

WORKING PAPER NO: 509

Religion and Economic Growth: Elements from Sikhism

Charan Singh

RBI Chair Professor

Economics & Social Science

Indian Institute of Management Bangalore

Bannerghatta Road, Bangalore – 5600 76

Ph: 080-26993818

charansingh@iimb.ernet.in

Year of Publication – April 2016

Religion and Economic Growth: Elements from Sikhism¹

Abstract: The Sikh religion is one of the most recent religions of the world, which originated during the late fifteenth century and finally formalized in early eighteenth century. There is limited material available in English on Sikh religion and its impact on economic growth. In this article, an attempt has been made to examine the important issues mentioned above in the context of Sikh religion and their impact on economic growth. The emphasis is on education, rational thinking, long term planning, modest consumption, high investment, self-employment, and employment generation. In all the pursuits of economic well-being, the guiding principle has to be meditation, honest work and sharing with others the fruit of hard labor.

Key words: Religion, economic growth, sociology of growth; Sikhism, status of women.

¹ The author wishes to thank Prof. Robert Barro, Department of Economics, Harvard University and Rachel M. McCleary, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University for encouragement to work on this paper. The initial draft of the paper was presented at the luncheon seminar at Weatherhood Center for International Affairs, Harvard University on April 30, 2004. The author would like to thank the participants at the seminar for useful comments and observations.

Religion and Economic Growth: Elements from Sikhism

The Sikh religion is one of the most recent religions of the world, which originated during the late fifteenth century and finally formalized in early eighteenth century. The total population of Sikhs world-wide is estimated at around 24 million or 0.4 per cent of the world population in mid-2000 with their presence in 34 countries. In India, Sikhs account for 1.9 per cent of the population with more than seventy per cent living in Punjab, a province in North India. The scripture and related literature on Sikh religion is in Punjabi, a South Asian language. Much of the literature has not been translated into English or in any other major languages of the world. To that extent, it is an unknown religious thought in most parts of the world. Being of recent origin, and having taken about two centuries to crystallize, its founders guided every sphere of life.

The human factor is an important input in any growth process and especially so in a developing economy. The size and quality of the labor force is of prime importance for the level of economic activity in the country. In the determination of the size and quality of the workforce, social and cultural factors play a significant role. One of the important socio-cultural factors that can have a significant influence on the development and nature of workforce can be religion (Tawney, 1926; Anderson, 1988; Iannaccone, 1998; Weber, 1930; Landes, 1999; Barro and McCleary, 2003; Noland, 2003). The important issues that have been raised in the socio-economic literature are the role of the caste system and social mobility, status of women in society, and attitude towards literacy, wealth and family life, and the reward system in after-life in terms of heaven and hell.

The impact of Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam on Economic growth has been examined by numerous authors (Weber, 1920, 1930, 1952, 1964; Landes, 1999; Iyer, 2002; Noland, 2003, Uppal, 2001). In this article, an attempt has been made to examine the important issues mentioned above in the context of Sikh religion and their impact on economic growth. In Sikh religion caste system is condemned, women are assigned equal status as that to men, family life is not considered a hindrance in spiritual enlightenment, literacy is encouraged and heaven and hell do not exist. The historical background at the time of emergence of Sikh religion is presented in Section I which is followed by a brief review of basic Sikh philosophy having a

bearing on economic life of an individual. In Section III, elements emerging from Sikh philosophy that contribute to economic growth are discussed. Section IV provides some empirical evidence based on economic indicators of the Sikh society. A discussion on the caste system amongst the Sikhs and status of women is also presented in this Section. Finally, broad conclusions are presented in Section V.

Section - 1: Historical Background

India's reputation of wealth attracted many invaders from Central and West Asia which affected the area of Punjab² as it lay on the direct route of invading armies since the fourth century B.C.³ Punjab became a part of the empire of Ghazni in early Eleventh century A.D. when Hindu Shahi dynasty was overthrown by Sultan Mahmud. It formed a nucleus of the Sultanate of Delhi in 1206 A.D. The proximity of Punjab to Delhi and its exposure to invasions from West and Central Asia, established its political and military importance. It also provided the principal entrance to the Muslim influences, religious and social, in the country dominated by Hindus. The Sultanate began to disintegrate by the end of fourteenth century. The disastrous invasion on Delhi by Timur, the Mongol conqueror in 1398 A.D. left a trail of blood and small warring kingdoms. The country was ruled by two different dynasties for short periods between 1414 A.D. and 1526 A.D.⁴ Finally, Babar seized power in a decisive battle at Panipat (Banerjee, 1983). Punjab had not witnessed peace since the Mongol invasions of the fourteenth century. Therefore, the economy was affected and lawlessness was deep-rooted. The country was suffering from anarchy, and administration was characterized by corruption and lack of justice.⁵

Since the time of the Lodhi dynasty (1451 A.D.), the rulers began to impose Islam upon the Hindus, the religion of the dominant segment of the society (Banerjee, 1936). The bureaucracy was filled with foreign Muhammadan adventurers who had no sympathy for India and its inhabitants. The Hindus were subjected to all sorts of indignities and persecutions to persuade them to embrace Islam.

² Punjab is located in North India. Punjab shares the border, after 1947, with Pakistan on the West and with six other Indian States (Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Rajasthan) elsewhere.

³ Alexander invaded India in 326 B.C.

⁴ Sayyad Dynasty till 1451 A.D. and Lodhi Dynasty till 1526 A.D.

⁵ First Sikh Guru talks of the situation - The times are like a drawn knife, the kings like butchers. Righteousness has fled away, darkness of falsehood prevails, and the moon of truth is nowhere to be seen (p. 1288 in Sri Guru Granth Sahib (SGGS)). All page numbers quoted are from SGGS unless specified otherwise.

The inhabitants of India largely practiced Hindu religion which originated sometime before 2500 B.C. and was later influenced by Buddhism (566 B.C.) and Jainism (599 B.C.). Buddhism was not much in practice during the mid-fifteenth century in India while Jainism was still being practiced in central India.⁶ The Buddhists and Jains conformed in many ways to Hindu customs. The impact of the dominant Hindu religion had its impact on Islam too which had come to India with the invaders. The religious people in Islam (*pirs, faqirs*) followed similar practices like the Hindus (*Jogis, Sannyasis*).

The understanding and practice of religion had become rather complex by the fifteenth century, with much assimilation of various influences. The Life of an individual was divided into four different stages.⁷ The religion for common people involved observance of rituals, symbolism and superstitions (Singh, 1912).⁸

The caste system which stratified all Hindus into four categories (*Brahman* or the priest and teacher, *Ksatriya* or warrior, *Vaisha* or trader and *Shudra* or untouchable) led to inequality and social immobility in the society (Narang, 1972). The touch, shadow and even voice from a distance of the *Shudra* were considered contaminating and could pollute the piety of the religion of the higher castes, especially the Brahmin (Banerjee, 1936).

The status of women was generally dismal, especially in Hindu religion, though this is contested by many scholars (Radhakrishnan: 1927 and 1947). Women were forbidden to go to assembly and had no right of inheritance. They were accorded the status of *sudras* (lowest class in the hierarchy of the caste system) and lower than the animals by the *dharamsastra* (Kane, 1974). And women were considered ritually impure (Sugirtharajah, 1994; Carmody, 1989; Jayakar, 1987). According to *Manusmriti*,⁹ women must never be independent and cannot do anything independently (Rambachan, 2001). The status of a widow was considered not only unfortunate

⁶ Mainly Gujarat and Rajasthan.

⁷ *Brahmcharya* (learning), *Grisht* (householder), *Vanprasth* (forest dwelling) and *Sanyas* (renunciation).

⁸ Some perform Hindu worship at home but in public read Qur'an, and observe the code of conduct of the rulers (First Guru, p. 471). Modesty and honor are not there, falsehood prevails everywhere, and those who look religious are trying to win the favor of the ruling class (First Guru, p. 722). Sin is the king, greed the minister and falsehood the chief agent. Lust is their constant counselor, People are ignorant. Priests dance, play music, shriek, scream and sing. Fools pass for the learned, sophistry for wisdom (First Guru, p. 468-9).

⁹ One of the most important *Smriti* which contains ethical laws of duties and disciplines to be observed in life.

but inauspicious (Young, 1987). In view of the inferior status of women in society, the birth of a girl child was not welcome and female infanticide was popular.¹⁰

It was in this socio-political and religious situation that Sikh religion originated. The Sikh Gurus, ten of them consecutively from 1469 A.D. to 1708 A.D., objected to the prevalent caste system and low social status assigned to women, and encouraged social mobility. They also made an attempt to realign the focus of religion from rituals and symbolism to learning, by insisting that every human being should have access to religious teachings to imbibe its essence and practice it in everyday life. Thus, the objective was to make religion and learning accessible to common people, as against restricted access only to *Brahmins*.

Section – II: Basic Sikh Philosophy

The Sikh¹¹ religion was founded by Guru¹² Nanak (born in 1469 AD). Guru Nanak was followed by nine more Gurus.¹³ In 1708 AD, the Guruship was ceremoniously bestowed by Guru Gobind Singh, upon the Sri Guru Granth Sahib (SGGS).¹⁴ Since then, the SGGS is revered as the living Guru in the form of scripture/word.¹⁵ Therefore, the basic Sikh philosophy comes from the traditions set by the ten Gurus during their life times and from the compositions included in the SGGS, which contains the writings of the Sikh Gurus, some saints and some Sikhs.¹⁶ The Sikh religion considers that the human being consists of body, mind and soul. The body and soul are

¹⁰ The girl was considered a burden – economic and otherwise - *a*) marriage rules were difficult, and *b*) safety was a concern where invasions were a regular incident (Kaur, 1968).

¹¹ Pupil, disciple, scholar searcher of truth.

¹² Spiritual guide, teacher, master or preceptor.

¹³ There are ten Sikh Gurus and their Guruship period follows consecutively. The ending period of Guruship is as follows: Guru Nanak – 1539; Guru Angad – 1552; Guru Amar Das – 1574; Guru Ram Das – 1581; Guru Arjun – 1606; Guru Hargobind – 1644; Guru Har Rai – 1661; Guru Harkrishan - 1664; Guru Tegh Bahadur – 1675; and Guru Gobind Singh – 1708.

¹⁴ And the Guru Khalsa Panth, all initiated Sikhs worldwide, who were to take decisions collectively.

¹⁵“The word is the embodiment of Guru, the Guru is in the word and in the word are contained all the elixirs” (Fourth Guru, p. 982 in SGGS).

¹⁶The SGGS was initially compiled by the fifth Guru and installed at the Golden Temple, Amritsar, India in August 1604. The Tenth Guru added the compositions of the Ninth Guru to it. The writings in SGGS, consisting of 1430 pages, are in commonly spoken South Asian languages, poetic in style, set in musical notes – 31 ragas or musical notes have been used. The compositions include writings of saints of the twelfth century to that of the ninth Guru in the late seventeenth century. In SGGS, writings of only six Gurus are included – the first five Gurus and the ninth Guru. The writings of 15 saints, both Hindus and Muslims, include Beni, Bhikhan (saint), Dhanna (farmer), Shaikh Farid (saint), Jaidev (Brahmin), Kabir (weaver), Namdev (calico-printer), Parmanand (saint), Pipa (king), Ramanand (saint-teacher), Ravidas (cobbler), Sadhna (shop-keeper -Butcher), Sain Nai (sculptor), Surdas (Governor of a province) and Trilochan (trader). The compositions also include writings of some bards/Sikhs that lived during the period of the Gurus. The important bards being: Mardana (musician accompanying Guru Nanak in all his travels), Sundar (grandson of Guru Amar Das), and Satta and Balwand (musicians during the time of Guru Arjan).

available to other entities in the universe, but an intellectually sharp mind is available only to humans. Mind can be defined as consciousness that feels the emotions of happiness, sadness, and the intermittent stage of indifferent equipoise.¹⁷ Mind consists of memory, belief, and consciousness. The soul is the spark or component of God that is contained in all things visible and otherwise.¹⁸ God in Sikh religion is defined in the following way -

*God is the one Supreme Being, the one and only one of this kind, who prevails in the universe as the unique creator who has merged in the creation and resides therein (and not anywhere outside separately). God is without fear and without hatred. God is beyond the measurement of time, unincarnated (and therefore exists beyond the cycle of life and death), self-created or self-existent and whose color, form, dimensions and scope of activities are unfathomable.*¹⁹

God in Sikhism is considered to be immanent and transcendent at the same time.²⁰ God is seen to be compassionate and benevolent to all his creation.²¹

The Sikh religion strongly believes that the universe is real but not eternal; everything that is visible has a lifespan and will collapse over time. The creation of the universe and its dissolution has occurred many times, already.²² Additionally, Sikh philosophy believes that everything operates in the universe under principles set by God.²³ The human mind has the potential to understand the principles set by God. The most basic and simplest principle is “As you sow so shall you reap.”²⁴ This belief implies that everyone makes his/her own fate and cannot blame anyone else for their condition.²⁵

¹⁷ “Now, the mind is in a state of ecstasy and then it falls from its heights. Yea, the greedy mind is never at peace and out-goes in all directions” (First Guru, p. 876).

¹⁸ The Sikh Gurus have often used the relation of sun and its ray to God and soul. “Wherever I see, I see the one Lord pervading all” (First Guru, p. 661). “Within the fortress of the body is the castle of the true Lord, and the Lord sits therein on the true throne” (First Guru, p.1039).

¹⁹ The supreme reality in its totality is unknown and this is acknowledged by the Sikh Gurus – “You are the all-knowing and all-seeing ocean, how can I a humble fish measure your vastness” (First Guru, p. 25). The created cannot have the measure of the creator (Fifth Guru, p. 285).

²⁰ God is with and without attributes (Fifth Guru, p. 98; Third Guru, p. 128).

²¹ “My Lord is ever fresh and ever bountiful” (First Guru, p. 660).

²² Fifth Guru, p. 275-76.

²³ “All are within the ambit of Hukam, there is nothing outside it” (Japji, p. 1)

²⁴ This rule has been stressed repeatedly. The soul knows that as one sows, so will one reap (First Guru, p.1243)

²⁵ “Blame not anyone else, one consumes what one earns” (Fifth Guru, p. 888).

In terms of the philosophy of the Sikh religion, the gift of life in a human body is considered unique and precious.²⁶ It is unique because only when the mind is in the human body, can the joyous experience of God through the soul be realized. The human mind has the unique potential to feel God through the soul.²⁷ It is also precious because the human life is not often made available. Therefore, this opportunity has to be carefully utilized.²⁸

The challenge within a human life arises when the experience of God through the soul weakens. Human beings have the tendency to digress and simply follow the dictates of the body or the misperceptions of the mind. In this situation, life is easily dominated by “the five thieves” known in the Sikh religion as ego, attachment, greed, lust and anger. These five challenges to a conscious human being are the distorted forms of basic human experiences and are also referred to as the five weaknesses of the flesh. They disturb peace of mind and harm the body.²⁹ The human mind has the unique potential to undertake the journey to attain and merge with the soul.³⁰

Sikh philosophy recognizes that human beings have simple basic needs—the need to live, the need to love, the need to learn, and the need to leave a legacy. Sikhs endeavor to spend life in pursuit of these needs through good deeds and actions.³¹ The five thieves weaken the body and distract or blind the mind from its ultimate goal of realizing its true potential, the experience of the soul.³² In such a situation, the mind suffers and becomes sick along with the body. Therefore, one has to learn to live a life of moderation and to be happily contented. Sikh philosophy does not fear the impact of the basic elements of human nature, but rather promotes harnessing their potential. For this reason, Sikhs do not renounce the world but continue to live with a positive and serviceful attitude.

²⁶ Of all the living species, God gave superiority to the human being (Fifth Guru, p. 1075). All the other species are the water-bearers of the human beings; humans have hegemony over this earth (Fifth Guru, p. 374).

²⁷ Human body is compared as a mare/vehicle to reach God (Fourth Guru, p. 576).

²⁸ Having obtained the human body, this is an opportunity to realize God (Fifth Guru, p. 378).

²⁹ The mind is wild and ignorant under the influence of ego, is born from the five elements, and if it submits itself to the all pervading God, it becomes equipoise, after conquering the five weaknesses of the flesh (First Guru, p. 415).

³⁰ The mind, devoid of ego, recognizes its original self (Third Guru, p. 441).

³¹ “Listen, Listen to my advice, O my mind. Only good deeds shall endure and there may not be another chance” (First Guru, p. 154)

³² Lust and anger combine to destroy the human body (First Guru, p. 932).

If the mind of a human being continues to be dominated by any one of the five thieves then when the body dies, another body may be received. Thus, the mind continues to get the pleasure that it wishes for.³³ This new body may not necessarily be human, but it will be one in which the dominant desire, while living in the human body, will be adequately met.³⁴ Thus, there is no defeat or loss; rather there is always victory for the mind.³⁵ This introduces the second simple principle of the Sikh religion – “seek sincerely and receive” implying that individuals have a choice and are responsible for what they seek.

The Sikh religion does not believe in the traditional domains which many world religions call heaven and hell.³⁶ Heaven and hell are not believed to be physical locations where the soul resides after the human experience. Instead, in the Sikh religion, enjoying bliss within the holy congregation is salvation and heaven, itself.³⁷ Heaven therefore is an experience of equipoise or *sahaj* (ineffable bliss), while hell is characterized as the absence of *sahaj* or separation from God; hence these are conditions of the mind. The journey of the mind towards realizing God is considered unendingly blissful, as it helps to support human potential. A balanced practice of self-restraint and a consistent pursuit of unending bliss is the recommended path for a Sikh.

Sikhism believes in an active and full participation in life—an amalgam of worldly strength and spiritual faith. The life style of the Sikh Gurus during their human life between 1469 A.D. and 1708 A.D. signified that the world is both the creation and the house of God – and so the world needs to be respected and gracefully lived in. As part of living in the world, basic human needs have to be fulfilled. The SGGS, has many hymns that instruct Sikhs to gain the provision of food and shelter in order to live a healthy and happy life.³⁸ In every Sikh temple, called Gurdwara

³³ God blesses us with our heart’s desires and fulfils all our hopes (Fifth Guru, p. 706). Kind God has ordained that whatever the human asks shall be provided (Fifth Guru, p.1266).

³⁴ Lured by greed, one is cast into the womb again and over again (First Guru, p. 1243).

³⁵ First Guru, p.1302.

³⁶ The God-man does not want to reside in heaven (Fifth Guru, page 1078); Every one seeks paradise and rests all hopes on it, but the devotee does not seek it (Fourth Guru, p. 1324); “I have risen above the conception of heaven and hell by the grace of the Guru” (Kabir, p. 1370); What are heaven and hell? The saints of the Lord have rejected both (Kabir, p. 969); Do not seek the abode of heaven and do not fear the residence in Hell. Do not build hopes regarding them, whatever has to happen is bound to happen (Kabir, p. 337).

³⁷ Kabir, p. 1161. The salvation and heaven are there in holy congregation, the man of God abides in the abode of the Lord (Fifth Guru, p. 682)

³⁸Fifth Guru supplicates to God that take care of your creation and provide them with plenty of grain and water (p.125). Kabir observes that there can be no devotion on a hungry stomach, and seeks from God some daily ration

(meaning the door to the House of God), since its conception, rich vegetarian food, financed by voluntary contributions, is served.³⁹ This practice correlates to two economic thoughts – endeavor to share your food and wealth with fellow beings and to be economically strong in order to increasingly contribute to social institutions.

Sikh philosophy does not believe that the acquisition of property or wealth is evil, but the mental attachment to material wealth or *maya* is to be avoided.⁴⁰ In the Sikh religion a very unique definition of *maya* has been given – it is simply any thing that makes the mind forget God, due to attachment and duality.⁴¹ The Sikh Gurus themselves led a householder’s life, and that at certain times was very royal. In the Golden Temple complex, a new seat was established in 1606 AD where the sixth Guru used to sit and discuss temporal issues pertaining to the social, political, and economic life of Sikhs.

As Sikhs believe that all things are created and inhabited by God, there is no scope for exploitation, cheating, or falsehood in the Sikh way of life.⁴² Additionally there are no superstitions as to what are favorable hours, days, months or years within the religion. Rather, all moments in the memory of God are considered auspicious. Social service, charity, and sharing with others in the name of God, without any discrimination about religion, cast, creed, or gender is another important idea within Sikh philosophy. Sikhs therefore, explicitly seek the well being of all, all the time and specifically after their daily formal prayers.⁴³ The practice of living on charity and begging, even in the guise of religion, is strictly prohibited in the Sikh religion.

and a comfortable bed. (p.656). Similarly, Dhanna seeks daily ration, good living standard and happy family life (p.695)

³⁹ This practice is called ‘*Langar*’ or community kitchen, where each individual is expected to voluntarily participate in physical work and monetary contributions. Each individual is expected to participate in the making of the food and then eating it together, without discrimination of caste or color. This institution has been in existence since the first Sikh temple was established sometime before 1500 AD. In fact, by the time of Third Guru, every one had to first eat from the community kitchen before being granted an audience with the Guru – this rule even applied to dignitaries like Emperor Akbar.

⁴⁰ *Maya* represents delusion and non-reality in one sense and wealth, property, family and similar other possessions.

⁴¹ Third Guru, p. 921.

⁴² In every particle of creation, God resides (Ninth Guru, p. 1427). From one source has all the creation been created, so who can be called noble or inferior (Kabir, p. 1349). The sense of high and low and of caste and color are illusions (Second Guru, p. 1243). All creatures are noble, none are low – one maker has fashioned all of them (First Guru, p. 62).

⁴³ The words ‘*sarbat da bhalla*’ imply “well being of all” and are uttered after every formal prayer – individual or collective.

Instead, Sikhs are expected to earn their living by labor, out of which they must offer something to the needy.⁴⁴

A Sikh's daily life keeps both the short-term and the long-term goal in view. This approach recognizes that our short-term day-to-day choices and endeavors in fact produce our long-term. The objective is to maximize the gift of this human life without the fear of after-life, hell or heaven.⁴⁵ In the short-term Sikhs are expected to meditate, work hard to earn an honest living, and to then share their wealth with others. Throughout this daily practice, Sikhs are also expected to happily conduct daily life while cultivating the following virtuous attitudes/actions: forgiveness, tolerance, patience, restraint, cleanliness, contentment, and sympathy.⁴⁶ A Sikh is also encouraged to be rational and take all decisions only after intellectually analyzing the situation.⁴⁷

Section – III: Elements that Contribute to Economic Growth

A Sikh is expected to work hard, yet stay absorbed in God.⁴⁸ A Sikh is also expected to lead a disciplined life, meditate at dawn and dusk, attend temple service daily, and be always alert and aware.⁴⁹ Additionally, each Sikh is expected to sleep just enough to fulfill the needs of the body, to meditate adequately, and to then, devote the rest of the time in earning a livelihood and building happiness within the family, immediate community and wider society. Since a major emphasis within Sikhism is the concept of 'truthful living' Sikhs bring a sincere attitude in all interactions and dealings.⁵⁰

Literacy: Sikhism encourages every individual to be literate, without discrimination of caste, creed or religion. The language used in SGGS therefore is accessible and is written in a simple spoken South Asian language that is a mixture of Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, Persian and Marathi. The

⁴⁴ Only that individual knows the true way who earns with the sweat of the brow and then shares it with others. Those who go dressed like religious people begging or living on charity for their livelihood do not know the true way (First Guru, p. 1245). Sikh religion frowns on begging – p.26, Bauer, P.T. (1965) and begging is unknown amongst the Sikhs - p.102, Ray, N. (1967).

⁴⁵ Always plan long term (Second Guru, p. 474).

⁴⁶ Participate actively in your daily life while dealing with people, however cultivate virtues (Japji, p. 6 and p.8).

⁴⁷ Japji, p. 8. By wisdom is God worshipped (First Guru, p.1245).

⁴⁸ The individual is advised by Kabir to work with his hands and to firmly keep God in the heart.

⁴⁹ Do not be lazy, do today as much as possible, nothing can be done or said, after uncertain death approaches (Kabir, p. 1371).

⁵⁰ Realization of Truth is above all else, but higher still is truthful living (First Guru, p. 62).

divine message of SGGS is conveyed in this simple plain language and in simple metaphors to all of humanity – SGGS is considered to be transmitting a message to everyone, irrespective of race and religion. The illustrations are from daily life so that any individual is able to understand the philosophy of religion. In fact, the second Guru further developed the Punjabi language and enriched it by introducing new alphabets and vowels – Punjabi script later came to be called Gurmukhi.⁵¹ This augmented script was used in SGGS. The availability of the religious teachings in daily spoken language was an incentive for all to learn the language. Till then, under the rules of Hindu religion, only the Brahmins were permitted to read, study and experience the scriptures and other religious literature, all of which were written in Sanskrit.⁵² The Brahmins accounted for about three per cent of the population.⁵³

In Sikhism, it is advised that each individual should personally read daily from the SGGS. The Sikh Gurus personally conducted classes for both Sikh children and adults and taught them to read and write Punjabi. The tenth Guru sent a team of Sikh scholars, to learn Sanskrit from the learned Brahmins in Benaras (also called Varanasi which then was the knowledge center of Hindu religion). These scholars then translated the literature of Hindu religion into Punjabi for the benefit of general public. This worked not only to spread literacy, but also knowledge of other religions among the very people who were till then prohibited from knowing the philosophy of religion. In Sikh religion, one definition of God is knowledge and wisdom, and the Sikhs are expected to read, listen and reflect on the word that epitomizes Knowledge and wisdom.⁵⁴ Therefore, many *Gurdwaras* offer formal educational facilities through schools and colleges to the larger community, mostly at subsidized rates and without discrimination of religion.

Family life: Sikhism encourages family life and living on earned income. All the Sikh Gurus, who were in the marriageable age, as also most of the others whose compositions are included in

⁵¹ Punjabi is an old Aryan language. Gurmukhi implies perfected and uttered by the Guru.

⁵² Sanskrit was considered the language of the Gods. Nobody other than a Brahmin could learn it. Therefore, only Brahmin knew the religious philosophy.

⁵³ P.12, Singh P. (1999).

⁵⁴ God is wisdom (Fourth Guru, p. 1069). “Through wisdom, one serves God, through wisdom one attains honor, through wisdom one realizes what one reads, through wisdom, charity comes to one’s mind. Says Nanak, this is the True Path, all else leads to Devil” (First Guru, p.1245).

SGGS, were married and had children.⁵⁵ Similarly, most of them worked in different professions.⁵⁶ For an honorable and respectful family life, some living standards are to be maintained and Sikh philosophy encourages a spacious house, adequate healthy food and a comfortable transport for every household. A Sikh is expected not only be able to maintain comfortable family standards but also willingly be able to provide food and shelter to the guests and the needy.

In the times of Guru Nanak, female infanticide was not uncommon in India and birth of a male child was a religious necessity.⁵⁷ The Sikh gurus prohibited female infanticide and encouraged a healthy family; a male child was not considered a must. In accordance with the Sikh philosophy, the female child is not discriminated.

Democratic Institutions: In Sikh religion, democratic institutions are encouraged. It encourages equal rights to all individuals and participative decision making. A Sikh is expected to lead by example, to practice before preaching or expecting others to follow – a worker or a manager.⁵⁸ It encourages diverse views, debate on the issues, seeks a common ideology and dedicated implementation. An incidence of failure is not be dwelt upon, except for drawing lessons for future corrections, and one is expected to think positively and proceed ahead with optimism.⁵⁹ But accountability and responsibility has to be fixed for any mistake, with the objective that it is corrected and not repeated. Corrective action and not punishment has to be the rule.

Healthy Living: A Sikh is expected to lead a healthy life - sleep, eat and dress adequately, exercise regularly and maintain a good physical body, as in it resides the mind and the holy soul – the component of God, which he/she yearns to discover.⁶⁰ A Sikh is expected to cultivate

⁵⁵ Householder's life is accepted and not considered a hindrance in spiritual advancement (Fifth Guru, p.385 and 496).

⁵⁶ Once having perfected true living, liberation can be attained in laughter, playfulness, enjoyment of wear and good food (Fifth Guru, p. 522).

⁵⁷ In Hindu religions the funeral rites have to be performed by a male child, otherwise the departed soul cannot reside in peace.

⁵⁸ When the belief and actions are different, then false is the commerce, false is the capital and harmful is the sustenance derived (First Guru, p. 471).

⁵⁹ Whatever had to happen has already happened, consider it as Gods order (Fifth Guru, p. 286). Look ahead and not backwards (Fifth Guru, p. 1097).

⁶⁰ Take care of the body; God resides in it (Fifth Guru, p. 554). Sleep and eat as much is required (Second Guru, p. 467).

austerity, contentment, simplicity, modesty and to avoid conspicuous consumption.⁶¹ The body is expected to be the temple of God, therefore, should be kept clean and healthy.⁶² A Sikh should be able to defend the weak and oppressed in time of crises, and help the needy.⁶³

In Sikh philosophy, for healthy living, restraint on consumption by both mind and body is necessary, as both are affected by what is consumed.⁶⁴ In terms of consumption by body, explicitly, some food items are prohibited - use of alcohol, betel leaf, tobacco and other intoxicants.⁶⁵ In Sikh temples across the world only vegetarian meal is served. Similarly, some restraint on consumption by the mind through the sensory organs is also prescribed. The ears, eyes and tongue are advised to be the filters and perceive only that is healthy for the mind and body.⁶⁶ The objective is to maintain a robust mind-body combination and, therefore, nourish it with healthy food and positive thoughts. This is expected to minimize the scope of physical and mental illness, and thereby reduce medical absenteeism – conversely enhance productivity.

The Sikhs are expected to maintain a healthy life style. If necessary, immediate resort to medical services is encouraged. The most rare and important Ayurvedic medicines were made available to the sick and needy from the medical store of the sixth Sikh Guru. The tenth Guru, encouraged the Sikhs to provide medical assistance to all the wounded in the battle field itself, without any discrimination of religion and irrespective of their allegiance.

Increased Workforce: In Sikh religion there is no discrimination what so ever based on the caste, color or creed,⁶⁷ which implies that each one can work in any area, given the need and specialization. It believes in pursuing an occupation in which one is adept and can establish competence, irrespective of the family status by birth. It believes in equal opportunities to all in terms of employment. There is no organized or ordained clergy in Sikh religion. The

⁶¹ Third Guru, p.86 and First Guru, p.468. Work hard, be content and maintain the garb of humility (First Guru, p. 595).

⁶² Japji, p. 6.

⁶³ The grace of God falls on such lands where the poor and needy are helped (First Guru, p. 15).

⁶⁴ Such consumption should be avoided that pains the body and gives rise to unholy thoughts in the mind (First Guru, p. 16).

⁶⁵ Are prohibited as they make an individual senseless and devoid of reason (Third Guru, p. 554).

⁶⁶ The ears, eyes and tongue are expected to perceive truth and God in all things (Third Guru, p. 921-22).

⁶⁷ Caste and honor are determined by deeds (First Guru, p. 1330). There is no caste or clan in the womb and all creation is from the Divine seed (Kabir, p. 324).

maintenance of the premises and service in the *Gurdwara* is generally provided by volunteers or sometimes by paid employees.

Women are considered an important component of work force. In Sikhism, a woman has been given equal status as that of man in all spheres of life.⁶⁸ According to Sikh thought, as all things are created and inhabited by God, there is no scope for discrimination on the basis of gender of an individual in the practice of religion in life.⁶⁹ The Sikh Gurus condemned the notion of inferiority of women and respected women for she gave life to all humans (Fowler, 1997). Sikh Gurus did not approve of any inferior treatment to one-half of the humanity and observed that women had become very meek and submissive.⁷⁰ They, therefore, strived to uplift their status socially, prohibited dowry, female infanticide, *sati*, and permitted widow-remarriage.⁷¹ Sikh women participate as equal members in all religious functions. In mid-sixteenth century, third Sikh Guru appointed 52 women⁷² as missionaries and four women to *Manjis* or diocese, in respective geographical areas in India to preach the tenets of Sikhism to men and women alike. In early eighteenth century, during the time of the Tenth Guru, women are known to have led a batch of Sikh warriors in the battle ground. Thus, all vocations are open to women, as are to men. A woman in Sikhism is considered to be equal, if not more important to society, she does not change her name after marriage, and can practice and participate in any religious ceremony as a grown-up, old or widow. Women are encouraged to be an equal participant in the workforce, with healthy self-esteem, strong mind and body. Therefore, she is entitled to same benefits, wages and perquisites.

Sikhism does not believe in renunciation of householder's life and, therefore, each individual has to work hard for a dignified living. All labor is dignified, and no work is inferior or superior - to earn a living by hard work is the guiding principle. The Sikh religion prohibits earnings by gambling, racketeering, cheating or other unfair means. Thus Sikhism encourages hard work and

⁶⁸ Why call them bad, from whom the kings take birth and from whom none can abstain (First Guru, p.473).

⁶⁹In every particle of creation, God resides (Ninth Guru, p. 1427). From one source has all the creation been created, so who can be called noble or inferior (Kabir, p. 1349).

⁷⁰ Women have become too meek and submissive in the modern times (First Guru, p.1243).

⁷¹ The third Guru criticized the practice of Sati and banned it from Sikh religion. Though an aberration in Sikh history, in the case of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, four of his wives, insisted and committed Sati, an un-Sikh act on June 28, 1839 (Singh, 1999). In recent past, it has emerged that the female infanticide is high in northern States, including Punjab, which is reflected in the adverse sex ratio. This trend is aided by modern medical techniques of determination of sex of the unborn child and then abortion.

⁷² 94 men were also appointed to do the missionary work and 18 men were appointed to *Manjis*.

honest living on earned income. The Sikh Gurus themselves led a professional life – farmer, shop-keeper and trader. The economic profession of the saints, whose compositions are included in SGGS and who are also considered to be role-models for the Sikhs, varied from that of a cobbler, sculptor, weaver, shop-keeper, trader, governor of a province, king, to a saint-teacher. Some of the Sikhs were famous traders and owned fleets of ships. They were known to conduct international trade. Such activities were encouraged and Sikhs were prodded to work hard and prosper. Sikh Gurus during their lifetime traveled widely across the continent and encouraged cross-country mobility of labor and trade.⁷³ The labor, preacher, teacher and other professionals were advised to aim for perfection in their respective areas.⁷⁴ Sikhism believes that one can meditate in heart and work physically to earn a respectful living.⁷⁵

Encourages Investment: Sikh philosophy encourages investment, especially capital. Accumulation of wealth and idle savings beyond what is adequate to meet immediate or planned consumption, is discouraged. It seeks to cultivate austerity and modest living, thereby avoiding conspicuous consumption. Further, it encourages employment generation and self employment, irrespective of trade or industry.⁷⁶ A Sikh is expected to be enterprising and pursue progress in all walks of life. The guiding principle has to be sincerity and sharing with others the fruit of hard work. The Sikh thought explicitly mentions that excessive profit margins and exploitation of monopoly power or that of labor is prohibited – God has to be witnessed in each human being.⁷⁷ The Sikh has been explicitly advised not to practice falsehood and hoard wealth but to have a long term vision and build a reputation of a truthful merchant.⁷⁸ In all economic dealings, an individual is expected to avoid anxiety and cultivate the virtue of detachment.⁷⁹

⁷³ First Guru is known to have traveled widely within India and then abroad to Sri Lanka, Mecca, Baghdad, Tibet and China. Similarly, the ninth Guru also traveled widely within India.

⁷⁴ There are numerous instances in Sikh history, where the trade has been specialized – horses from Kabul, woolens from Kashmir for the Sikh community. In the construction of the cities by the Gurus, same principle was followed – the best artisans and professionals would be encouraged to participate in the activity.

⁷⁵ Kabir, p.1376.

⁷⁶ A Sikh is prodded to work. He is encouraged to get absorbed in self employment (First Guru, p. 474).

⁷⁷ By exploiting others, the mind becomes sick (First Guru, p. 140). To grab what belongs to another is bad (First Guru, p. 141).

⁷⁸ First Guru, p.418.

⁷⁹ Every individual who is born has to perish, be it the king or a wealthy man (Fourth Guru, p. 141). The landowners also have to leave one day (Fifth Guru. p. 188).

The kings/rulers/administrators were advised to be kind and just to their subjects. In years of drought and famines, Sikh Gurus would request the rulers to forgo or ease the terms of tax compliance. They insisted that tax laws should be uniform and not discriminatory on the basis of religion of the population.⁸⁰ Similarly, imposition of death duty was criticized. The rulers were expected to provide social security and welfare schemes for the needy and the sick.

The Sikh Gurus encouraged proper accounting standards to be maintained. The *Gurdwaras* were constructed, many new cities were founded, temples of other religions constructed and wells and canals dug-up in drought affected areas mainly from the voluntary collections – at least one-tenth of the earnings of the individual were to be offered for purposes of community assets and charity. The third Guru organized an institutional set-up, spreading across the country, for the collection of voluntary offerings made by the Sikhs and their appropriate utilization – the money would be collected, utilized in local congregations and remaining amount deposited at the Headquarters where the Guru would reside. The use of banking services was also made in these transfers of resources. The budget was made annually. The Sikhs would be advised in advance of the needs of the community and accordingly asked to make the contributions in kind or in cash. The budget constraint would be observed and expenditure would be adjusted accordingly to match the receipts.

The Sikh Gurus emphasized the institution of charity, without discrimination, for social welfare.⁸¹ They would organize relief operations consisting of food and medicine when ever drought or famine would occur. The Gurus themselves would help the needy farmers by sinking wells and building tanks for providing water for drinking and for irrigation purposes, wherever they would travel. The money out of charity would be liberally used for helping the needy and the sick. Since the first Guru, the Sikhs were advised to help the needy and the *Gurdwaras* became the focal points of providing such help – free food, lodging and medical assistance continue to be provided even now in the main *Gurdwaras* throughout the world.

⁸⁰ Pilgrimage tax was imposed by the Mogul kings on non-Muslim population.

⁸¹ The highest state of spiritual bliss is possible while engaging in truth, self-discipline and noble endeavors, amidst life's activity (Third Guru, p.26). The god-enlightened people always help the needy and are benevolent (Fifth Guru, p. 273). Learning induces in mind, service of mankind (First Guru, p. 356).

The concept of sharing is not only restricted to fellow humans, but also has to be extended to animals and plants in the immediate surroundings – God is all-prevailing and lives in the creation.⁸² The ecological balance and the concerns for environment were practiced by all the Gurus during their human life-time.

Gurpurabs (Functions): These are celebrated to commemorate the anniversaries/events related to the lives of the Gurus.⁸³ These functions were encouraged and being celebrated with gaiety and fervor even during the times of the Sikh Gurus. These are socio-religious occasions when Sikhs in large numbers collect in the *Gurdwaras*, sports and literary competitions are held and other events like fairs, entertaining games, theatre are organized. There are six important *Gurpurabs* spread evenly throughout the year.⁸⁴ The *Gurpurabs* give rise to commerce and business, as commodity and animal markets are organized and where preparations are made months in advance. These activities not only generate employment opportunities but also trade volumes. In India, earlier these festivities would last for over a month but now extend to about a week.

Section – IV: Select Evidence

The Sikhs are characterized by unshorn hair – generally men sport a specific type of a headgear, a turban on their head.⁸⁵ The majority of the Sikhs live in Punjab, India where the religion originated. They have had a brief but interesting history beginning from the late fifteenth century. The history of the Sikhs presents an evidence of a community who has progressed despite many adverse conditions. First, it proposed equality of the human race, and opposed the existing social system, mainly characterized by the caste system which had been in existence for centuries. Secondly, it advocated democratic traditions and opposed the autocratic rule of the kings wherein the subjects were treated as sub-human. Thirdly, it originated and spread in a geographical area which was enroute to India from Central Asia – the invading armies into India ravaged the area. Finally, when India gained independence in 1947, Punjab was partitioned into

⁸² The world is the chamber and abode of the holy Lord (Second Guru, p. 463).

⁸³ The stories of the great elders, their worthy progeny remembers (Third Guru, p. 951)

⁸⁴ The important ones are the birthdays of First Guru (September) and Tenth Guru (January), Martyrdom day of Fifth Guru (June) and Ninth Guru (November), Baisakhi (April) and Diwali (October). The local congregations can always make a choice of celebrating more occasions.

⁸⁵ Many women also wear a turban, while others cover their long hair by a scarf. The practice of maintaining clean unshorn hair and unmutilated body is symbolic gesture of surrender to the will of the creator.

two – one part going into Pakistan and the other into India. Most of the Sikhs were dislocated and had to move into India in adverse conditions and virtually penniless situation. A large number of them settled in Punjab, a bordering state with Pakistan. This uprooting was followed by three wars and continuous tension across the border with Pakistan. However, within a few years they established themselves in their new environment and are credited with having the highest per capita income in India. In this section, a brief review is made of the economic performance of the community.

Establishment of New cities: The Sikh Gurus generally had a tradition of establishing new cities by purchasing the land. The establishment of the city would generate employment and encourage commerce, apart from accommodating new social order where all human beings were accorded equality in terms of vocation and learning, without any discrimination of caste, color, race or religion. The cities which have been established by the Sikh Gurus are Amritsar,⁸⁶ Anandpur Sahib,⁸⁷ Goindwal,⁸⁸ Kartarpur,⁸⁹ Kiratpur,⁹⁰ Paonta Sahib,⁹¹ and Tarn Taran.⁹² The cities would be developed generally with the efforts and contribution of the volunteers and expert artisans. The city of Amritsar has been an important centre of commerce and trade since the seventeenth century. The other cities are also doing well in India today.

Sikh Kingdoms and an Empire - Punjab:

In May 1710 AD, two years after the death of tenth Guru, Sikh states began to be established signifying the transformation of people (Cunningham, 1966). Initially, within a short time, the Sikh state was lost in 1715 AD, but after the foundation of Patiala in 1752 AD, the Sikhs could establish Sikh rule in many parts of north India on a long term basis.⁹³ In 1799 AD a Sikh empire was established which extended from the present day Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and

⁸⁶ Foundation stone was laid in 1577 A.D. by the fourth Guru. The land, by some accounts was purchased while from other accounts was gifted by Mogul Emperor Akbar.

⁸⁷ Foundation stone was laid in 1665A.D. by the ninth Guru on land purchased from Kahlur (Bilaspur).

⁸⁸ The city was popularized by the third Guru, when he shifted his headquarters in 1552. He had earlier, laid the foundation of the village after the name of Goinda, a trader who had approached the second Guru for blessings. The city derives the name from the well (baoli - a well with stairs going down till the water level), which was constructed by the third Guru in 1559 A.D.

⁸⁹ Founded by the fifth Guru in 1594 A.D. on land granted during the reign of Mogul Emperor Akbar.

⁹⁰ Founded by son of the sixth Guru on May 1, 1626 A., D. on land purchased from Kahlur by the Guru.

⁹¹ Founded by tenth Guru in 1685 A.D. on land offered by Raja of Nahan.

⁹² Founded by the Fifth Guru in 1596 A.D.

⁹³ In 1710, Sikh state was set up in Sadhaura, Lohgarh, and Sirhind. The states other than Patiala were Faridkot, Jind, Nabha, Multan, Kapurthala, Kaithal and Kalsia.

Kashmir in India to parts of Pakistan and Afghanistan.⁹⁴ The Sikh empire was considered to be very rich and strong.⁹⁵ The advancing British forces to North India treated it with respectful caution. The British signed a Treaty with the Sikhs on January 1, 1806 and another on April 25, 1809, to respect each others territorial boundaries. The British after fighting two wars (1845-46 and 1848-49), finally annexed Punjab on March 29, 1849. The Sikhs were offered jobs in British Army and many of them migrated to England, Australia and other countries in the mid-nineteenth century.

The important thing in the Sikh empire was the liberal and benevolent attitude of the king and administration to the population. The king was assisted by an administrative set-up consisting of a large number of ministers appointed without any discrimination of religion or caste. The administration was organized in various departments to provide efficient service to the masses. The rule was in the name of God, and large amount of offerings would be made to the temples of all religions. No discrimination was shown in employment – Muslim, Hindu, Sikh and others were offered employment based on talent and merit. Even foreigners were employed, mainly as advisers for the defense services. The revenue from the land was the major source of finance, and land revenue was nearly half the gross produce – it was not considered exorbitant, as the farm income was high and the farmer was prosperous and secure under the rule. In times of famines and droughts, the State would undertake relief measures. Crime would be generally atoned with fines – based not on the gravity of the crime but the capacity of the criminal to pay. Capital punishment was unknown and justice was provided urgently. A large army was maintained at a cost of one-third of entire revenue receipts. According to one estimate, the revenue of Punjab amounted to Rs.25 million in 1832, comprising of land revenue (Rs.12 million), customs duties (Rs.1.9 million) and others.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780 – 1839) was the most notable Emperor of the Sikh empire. The borders ranged from Habra Pass in West, Sutlej in East, Kashmir in North and deserts of Sindh in South, including Lahore, Peshawar and Multan; covering an area of 1,00,436 square miles.

⁹⁵ The Sikhs consider the Sikh empire as an aberration because a military monarch was not what the principles of the religion recommended (Banerjee, 1936).

⁹⁶ P.484, Volume III, Singh, H. (1997).

Modern Times

In the modern times, first a brief discussion on two important issues of caste system and status of women is presented followed by data analysis.

Caste System

The caste system was rooted deep in India but the Sikh Gurus, who preached for nearly two centuries against it, were finally successful in ushering in a new order. The Sikhs, mainly consisted of the so called non-Brahmin castes, were able to discover their self-esteem. They were able to learn and read, not only scriptures from which they had been forbidden for centuries (capability of a *Brahmin*), but could also develop soldier like qualities under the teachings of Sikh religion (capability of a *Kshatriya*).

However, on the caste dynamics, though the Sikh religion forbids practice of caste system, this ideal has not been fully realized, though it is less pronounced amongst the Sikhs than the Hindus in Punjab and it is restricted to marriage generally (Kaur, 1990) It is surprising that it still persists amongst the Sikhs despite the fact that since the first Guru, the teachings forbid it explicitly. In fact, the Sikh scripture contains revelations received by many saints belonging to *shudra* or low castes. In 1699 A.D., in the first baptism ceremony the five Sikhs who came from different castes – *kshatriyas*, *jat*, washerman, water-carrier and a barber, were baptized together and made to drink sweetened water from the same bowl by the tenth Guru. Later, the same five Sikhs baptized the tenth Guru. Conceptually, this ceremony abolishes all caste system amongst the baptized, as a common surname is given to all the initiated and each one are made to drink from the same bowl – thus no individual is an untouchable. The tenth Guru specifically mentioned then that all humans are equal, no caste system which divides the human race has to be respected, all are brothers and sisters and no feeling of disgust or contempt for one another has to be nursed (Macauliffe, 1909). In Sikh religion, this concept and practice of initiation continues even today. In the *Gurdwara*, without any discrimination, everyone sits together and after the singing of hymns, takes *langar* or food together. The *langar* is cooked and served by members of the congregation, irrespective of their caste affiliations.

According to the caste system, based on the concept of hierarchy, purity and pollution, avoidance of *Shudras* or untouchables is an important part of Hindu religion. There is no principle of purity and pollution in Sikh religion that would provide an order to caste ranking but there is recourse to land-ownership for differentiation and hierarchy (Jayaraman, 1998). In Punjab, as also amongst the Sikhs in general, the caste system lacks the hierarchical character common in other parts of India. The *jats* or agricultural peasants occupy highest position in the rural areas while in urban areas it is the trading community. In some parts of urban Punjab, trading community amongst the Hindus is considered higher than the Brahmins. However, Punjab can be characterized to have a class system based on ownership of land - Marxian concept of class – defined in terms of property rather than occupation (Dhami, 1988). The upward mobility is noted in Punjab based on asset holdings and jobs (Nair, 1961). As a result of the large scale availability of jobs in British army, the influence of caste system was also weakened. The occupational mobility with industrialization and urbanization and education further eroded the caste equations. However, the marriages are still generally held within the same caste (Singh, 1967). One of the reasons that traces of caste system persists, though restricted to marriage, is that some of the converts to Sikhism came from high caste Hindus who continue to retain their value system (Jayaraman, 1998).

Status of Women

The Sikh Gurus subscribed equal religious status for both men and women but in the later period due to historical and societal restrictions her position deteriorated, especially in terms of female infanticide⁹⁷ (Shanker, 1994). The initiated or baptized Sikhs are specifically instructed to have no social relations with families which practice female infanticide. The Sikh religion upheld gender equality but it needs to be reaffirmed against the ancient and deeply embedded patriarchal values that have dominated the society for so long. The status of women in the Indian society and especially amongst the Sikhs has to be analyzed in the context of history. Punjab had been a border state through which the invading armies would come to India. The invading armies would kidnap women and therefore the need to always protect her. But women were important for the community as she provided labor. In a patriarchal society a woman could be gifted to build

⁹⁷ In northern India, the pride of the parents of the girl was affected as the marriage of the girl is considered to be humiliating for the parents as they feel subjugated to her in-laws (Kaur, 1968).

kinship and insecure security. The sexual role of women in motherhood, childrearing and development further tied her to domestic activities. These complex set of factors resulted in lower status of women. Therefore, in Rajputs and Jats in north India, which were the two groups mainly involved in resisting the invading armies, female infanticide was popular. This practice seems to have become widespread and has resulted in adverse sex ratio as would be noted in the next sub-section. The attitude to protect the girl child from outside influence, including education and ensure marriage at a young age was also the result of the complex set of factors mentioned above. Sen (2004) argues “that nearly every part of the Indian culture bears the important imprint of Hindu thoughts and practices” (p.43). In addition, Harriss-White (2004) observes that as household wealth rises the relative chances of women drop; illustratively, juvenile sex ratio for landless agricultural households in 1994 was 930 that for children under 15 in the local agro-commercial and business elite was 784. These inhibiting factors in the development of the female population are beginning to loosen as the survey data in next section reveals. The practice of *sati* is unknown amongst the Sikhs but the dowry system is still prevalent, despite explicit forbiddance of this practice by the first Sikh Guru.

Section – V: Conclusions

The Sikh religion considers the creation of the world as real though not eternal. It also encourages family life, active participation in the present precious human life and does not assign any merit to renunciation or *sanyas*. The religion provides a different connotation to the term *maya*/illusion and does not consider material wealth or family life as a hindrance in the spiritual advancement of the human being. It insists on healthy living by observing that God resides in the creation and body is a temple of God. It insists that each individual has to read religious scriptures, understand and rationally practice them in daily life and strictly not to observe/practice rituals, occult powers and superstitions.

In terms of workforce, by providing equal opportunities to all humankind, including women and insisting on hard work, it ensures an upward sloping supply curve of labor. The caste system amongst the Sikh has lost its traditional implication of hindering social mobility. The status of women amongst Sikhs, given some indicators of autonomy, is high though the sex ratio is still adverse, probably due to persistent female infanticide.

The emphasis is on education, rational thinking, long term planning, modest consumption, high investment, self employment, employment generation, and sharing output with others. Honest living, earning through honest means and regular contribution to charity is must. In all the pursuits of economic well-being, the guiding principle has to be meditation, honest work and sharing with others the fruit of hard labor. The objective is to maximize the gift of this human birth without the fear or joy of after-life, heaven and hell. In a short span of a few centuries, despite uprootings, wars and hardships, the Sikhs have been able to establish themselves as a hard working and prosperous community in Punjab and in India.

References

- Anderson, G.M. (1988). Mr Smith and the Preachers: The Economics of religion in the Wealth of Nations, *Journal of Political Economy*, Vol.96, No.5, pp.1066-88.
- Banerjee, A.C. (1983). *The Sikh Gurus and the Sikh Religion*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers.
- Banerjee, I. (1936). *Evolution of the Khalsa*. Calcutta: University of Calcutta.
- Barro, R. J. and R. M. McCleary. (2003). *Religion and Economic Growth across Countries*, *American Sociological Review*, October, pp. 760-781.
- Barro, R. J. and X. Sala-i-Martin. (2004). *Economic Growth*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.
- Bauer, P.T. (1965). *Indian Economic Policy and Development*. George Allen and Unwin Ltd: London
- Carmody, D. L. (1989). *Women and World Religions*. Prentice Hall: New Jersey.
- Cunningham, J.D. (1962). *A History of the Sikhs*. Delhi: S. Chand and Company.
- Dhami, M. S. (1988). *Caste, Class and Politics in the Rural Punjab: A Study of Two Villages in Sangrur District*, In *Political Dynamics and Crises in Punjab* by P.Wallace and S. Chopra (eds). Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University.
- Fowler, M. (1997). *Sikhism*, In *World Religions: An Introduction for Students* by J. Fowler et al (Eds). Sussex: Academic Press.
- Harriss-White, B. (1999). Gender-Cleansing: The Paradox of Development and Deteriorating Female Life Chances in Tamil Nadu In Rajan, R.S. (Ed), *Signposts: Gender Issues in Post Independence India*, New Delhi: Kali for Women.
- Harriss-White, B. (2004). India's Informal Economy: Facing the Twenty-First Century, In Basu, K. (Ed), *India's Emerging Economy*, Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Huntington, S.P. (1996). *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Indian Council of Social Science Research. (1975). *Status of Women in India*. Bombay: Allied Publishers.
- Inglehart, R. and W.E. Baker. (2000). *Modernization, Cultural Change, and the Persistence of Traditional Values*, *American Sociological Review*, February, pp. 19-51.

- Iannaccone, L.R. (1998). Introduction to the Economics of Religion, *Journal of Economic Literature*, Vol.36, No.3, pp.1465-96.
- Iyer, S. (2002). *Demography and Religion in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Jayakar, P. (1987). *Indian Religions: Rural traditions* In the Encyclopedia of Religion Volume 7. New York, Macmillan Publishing Company.
- Jayaraman, R. (1998). Sikhism and Caste In Social Structure and Change – Social structure and Change by A.M.Shah, B.S.Baviskar and E.A.Ramaswamy (Eds). New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Kane, P. V. (1974). *History of Dharmasastra*. Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute.
- Kaur, M. (1968). *Role of Women in the Freedom Movement (1857-1947)*. Delhi: Sterling Publishers.
- Kaur, U.J. (1990). *Sikh Religion and Economic Development*. New Delhi: National Book Organization.
- Landes, D.S. (1999). *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations*. New York: W.W.Norton and Company.
- Macauliffe, M.A. (1909). *The Sikh Religion, Volume V*. Oxford: Clarendon Press
- McCleary, R.M. (2003). *Salvation, Damnation and Economic Incentives*, PRPES Working Paper 36.
- McCleary, R.M. and R.J. Barro (2003). *International Determinants of Religiosity*, NBER Working Paper 10147.
- McLeod, W.H. (1989). *Who is a Sikh*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Nair, K. (1961). *Blossoms in the Dust: The Human Factor in Indian Development*. New York: Frederick, A. Praeger, Inc., Publisher.
- Narang, G.C. (1972). *Glorious History of Sikhism*. New Delhi: Soni Printers.
- Noland, M. (2003). *Religion, Culture, and Economic Performance*, Working Paper 03-8, Institute for International Economics.
- Pastis, J. (1999). *Paul and the Pauline Tradition* In Encyclopedia of Women and World Religion by S. Young. Macmillan Reference USA: New York.
- Radhakrishnan, S. (1927). *The Hindu View of Life*. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd.
- Radhakrishnan, S. (1947). *Religion and Society*. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd.

- Rambachan, A. (2001). *A Hindu Perspective In What Men Owe to Women* by J. C. Raines and D.C. Maguire (Eds). Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Ray, N. (1967). *The Sikh Gurus and the Sikh Society*, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla.
- Sen, A. (2004), Democracy and Secularism in India, In Basu, K. (Ed), *India's Emerging Economy*, Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Shanker, R. (1994). *Women in Sikhism* In Religion and Women by A. Sharma (Ed). Albany: State University of New York press.
- Singh, H. (1997). *The Encyclopedia of Sikhism*. Patiala: Punjabi University.
- Singh, H. (1964). *The Heritage of the Sikhs*. Bombay: Asia Publishing House.
- Singh, I.P. (1967). *Caste in a Sikh Village* In Sikhism and Indian Society by N. Ray (Ed). Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study.
- Singh, K. (1912). *History and Philosophy of the Sikh Religion*. Lahore: Neval Kishore Press.
- Singh, P. (1999). *The Sikhs*. New York: Doubleday.
- Srinivas, M.N. (1962). *Caste in Modern India and Other Essays*. Bombay: Asia Publishing House.
- Sugirtharajah, S. (1994). *Hinduism* In Women in Religion by J. Holm (Ed), London: Pinter Publishers.
- Tawney, R. H. (1926). *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*. New Jersey: Transaction Publishers.
- Uppal, J.S. (2001). Hinduism and Economic Development in South Asia, *International Journal of Social Economics*, Vol.13, No.3, pp.20-33.
- Vishwanath, L.S. (1996). Female Infanticide and the Position of Women in India In Social Structure and Change – Women in Indian society by A.M.Shah, B.S.Baviskar and E.A.Ramaswamy (Eds). New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Weber, M. (1920). *The Religion of India*. Illinois: The Free Press.
- Weber, M. (1930). *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. London: Unwin Hyman Ltd.
- Weber, M. (1952). *Ancient Judaism*. New York: The Free Press.

Weber, M. (1964). *The Religion of China*. New York: The Free Press.

Weber, M. (1999). *Essays in Economic Sociology*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Young, K.K. (1987). *Hinduism In Women in World Religion* by A. Sharma (Ed). Albany: State University of New York Press.

Young S. (Ed) (1993). *An Anthology of sacred Texts – By and about Women*. Pandora: London.

Young, S. (Ed) (1999). *Encyclopedia of Women and World Religion*. New York: Macmillan Reference USA.