

Critique of Spiritual Voluntarism: A Sikh Perspective

NIRBHAI SINGH

Fellow, Indian Institute of Advanced Study
Rashtrapati Nivas, Shimla

*nirākāra mahi ākāru samāvai/
akala kalā sacu saci tīkāvai//**
/GG (Guru Nanak), p. 414

I. INTRODUCTION

In this paper there are certain philosophical issues which need to be analysed. In order to understand the singular contribution of Sikhism, it is necessary to discuss critically and analytically these philosophical questions. First, in the 'Introduction' the general problem of the present paper has been broached. And in other sections it is proposed to enunciate the other issues one by one. These questions have been segmented into different sections so as to have indepth understanding of the present problem. What is the concept of man? Man as Creative Being. What is Spiritual Voluntarism and Reality of Time (*kāla*)? Voluntarism: *theoria* and *praxis*? These will be explored directly to discern the underlying hermeneutical meanings in the Sikh Canon and historicised consciousness manifested in the tradition. And others shall be covered under them.

From the metaphysical standpoint Sikhism is neither a crude materialism of Cārvāka nor an abstract idealism of the Vedānta and the Buddhist School of Śūnyavāda. It is a kind of realism because the phenomenal world is considered real. The ephemeral world is contingent. The metaphysical postulation of Sikhism is dynamic. Thus, in Sikhism there is a metaphysical necessity to transcend the contingent world and live in the eternal (necessary) realm of spirituality. Guru

*The Sikh Canons have been interpreted in the medieval *muktak* system of phones in which the last character is often silent. English rendering of the Sikh Canons is author's own.

Nanak's spiritual world-view of *sacakhaṇḍa* has existential import as well as ontological faith in the Infinite. His existential concerns are for transcendence from the contingent world into the eternal and spiritual space of necessity, *Akālāpurakh*.

There are two spaces. One is physical or contingent space of scientists determined by contingent causal relationships. The other one is the spiritual space of logical necessity. According to *Gurubānī* it is created through conceptualisation of guru's word (*śabda*). It takes the self to an acme where it is one with the Eternal. It is in resonance with the cosmic echo (*anahada nāda*) while living in the contingent world with other fellow beings. The moment man realises the natural state of equipoise (*sahaj*), he gets emancipated from entices of the contingent world and enters into the realm of spiritual necessity. He regains his ontic freedom. This idea is spread all over the Sikh Canon. The structure could be created out of the *a priori* necessity of transcendental spirituality and values. These values need to be hermeneutically moulded in consonance with the eternally changing social conditions of the contingent world. In this sense space of ideology is to be worked out. There should be perfect harmony between theoretical framework and praxis. This is the crux of the present paper.

II. MAN AS A CREATIVE BEING

Having dealt with brief "Introduction" to the theoretical prelims of Sikh voluntarism, let us take up the concept of man's creativity. According to the materialists human behaviour is entirely to be determined by the physical or material causes and laws. The influx of material Western commercialization and materialization has engendered our cultural system. As a result of economic globalisation our spiritual culture is being eclipsed. According to them man is determined by his bare impulses for food and other bodily needs. They do not appreciate that man has innate free will. All religions reiterate their unswerving faith in the Eternal. Man can go beyond the contingent world. He has been treated as an automata. And he has also been deprived of his ontic freedom. In India the Cārvāka thinkers also suffer from this fallacy. Both in the East and the West the materialists failed to appreciate the dormant creative potentiality in man that could create some eternal human values (i.e., moral, spiritual, and aesthetic). They commit a fallacy of reductionism by reducing man as a machine or robot. The Cartesian irreconcilable duality between mind and body for attaining rational certainty has created a problem in the Western

thought. In the Indian Philosophy Sāṃkhya System's irreconcilable parallelism between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* dichotomises non-dualistic ontological structure. It creates a thorny problem to strike an optimum synthesis between theory and praxis.

Sikhism, on the contrary, considers both mind and body as two subtle and gross phases of one reality. Consciousness is postulated inherently latent in the energy (*śakti*). It is to be aroused from within. Hence there is no denying the fact that man and other living organisms have the same material stuff as rest of the cosmos, but man with his creative mind transcends all the physical conditions. He can live life of freedom and higher human values. Perhaps, for this reason Sikhism does not limit itself to the Aristotelian definition of man as a sheer 'political animal'. For Sikhism man is also a spiritual micro-reality. According to the Sikh philosophy man is capable of living in the higher spiritual space of blissful conceptual cognition and eternal freedom (i.e. *nānaka bhagṭā sadā vigāsu* / GG, p. 2).

In the Sikh philosophy man has been projected as a concrete and creative being in the web of societal relationships. It is because of the fact that he is in the real and concrete historical situations. And he is creator because he cannot dispense with his historical, political, and other responsibilities. He is expected to create a new value-system. Values are not in the contingent world. Their realm is transcended from it. Material civilisation does injustice to man by reducing him to a robot bereft of higher human values. Culture, on the other hand, is the inner motivating force of values and higher human aspirations, which determine the course of development of human history and civilisation. The values emanate from man's creativity and his inherent freedom of will. He can create better world and demolish tyranny and injustice in the world. He has the capacity to historicise new values in practice. For this purpose Sikhism emphasises to cut down *manmukh* (egocentric self) and to transform him into cosmic conscious being (*gurmukh*). To be *gurmukh* is a dire necessity for execution of the divine purposes. It is through the individual consciousness the cosmic echo (*anahada nāda*) is carried out. Since in the cosmic consciousness there are no extraneous constraints, so individual consciousness has been postulated inherently free. He wants to be free in the practical life as well. The materialists view man as naturalist and positivist in essence. According to them man is determined by his impulses for food and other bodily needs. They do not appreciate that man has innate free will. He can go beyond the contingent world and can live in the eternal domain. Here lies the creativity of man.

III. CREATIVITY OF MAN

Not to speak of Sikhism all scriptures station man as the central linchpin in the existential human conditions. Human condition is visualised in the concrete dynamicity of societal situations within the cosmos. Now the philosophical question arises: Can man be both a creature and creator? First, he is creature because he is the creation of his parents. Second, our answer would be that he creates his own self as well. Wittgenstein's 'Tractarian' view would correctly assert that man's creative mind is operative in all-comprehensive reflections on all possible perspectives on the problematic issues. It makes analysis of five interrogative w's (i.e. *what, why when, where, and who*).

Then, what is man in Sikhism? What is the crux of human conditions? Man is considered concrete in the existential situations. Aristotelian entelechy in potentiality is free and it can actualise its freedom only if congenial conditions are available. In the Kantian sense man as person is an end in himself because of his inherent autonomous nature. Freedom is postulated as *a priori* potentiality in his self.

From his inherent *a priori* autonomous being it can be inferred that he is a potential *Akālāpurakh* and is capable of traversing from the narrow individuated consciousness (*mānmukh*) to the cosmic integrated consciousness (*gurmukh*). The eternally dynamic divine law (*hukam*) inherent in man historicises itself in praxis. The genius among men bridges the hiatus between Eternity and temporality. The creation of *Akāla Takht* (throne of Eternity) in Amritsar is concretisation of Eternity on the earth. It is a concrete form of reconciliation of Eternity and temporality. Later on creation of the *Khālsā* by Guru Gobind Singh in AD 1699 is another singular historical development in concretisation of Eternity on the earth.

The creative mind creates a space, which is independent of the ephemeral world. For instance, Guru Nanak's *sacakhanda* is not contingent. It is eternal and independent reality of its own kind. It is a real world. It is neither similar nor identical with the perceptual or external world. The role of a genuine genius is to create a world, which could mirror or cope with the eternally changing temporal events and is to create new vista for the coming humankind. The creative genius crosses over all the dichotomised linguistic structures and creates a new one. This is how dynamic ideologies are created for the coming world of human generations. Continuous restructuring of the idealised forms are symbolic of dynamicity of the cosmic ontic reality and

creativity of man. The forms or images are fashioned by the word (*śabda*). The word crystallises the forms and shapes them. It is the role of human mind to articulate signification with the help of linguistic tools.

When the genius philosophises, he has to transcend into primeval chaos and will feel at home. In the *Mārū Sohale* in the *Guru Granth* the realm of transcendental ontic reality has been portrayed. It is independent of the contingent world. This transcendental eternal world is to be historicised to make it workable in practice. Thus, it is talent put to use. Talent without infusion of practicability is sterile and a mere intellectual skeleton. In Sikhism the idea, word and action (i.e. *mana, baca, karma*) make a perfect voluntaristic eternal world-view. The Gurus innovated new ideas and implemented them in history. In this sense the Gurus were creators of history. Creation of *sacakraṇḍa*, *Akāla Takht*, and the *Khālsā* are unique instances of creative innovations in Sikhism.

These are the creative innovations of the geniuses of the Sikh Gurus. It is wrong to say that one genius is influenced by another genius. The very distinct mark of the genius is that he creates a new path that makes a departure from the beaten track. His creative mind is a path-breaker. He may agree or disagree to the interpretations of the existing traditions and the scriptures propounded by other geniuses, but his articulations create new conceptual patterns. He will definitely come out with his new articulated interpretations. This is how the traditions and scriptures are created by the geniuses of the coming ages. Emergence of a genius's ideas is a rare phenomenon, which opens new vistas.

Then a question arises: Why is not a genius effected or influenced by another genius? It is because of the fact that no genius treads the beaten path and he digresses from the fossilised truth. And his experiences of truth from different perspectives are unique and relative to differences of space(s) and time(s). Moreover, the genius creates his new articulated space that makes all the differences. In addition to it creativity of the genius also depends on receptivity of the audience. In fact creative genius is an exemplary specimen of unity-in-diversity of human nature. Experiences of different geniuses always differ. If both are contemporary even, their experiences cannot be similar or identical. If they are existentially or historically stationed at different places and times, their experiences are bound to be different because truth changes at every point-instant (*pala/kṣana*).

The differences become manifest when the geniuses are dialectically engaged with one another. So exposition of truth by two or many geniuses cannot be identical. Every person sees facts through uniqueness of his new lenses of different perspectives and angles.

Moreover, every genius's interpretations of the contingent, logical, spiritual and the spaces of facts are always diachronic. And creativity of one genius differs from the other one. The role of the genius is reconstruction of Eternity in the historical human conditions. It is genius's creativity that carries out through the vicissitudes of history. The genius of Guru Nanak created the intuitively conceptualised space of *sacakhaṇḍa* that was concretised in history as *Akāla Takht* and the *Khālsā*. In this sense the genius is not only a creation or creature of history but he is creator of history as well. It is through his dual nature (creature and creator) the genius could bridge Eternity and history. So the contribution of the Sikh Canon would assert that the supreme Reality is not a metaphysical creator, but man is creator of the conceptualised supreme Being. Religion as a linguistic construct of the supreme Reality is to transform individual consciousness from within into cosmic consciousness. It is synthesis of nominalism and conceptualism into realism of the world. In the Sikh metaphysics there is no element of human self that is derogatory. Every element could be transformed into a good one.

For this purpose there is a need of ethico-spiritual discipline. Man is required to do honest earnings (*kirat karnā*). Guru Nanak was a mendicant, but not an ascetic (*saṅnyāsī*). His personality is a synthesis of asceticism and domesticity of householder. Before he undertook his spiritual sojourns (*uddāsīs*), he was employed in the service of a provision-store (*modīkhānā*) of the Sultan at Sultānpur in district Kapurthala (Punjab). And after his *uddāsīs* to Indian regions and South-Asian countries, he tilled the lands at Kartārpur (now in Pakistan). He is against exploitation of hoarding. As a mendicant it is incumbent on his part to earn his hard-earned bread and share with others. He says: "*ghālī khāi kichu hathahu dei, nānak rāhu pachānhi sei/ GG, p.1245*). Therefore, trio of meditative remembrance of the divine *nāma*, honest hard earning and sharing goods with others (i.e. *nāma japanā*, *kirat karnā* and *waṇḍa chaknā*) is well-known in the Sikh tradition (see, Guru Nanak's, *Siddhi Goṣṭi*). Therefore, *nāma-simran* and *kirat-karnā* should go hand in hand. *Nāma-simran* has been democratised and secularised in the medieval Bhakti cult and this wave was continued in the Sikh tradition as well.

There is a simultaneous exposition of man's creative nature that ceaselessly tries to reconcile the transcendent and the immanent, and the sacred and the profane. Manifest facts are in eternal flux. Sensations are successions of cause and effect. It is interesting to note that every living species has some degrees of creativity. For example, birds make their nests and animals find food and space for shelter. As compared to lower species man's creativity is penetrative and deeper. He is capable of analysing 'how' and 'why'. His conceptual analysis can go deeper into the problems. The lower species remain at the level of perceptual series of successions and appearances. Man is capable of theoretical and coherent understanding of the problem. With the help of his intellect he can invent material and intellectual tools. As a modern philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) says that whenever man is confronted with a problem, he invents new tools of language to dissolve the practical problems (*Philosophical Investigations*, 1st edn., 1953).

Guru Nanak says in this context that human consciousness (*surati*) encompasses degrees of consciousness of all lower species and all human values are realised through it (i.e. *sabhi surati mili surati kamā, sabha kīmati mili kīmati pāi*/GG, p. 349). No other species can attain the acme of self-consciousness. It follows that experiences of the lower species are not at par with human species.

Machine cannot have thinking, calculating creativity and other higher human experiences. Similarly machine cannot have experience of man. Even computer cannot have creativity without command of human mind. It is only the *homo sapiens* who have creativity and potentialities of becoming self-conscious. Lower species also remember past experience. For instance, if we beat a dog with a stick, it will remember and bark at you in future. It implies that the dog can have a memory, but its memory cannot be as good as that of man. Man with the help of tools of language and techniques of improvement of memory is far ahead of lower species. He has the power of *wonder* and *curiosity* that is the root-cause of the birth of philosophy. It is also the cause of new discoveries and inventions. It, then, leads to praxis that is necessary for solutions of the theoretical problems. Man has an inherent urge to beautify himself. It is human urge that distinguishes men from animals.

After Plato in the ancient Greece Aristotle upgraded art which forges unity in human consciousness. Animals and other species are incapable of pure theoretical and intuitive insights. There is no need

of false austerities (*tapas*) for attaining liberation. Guru Nanak and other Gurus never accepted all these; such as, charity, pilgrimages, fasts, and performance of other religious rituals. He was a realist to the core and always tried to be in the battle of life to resolve existential knotty problems. He accepts life in full 'here' and 'now'. There is no dependence on the past and no optimism for the future. It is interesting to note that (unlike Vedantic and Buddhist traditions) in Sikhism the past *karmas* do not have an absolute efficacy to determine the present of man if he takes resort to *nāma-simran*. There is no sense of glorification of demands of the worldly life. Guru Gobind Singh has condemned these in his lengthy poetic anthology "*Akāla Ustati*" as a fake religion (*phokāta dharma*). In Sikhism human life is considered the highest divine gift for self-realisation. As compared to other species man is at the top. Human life is treated as a rare opportunity (*durlabh*) to realise truth in human life.

It is interesting to argue out that man is not an 'object' of history as a robot or automata, but he has the capacity to be the 'subject' of history. He is not to be absolutely determined by history but he is to create and control it. He has the potentiality to make himself infinite (*akāla*). He is inherently endowed with freedom of will to become subject of history by going beyond historicity. In the post-structural aspects it includes denial of any fixed meaning or any correspondence between language and the world, or any fixed or static objective reality/truth or fact. In the West Nietzsche initiated this new tendency. His perspectivism is a philosophical technique for dissolving the earlier metaphysical presuppositions, which warranted objective knowledge. For him objectivity in epistemology is revealed as a disguise for abuse of power or authority.¹

Hence every experience of truth is an interpretive articulation of the preunderstanding in which we all find ourselves as living humans in the world. Nietzsche's statement that 'God is dead' eroded the basic ontological nature of the Numinous, and objectivity of knowledge or truth. For him there are no objective facts but only interpretations (see, *Beyond Good and Evil*, *Will to Power*, and *Human, All Too Human*). In the process of interpretation there is no longer any necessity of the metaphysical creator God. He is a sheer linguistic construct articulated by man as a regulative principle. This principle was first recognised by Aristotle in the ancient Greece, but Kant in modern times further carried it forward in his, *Critique of Practical Reason*. He projects God as a moral necessity to organise the societal affairs.

Continuing Kantian viewpoint Nietzsche's argument was that humanity needed God in order to structure and regulate the societal relationships. Thus supernatural agency is often introduced as a *deus ex machina* to overcome the practical or existential problems. For Nietzsche God as a metaphysical creator of the universe is dead in the modern rational philosophy. Nietzsche's nihilistic hermeneutics contends that all experiences are interpretive without any preconceived experiences of the objective truth. In short, Nietzschean hermeneutics is a response to the checkered history of changing events. It is being interpreted in history as the recurrence of nihilism. In the West we find for the first time the nihilistic hermeneutics in Nietzsche's philosophy. The concept of nihilism was carried forward by Martin Heidegger in *Being and Time* and *The End of Philosophy*. And Hans-Georg Gadamer further applies it in his masterpiece work, *Truth and Method*. This nihilistic trend has influenced the modern French philosophers; J. Derrida, M. Foucault, Richard Rorty, G. Deleuze and many others. Even the living Italian philosopher Gianni Vattimo's works, *The End of Modernity*, *The Adventure of Difference*, *Beyond Interpretation*, et al., reflect influences of Nietzsche and Heidegger. Vattimo in the first chapter of his, *Beyond Interpretation*, calls it, "The Nihilistic Vocation of Hermeneutics". Metaphysical or epistemological nihilism is identified with modernity. This is the revival of the Heraclitian metaphysical universal non-repetitive eternal flux. In the Indian metaphysics it is revisiting the Buddhist philosophy of the 'universal flux'.

Similarly for Guru Nanak when the self realises itself (*ātamu cīnhi*), it becomes the formless Being (*nirañkāri*) (i.e., *ātamu cīnhi bhae nirañkāri* (7-8)/GG, p. 415). Consequently the value of objective truth stands relegated to the background. In the medieval ages objectivity and absolutism were current concepts in the philosophical world. These concepts effected the religious, social and political fields. But in the modern era they are no more viable ones.

The charismatic personalities of the religious deities and pieties have disappeared in the modern wave of globalisation. Now the ghost of globalisation has assumed the role of medieval despotism and absolutism. There is a need of the hour to strike a balance of power between the rich and the poor. It resulted in new paradigmatic shift from the monarchic or despotic culture to the democratic and emancipatory trends of the subaltern and the women folks. The higher classes are no more recognised as gifted and chosen offsprings of God.

The subaltern (*dalit*) masses are struggling to restore their existential identity in the society based on the principles of equality and self-dignity, fraternity and freedom in the modern civil society. The feminine folks are also struggling for getting recognition of their distinct identity in the society rather than equality with men. Both are different and they cannot be treated at par with each other. Medieval *ṣūfīs* and the Sikh Gurus, Marx, Gramsci, Ambedkar, *et al.*, have been instrumental for the uplift and amelioration of the downtrodden masses. They were the underprivileged tillers of the motherland. The wretched people of the earth had been victims of atrocities of the upper strata of the society. Guru Nanak has gone to the extent of identifying himself with the *dalits*. He refuses to have any truck with the higher castes (see, *nīcā aṅdari nīca jāti nīci hu ati nīcu/ nānaku tina kai saṅgi sāthi vaḍiā siu kīā rīsa / GG, p. 15*).

Guru Nanak and other Gurus practically identified themselves with the subaltern masses. The creation of the *Khālsā* is the hypostatized macro-identity of *Akālāpurakh* concretised in the micro-identity of the realised self in history. He is like Keikegaard's "knight of faith" on the earth. He is above all the parochial grooves of communalism, casteism and sectarianism. Principle of love for mankind is the essence of the *Khālsā*.

With the creation of the *Khālsā* Guru Gobind Singh identified himself with the *Khālsā-panth*. In one of his hymn "*Khālsā Mehmā*" he goes to the extreme of eulogising the *Khālsā* as the true image of his real self. He goes on praising them that with their help he won many battles and bestowed charity on the [subaltern] with their grace. With their help he could demolish evil. Due to them he became a scholar. With their kindness he could destroy enemies. Because of them he assumed guruship though crores of others were in the world.

The above mentioned state of identification of the self either with the Numinous or with others is called in the German philosophy '*einfihlung*' (n) which literally means 'identity of feeling or empathy' 'en'= into, 'fihlung'= feeling or empathy'. And the verb '*einfihlen*' means to penetrate into the mind of others. Hence it is an identification of the feeling with others.

It can be said that the Sikh movement was the realisation of the divinely commissioned design of *Akālāpurakh* for the uplift of the subaltern. It was a grand creative event in the history of mankind to bring in such a splendid revolution in practice. The Gurus steeled the castrated will of the marginalised Indian masses and aroused their dormant potentialities for becoming the perfect men. Their enslaved

selves were imprisoned in the body as a silk worm is in the cocoon or an oyster in the shell. They were set free with the creation of the *Khālsā*. They were made to get rid of the fossilised and sterile beliefs that had enfeebled and entombed their free will for centuries together. A new life of invincible volition and optimistic attitude towards life was infused into the subaltern. A new impulse of chivalry was injected in the baptised *Khālsā* for supreme sacrifice and gallantry. It gave an irrevocable turn to the subaltern trends to the forthcoming social upheavals of modern historical and political events. The ancient institutions of the divine rights of the kings, caste system, ritualism and formalism, and many others were discarded. With the abolition of hegemony of kingship and feudalism new democratic trends were set in. Hence the movement of Sikhism is a crusade of the subaltern.

We have pointed out above that man is always confronted with the problem of violence from within and without. Therefore, Sikhism believes that the highest form of non-violence (*ahimsā*) is love for mankind, which is also love for God. When all rational arguments with the tyrant and the cruel fail, then sword is the last resort to restore justice in the society. To put to an end evil in the society use of sword or *khaṇḍā* is a must. Evil recurs again and again. So eternal vigilance against it is required. Hence Sikhism is a philosophy of defensive and corrective violence for restoring justice with the sword (*bhagotī*).

Man is born with his limitations in the world. And society is always cruel to man from without. And tyranny is within because of false worldly attachments and bodily infirmity. As pointed out earlier it results in fear of death. In the *Gītā* Kṛṣṇa's advice to Arjuna in the critical predicament in the battlefield of Kurukṣetra was that his will is 'to be resurrected from within'. He was horrified. He is on the horns of dilemma to decide the course of next action. Owing to the fear of death and attachment with his kith and kin, he is reluctant to fight. Arjuna as an essentialist novice is reluctant to take part in the moral battle (*dharma yudha*), but his will is ignited and enlightened by Lord Kṛṣṇa's philosophical teachings of voluntarism.

On the contrary, Guru Gobind Singh is an existentialist and voluntarist to the core. He himself jumps into the battlefield and fights against the evil forces. His actions are purely categorical imperatives. His existentialist attitude towards life is also interpreted as his voluntarist thought because of dominance of intuitive volition in theory and praxis. This enjoins upon us to explain the concept of Sikh voluntarism in general and with special reference to Guru Gobind Singh's spiritual voluntarism.

IV WHAT IS SPIRITUAL VOLUNTARISM?

Now the question arises: What is voluntarism? Why should it be termed as spiritual voluntarism? What is the difference between voluntarism and intellectualism? What is the ontological basis of it? How is it related to freedom of will? How is it related to the divine will? How does the divine will and the individual will represent continuum of the non-dual Being? How is it related to the Sikh concept of cosmic law (*hukam*)? Does it have any affinity with the Vedic concept of *ṛta* and the *Qur'ānic* concept of *razā*? These are some of the fundamental philosophical issues that shall be analysed in this section. An effort shall be made to understand distinct nature of the Sikh concept of spiritual voluntarism.

The term voluntarism comes from the Latin *voluntas* (will) that was introduced by F. Tonnies in 1883 in a study of the Dutch rationalist philosopher, Spinoza). He was concerned to contrast the then current doctrines of the voluntarists with the intellectualists of the seventeenth century rationalism of Descartes (1596-1650), Spinoza (1632-77) and Leibnitz (1646-1716) and many others. Voluntarism is essentially associated with the precedence of will over intellect in praxis.

Sikhism has essentially spiritual and ethical significance to evolve an esoteric discipline of voluntarist philosophy. Before we take up the problem of voluntarism we are confronted with a vital question: Can voluntarism replace cognitivism or intellectualism? In the ancient Greek philosophy Socrates was the greatest cognitivist or intellectualist philosopher. He does not believe in the precedence of the will over the intellect. Will for him is included in cognition. He is of the opinion that if he fully knows some thing is good, he cannot behave otherwise. For instance, if he knows that telling a lie is bad or immoral, he will not indulge in it. It means that knowing entails doing. In other words, cognition implies volition. However, man without perfect knowledge can do wrong deeds. If one fully knows, one cannot do wrong. This is the meaning of intellectualism.

In short, for the Greeks (e.g., Socrates, Aristotle, *et al.*) human intellect was the dominant inner potency of mind. Man as a rational animal differs from other beasts in his power of rational discrimination. Intellect was deemed to be discriminative element for rational choice, and will is the dynamic power/force. Socrates even holds of knowledge as a supplement to determine one's choice. For Aristotle men may have knowledge of the good, still he may not do good action. It implies

that will rather than intellect dominates his inner urges. It is because of weak will (*akrasia*) he is incapable of translating his urges into praxis. The Socratic and Aristotelian philosophies generally saw free choice in terms of rationality.

Later on Aristotle took up this problem that knowing culminates in praxis. Intuitive volition in praxis is the culmination of volition. He has introduced the concept of *akrasia*¹ (Gr. *acrasia*; i.e. incontinence) which connotes weakness of will; i.e., the condition of knowing what it would be the best to do, but owing to weak will one does sometimes something otherwise. We know that gambling, drinking wine, stealing and other vices are bad, but addicts are still victims of these. Knowing a thing to be good and desiring it makes difficult to execute it in praxis. So long as weakness of the will is there, one often indulges in vices because he lacks self-continenence. When desires are corrected by reason (cognition) and self-control (self-continenence), good deeds will follow. According to Aristotelian ethics the temperate person (self-continent) is not to be over powered by the vices. This moral issue is all owing to weakness of will power. We need to fortify our will power.

In short, this thorny doctrinal problem of intellectualism *versus* voluntarism dominated medieval philosophies of the Semitic religions (say, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam). These philosophies put emphasis on divine volition as creative principle of the universe. God as the absolute cause of the universe was finally rooted in the divinity's free will. For both intellectualists and voluntarists Divinity is absolutely able to create whatsoever It/He wills to create. For example, in the *Qur'ān* Allah orders 'be' (*fai-kun*),² then the universe (*kāi'nāt*) came into being. Similarly the terms *dhamma* and *ṛta* in Buddhism and Hinduism respectively stand for cosmic law and ethical code of human conduct. Both also stand for justice.

Continuing the spirit of the concept, Guru Nanak in the "Japujī" says that with [His] divine 'command' (*kavau*) the manifest universe came into being. Then the myriad emanated forms of the universe were created (i.e. *kītā pasāu eko kavāu/ tisa te hoe lakha dariāu /16/ GG, p. 3*). The Sikh philosophy (*gurmatī*) is a station of divine and human will. Both divine Agent and human agent are interchangeable concepts. It can be said in other way round. Human will was divinised. Both represent continuum of universal creativity of the universe.

It follows that Sikhism harks back to the primordial divine will, in which the world proceeds from His free will (*hukam*). *Hukam* as a categorical imperative, is the joyous overflow of the divine grace [on

humanity]. Guru Nanak expresses this idea in the last realm of Truth as: (i.e. *sacakhaṇḍa vasai nirāṅkāra/ kari kari vekhai nadari nihāla /37/ GG, p. 8*).

Then a question arises: Does Divinity has absolute freedom to create? Our answer to it should be 'Yes'. If the Divinity does not have freedom, then evil will stealthily creep into human heart. It will corrupt human will. As we find in the onto-theologies of Christianity and Islam 'śatān' and 'iblās' as personified evil figures are symbolic defiant rebels. They disobey the divine will. Their existence in the world is negation of divine will. Though evil has its malignant influence on the human will, yet man with God's grace can emancipate himself from the devilish impact. Then only precondition is complete self-surrender before the divine will. Sikhism, therefore, posits free will inherent in man. He is required to traverse to the state of numerical identification (*einführung*) with the Numinous. In the *Qur'ānic* terminology it is called approximation (*qurb*). In Indian philosophy Śāṅkara's Advaita Vedānta propounds complete ontic identity with the *nirguṇa brahman* and Rāmānuja is for epistemic *prāpti* of the qualified *brahman* in which schism between the self and the *brahman* is retained. Sikhism encompasses all within its non-dual dynamic structure.

Then a question arises: Can a liberated man (*muktā*) of Sikhism be immoral? For Socrates it will be a category mistake. For him there is no gap between thought and action. In Sikhism *giāna* (cognition) also implies volition but the latter dominates in praxis.

In the East the Vedantic philosophy puts up different veils or sheaths (*kośās*) over the eternal self (*ātman*). The eternal is realised in the time (history) in the lived world. On the other hand, metaphysical truth cannot be in time. Then what is the guarantee that one is liberated? Non-realised person cannot know that he is a realised person. If he realises himself, he knows truth. It is only the realised person who can categorically assert that he knows truth. For example, Guru Nanak has no doubt about the Numinous that is present, will be, and is eternal (i.e. *hai bhī hoṣī jāi na jāṣī racanā jini racāi/ GG, p.6*). He declares that he has realised truth beyond doubt. It is possible to say only if one is a realised self. The contributors of the *Guru Granth* were liberated selves. Bhakta Ravidass has envisaged or conceptualised such a city of liberated selves (*begampurā sahar ko nāu /GG, p. 345*). This idea divinised by Ravidass was realised in history with the creation of the *Khālsā-paṅth*, militant civil society. It constitutes an assembly of saint-soldiers (*saṅta-sapāhī*).

Sikhism lays emphasis on strengthening human will. It reconstructs the doctrine of disinterested action (*nīškāma karma*). As Kant's categorical imperative in the modern times is a reconstruction of the Socratic doctrine of 'knowing implies willing', similarly *Guru Granth* propounds the doctrine of '*śubha karma*' which means that with the grace (*kirpā*) of the Eternal all our ideas are to be executed in history. This is the crux of spiritual voluntarism. This is how the triangle of human mind (cognition, feeling and willing) is formatted. In the Kantian terms good is an intrinsic value and a categorical imperative. Hence action is good in itself. Is good teleological? If the self is not a realised one, it cannot be a teleological one. If the self were a realised one, our response would be 'yes' because the latter knows all. The *telos* is inherent in the human will.

G. E. Moore in his classical work *Ethics* (London: OUP, 1966) asserts that good is the object of 'pure intuition'. It does not require scholars to confirm it. Similarly Kant's moral laws being *a priori* require no scholars to articulate them. Court books/principles are just mechanical articulations of the intellect. G. E. Moore's teacher Henry Sidgwick is a realist and utilitarian. He has raised a very significant point with regard to the problem of voluntarism in his book, *The Methods of Ethics* (London: Macmillan, 1962). He has formulated conditions of moral will as under: (i) Utilitarianism (usefulness), (ii) Historical Identity of the Self (cf. "Station and Its Duties", *Ethical Studies* by F.H. Bradley and Hindu view of *viśeṣadharmā* and *sādhāraṇadharmā*), (iii) Pure Intuitive Cognition of the Good, that is beyond scientism and physical causality.

All these three combined together will determine your will or action in history. In the existential situations all moral dilemmas and their internal conflicts pose serious moral problems for us. Then the question arises: How to reconcile these conflicts? How can we be fair to the stranger? In such predicaments some times wrong means for possible good is justifiable. For instance, doctor's telling lies to the patient is good. On the other hand, bad means legitimise good means. For example, if one tells a lie before a butcher chasing the cow to kill her, it will save life of the cow. When a butcher is chasing the cow to kill her, then to tell a lie shall not be bad. Marx is in favour of violence and Gandhi advocates peaceful struggle for truth (*satyāgraha*). Here I want to argue that there is no absolute distinction between end and means. It depends all on the specific practical situation(s). It is not possible to execute all the willed desires at one and the same time.

Sometimes human choice in history is limited. For example, patient of cancer is to survive for a short span of time. There is no question of cowardice. Therefore, moral action does not have a fixed answer, It varies from situation to situation. According to Henry Sidgwick each action or question is to be divined by the intuitive will in the unique historical situations through 'singularity' of personal experience. How does intuitive will determine goodness or rightness of action? As casuistry says one should prefer greater truth to the lesser one. For the sake of love for humanity Guru Gobind Singh prefers violence for restoring justice and freedom in the society.

We are trying to reconstruct Socrates in our own context of Sikhism. Historical Guru Nanak is different from our hermeneutically reconstructed Guru Nanak and other contributors of the Sikh Canon and Guru Gobind Singh. We can sum up the above argument that for Socrates there is no dichotomy between reflection and action. Knowledge and will are two dimensions of the inseparable consciousness, but they are segmented only to have an intuitive insight into the very essence of pure flux of Eternity. Therefore, pure will and consciousness are one in essence. Eternity is fully realised in pure will in praxis. It can be termed as 'consciousness of consciousness' in praxis.

Similarly Kabir in one of his hymn says, 'to know is to be'. And for the Buddha the ideal for man is, 'Be a lamp to your self' (i.e., *ātma dīpa bhava*). The *Gītā* claims: whenever there is moral degeneration in the society, the incarnate (*avtāra*) would descend on the earth to restore justice. In Sikhism man is placed in the concrete moments of historical situations. The *avtāra* is within him. He is to be awakened from within to make Him act in history for executing the divine will as a responsible moral person. This is the meaning of *khare dā khālsā*. The *Khālsā* is always out to discharge his duties for the welfare of all.

It has been pointed out that man is an epitome of *dr̥ṣṭā* (seer), *bhoktā* (experiencer) and *kartā* (doer). The doer is dominated by the human *samkalpa* (will). It gives birth to the philosophical doctrine of voluntarism (*samkalpavāda*). It entails historical action. It may be noted that emotions and feelings do not encroach upon human freedom. Man's will has a tendency to transcend the limitations of action provided it is emancipated from the worldly entices (*māyā*) and he is not disillusioned by his separative and independent sense of I-ness (*haumai*). This lands us into the realm of spiritual voluntarism of Sikhism.

Voluntarism as a doctrine has been propounded both in the East and the West. In this section my concentration shall be on Indian

concept of voluntarism with reference to the Vedic and the Buddhist traditions. My main stress in this section is to emphasise that Sikhism developed its distinct and singular character in the Gurus' period. The movement of Sikh voluntarism developed in the concrete history of Sikh tradition from Guru Nanak (AD 1469-1539) to Guru Gobind Singh (AD 1656-1708). The Gurus also represent existential and spiritual voluntarism because they are involved in the existential problems. The latter lays stress on priority of spiritual values over the temporal ones. So it may be called spiritual voluntarism. It is existentialist because in Sikhism spirit dominates the matter. If we view the system from the point of view of the whole, then we will find that the miniature divine law in man as a will (*samkalpa*) spiritualises all the historical actions.

Religious discourses on Sikhism move between the poles of finite desperation and infinite emancipation and freedom. The self-created self (*natura naturan*) is within the clutches of the mundane world. It is the endeavour of religions to free the entombed self from the worldly fascinations. It is possible if we remould and restructure the very stuff and give it a new form. It is a flight of the self from mediate to immediate, conditional to unconditional, and relative to absolute state of stilled or naturally equipoised consciousness. This is the central point of voluntarism in which will is to dominate both in theory and praxis. Mind is the main instrument in this process.

Voluntarism is primarily concerned with human will or volition, which has been given priority over intellect or reason. In the Sikh voluntarism volition creates values and subordinates intellect or reason. Gurus were creators and custodians of the eternal human values both in theory and practice. They were crusaders of the subaltern. They identified themselves with the poor and ignored the rich. In short, we can say that the Sikh movement is emancipator of the neglected and marginalised masses. It is voluntarist concept that has restored historicity of human action (*karma*). It may be pointed out that the Sikh voluntarism has been derived from its dynamic metaphysics. We have discussed above that Sikhism gives priority to the spirit and matter (*śakti*) is made subservient to it. Voluntarism can be characterised as any philosophical view in which prominence is given to the will over one's other mental activities.³ Sikhism expounds the philosophy of spiritual voluntarism. In ethics voluntarism puts forth an idea that it is will of man that creates moral ideas and values. The Sikh ideas and values of moral conduct (*rahit maryādā*) are created by human volition.

The Numinous (*Akālapatrah*) creates all these through man's will. In other words, men are executors of the divine will. With a view to understanding the philosophical import of spiritual voluntarism of Sikhism in the contemporary context of India the technique of *verstehen* model and interdisciplinary method will be used. It will lead to axiogenesis, creation of values and microscopic analysis of the concepts related to the concept.

Gurus reinterpreted the Purāṇic mythical world-view from the voluntarist standpoint in the real historical times. From Guru Hargobind to Guru Gobind Singh there had been struggle on the part of Gurus to reconcile martial spirit and sainthood (*saṁta-sapāhī*) within the framework of non-dual dynamic ontology of their *śabdās*. Fifth and ninth Sikh Gurus laid their lives on the altar of truth. They steeled their wills and transcended the fear of death. Their invincible voluntarism immortalised them. They got *mukti* while discharging their duties for the sake of righteousness (*dharma*).

In order to have an objective and candid understanding of the Sikh voluntarism we have accepted that as compared to lower species man's interpretive nature is distinct and more creative and dynamic. His voluntarist urge inherent in him is to control the environment. Man with the help of tools of language can communicate his thoughts to others. He is the only creature who is capable of pure theoretical articulation of knowledge. By virtue of his creative volition and cognition he can create a space beyond the visible world. His actions are purposive. He stores and restores in his memory ideas to put them in use at proper times.

From the point of view of socio-political internal developments in the Sikh movement the peaceful reformative movement turned into a militant upsurge. In this way spiritual was supplemented with temporality. It was due to confrontation against the state or temporal rulers. It leads us to face a philosophical question whether there was a deviation from the original doctrinal ideals of Guru Nanak. My answer to it is 'No'. Hence there was no doctrinal digression in the development of the Sikh movement.

The idea of active resistance to tyranny, injustice and evil is present even in the *Guru Granth*. The Gurus translated this idea in praxis. They carried out the struggle for eradication of evil and tyranny in India. They were true guarantors and custodians of human values; like justice, freedom, self-dignity and many other values. With the creation of the *Khālsā* in AD 1699 the ideal of spiritual voluntarism was

fully concretised. The entire historical vicissitudes of the Sikh movement show the development and growth of synthesis of the Sikh ideal and praxis in concrete but the very essence of its spiritual voluntarist doctrine of the Sikh philosophy is realised by the Gurus in their lifetimes.

Sikh Gurus reinterpreted the Vedic voluntarist concept of *ṛta* or the *Qur'ānic* doctrine of *hukam* both as cosmic and categorical imperative. *Ṛta* in the Vedic tradition was a dynamic cosmic principle. Sikhism interpreted it as a cosmic principle and a categorical imperative inherent in man. *Hukam* in the microcosm is the same. It was based on the *tāntric* metaphysical unity of microcosm (*pinḍa*) and macrocosm (*brahmaṇḍa*). Unlike the abstract Vedic and monastic Buddhism, Sikhism treats human person (*deha*) as concrete reality in space and time. It is a boat or raft for man to cross over the phenomenon world (*bhavasāgar*) and struggle against oddities of human life. It is from within the human person dormant consciousness is awakened and is further developed to the highest state of pure intuitive volition. The dormant form of consciousness inherent in the energy (*śakti*) is potentially infinite in itself. Kabir explicitly explains this point that mind (*mana*) at the nadir stage is dominated by *śakti* and at the highest stage it is pure consciousness inclusive of *śakti*. This progression is a spiritual voyage into the interior self. The gross five elements (earth, air, fire, water and ether) out of which consciousness is born are transmuted into a state of consciousness that could divine three regions; i.e. nether world (*pātāla*), heavens (*ākāśa*) and earth (*prithvī*). Kabir has expressed this idea in the following words:

This mind is energy, [and] the consciousness,
It is born of five gross elements.
By taking it to the highest state of self-consciousness,
It unveils the truth of the three worlds (33).⁴

The realised self (*gurmakh*) attuned to the cosmic law transcends the limitations of causality and temporality without withdrawing from the existential socio-political responsibilities. This involvement in the historical events was restructuring of history embedded in Eternity and reconciliation with praxis of historical action.

Hukam, thus, was interpreted as a historical categorical imperative because it is the cause of historical action. So it is *a priori* categorical command of the realised self from within to discharge historical responsibilities. It is obligatory on the part of man to abide by *hukam* in

thought, speech and action (*mana, baca karma*). Therefore, duty and values in Sikhism are moral obligations for man. The Gurus were fully seized of historical responsibilities. From the existential point of view they were completely committed to the cause of crusade of the marginalised workers and tillers of Indian soil. Guru Arjana Dev's and Guru Tegh Bahadur's events of martyrdom were supreme sacrifices for the sake of truth and moral values. They had no remorse or false sense of glorification. They rather remained steadfast like the ideal man (*sthitaprajña*) of the *Gītā* (II, 55-6). They were fully attuned to the divine will of *Akālāpurakh*. It reaffirms societal relationships and living social responsibilities.

Now the question arises: What is the philosophy of sacrifice? How is the supreme sacrifice (martyrdom) related to voluntarism? The term sacrifice comes from the Latin 'sacrifice' (*sacra*, "holy"; "to make"), carries the connotation also to be understood as the act of sanctifying or consecrating an object of offering.⁵ So sacrifice on the altar of the deity is a confession made before the divine goddess through material gift or offering. Votive sacrifice is often offered as an act of thanksgiving for the favour granted to the person. Divinity is deposed from the aloof otherness (transcendence) and is embodied in all men. Man's relationship of equality or identity with God and man becomes concretised. This relationship is democratised in all and sundry. These interpersonal relationships which were abstract ideas are concretised with the make-belief of sacrifice of the five beloved (*pañja piāre*). It is believed that Guru Gobind Singh freed them from the fear of death with baptism ceremony of the double-edged sword nectar (*khaṇḍe dī pauhal*). The abstract unity of the *brahman* of the Vedānta was concretised. This is revisiting the philosophy of the *Gītā's karma-yoga* (voluntarism) in real temporality.

Offering of votive material gift is the expression of devotion and love for reunifying (*religo*, to reunite) with the deity. God is postulated as a creator in the macro-sense and man is also creator in the micro-sense because he is a miniature god (*brahmaṇḍa-piṇḍa*). Self-willed sacrifice, as a benevolent offering is a gift of man's whole self. And prayer (*ardāsa*) is calling upon the inner self to make self-surrender. Complete surrender is the ideal of all religions. If this principle is translated into praxis, then it will be the supreme sacrifice or martyrdom. It is nothing but witness to truth. In this connection it may be pointed out that the concept of sacrifice had been prevalent in the tribal societies and continued even in the developed religions

like Judaism and Islam.

Technical significance of sacrifice is the attitude or value man attaches to the deity. The significance is fourfold. First, animal and humans are sacrificed as offerings before the deities for sanctifying and consecrating the object of offering. As the Prophet Abraham offers his son's sacrifice on God's command. It follows that sacrifice is a complete surrender before God's will. The very meaning of the term 'Islam' means 'surrender'. Second, is duty of dedication (moral sense) to God. It is a hagiographic belief that prophet's son under the sheet was changed into a goat. Third, relationship of man is humanised or secularised by creating human values: like; equality, fraternity, freedom and many others. Sacrifice bids good bye to unequal relationships between man and God. It is initiation of democracy in praxis (history). Fourth, ". . . The religious rule in which an object is offered to divinity in order to establish, maintain, or restore a right relationship of man to the sacred an almost universal aspect of worship, being found in the earliest known form of worship and in all parts of the world."⁶

Then the question arises: What is the significance of the sword or violence in the Sikh voluntarist philosophy? Sikhism believes in defensive use of violence for crusade of the victims of tyranny, injustice and other atrocities. Tyranny is within man and without in the society. Inner tyranny in man is a disorder created by the five psychological negative propensities; i.e., *kāma* (sex), *krodh* (anger), *lobh* (greed), *moha* (worldly fascinations), and *ahamkāra* (pride). All these are to be tamed and turned into positive propensities; *sañtokh* (self-contentment), *dayā* (compassion), *dāna* (charity), *tyāga* (renunciation), and *nimrtā* (humility). It will result in full control over mind. Mind will be completely stilled and detached from the external world and from inner desires. It will realise its pristine self-luminous ontic nature. It is through this simultaneous continuous inward and outward journeying that the self realises its identity with the Numinous. Therefore, pure consciousness and the supreme reality is one in essence. So consciousness is a continuum of the consciousness from dormant consciousness (*surati śakti*) to pure cognitive volition of man. When it is put to test in practice, it will be volitional execution in praxis. It has become clear from the above discussion that reality of historical actions enjoins upon us to discuss the ontological status of the phenomenal world. It leads us to analyse the concept of this world and the otherworld in Sikhism. This contingent world of ours is in real historical time and the conceptualised realm of space symbolises Eternity.

V. VOLUNTARISM AND REALITY OF TIME (KĀLA)

Sages of antiquity in India and Greece had a real sense of time (*kairos*). In the medieval ages people lacked genuine awareness of historical time. The historical time was shadowed into mythical one and, consequently, the phenomenal world was conceived as illusory (*māyā*) or the magic show. The medieval world-view on the whole paled into insignificance, besides life and world negation. Sikhism reinterpreted the prevalent negative Purāṇic and *Qur'ānic* world-views of the middle ages and revived the ancient Vedic affirmative historical perspective which is primarily concerned with this worldliness.

The basic philosophical question arises: Can time come to an end or can it have beginning? It is 'eternal present' without beginning and end. It is living, growing and existentially experienced by progressing human consciousness. The vicious cycle of human life and death are endless phases of eternal flux of reality. In Sikhism reality of historical point-events has been given central salience. Time is the very essence of reality. There is no lease of life in the conceptualised otherworld. The mundane world liberation is sought out. It gave birth to the concept of martyrdom. Death has been treated as an event in whole of life and a step forward to renewal of existence and not an abrupt end of it. It is an inner flight of the self (*ātman*) to Eternity.

For a crude materialist there is no return of human life after consumption of the body in the funeral pyre. The Semitic tradition, however, believes in the concept of resurrection of body. In the Sikh tradition bodily death means to glide willingly into eternal life (*marjīvaṛā*). In the existential lived experience of transcendence from death is to realise freedom from within. It is a stepping-stone for a voluntarist life 'here' and 'now'. While creating the *Khālsā* Guru Gobind Singh blend-ed the secular time with Eternity (*mahāāla*). It was transformation of mythical *satyayuga* into a real cyclic and historical social reality. It means that commitment of the self to the present lies in facing responsibilities squarely and courageously. It is called voluntarist view of Sikhism. It was the divine will executed by realising kingdom of *Akālapurakh* on the earth.

Sikhism's dynamic world-view treats time (*kāla*) as the very stuff of the metaphysical *Ik* (One). It is dynamic in essence. In the beginning of the *Guru Granth* the complex term *kartā-purakh* symbolises the cosmic creative force. The literal meaning of the Punjabi term '*kartā*' is 'doer' but its philosophical interpretation would be 'creative force'

of the Being. It implies inherent creativity of the supreme Being. And 'purakh' is also a Punjabi version of the Sanskrit term 'puruṣa'. It has many connotations but in this context its philosophical meaning is an 'embodiment of eternal consciousness'. So here *kartā-purakh* stands for creative principle as an embodiment of eternal consciousness. This creative force of the Being is the cause of all creation and destruction of the manifest forms in the universe. It also enables the self (*mana*) to develop its dormant spiritual nature. So *kartā* and *purakh* taken together constitute a dynamic and purposive principle of creativity. In this case the essence (*tata or dhāta*) is the very fluxional stuff which is not created out of some extraneous cause but the living and non-living beings are created out of itself.

In Guru Nanak's kernel doctrine (*mūlmantra*) the term *akāla* has been coupled with *mūrati*. And the complex word '*akāl-mūrati*' means 'eternal embodiment'. Since essence in his hymns is eternal '*akāl-mūrati*' fluid, so the One (*Ik*) as a dynamic unity of existence is an 'eternal embodiment of consciousness'. And the myriad manifest forms picture fluxional nature of the essence. It means that *akāla* (eternity) is not devoid of *kāla* (time), but it is plenum of it. In the Sikh Scriptures it has been projected as *mahākāla* (Time of times) that subsumes *kāla* within itself. In other words, time and Eternity are fused into each other. The fluxional essence as the ontological core of *akāla* and *kāla* is its inseparable dimension. As, for example, the river is a fluid unity and the waves are its manifest fleeting and transitory forms. The universe is a dynamic reality. The river is a micro-unit of the cosmos. Therefore, river mirrors the transitory nature of the cosmos. In short, my interpretation of *akāla* (eternity), in the Sikh philosophy, is not timelessness or devoid of time. It stands for an endless and seamless duration of the cyclic time (*kāla*) though involving no scientific 'measures'. In Greek thought Parmenides and Plato take Eternity as contrasted with time. The former explains this idea in his poem, "The Way of Truth".⁷

It denies dimensions of the past ('was') and the future ('will be'). It expresses some concept of Eternity—but what is that concept? It denies creation, and destruction of the everlasting ontic essence. Eternity is a 'specious present' ('eternal now'). Parmenidean 'Being' lacks change and instant. It upholds the timelessness interpretation of Eternity. But Sikhism's concept of Eternity is closer to Heraclitean and the Buddhist philosophies of universal flux or eternal change. This change is not an "endless recurrence of the same". It is different

and distinct at every moment. Guru Nanak ascertains this idea in one of his *śabda* (hymn). With reference to the Numinous he says:

My Master is new at every point-instant,
And He is always benevolent.⁸

Nietzsche eroded the Greek myth of the 'eternal recurrence'. It is interesting to note that Sikhism much earlier anticipated Nietzsche's concept of perspectivism and creativity at every moment. The Greek concept of the 'eternal return or recurrence' is discarded because creativity transcends the repetitive sameness of static point-states. This dynamic view implies that to live with the ever-flowing seamless stream of creative duration is the essence of Eternity. This is what the Sikh philosophy means to say that one should live in Eternity through the 'now' (present) in history. The realised self, according to the Sikh Scriptures, simultaneously lives in historical time and Eternity.

Sikhism's world-view may be a linguistic or conceptual construct that transcends the empirical world but it was created by the creative genius of Guru Nanak. Other contributors of the Sikh Canon supplemented it with their hymns. Guru Nanak, third Guru Amar Das and the fifth Guru Arjan Dev schematised it. The contents of the Scripture are eternal (*amar*), but the Scripture itself is not uncreated (*anādī*). Once it was created it became eternal. In the Sikh tradition the scripture becomes eternal because it is true for all times to come (i.e. *jugo juga aṭala*). It is not of an age but of all the ages. Man has a latent tendency of self-transcendence because of his creative nature.

He being finite he wants to transcend his temporal finitude. Death is a stumbling block in his way to realize eternal life. Nobody can be spiritual unless he transcends the fear of death. It chokes man's freedom of will. Man becomes enfeebled from within. The *Gītā* has taken up this problem. Arjuna is not ready to fight in the battlefield for two reasons. First, he was not ready to kill his kith and kin. He did not have full knowledge about *ātman* that it is eternal and body is perishable. It migrates from one body to the other body. Arjuna's will is dead from within because of fear of death. Kṛṣṇa eggs upon him that death destroys only body but *ātman* is Eternal. He argues with Arjuna so as to free him from the fear of death. This has been asserted in the *Gītā* that death is an eternal phenomenon. It cannot be avoided but its fear can be overcome. For this purpose Lord Kṛṣṇa transformed Arjuna's blinkered vision into a cosmic vision (*viśaparūpa*).⁹

It is most horrible phenomenon for man that deprives him of his freedom. Man experiences the fear of it through out his life. Wittgenstein contends that 'actual death' never occurs in man's lifetime. Death is not an event in man's conscious life: we do not live to experience death. If we take Eternity to mean an infinite temporal duration or timelessness,

Then eternal life belongs to those who live in the *present*.
Our life has no end in just the way in which our visual field has no limits (emphasis added).

/Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus: 6.4311.

Guru Nanak has also expressed his thought on the concept of 'death' that deprives man of his freedom. The Guru is of the view that one is to transcend the consciousness of fear of death if he is to realise his beloved or Truth. The Guru says as under:

If thou are fond of playing [the game] of love,
Then enter my lane with thy [chopped off] head on thy palm.
[If] thou set thy foot on this path, then lay down thy life,
and do not lament on it (20).¹⁰

The moment death comes one is not aware of it. Eternal life belongs to those who live in the present. It is the philosophical foundation of voluntarism. But to struggle with life while simultaneously living in eternity and in the present is the spirit of the Sikh spiritual voluntarism.

Existentially common man experiences the cognitive fear of death in the whole span of life. It is only the lovers, lunatics or fools or the realised selves (mystics) can transcend the fear of death. The lover is in the clutches of emotions. His actions are involuntary. Similarly fool's activities are involuntary and he is oblivious of the fear of death. It cannot be called a heroic life of high degree because no moral judgement can be passed on their conduct. On the other hand, the mystic transcends the experience of death. The mystic or the martyr accepts it willingly. For example, Socrates, Mansūr-al-Hājj, Guru Arjan Dev and Guru Tegh Bahadur laid their lives on the altar of truth. They sacrificed their lives not with a motive of obliging others or to show a sense of conceit or pride. Hence they did heroic deeds. They martyred themselves for the sake of truth or humanity. They simultaneously lived in the temporal or historical world and eternity. The Sikh movement from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh is a temporal process of transcendence from the fear of death. It is believed in the

Sikh tradition that the *khandā*-baptism is a make-belief to transcend the fear of death. It is current in the Sikh tradition that when Guru Gobind Sing prepared *khande kī pahul*, the sparrows drank it. They started fighting against the eagle. It symbolises their fearlessness. Similarly one who is baptised transcends the fear of death. In this sense they were immortalised in this very life.

It may be pointed out that no body can be spiritual without transcending the fear of death (*kāla*). The question arises: How to become *akāla* or *amar* (eternal) while living in the world? As I have pointed out above that man faces twofold tyranny from within and without. He is to annihilate his false consciousness of attachment with his body and the world, and to be one with the Eternal (*Akālāpurakh*). If one eschews one's false I-ness, false sense of independent consciousness, then one will not be attached to this world. He, then, would eternalize himself (*marjīvarā*) in the present. In this context Guru Arjan Dev opines that when false consciousness (*khudī*) is annihilated, then one attains blissful state of body and mind. He frees himself from all kinds of mental and bodily ailments (i.e. *khudī miṭī taba sukha bhae mana tana bhae aroga* / GG, p.260).

This argument can be extended to other realms as well. His consciousness is to live between the realm of Eternity and temporality. Here I want to emphasise that Sikhism's ideal man (*gurmukh*) lives in the present without the hang over of the past and anxiety or fear of the future bodily death. He should live in Eternity through the 'specious present'. The mystic glues past, present and future into singularity of the 'eternal present'. At such a point-instant (*pala*) temporality is stilled into the motionless flux of consciousness. This state of balanced consciousness in Sikhism is called *sahaj* (state of equiposed conscious naturality) and in Zen Masters' terminology it is 'satori'. In Buddhism it is called *nirvikalpa smādhi*. It is nothing but a state of realisation of Platonic concept of moving image of Eternity (see, *Parmenides*). In this way Plato tried to solve the problem of time and Eternity but in practical life he could not reconcile.

This leads us to a view that time in the Sikh Canon is a living reality and part and parcel of life. The Sikh view implies that time is an inseparable dimension of Eternity. It affirms reality of the historical time. It also advocates active view of life. It has been pointed out above that Sikhism expounds the cyclic concept of cosmology. In the modern times it is gaining more significance and it has also penetrated into the social praxis. In Sikhism *śiva* (consciousness) and *śakti* (energy)

are twin fluxional and inseparable elements of the cyclic cosmology. It is wrong to say that the oscillating universe does not go beyond the eternal recurrence of the same moments (*kṣaṇas*). Rather it implies improvement, innovation and deviation from the previous repetitive point-events.

This can be legitimately applied on the social phenomena as well. The fact that historical time was accepted as a reality, Sikhism recognised oscillating seasonal rotation of twelve months of the year (*bārāñ māhañ*). It was a cyclic view which is reflected in man's sense of realistic progress of historical consciousness. It is in the real historical time that man is to come out of his cocooned egocentric vision of the self (*manmukh*) for developing the cosmic vision (*gurmukh*). Man's will becomes attuned to the Cosmic Will (*razā*). It implies that Cosmic Will executes the divine purposes (*telos*) through the reed of individual's life and will. So all divinely ordained actions are carried out through man in the real historical time. The ideal or realised man (*gurmukh*) of Sikhism is a free person who attains dual victory over the seamless and ceaseless flux of time and lives in Eternity. He is an epitome of theory and praxis because he carries out all actions as categorical imperatives. This leads us to the critical analysis of the next section of *theoria* and praxis.

VI. VOLUNTARISM: THEORIA AND PRAXIS

I have been articulating to comprehend theoretical perspective of the Sikh spiritual voluntarism. All practical problems can be solved if we have a sound metaphysical theory. It is to be done through distancing. For example, the doctor diagnoses the ailment of the patient by detaching himself from him. In the same way theory and practice are to be dispassionately separated. We should not mould cognition with praxis because no praxis is justifiably possible without sound *theoria*. Therefore, praxis needs sound logical basis. Perfect comprehension of intuitive insight of man is an optimum balance of thought and action. So action without thought or theory is an abortion and thought without action is paralysis. Both should be coherently harmonised with each other with a scope of remoulding both from time to time.

Man while doing action keeps end in view. His actions are purposive. He stores ideas and concepts in memory and tries to restore all of them for praxis. It then leads to praxis, which is necessary for

solution of the theoretical articulation of knowledge. Pain in body and its dispassionate and detached cognition is a distanced comprehension only at human level. It is renunciation through distance or theoretical analysis by paralysis. There should be no haste or delay, but to arrest an appropriate opportunity to have an optimum balance of thought and action. It is called perfect human condition. The concept of *sahaj* in Sikhism is an optimum ecological balance from within and without. It is permanently undisturbed state of consciousness. Except human beings no other living or non-living beings or objects are capable of such mental detachment. So lower animals are also devoid of it. Just for the sake of the argument it can be said that other lower species are devoid of it. It is only man who is capable of detachment. He reflects on others' problems without himself being emotionally involved in them. For instance, when a child is in trouble, his mother is emotionally involved and disturbed. On the other hand, the doctor is concerned with rational understanding and solving the child's problem. He is concerned with *how* and *why* of the problem. Just for the sake of argument it can be said that all practical problems can be solved only if we have a sound theory. Then the coherently articulated theory is to be put to use for testing it in history.

Human reason has several roles to play. Perfect human condition is an optimum balance of thought (*theoria*) and action (*praxis*). If thought is not put to use or test, it shall be an utter paralysis. It implies that no action is to be done in haste or anger. At the same time it should not be too slow as well. We should catch hold of the appropriate opportunity in proper perspective and then come to a final conclusion. There should be optimum balance between theoretically articulated structure and practical aspect. There is no absolute truth. It is in agreement with modern trends of philosophical hermeneutics. Every truth is relative and requires that it should be continuously interpreted and reinterpreted.

In India the earnest attempts were made in the *Gītā* and Buddhism to strike an optimum synthesis between theory and praxis, but in the medieval ages both ended in withdrawal from the mundane world. According to this criterion the *Gītā* was a climax of India's voluntarism in which theory and practice have been reconciled. *Niṣkāma karma* (disinterested action) of the *Gītā* strikes a balance between *theoria* and *praxis*. Later on in the medieval ages practical dimension was marginalised and there developed an ascetic and escapist outlook of life. It reverted to quiet and static attitude towards

life and the world. It was a period of decadence and retrogression in Indian voluntarist thought. To strike a balance between theory and praxis the following verses from the *Gītā* are often quoted:

The strivers in work reach the fulfilment of the strivers in
Renunciation sees both as the same, and you see the truth. (V:5)

In this case the *karma-yogi* (*sthityaprajñā*) is required to discharge disinterested action. Jñāneśvara in his *Jñāneśvarī* interpreted the same highest spiritual state conceived by the Śāṃkhya System is realised by the *yogis* in *kaivalyā* state in praxis. Both paths are simultaneously functional and inseparable. It was a reconciliation of *theoria* and praxis. In Indian thought Buddhism, Tāmil *tāntric* Siddhas and the medieval *bhaktas* tried to achieve this ideal, but the Sikh movement under the personal guidance of the Gurus developed it into a fullfledged onto-theology.

I have discussed above in berief that negation of the world and the self was in vogue in the medieval ages. The medieval saints (*bhaktas*) reinterpreted and reaffirmed the phenomenal world and the self. In this field the *bhaktas* dotted the i's and Sikhism crossed the t's. Sikhism propounded spiritual voluntarist philosophy, which gives priority to praxis over theory without marginalisin the latter. It reaffirmed historicity of human action and time. The renunciatory tendency (*saṅnyāsa*) was reinterpreted as disinterested involvement in the temporal world. All ideals of human life are to be realized through the holy assembly (*saṅgat*) of the householders. It is restoration of social realities and repudiation of otherworldliness. It is a singular contribution of the Sikh voluntarist view to the global thought. In social context historical human action has been spiritualised and humanised with divine grace (*kīrpā*). It condemned ritualism and formalism devoid of spirituality. It restores human freedom that has been the epitome of all religions in the hoary past. The Sikh Gurus preached and practised their ideas in the course of history. This is how theoretical and practical teachings are concretised in praxis. It is yoking Eternity in the chariot of history or temporality.

Guru Gobind Singh pronounces the role of invincible will in the existential situation as a social and moral responsibility. This is the essence of Sikh spiritual voluntarism. For this reason the *Khālsā* dominated by spirituality had to defy the temporal state or rule. According to Guru Gobind Singh the *Khālsā* is not purely created by history. It is a natural creation by the Divine Will. (*sahje racio khālsā*)

for realisation of the eternal freedom of the self. A verse can be quoted to reiterate his voluntarist thought:

Grant me such a boon, O Almighty Sivā
As I may never deter from righteous deeds.
And when fight I must, I fight for sure to win.¹¹

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. See S. Blackburn, *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*. N Y: Oxford Press, 1994, s.v.
2. *To Him is due the primal origin of the heavens and the earth:*
'When He decrees a matter, He says to it: "Be", and it is'.
/ *Qur'ān*, II:117
3. See Ted Honderich (ed.), *The Oxford Companion of Philosophy*. NY: OUP, 1995, s.v.
4. *ihu manu saktī ihu manu sīu/ ihu manu pañca tata ko jiāu/*
ihu manu le jau unamani rahai/ tau līni loka kī bātai kahai/ /33/ /
/ *GG (Guru Granth)*, Kabīr, p. 342.
5. Micro Elide (Editor-in-Chief), *Encycopaedia Of Religion*. NY: Macmillan, 1987, q.v.
6. *Encyclopaedia Britannia*. London: 1768, q.v.
7. *Ibid.*, q.v.
8. *sāhib merā nita navā, sadā sadā dātāru* (1-1)
/ *GG*, p. 660.
9. *Mouths like moths rushing to the fatal flame,*
These heroes rush into your flaming
/ *XI:20?*
10. *ju tu prema khelan ā cāu/siru dhari talī galī/*
itī mārgī pairu dharjāi/ siru djai āzi na kjai/
/ *GG*, p. 1412.
11. *deha sivā baru mohi ihai subha karman te kabhūm na tarom/*
na dāro ari so jaba jāi laro, niscāi kari apunī jita karom/
aru sikkhom apne hī mana ko, iha līlac hu guna tu ucarom/
jaba āva kī audha nidāna banai, ati hī rana mai taba jūjha marom/233/
/ *Randhir Singh (comm.) Śabdāratha Dasam Granth*, 1. (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1973), p. 127.