioner was standing with his bloody sword upheld over the young man's head. She showed the order for his release. The youth then broke out into complaints, saying: "My mother tells a falsehood; I with heart and soul join my fellow-believers in devotion to the Guru; send me quickly after my companions."[132]

Muhammed Latif comes to the conclusion: "The pages of history shine with the heroic deeds of this martial race, and the examples of self-devotion, patriotism and forbearance, under the severest trials, displayed by the leaders of their community, are excelled by none in the annals of the nations."[133]

"According to a contemporary Muhammaden author, the Sikh horsemen were seen riding, at full gallops, towards their sacred favourite shine of devotion. They were often slain in making this attempt, and sometimes taken prisoners; but they used, on such occasions to seek, instead of avoiding, the crown of martyrdom." The same authority states, "that an instance was never known of a Sikh, taken in his way to Amritsar, consenting to abjure his faith".[134] Ahmed Shah Abdali, the victor of Panipat, recognized that for the complete reduction of the Sikh power it would be necessary to wait until their religious fervour had evaporated.[135] Even during the faction-ridden period of the Misals, the Sikh chiefs could find a common meeting ground at the sanctified Amritsar Golden Temple, and the only cementing force left between them were the Akalis, the conscience-keepers of the Sikh faith.

There is a spark in human nature which yearns eternally for freedom and equality. The Gurus ignited this spark. In Cunningham's words: 'The last apostle of the Sikhs did not live to see his own ends accomplished, but he effectually roused the dormant energies of a vanquished people and filled them with a lofty, although fitful, longing for social freedom and national ascendancy, the proper adjuncts of that purity of worship which had been preached by Nanak. Gobind saw what was yet vital, and resumed it with a promethean fire."[136] The Sikh movement derived its strength also because Guru Gobind Singh "opened, at once, to men of the lowest tribe, the prospect of earthly glory." The objective of capturing political power for egalitarian ends fired the imagination of the masses, and for this reason more and more of the downtrodden people were drawn to the Khalsa ranks as the struggle progressed. It was because of its deep commitment to the egalitarian cause that the movement pursued the armed struggle to its bitter end until its aims were achieved. This was why the movement, though hard pressed, rejected a number of offers of a compromised peace by Abdali; who could not comprehend that in this case he was not pitted against feudal lords whose interests could be adjusted within his own ambitions. Here, he was face to face with an ideologically surcharged people's movement committed to achieve its own egalitarian political aims; in which there was no room for compromise with feudalism or aristocracy.

However, what is more germane to our topic is the fact that the genesis of the Sikh revolutionary spirit lies in the Sikh religion and the religious faith of the Sikhs in the Gurus. It is the Sikh religion which stands for social and political equality. It is the Gurus who worked laboriously over a long period to institutionalise the egalitarian values in the form of the Sikh Panth. And it is

through their religious faith in the Gurus that the Sikhs came to enshrine the values of human freedom and equality in their hearts. Again, it is due to the deep commitment of the Gurus to the revolutionary cause that they channeliszed the religious faith in them of their followers into a course which aimed at achieving political freedom wedded to egalitarian objectives.

The Sikh ideology not only inspired the movement, but it was the main stay of its revolutionary phase. The Sikh guerrillas had no earthly hope of success. Even the Mughal Governor was amazed, when he exclaimed "O God! to eat grass and to claim kingship!"[137] They were sustained only by their faith in the Guru's word. As Bhangu puts it:—

'The Singhs had no resources; were without arms and clothes. Were naked, hungry and thirsty. Had no ammunition with them. Had no access to shops or markets; Those who fell sick died for lack of medicine. They were sustained by the hope of Guru's benediction; This was the only treasure they had.'[138]

It goes without saying that the Sikh religious faith was the creation of the Sikh Gurus and not that of the Jats, who are well-known for their indifference towards transcendental religion. Otherwise, it is up to the scholars, who trace the genesis of the Sikh Revolution to Jat traits, to explain how the Sikh revolutionary psychology evolved from the purely Jat beliefs and traits. There is no historical record of the Jats of the Sikh tract having ever shown, before the Sikh movement, even that turbulent spirit and resistance which the Jats around Agra, Mathura and Bharatpur showed, and against whom several Mughal expeditions were sent to curb their turbulence. If the Jats around Agra, Mathura and Bharatpur remained tied down, at all times, to the caste and feudal strings, how did the Jats of the Sikh tract alone evolve, on their own, a remarkable 'revolutionary psychology' and zeal, and a deep commitment to an all embracing egalitarian cause?

In fact, it is the Sikh ideology which transformed those, who participated in the Sikh revolutionary struggle, and it is not the Jat traits which determined its ideological content. As there is marked difference in the chemical behaviour of unionised and ionised atoms (ions) of the same element so do we find a marked behavioural contrast between those of the same stock, whether Jat or non-Jat, who, when and where, were charged by the Sikh ideology and those who were not.

Two prominent features of the character of the Jats of all the regions, their laxity in domestic morality and their propensity for stealing, are mentioned from their very early history.[139] As against it, Qazi Nur Muhammed pays the Khalsa a rich tribute for respecting the honour of women and for not befriending thieves,[140] and this testimony of his is supported by others.[141] It is on these very two accounts that the comments of competent observers in the post-Khalsa period again become unfavourable to the Jats of the Sikh tract, like those of others.[142]

All the members of the Khalsa Dal, including Rangrettas, addressed one another as Bhai (brother).[143] There was complete equality and fraternization within its ranks. One of the five divisions of the Taruna Dal was commanded by Rangretta Bir Singh[144] and he was chosen to be the first to receive honour after the battle of Malerkotla.[145] There is no mention of any factions within the Khalsa Dal on the basis of caste or clan. But, in the post-revolutionary period, factional strife became a prominent feature of the Misals and Jat Sikhs in Ranjit Singh's army refused to associate on equal terms with Rangrettas m their Regiments.

All those who joined the Khalsa were volunteers and were not mercenaries. Whatever they brought from their homes, or whatever came to their hands, was deposited in the common store.[146] The Khalsa ideal was to dedicate one s soul and body (Tan, Man, Dhan) to the revolutionary cause.[147] A large number of Singhs, especially the Shaheeds of Akalis, lived up to that ideal. But the followers of Dala, the Brar Jats, had no hesitation in demanding pay for their services from Guru Gobind Singh.[148]

The insignia of so-called Nawabi was not acceptable to any one of the Khalsa and had to be thrust on reluctant Kapur Singh.[149] What a contrast between this spurning of power and the lust for power that seized the Misal Chiefs!

Even the faction-ridden Misals would unite to face the common danger posed by Abdali and Abdali had to come to the conclusion that the conquest of the Khalsa shall have to wait till their religious fervour subsided. But the universally believed rumours of an impending invasion by the British failed to unite the parties of the Sikh raj, and Lord Hardinge could foresee that the Sikh soldiers of the Sikh raj, if defeated, 'will relapse into the rude state of their grand-fathers, from which they only emerged fifty years ago, and to which they will have no objection to return.'[150]

If it is not the Khalsa ideology, to what else is the glaring contrast in the behaviour patterns of the people of the same stock, noted above, due to? Forster noted that, under the relentless persecution launched by the Mughals, "Those who still adhered to the tenets of Nanock, either fled into the mountains at the head of the Punjab, or cut off their hair, and exteriorly renounced the profession of their religion."[151] In other words, all that was needed to save one's life was to cut off one's hair and melt into the multitude. Who were the steel-frame of the movement? Those who renounced their faith, or those ideologically surcharged Khalsa guerrillas who took to the mountains?

Footnotes:

1. Qanungo, K.R.: *Historical Essays,* p. 42. The figure giving the number of Jats obviously refers to the period round about the year 1960 when the book was published.
2. Baden-Powell, p. 216, Cited by M.C. Pradhan: *The Political System of the Jats of Northern India,* p. 5.
3. Pradhan, p. 1.
4. Ibid, pp. 113-4.
5. Ibid, p. 113.
6. Ibid, p. 144.
7. Ibid, p. 98.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid, p. 105.
10. Ibid, p. 107.
11. *Gazetteer of Karnal District* (1918), p. 84.
12. *Gazetteer of Rohtak District* (1883-84), p. 17.
13. *Gazetteer of Jullundur District* (1904), p. 62.
14. *Settlement Report of Ludhiana District* (1978-83), p. 46.
15. *Gazetteer of Ferozepur District* (1915), p. 21.
16. Ibid, p. 74.
17. Ibid, p. 76.

18. Bingley, A.H.: *History, Caste and Culture of Jats and Gujars,* p. 37.
19. *Punjab Castes,* sec., 424.
20. *Gazetteer of Amritsar District* (1892-3), pp. 52-3.
21. *Gazetteer of Amritsar District* (1914), p. 19.
22. *Gazetteer of Amritsar District* (1883-84), p. 24.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid., (1914), p. 19.
25. Ibid.
26. *Gazetteer of Gurgaon District* (1910), p. 169.
27. *Gazetteer of Rohtak District* (1883-84) p. 16.
28. *Gazetteer of Gurgaon District* (1910), p. 24.
29. *Gazetteer of Rohtak District* (1883-84), p. 27.
30. *Gazetteer of Karnal District* (1918), pp. 24-5.
31. Bingley, p. 91.
32. Pradhan, p. 34.
33. Ibid, p. 36.
34. *E.H.I., i.* p. 151, Cited by Rose, ii, p. 358.
35. Ibid, p. 188, Cited by Rose, ii. p. 358.
36. Ibid, p. 128, Cited by Rose, ii. p. 359.
37. Bingley, p. 15.
38. Ibbetson, sec. 440.
39. Pradhan, p. 48.
40. Crooke, W.: *The North Western Provinces of India, their History, Ethnology, & Administration,* p. 206.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid, p. 244.
43. *Gazetteer of Gurgaon District* (1910), p. 32.
44. *Gazetteer of Karnal District* (1918), p. 89.
45. *Settlement Report Ludhiana District* (1978-83).
46. *Census Report* (1891), p. 202; Rose, iii, p. 75.
47. Bhangu, pp. 86, 212, 261, 436.
48. Ibid, p. 215.
49. Roy, M.P.: *Origin, Growth & Suppression of the Pindarics,* p. 86.
50. Ibid, p. 80.
51. Ibid, p. 123.
52. Ibid, p. 12.
53. Irvine, William: *Later Mughals,* i. pp. 98-9.
54. Ibid, p. 97.
55. Cunningham, H.L.O.: *History of the Sikhs,* p. 159.
56. Khushwaqt Rai: *Tarikh Punjab Sikhan,* pp. 63-64.
57. *Imadul-Saadat.* p. 71.
58. Haqiqat, Cited by Gurbax Singh in *Punjab History Conference* (March 1978), Proceedings, pp. 89-90.
59. Ibid, p. 86.
60. Punjabi translation, p. 7.
61. Bhai Gurdas, Var 41; Macauliffe, v. p. 258.
62. Sinha, N.K.: *Rise of the Sikh Power,* p. 110.
63. Wilson: *J.R.A.S.* (1846), p. 50; Prinsep, p. 23; Cunnin-gham, pp. 94-96; Maelcolm, p. 222; Polier, *Early European Accounts of the Sikhs,* p. 197.

64. Forster, i, p. 330.
65. Ibid, p. 329.
66. Cunningham, p. 151.
67. Ibid, pp. 151-2.
68. Sohan Lal Suri ; *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh,* Daftar iv, p. xviii.
69. Ibid, pp. xvii-xviii.
70. Ibid, p. xxii; *Punjab Papers,* edited by Hasrat, p. 66.
71. Malcolm: *Asiatic Researches.* (1812), Vol. ii. p. 219.
72. Scott, G.B.: *Religion and Short History of the Sikhs.*
73. A. Roberts, J.M.: *The French Revolution,* pp. 57-59.
74. Bhangu, pp. 40-1.
75. Macauliffe, iv, pp. 197, 107.
76. Bhangu, pp. 50, 58, 104, 236, 244, 262, 368.
77. Ibid, p. 216.
78. Ibid, p. 469.
79. Ibid, p. 368.
80. Irvine, pp. 94, 96, 98-99.
81. *Fatuhat Namah-i-Samdi,* p. 28, Cited by Gurbax Singh: *Punjab History Conference* (Dec. 1973), Proceedings, p. 55.
82. *Asrar-i-Samdi,* trans. in Punjabi, p. 7.
83. Elliot and Dowson, Vol. vii, pp. 419-420.
84. Irvine, Vol. i, pp. 83-4.
85. *Early European Accounts of the Sikhs,* edited by Ganda Singh, p. 192.
86. Ibid, p. 228.
87. Hugel, p. 281.
88. Narang, Gokal Chand: *Transformation of Sikhism,* p. 81.
89. *Sri Gur Sobha,* edited by Ganda Singh, p. 128.
90. Bhangu, p. 131.
91. Ibid, p. 215.
92. Budh Singh Arora: *Risala-i-Nanak Shah.* Cited by Gurbax Singh, Punjab History Conference (Nov., 1976), Proceedings, p. 79.
93. *E.E.A.* of Sikhs, p. 197.
94. Forster, i, p. 329.
95. Griffin: *Rajas of the Punjab,* p. 16.
96. Malik, Arjan Das: *An Indian Guerrilla War,* pp. 40-1.
97. Malcolm: *Asiatic Researches* (1812), pp. 244-246.
98. Frederic Engels: *The Peasant War in Germany,* p. 29.
99. Ibid, p. 129.
100. Ibid. pp. 101, 102, 129.
101. Ibid, pp. 100, 101, 105-6, 108.
102. Wolf, Eric R.: *Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century,* p. 9.
103. Ibid, p. 31
104. Ibid, p. 83.
105. Ibid, p. 141.
106. Ibid, p. 150.
107. Ibid, p. 185.
108. Ibid, p. 269.
109. Ibid, pp. 289-290.

110. Ibid, p. 294.
111. Roberts, J.M.: *The French Revolution,* p. 127.
112. Rose, ii. p. 357.
113. Ibid, p. 358.
114. Kadryatsev, M.K.: *On the Role of the Jots in Northern India's Ethnic History,* p. 6.
115. Qanungo, K.R.: *Studies in Rajput History,* p. 63.
116. *Gazetteer of the Rohtak District* (1883-84), p. 19.
117. Bingley, p. 15.
118. Irvine, i, p. 323.
119. Ibid, p. 327.
120. Bingley, p. 18.
121. Ibid, p. 19.
122. Ibid, p. 19.
123. Bingley, p. 24.
124. Koer Singh, p. 99; Bhangu, p. 41.
125. Bhangu, pp. 41-42.
126. Lefebvre, Georges: *The Coming of French Revolution,* p. 50.
127. Rude, George, *Revolutionary Europe,* p. 74.
128. Forster, i, 312-313.
129. Malik, Arjan Das: *An Indian Guerilla War,* p. 3.
130. Irvine, p. 317-318.
131. *Early European Accounts of Sikhs,* p. 188.
132. Elliot & Dowson, vii, p. 458.
133. Latif, Syed Muhammed: *History of the Punjab,* p. 629.
134. Malcolm, *Asiatic Researches,* Vol II (1812), p. 23.
135. Banerjee, A.C.: *Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh,* p. 91.
136. Cunningham, p. 75.
137. Khushwaqt Rai, p. 71, Cited by Gupta, *History of the Sikhs,* i. p. 12.
138. Bhangu, pp. 304-305.
139. Pradhan, p. 246; *Gazetteer of Gurgaon District* (1918), p. 67; *Gazetteer of Karnal District* (1918), p. 65; *Settlement Report, Ludhiana District* (1878-83), p. 54; *Gazetteer of Jullundur District* (1904), p. 121; *Gazetteer of Lahore District* (1883-84), p. 68.
140. *Jangnamah.*
141. *Fatuhat & Nam-i-Samdi;* Forster, i, p. 333; Ahmed Shah, Sohan Lal, Alimud-din and Ganesh Das cited by Gupta; *A History of the Sikhs,* i, p. 195; Griffin: *Rajas of the Punjab,* p. 17.
142. Pradhan, p. 3; Bingley, p. 101; Ibbetson, 424; Rose, ii, 359, 357; *Administration Reports of the Punjab,* (1851-53), p. 90 of 1953 to 1956), p. 7) *Gazetteers of the District of Lahore* (1883-84, p. 68); *Amritsar* (1947, p. 47), Feroze-pur (1915, p. 69).
143. *Fatuhat Namah-i-Samdi,* cited in Punjab History Conference (Dec. 1973), Proceedings, pp. 55-56; *Khulasaetut-Twarikh* (trans. in Punjabi), p. 81.
144. Bhangu, p. 216.
145. Ibid, p. 469.
146. Ibid, p. 215.
147. Ibid, pp. 80, 87.
148. Macauliffe, v, p. 217.
149. Bhangu, pp. 213-4.
150. *The Punjab Papers,* ed. Bikram Jit Hasrat, pp. 56, 86.
151. Forster, i, pp. 312-313.

CHAPTER II

Conclusion

In the light of the study made in the preceding pages hypothesis of some of the western scholars regarding the militarisation of the Sikh movement is untenable on more than one account. The very basic assumptions on which their thesis rests are belied by facts. There is no data to infer that Jats were the predominant element among the Sikhs when Guru Hargobind decided to militarise the movement, or in the battles of Guru Gobind Singh and those of Banda. Rather, all the available historical evidence points to the contrary. Similarly, there is nothing to suggest that the Jats used to come armed when they came to pay homage to the Gurus. Even this is a presumption that the Jats were the only people who bore arms, if the population was not disarmed, and the Khatris and the castes lower than the Jats did not.

Similarly, the other two assumptions are equally baseless. The keeping of sword (kirpan) and hair was not a speciality of the Jat culture, which the Sikh movement is supposed to have borrowed from there. Nor did the Sikh movement need the inspiration of the Devi cult for its militancy. Guru Hargobind went to the hills after finishing all his battles in the plains, and no Devi cult survives among the Sikh Jats. Besides, it remains a mystery, how the Jats, without control of the leadership and the organization of the Khalsa in their own hands could possibly manoeuvre it according to their own predilections.

The most important consideration, however, is that the Sikh militancy has to be viewed not in isolation, but in its relation to the Sikh egalitarian Revolution. The Sikh movement aimed at capturing political power by the Khalsa and the Sikh-militancy was geared to achieve this purpose. The two should not be divorced from each other arbitrarily. As we have seen, the peasantry have lacked political initiative throughout the world, and peasants in India, including the Jats, were additionally inhibited by the caste ideology. Also, the Jat pattern of egalitarianism, which was limited to the Jat *Bhaichara,* cannot be equated or confused with the egalitarian character of Khalsa brotherhood in which the 'lowest were equal to the highest'. Therefore, it becomes pure speculation to assume that the Khalsa egalitarian political goal, and the militarisation of the Sikh for achieving that objective, evolved out of the interaction of Jat cultural traits with the environmental factors. Moreover, neither the Jat pattern of social organization, nor their factional spirit, fit in with the organizational set-up of the Khalsa and the spirit of fraternization that prevailed in the Khalsa ranks.

It is surprising that some of the scholars have completely ignored the basic issue noted above. Possibly, they have fallen into the error which Lefebure cautioned historians to avoid. There can be no revolution, much less an egalitarian one like the Sikh Revolution, without a "revolutionary psychology". And "there is no true revolutionary spirit without the idealism which alone inspires sacrifice." The Jats, in common with the peasantry in general, lack political initiative. They are governed by caste considerations in their dealings with the Sudras and they are generally indifferent towards idealism or higher religious aspiration. Therefore, it is too much to surmise that the revolutionary psychology of the Sikh Revolution was a creation of the Jats. It is the Sikh ideology which inspired and sustained the Sikh Revolution. It is the hold of this ideology which was the dominant feature of the revolutionary phase of the movement, and it was the extent to which this hold loosened which marred its post-revolutionary phase.

Another possible reason which misleads such scholars is that they either ignore the revolutionary phase altogether, or they lump it together with the post-revolutionary phase in a manner so as to undermine its distinctiveness, or they interpret it in the light of the latter. It is true that revolutionary upsurges do not-last long because of the inherent limitations of human nature of the environmental factors. But, to evaluate the revolutionary aspect of a movement in the light of its post-revolutionary developments would be no more valid than it would be to ascribe the rise of waves in the ocean to the very gravitational pull of the earth which brings them back to their original level. The French Revolution, as already pointed out, loses all its glamour and historical significance if it is judged in the light of its sequel—the Bonaparte regime. Besides inching humanity forward towards its ultimate goal of freedom and equality, the revolutionary movements provide a perpetual source of inspiration for future efforts. Nor are the revolutionary upsurges inconsequential in terms of tangible achievements. They are an integral part of the so-called 'historical process'. Without the impulse supplied by Islam, the Bedouins might have been content in plucking dates in the Arabian desert and not aspired to vast empires. Similarly, there would probably have been no Misals or Ranjit Singh without the guerrilla warfare waged by the Sikh revolutionaries. And this prolonged revolutionary struggle is inconceivable if we take away the ideological inspiration and the deep commitment to the revolutionary cause provided by the Sikh ideology.

This is also true that such periods, when ideologies sway the minds of vast masses, are rare in history. But, they are to be valued on that very account. Because, they are exactly the occasions when humanity, or a section of it, is 'on the move' towards its progressive goals. The Sikh Revolution was such a one.

APPENDIX A

Inter-caste Marriage

It has been said that the Sikh movement did not do much to promote inter-caste marriages. This assertion has probably been made in order to detract from the anti-caste achievements of the movement. It appears that the role of endogamy[1] in the caste complex has either not been understood, or has been overemphasized.[2]

(i) *Endogamy[1] and the caste complex:* Hutton writes: 'Indeed, it seems possible that caste endogamy is more or less incidental to the taboo on taking food cooked by a person of at any rate a lower, if not of any other caste, and in the view of the writer this taboo is probably the keystone of the whole system. It is not uncommon in some parts of India for a man of one caste to keep a concubine of a lower caste, or even a non-Hindu, and he is not outcaste by his caste fellows on that ground, though he may be, and often is, on the ground that he has eaten food cooked or served by her or taken water from her hands. This suggests that the taboo on marriage is the necessary and inevitable outcome of the taboo on food and drink, rather than the cause of it.[3] Hutton thus underscores the point that the problem of endogamy is only a part of the caste complex, and not an independent or a premier part at that. As such, its role should be viewed in this context and in the right perspective. The removal of endogamy is not indispensable for breaking up the caste structure. For, the caste has been losing its hold in India since it came in contact with the Western culture and the capitalist economy. But, all the same, not many intercaste marriages' have taken place since then so as to make any appreciable contribution to this development.

What is fundamental to the caste system is the preservation of the caste status, and the ritualistic and religious sanctions which helped maintain that status. The restrictions on inter-caste marriages are made inflexible by the religious and ritualistic rules of the caste ideology. 'Among classes who marry among themselves, marriage outside the class is prevented by sentiment and not by hard and fast rules. Marriage outside the class in Europe might be rare and invalid, but in India, if it is contracted outside the caste, it is a sacrilege.[4]

What makes endogamy formidable and obnoxious in the caste society is that inter-caste marriages, as pointed out by Ketkar, are not prevented, as in class societies, primarily by sentiment, but by the 'hard and fast' rules of the caste ideology. These 'hard and fast' rules are not applicable exclusively to endogamy. Most of these rules, especially the social approach underlying them, cover in their ramifications almost the entire spectrum of caste mechanism. For example, caste endogamy is the product of the notion that Aryan blood is pure and the non-Aryan impure, and that the admixture of the two should be avoided. As the mixture of the Aryan and non-Aryan bloods had already taken place on a large scale, caste endogamy was enforced at a later stage to compartmentalize this mixture so as to prevent further admixture. Exactly, the same principle or notion about the purity of Aryan blood and the impurity of non-Aryan blood underlies the injunctions against inter-dining among castes and pollution by contact or sight. 'Despite their indispensability for a millennium, the impure castes have remained absolutely impure; because of the blood they inherit which could not be accepted as pure under any circumstances. All such people are magically defiled.' 'Their very presence may infect the air of a room and so defile food in it that it must be thrown away to prevent evil enchantment.[5] The idea that certain persons defile if they sit down to a meal in one row is present in the Sutras.[6] Similarly, Gautma upholds that an impure

person imparts pollution by his touch and even by his near approach.[7] In the later periods, these rules were further elaborated and made rigid. In the medieval Occident, 'there were factual barriers restricting the connubium between differently esteemed occupations, but there were no ritual barriers, such as are absolutely essential for caste. Within the circle of the 'honourable' people, ritual barriers were completely absent; but such barriers belong to the basis of caste differences.[8] 'Nowhere are endogamy and the exclusion of commensalism more rigidly observed than by the occupational castes, and this is by no means true only of the interrelation of high and low castes. Impure castes shun infectious contact with non-members as rigidly as high castes. This may be taken as a conclusive proof of the fact that mutual exclusiveness was predominantly caused, not by social, but by ritualistic factors based on the quality of many of these castes as ancient guest or pariah people.'[9]

All the above facts emphasize that the foundation on which the super-structure of injunctions against inter-caste marriages, inter-caste commensalism, inter-caste contact, pollution, etc., rested was the same. Ritual barriers or magical distance between castes in their mutual relationships (whether it applies to inter-caste marriages, inter-caste commensalism, various notions about pollution or to the stigma attached to certain occupations) is a fundamental basis of the caste. The caste order is orientated religiously and ritually to a degree not even partially attained elsewhere.[10] 'Complete fraternization of castes has been and is impossible because it is one of the constitutive principles of the castes that there should be atleast ritually inviolable barriers against complete commensalism among different castes.'[11]

(ii) *Restrictions in other societies:* Another important point to be borne in mind is that caste restrictions on marriages are not the only restrictions current on marriages between exclusive groups. Individual and group prejudices against marriages, based on considerations of various kinds (viz., health, beauty, colour, race, class etc.) exist in societies where there are no castes. In other words, caste endogamy is superimposed on prejudices about marriages between mutually exclusive groups common to non-caste societies as well. This leads to two corollaries. First, the problem of restrictions on marriages between exclusive groups or classes is not solved by the undoing of the caste endogamy. Secondly, the problem of removing prejudices regarding marriages, as it is in non-caste societies, is hard enough to solve. Because, in view of the very personal nature of the marriage relations and the human prejudices involved, no positive regulations can be prescribed in this field. Except for marriage restrictions imposed by the caste system, few societies have tended to lay down positive laws governing marriages between different social groups or classes. No wonder that Plato's suggestions in this regard always remained as the odd ramblings of a philosopher's mind; and the attempt in Rome to regulate marriages through the Theodosian Code failed miserably. For the same reasons, the racial problem between the Whites and the Negroes in the U.S.A., or elsewhere, continues to be intractable. The super-imposition of caste endogamy on the other prejudices regarding marriages made the problem doubly complicated.

(iii) *The Approach of the Sikh Movement:* Guru's stand on the issue is very clear. When the Muktas (the select band of Sikhs in the congregation of Guru Gobind Singh at Anandpur, who were given this honorific title for being foremost in living upto the ideals of Sikhism) advocated intercaste marriages, some other Sikhs openly expressed their inability to follow this line. The matter was represented to the Guru himself. The Guru indicated that the advice of the Muktas should be followed. He said, 'The four castes are one brotherhood. The Guru's relationship to the four castes is common (i.e. equal). There is no doubt about it. . . Muktas are my own life. What they do is acceptable.'[12]

'Caste is probably what Professor Bartlett would call one of the 'hard points' of Hindus culture, and any attempt to modify if by a direct attack on it is likely to provoke resistance and discord, and reformers will need to aim at some 'soft point', some other feature of the culture, that is, through which the 'hard point' can ultimately be circumvented and isolated.[13] It is probably on this account that, 'In regard to the matter of the right to enter Hindu temples, the exterior castes were advised by Mr. Gandhi not to attempt to gain entry, as God resides in their breasts.[14] If this cautious approach was necessary in the twentieth century, it was much more so in the times of the Sikh Gurus. They had to avoid taking steps that might affect adversely the very objectives of the movement. They were not idle dreamers interested only in the postulation and declaration of a utopian stand. They could not afford to sit in isolation tied to an abstract maxim. They were the leaders of a movement. Although they never swerved for a moment from their objectives, and even paid with their lives for not doing so, they had to weigh beforehand the feasibility of each and every step they took in the light of its likely consequences on the course of the movement as a whole. As leaders keen to achieve practical results, they were aware of the necessity not only of carrying their followers with them, atleast a majority of them, but also of ensuring their zealous participation. Evidently, they would not like to take such steps as might sidetrack the main problems.

There were open rifts in Sikh ranks at different pleas between those who wanted to stick to the old rite of Bhadan (cutting off the hair of the child at a certain stage of his life) and those who wanted to give it up following the Guru's injunction not to shave.[15] Where differences could crop up on such a minor issue, the Gurus could not risk the future of the movement by insisting on inter-caste marriages.

The abolition of the caste was not the only goal of the Sikh movement. It had also to fight the religious and political oppression of the rulers. In fact, the pursuit of the latter objective became more urgent especially when the Mughal rulers launched a frontal attack to convert the Hindus to Islam. The Sikh movement depended for all its recruitment to its ranks entirely on elements drawn from the caste society. It could not afford to cut itself off completely from the base of its recruitment. By doing so, none of the three social objectives of the movement would have been furthered. Neither would it have succeeded n building a society outside the caste order; nor could it have successfully challenged the religious and political dominations nor it could have captured political power for the masses.

It is in this context that the anti-caste stance of the Sikh Gurus and the Sikh movement should be judged. No socialist or communist movement has ever cared to adopt the issue of inter-class marriages as its plank. They know that human prejudices regarding marriages would automatically disappear with the levelling up of class differences. Similarly, the Gurus attacked the very fundamentals of the caste, i.e. caste-status consciousness and the ritualistic barriers between the castes. They hoped that caste endogamy would disappear with the disappearance of caste-status consciousness and these ritualistic barriers. They did not want to side-track the movement from the comparatively urgent problem of meeting the political challenge.

Secondly, as we have said, the Gurus did not want to cut off, as far as possible, the movement from the base of its recruitment. Two instances would amplify the point we want to stress. It was Guru Nanak who started the institution of *Langar* where people of all castes and creeds dined together. It was a very big step towards breaking the caste ritualistic barriers. But, it was Guru Amardas who made it a rule that nobody could see him unless he had dined at the *Langar*.

Possibly this could not be done all at once in the beginning, because it required time to educate and influence the people in overcoming the ritual or taboo by which one could not eat 'in the sight of people not belonging to one's caste'. In the famine of 1866 in Bengal, when people were forced by starvation to eat in the public soup kitchens opened by the Government, 'they made certain that often a sort of symbolic *chambre separee* was created for each caste by means of chalk lines drawn around the tables and similar devices.[16]

Again, Guru Gobind Singh himself took away the Janeo of Alim Singh when he felt it necessary to prevent him from reverting to the caste society.'[17] But, the same Guru advised his Sikhs not to insist on anybody wearing Janeo,[18] nor coerce anyone to forgo it. The same was the Guru's approach regarding inter-caste marriages. While he approved of the proposal of the Muktas, he did not prescribe or insist on inter-caste marriages, leaving it to the Sikhs to follow it on their own.

Footnotes:

1. In dealing with restrictions on inter-caste marriages, we exclude exogamy, because it is not born out of the considerations of social discrimination, and hypergamy because the Sikh Jats, who form the majority of the Sikh population, are not adverse to taking wives from the lower castes.
2. Rose, 11, p. 361.
3. Hutton, p. 71.
4. Ketkar, p. 117.
5. Max Weber, p. 13.
6. Ghurye, p. 79.
7. Ibid.
8. Max Weber, pp. 34-35.
9. Ibid., p. 106.
10. Ibid., p. 44.
11. Ibid, p. 36.
12. Rehatname, pp. 68-69 (See Appendix A).
13. Hutton, p. 130.
14. Ibid., p. 202.
15. Gur Sobha.
16. Max Weber, p. 37.
17. Macauliffe, V. p. 157.
18. Mehma Parkash, ii, p. 831.

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Footnotes:

1. Based on works cited or consulted.

	chapter	Book page, line	Doc page, line
theophratries	5 three facets of the caste system	19,11	3,44
seel	5 three facets of	25,6	7,13
irt	„	33,12	11,43
theophratries	6 the period of ideological ascendancy	41,6	3,24
pensance	7 the caste system	65,12	3,23
attendendant	„	72,29	7,22
tuch	„	73,4	7,33

PERSPECTIVES ON SIKH STUDIES
1985,

1. The whole book is typed in Garamond font (English UK), with a consistent font format [i.e., size, bold (for titles), Italics, Underlines ect.]

2. Typographical errors such as shown in the example are corrected wherever noticed.
   Example: Page 37, line 26 of book and page 56, line 8 of the soft copy of **Spirit of the Sikh (Part I)**:
   known as "Sikh" or Disciple". IN the given phrase the inverted comas before disciple are missing which have been fixed.

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3. All the Grammatical errors have been left as they are and spelling mistakes corrected according to British English which has been used by the author. At certain places to convey the essence the author has changed the form of words which are not permissible and hence account for grammatical errors. Example: Word "slightingly" appearing on page number 43 of the book and 29 of the soft copy of the **Spirit of the Sikh (Part I)**. All other spelling mistakes, which do not account for the above given explanation have been changed. All the mistakes noticed, but not changed for the lack of surety are listed in the file named mistakes sent along. We can correct them as per your instructions.

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