

RELIGION AND POLITICS: THE SIKH PERSPECTIVE

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Introduction

Religion, in the real sense, is a spiritual force which stands for the unity and integrity of the cosmos. But a mere glance at the present scenario all over the world reveals the reality that the maximum violence and massacre of innocent human beings is taking place in the name of religion, caste and creed. The underlying factor seems to be the possession of religion rather than its practice. It is, therefore, imperative to delve deep into the cause of religious fanaticism and its challenges to the integrity of the nation.

The present paper is an exclusive study of the relation of Sikh religion to politics in the Indian political scenario. The aim is to analyze and to highlight, first, the Sikh perspective of religion in relation to politics, second, the involvement of the Sikhs in politics and use of religious infrastructure for political purposes; third, the challenges as well as the prospects of the Sikh polity in the Indian polities.

I

The origin of the Sikh religion, with the advent of Guru Nanak (1469-1539 CE) and its culmination in the creation of *Khalsa* by Guru Gobind Singh (1699-1708 CE), provides a network of distinct religio-political values and traditions which may be termed as the Sikh Political Culture.¹ No systematic theory of state is propounded in the holy compositions of the Sikh Gurus. Whatever observations they have made about religion, society and politics of their times, those provide the basis of the Sikh polity. The unique tenets of the Sikh polity are *Sangat* (holy congregation), *Guru Granth* and *Khalsa Panth* (the spiritual and temporal authority), the *Panj Piaras* (plural executive), the *Gurmata* (collective will of the people) and the *Sarbat Khalsa* (democratic and egalitarian polity)². No doubt, the distinct religious identity

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¹Gobinder Singh, *Religion and Politics in the Punjab*, Deep & Deep Publications, New Delhi, 1986, p. 48.

²Kapur Singh, *Parasaraprasna*, ed. By Piar Singh & Madanjit Kaur, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, 1989, pp. 222-223.

was vouchsafed by the first five Gurus by creating cohesive infrastructure for the community. A new dimension was given to the Sikh community by the Sixth Master, Guru Hargobind Singh, who wore the two swords, symbolic of the integration of spiritual authority (*Piri*) and temporal authority (*Miri*), in order to control the onslaughts of the Mughal emperors.³

The spirit of the integration of the sacred and the secular was carried on by Guru Gobind Singh, in the creation of *Khalsa*, in the year 1699 CE., through the baptismal ceremony of *Amrit* (nectar). The Guru had conferred on his followers not only the individual identity expressed by the five external symbols, but also the corporate identity of ethno-religious, ethno-social and ethno-political nature. In this way, Sikhism evolved from a pacifist religious group into an organized political community, thus embodying the spirit of universal religion as contained in the *Guru Granth* along with the physical form to preserve it.

The Sikh religion believes in the spirit of religious pluralism. It negates the philosophy of absolutism and religious totalitarianism which makes dogmatic assertions of final revelation. No such claim to an exclusive religious authority is made by the Sikh Gurus. Guru Nanak addresses himself as 'the lowest of the low' (*Guru Granth*, p.15); Guru Ram Das calls himself as 'meanest of the whole creation' (*Guru Granth*, p. 1295); and Guru Gobind Singh regards himself as 'the slave and servant of the Divine Being' (*Dasam Granth*, p. 57). In his discourses with the Yogis, Muslims and Brahmins, Guru Nanak, no doubt, condemned their formal ways of worship and ritualistic practices, but only to tell them to rediscover the inner essence of their religion (*Guru Granth*, p. 662). This cosmopolitan spirit of the Sikh religion is also explicit in the compilation of *Guru Granth Sahib* by the fifth Master, Guru Arjun Dev, who has incorporated the hymns of *bhaktas* and Muslim saints in it and accorded them an equal status with the holy compositions of the Gurus.

This cosmopolitan vision of the Holy Granth is also seen in the concept of universal polity, as is found in the daily prayer (*ardas*) of the Sikh religion. In the last lines it is stated,

³For details, see Ganda Singh, *A Brief Account of the Sikhs*, S.G.P.C., Amritsar, 1956, pp. 5-8; G.C. Narang, *Transformation of Sikhism*, New Book Society, Lahore, 1912, pp. 27-28; Indubhushan Banerjee, *Evolution of the Khalsa*, Vol. II, A. Mukerjee & Co., Calcutta, 1972, pp. 7-11.

God ordained the creation of the path of *Khalsa*. All followers are commanded to accept *Guru Granth Sahib* as their guide, Guru Granth is the manifest body of their Teacher, A Pure mind, all find his guidance in the word; *Khalsa*, the Pure will rule, the impure will be doomed. They, in disgust, will rejoin the Pure ultimately and be saved.⁴

Hence, this *Khalsa* is defined as 'commonwealth of enlightened human beings at a higher level of spiritual growth—a Divine Brotherhood of those who according to Guru Nanak are *sachiar* (embodiment of truth and truthful living) and according to Guru Gobind Singh are *ujhar* (socially committed and active for righteous cause).⁵ A Sikh theologian, Bhai Gurdas has defined 'the nation of the Guru-oriented people as the nation of truth. Their slogan is Truth and their kingdom is based on the laws of Divine Truth' (Var: 26:1). The Sikh Gurus have never encouraged the narrow based religious state, rather they preached the universal brotherhood of man based on the ideational foundation of the ontological principle of One God and Oneness of mankind. The basic truths are not confined to any particular community, but they are universal truths applicable to all and no one can claim any special privilege by virtue of birth.

The practical example of this universal polity is manifest in Guru Gobind Singh's choice of the five beloved ones (*panj piaras*) who belonged to different castes and were from different regions. Besides, Guru's own initiation from the five beloved ones, after initiation of them, and thus merging the Guru disciple tradition in the larger body of the *Khalsa Panth*. Here 'Panth' means the community or collective personality of the Sikhs who have direct relation with their Guru, namely, *Guru Granth Sahib*. This is the finest example of democratic, socialistic and universal system of the Sikh religion, based on the principle of equality, universality of human values as well as respect for other religious traditions and scriptures.

Nonetheless, the Sikh religion stresses on the spiritualistic basis of politics. According to Guru Nanak, the political authority is the Divine Gift, conferred on the king or the ruler who, in turn, owes moral responsibility

⁴Narang and Gupta, *History of the Punjab*, p. 323, quoted by Ishar Singh, *Nanakism-A New World Order: Temporal and Spiritual*, Ranjit Publishing House, New Delhi, 1976, p. 213.

⁵J.S. Ahluwalia, *Lectures in Sikhism* (Delivered on 18-20 April, 2000, at University of California), Punjabi University, Patiala, p.14.

towards his subjects. In any case, if he fails to perform it, he is liable to punishment by God, Who has the power to degrade the Sultan as well as to exalt the common man (G.G. p. 1321). Hence, this democratic polity gives no exemption to the politicians who are equally subject to the Divine Laws. Freedom as well as responsibility are both the ideal paradigms of the Sikh Polity. Stressing on the dynamic view of life, it encourages struggle against the forces of evil and tyranny, to protect the righteousness and goodness.

The interaction between the Sikh religion and politics, on the basis of scriptural and historical evidence, reveals the fact that the aim was to ameliorate and elevate the socio-political structure, by integrating the historical facts with spirituality as well as with universality. This policy of political liberalism was adopted by the Sikh rulers in the eighteenth century. This ideology is vividly apparent during the rule of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, which was termed as 'Sarkar Khalsa' but which treated all subjects on the same political level, regardless of their race or religion⁶. Here our main concern is with the present day Akali politics in the Indian Political Scene.

II

Regarding the relation of politics to religion, one thing should be kept in mind and that is, by religion, we mean here religious institutions or the organized religion and not merely the tenets of religion which, indeed, should be the basis of an ideal political system. Now many questions arise, such as: Is it possible to delink the Sikh religion from politics? What are the avenues for the Sikhs to participate in the politics? What can be the cause of the instability of the Akali politics?

The history records that a theo-political status to Gurdwaras, especially to the Golden Temple, has been accorded since the times of the Sikh Gurus, who installed the *Akal Takht* adjacent to the Golden Temple, to set up an example of the integration of the spiritual and temporal authority. The practice of participating in the holy congregation (*sangat*) and passing of resolutions on the important religious matters (*Gurmatta*) at the *Akal Takht* began in 1745, on the eve of Diwali⁷. The declaration of the Holy congregation, as the *Sarbat Khalsa* or a theo-political body took place in

⁶Bhagat Singh, *Sikh Polity*; Oriental Publishers, New Delhi, 1978.

⁷H.R. Gupta, *Studies in Later Mughal History of the Punjab*, Minerva Book Shop, Lahore, 1954, p.21.

November 1760 and this institution is recognized till the present times⁸. The significant issues of the *Sikh Panth*, relating to socio-religious and political problems were discussed in the *Sarbat Khalsa* which used to meet at the *Akal Takht* on the occasions of Diwali and Baisakhi. Before independence, all political struggles against the foreign invaders and against the British imperialism took place from the premises of the religious institutions and even after independence, all agitations were initiated from the *Akal Takht*.

Talking about the fundamental tenet of the Sikh politics, that is, 'Politics is for Religion' and 'Religion is for Politics', the Sikh leaders have made use of the religious infrastructure for the political purposes. It is most essential to understand the nature and relation of Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (the most significant religious body of the Sikhs) and Shiromani Akali Dal (the political party of the Sikhs). To protect the religio-political identity of the Sikhs, and to liberate the Gurdwaras from the possession of *mahants*, SAD was constituted in 1920 and the S.G.P.C. was constituted in accordance with the statutory provisions of the Sikh Gurdewara Act of 1925. The members of the S.G.P.C. are elected by the Sikh votes, from 120 constitutions, on the basis of universal adult franchise and elections are conducted at the expenses of the Punjab Government by the Chief Commissioner of Gurdwara Elections. Though the different political parties has the right to participate in the S.G.P.C elections, yet only the majority party can claim to represent the entire Sikh Community.

The SAD is the dominant majority party in the S.G.P.C. which gives an impression of the Akali identity of the S.G.P.C. and this impact is visible in its structural and functional aspects. The agenda for the election campaign of the sgpc relates mostly to the religio-political issues, depending on the change in the political scenario. For instance, in 1965 elections, the two rival Akali groups had no power in the state assembly, so the issues raised were Punjabi Suba and better Gurdwara administration. But in 1971, the SAD being in power at the state level, was in a position to give secular allurements to the electorates.

The political relevance of the sgpc is explicitly clear because it is the representative body of the Sikhs, often known as the 'Sikh Parliament'. It controls the huge amount of finance of the Gurdwaras under its jurisdiction.

⁸Bhagat Singh, 'The Akal Takht', *The City of Amritsar*, ed. By Fauja Singh, New Delhi, 1978, p. 57.

So it is like an estate within the state and may aspire to become a state within a state in critical times. That is why the political demands of the SAD, if presented through the sgpc appear to be genuine demands of the Sikh community. The historical legacy of the inseparability of the religious and political traditions in the Sikh religion, makes it convenient for the sgpc to present the political demands in the religious phraseology and idiom.⁹ Contrarily, the dominating ruling party has used the potential of panthic platform for the achievement of its political demands. To weaken this panthic platform of the Akali party, the ruling Congress party at the centre and in the state has always endeavoured to capture it in their own way. This intention of the Congress has become obvious, first, in their participation in the Gurdwara elections under the cover of Sadh Sangat Board with the blessing of Partap Singh Kairon; second, in supporting Bhindranwala and his men against the Akali candidates; and third, is explicit in the operation Bluestar.¹⁰

The question is may arise, how could the Sikh politicians manage to unify this religious body and what type of problems they have to face? The Shiromani Akali Dal, organized on the communal basis, is indeed, a minority party in the Indian politics, but it is majority party in its own regional state. Though being in majority in Punjab, it could but once formed a ministry, with absolute majority, otherwise it came in power only as a coalition government in alliance with the other parties. There are several instances in the Punjab politics, which enunciate this fact of the instability of the Akali ministry. To quote a few, we can observe that the cause was the internal dissensions within the party either between the moderate group and the hardliners or between the religious and political leaders. For instance, the demand for 'a self-determined political status' was initiated by Master Tara Singh Akali Dal, by passing resolutions in May 1965 and Dec. 1966. After his death on 22 Nov. 1967, Dr. Jagjit Singh Chauhan had become a militant voice of Master Tara Singh faction. In the meantime, the moderate group of Akali Dal, headed by Sant Fateh Singh, could manage to get 24 seats in the State Legislative Assembly in alliance with the communist party. They formed a coalition ministry on 8 March, 1967, with Gurnam Singh as the

⁹A detailed analytical study of the relation of sgpc and SAD, on the basis of data collection is done by Gobinder Singh, *op.cit.*, p.339.

¹⁰G.S. Sandhu, 'The Roots of the Problem', *Punjab in Indian Politics*, ed. By Amrik Singh, Ajanta Publications, Delhi, p.66.

Chief Minister. This moderate Akali group could rule for a short period and the other Akali group (the hardliners) with the motivation and support of Congress could succeed to form a ministry, headed by Lachman Singh Gill, who initiated the move to make Punjabi as the official language. After some time, the Congress party withdrew support from the minority government but Gill refused to resign, leading to violence in the assembly and consequently, the imposition of Governor's rule on 13 August 1968.

In another case, the Akalis got the opportunity to form ministry in alliance with the Jana Sangh in 1969, with Gurnam Singh as the Chief Minister. Here the cause of internal conflict was the religious and political leadership, on the announcement of Award for the transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab. Both the leaders were trying to take credit of it. The religious leader, Sant Fateh Singh thought it was due to his threat of 'fast unto death', but the Chief Minister took it as a reward for the Akali support to Congress candidate (of Mrs. Gandhi) for the election of President. However, the religious leadership proved dominant and the Chief Minister, Gurnam Singh was expelled from the party and Parkash Singh Badal was made Chief Minister on 27 March, 1970.¹¹

Again in 1977, the Akali got the chance to form a ministry in alliance with the Janta party. An anti-Congress move led to the victory of Janta-Akali coalition government not only in the Punjab assembly, getting 91 out of 177 seats, with 58 seats of Akalis¹², but they also got all seats from Punjab in alliance with Akali-Janta-CPM for Lok Sabha.¹³ This was the golden opportunity for the Akalis to gain stability in the Indian political spectrum in alliance with Janta party. They adopted a policy of non-violent campaign for their demands. Here again the internal conflict between the religious and political leadership led to the creation of a split group known as Dal Khalsa, the hardliners, who challenged the Akali Dal in sggpc elections in 1979 and were badly defeated.

¹¹For details, see M.J. Akbar, *India: The Siege Within*, Penguin Books, England, 1985, pp. 173-184; *Encyclopedia of Sikhism*, vol. I, ed. By Harbans Singh, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1995, pp. 43-49.

¹²*The Tribune*, June 15, 1977.

¹³*The Hindustan Times*, March 20-22, 1977.

An another brief spell of power, with an overwhelming majority of seats, was enjoyed by the SAD in the State Legislative Assembly after the Rajiv-Laungoval accord was signed on 25 July, 1985. This ministry led by Surjit Sing Barnala could not remain in power for a long time, due to inter-party conflict and pressure on the issue of non-implementation of accord and ultimately it has to face he same tragedy of confrontation and dismissal by the centre.

At present, the ruling power in Punjab is in the hands of SAD in alliance with BJP, under the leadership of Parkash Singh Badal. This ministry is working well with the BJP coalition government at the centre, as is evident from the recent statement of Home Minister, Mr. Advani, who has appreciated the role of SAD during the emergency and their steadfast support to the Vajpayee government during the crisis. this is also an indication of good rapport between the two parties.¹⁴ Even Parkash Singh Badal claimed that till date no other state government had been able to secure so many benefits and big projects for Punjab from the centre as was done by the SAD-BJP coalition government. Even now, the crisis is going on between the ruling party SAD and SHSAD (Sarb Hindi Shiromani Akali Dal), headed by former president of the sgpc, Gurcharan Singh Tohra. Both groups are trying to utilize the religious platform to mobilize the masses to gain public opinion.

This brief survey of the Akali politics in Punjab makes it clear that the cause of instability of the Akali ministry in the past was inter-party confrontation or ideological differences of religious and political leaders. The present crisis is also due to intermixing of religious and political demands. No doubt, the Akali party, being in majority in the sgpc is representing the whole Sikh community. But it should be kept in mind that the SAD is also the majority party in Punjab, so it has to represent the whole Punjabis, to whatever religion or ethnic group they may adhere to. The present ministry is facing many challenges, either they have to break their alliance with BJP or they have to ignore the religious commandments. In the recent past, we have seen the removal of two jathedars of the Akal Takht on the one or the other pretext, which may appear in the Sikh history as an example of the dominance of politics over religion.

¹⁴*The Tribune*, April 18, 2000.

III

Now we come to the pertinent issues, regarding the role of the Sikh politics in the Indian politics. What type of participation in the national politics do they want? What are their contributions to the national mainstream? Are they presenting any challenge to the national integrity? How can their problem be solved?

The Sikhs, in the Indian political scenario, are having the similar apprehensions which are faced by almost every minority community or ethnic group. There is no doubt that the Indian constitution is based on the socialistic and democratic principles and it provides provisions for the fundamental rights as well as directive principles of state policy. Being an amalgamation of different linguistic, cultural, religious, ethnic and regional groups, it recognizes, implicitly, the corporate identity of minorities and strives to attain balance between the unitarianism and pluralistic polity. The fear of insecurity has originated in the minorities by the emerging trends towards the ideology of totalitarianism which repudiates the liberal and rational attitude by stressing on the absolute allegiances to ethnicity and religion etc. It creates the fear of assimilation of the individual into the national body-politics. The minorities look with suspicion certain attitudes of the majority community and contrarily, the majority community starts doubting the political loyalty of the minorities.

Is this identity-consciousness a positive phenomena? Can it be a step towards sectarianism or exclusiveness? Is it possible to safeguard the identities of religio-cultural groups as well as to maintain the unity and integrity of the nation? The main problem of the Sikh religio-politics in the context of the Indian politics is its 'imperative to preserve its separate identity' and the non-acceptance of the Punjabi Hindus, who interpret it 'as a threat to the unity of the country'¹⁵. This quest for distinct self-identity has become a challenge. The origin of this identity-consciousness can be traced back to the Arya Samaj Movement which attempted to absorb it into the Hindu fold. As a reaction, the Singh Sabha Movement arose in the late nineteenth century and its political wing, the Chief Khalsa Diwan was created as the first political organization. In this way, the historical awareness and consciousness of being a distinct ethnic group with the desire to preserve

¹⁵Harji Malik, 'The Historical Legacy', *Punjab in Indian Politics: Issues and Trends*, ed. By Amrik Singh, Ajanta Publication, Delhi, 1985, pp.33-34.

their heritage are the products of this religio-cultural revolution of Sikhism. This identity-consciousness finds expression in two ways viz., the individual identity owing to distinct from the corporate identity of an ethos on the political level.

A clear cut demand for the preservation of distinct Sikh identity is set up in the political goals of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution, which was approved by the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) on 16 Oct., 1973, under the Chairmanship of Surjit Singh Barnala. Among the political demands, the two are of main concern. The one is that 'The Shiromani Akali Dal is the very embodiment of the hopes and aspirations of the Sikh nation and as such is fully entitled to its representation', and the second is the 'the political goal of the Panth, without doubt, is enshrined in the commandments of the Tenth Lord, in the pages of the Sikh history and in the very heart of the Khalsa Panth, the ultimate objective of which is the pre-eminence of the Khalsa.' The fundamental policy of the Shiromani Akali Dal is to seek the realization of this birth right of the Khalsa through the creation of a geographical entity and a constitutional set up of its own. For the attainment of this aim, the SAD is determined to strive by all possible means.¹⁶

This quest for identity implies, in an implicit form, the feeling of insecurity or fear of assimilation as is explicit in the explanatory pamphlet, sent to the members of the Parliament by Sant Harchand Singh Laungoval under the title 'You Owe us Justice' stating 'the genuine foreboding that like Buddhism and Jainism earlier, they (the Sikhs) may also lose their identity in the vast ocean of overwhelming Hindu majority'¹⁷. This type of apprehension found reaction in religious orthodoxy and fundamentalism.

Certainly this happened in Punjab due to the delay tactics of the Centre Government in deciding the demands of the Akalis, which aggravated the whole situation. The fundamentalists in confrontation with the moderate group of the Akalis came in the forefront to lead the Sikh community. The result was the disaster relating to Bhindranwala phenomenon, the operation Bluestar in the Golden Temple by the Congress Government, the

¹⁶Regarding the controversial point 'Sikh Nation', the Akalis explained it as nearest equivalent of the word in Punjabi *qaum* which denotes community rather than nation. M.J. Akbar, *op.cit.*, p.179; cf. also V.D. Chopra & Others, *Agony of Punjab*. Patriot Publishers, New Delhi, 1984; *Encyclopedia of Sikhism*, vol. I, p. 136.

¹⁷M.J. Akbar, *op.cit.*, p. 178.

assassination of Mrs. Indira Gandhi by the Sikh terrorists and as reaction to it, the Nov. 1984 riots in Delhi. These tragic events had made the Punjab problem as the national problem and created a feeling of alienation, insecurity and suspicion in the Sikh masses. In a recent interview, Mr. S.S. Ray, who was Governor of Punjab between 1986 and 1990, attributed the Punjab militant movement to the outcome of Punjab grievances, and said, "I can tell your that they had some genuine grievances which New Delhi had been ignoring all the time... Anyway, once their grievances were looked into their movement gradually came to an end."¹⁸

So far we have seen that the religio-political demands of the Sikhs such as 'pre-eminence of Khalsa' or 'autonomous state' are centred round the issued of distinct Sikh identity. Recently, this issue of identity is in the limelight due to the RSS activities, which through the Rashtriya Sikh Sangat, is distributing literature and organizing camps to prove that the roots of Sikh heritage lie in the Hindu tradition. This movement is bound to affect the Sikh sentiments and to disturb the religious harmony, as this issue of separate identity had earlier sparked militancy. The Sikh conclave in its significant meeting held at the Akal Takht on May 13, 2000, pronounced about 'the distinct identity of the Sikhs' and expressed deep concern about these forces which are trying to assimilate the minority communities by using political power or other methods. They also directed the ruling party SAD to represent the case of the Sikh Panth in the Constitutional Review Commission, constituted by the Government of India and the Chief Minister should ask the Government of India to delete clause 25(1) (B) of the constitution, clubbing the Sikhs with the Hindus¹⁹. An important point to note here is that, as usual, the Congress party through its MP, Jagmeet Singh Brar, is joining hands with the radicals and is presenting the Sikh issues openly in the Parliament. The radicals are mobilizing the masses on this issues and thus are trying to re-establish themselves again.²⁰

Nevertheless, the religio-political demands of the Sikh polity may prove a challenge to the Indian politics, yet the contributions made by the Sikhs for the emancipation of the country and for protecting the frontiers of the country can not be ignored. The Sikh history is replete with numerous instances of

¹⁸*The Tribune*, May 7, 2000.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, May 19, 2000.

²⁰*Ibid.*, May 22, 2000.

suffering and sacrifice as well as valour and bravery of the Sikh heroes. To quote a few instances, it can be observed that the Sikh religious and political leaders at the time of national crisis, has suspended the agitations, launched by them for their religio-political demands, in the larger interest of the nation. The contributions of the Sikhs to the freedom struggle of India, in the Indo-Chinese Conflict (1962) and Indo-Pak Conflict (1965) cannot be ignored. They rendered glorious service to the defence of the country.

The participation of the Akali Dal in the wide-spread national movement against the emergency provisions, from June 1975 to March 1977, is of utmost important. The president of Akali Dal, Jagdev Singh Talwandi, in a special meeting of the executive, rejected the political gimmicks of Mrs. Gandhi and passed a resolution to condemn the emergency in an unequivocal terms. The Akali Dal started the agitation known as 'Save Democracy Morcha' under the Convener Jathedar Mohan Singh Tur. All the senior Akali leaders, legislators and more than 43000 volunteers courted arrest under MISA (The Maintenance of internal Security Act) and other emergency provisions. This Akali agitation, operating from the premises of the Gurdwaras, was the most sustained opposition which enabled the party 'to emerge as the hero of the emergency struggle.'²¹

Conclusion

To recapitulate, the interaction between the Sikh religion and politics, its challenges and prospects in the context of the Indian Political Scenario, the following points must be kept in view:

I. The Sikh religion has its distinct religious as well as political identity. It negates the philosophy of absolutism and religious totalitarianism and encourages the spirit of religious pluralism. It is not right to denominate it as sectarianism because of its cosmopolitan spirit, universal principles and pluralistic polity.

II. The close proximity of religion and politics in Sikhism may be attributed to the interrelation of sgpc and SAD, both the religious body and the political party. The reason behind the instability of the Akali ministry in the State Legislative Assembly is the inter-party faction and the ideological differences between religious and political leadership. It is, therefore, most

²¹For details see G.S. Dhillon, 'The Role of the Akali Dal during the Emergency', *Journal of Sikh Studies*, vol. Xiv, no.2, Aug. 1987, pp. 97-108.

essential for the politicians to carry out introspection, to search for their wrongs and to decide about the measures to set things right for Global Fraternity and powerful nation as in envisaged by the Sikh Gurus.

III. To curb the forces of religious fundamentalism, the Government of India must accept the genuine demands, of common interest, without any delay tactics. It must generate policies to strengthen the dynamics of pluralism and secularism. Here we may quote the words of Swami Vivekananda that 'Only that plan can bring harmony which does not destroy the individuality of man in religion'²². He further says, "The Christians is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, nor is a Buddhist, nor is a Buddhist or a Hindu to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth."²³ So the aim of federal polity should be unity and not uniformity. It should recognize not only the co-existence but also the co-equality of different religious and ethnic groups and it must assure their co-participation in the national body politics.

²²*Selections from the Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Advaita Ashram, Calcutta, 1995, p. 164.

²³Swami Nikhilananda, 'Swami Vivekananda: India and America', *Swami Vivekananda Centenary Memorial Volume*, ed., by R.C. Majumdar, Swami Vivekananda Centenary Committee, Calcutta, 1963, p. 169.