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Valour with a Difference: Story of a Good Cop

By Yashwant Raj (Courtesy: Hindustan Times)

IN UTTAR Pradesh, it hardly matters whether the Chief Minister is Mayawati or Mulayam Singh Yadav. They are all the same for a police officer like Jasvir Singh. He is 40, in-corruptible, single, diabetic and has suffered two facial-paralysis attacks. Another, and possibly a lesser man, would have made his peace with his conscience and crossed over. Not Jasvir. He continues undeterred and unafraid. It's a little over the top, his zeal, but every bit real.

After 15 years in service he takes home Rs 17,000 a month. He drives a Bolero, an official car that he has received after years of going to work on a motorcycle with his bodyguard riding pillion. Not quite what the recruitment ad promised.

"I am happy," he says, "except for the fact that I have an old mother to look after." **All the land owned by his family in Punjab is lost, most of it mortgaged to pay lawyers engaged to fight his cases against the government.** Jasvir has seen too much and done too much to actually care much about anything. He has a look about him that screams: don't try to impress me, don't try to surprise me and keep your honesty spiel to yourself.

His honesty nearly got him killed, nearly got him dismissed, and it nearly left him maimed for life. Talk to him about his exploits and you realise he is rather vain about his honesty. And why not?

How many have actually lived a life worth a Bollywood potboiler? Jasvir has. There is enough here for not one film but an entire series.

Jasvir met his 'Gabbar' after almost 15 years of working in the UP Police, most of it having been quite eventful. When he took up his posting at Pratapgarh, he was as much a name as the local don who was a terror.

The don travelled in a convoy of cars -filmy style - with guns sticking out of the windows. No one

ever dared stop them, not even at police checkposts and barricades. This immensely bothered the young SP.

Jasvir had a dedicated team of about 50 policemen - whom he had personally trained in karate. He himself is a **brown belt**. It was time for 'the boys' to show their boss it hadn't all been in vain. A sub-inspector and a homeguard took position at a barricade, the rest of the team - some 50 people - stayed out of sight. As usual the convoy came by and pulled up abruptly, almost surprised by the barricade.

A sidekick came out to inquire, and soon the don followed. He was, of course, furious; And he took it out on the poor sub-inspector, who was looking quite miserable with fear, slapping him several times.

The officer panicked and started screaming - not exactly the prearranged secret call sign - at which the rest of the police charged in. "We beat the hell out of them," says Jasvir, reliving what was clearly a moment of triumph.

The don himself got slapped around and soon took off for Nepal to keep out of the way of the young officer. Though Jasvir in the process won himself a lifelong enemy, Pratapgarh rejoined civilised India.

The army havildar's son had come a long way from his tiny Hoshiarpur village in Punjab. He is clear that he completed school only because *he* was interested in studies and not because parents or relatives ever wanted him to study that far.

The next stop was the Punjab Engineering College in Chandigarh. A classmate, the well-known pollster Premchand Palety, remembers Jasvir as a simple man with simple tastes: vegetarian, teetotaler and, of course, being a Sikh, a non-smoker. He remains a bachelor because he didn't have the time to marry when

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he should have, and now his reputation seems to be a bit too formidable.

Palety says, "The one time he came close to getting engaged was when the girl's family had not done enough ground check - once they figured (his zeal for correctives), they ran away." Jasvir smiles, "It's their loss."

He studied hard and qualified for the Police Service in the first attempt, a matter of prestige. Uttar Pradesh became his assigned cadre. "I had never been to UP before and didn't know what it was like."

An early lesson he learnt as a raw IPS probationer was from a crusty old sub-inspector. On duty with him one day, he heard the old man ask a complainant - an old woman - for her caste!

"I was shocked," he says and remembers asking the sub-inspector why her Caste should matter. "He told me that policemen get dismissed in UP for not getting the caste right." That was a useful first lesson.

He learnt fast and was soon in the thick of things - giving politicians a hard time (not his job strictly, but intended collateral damages) and chasing and gunning down outlaws.

The Tyagi gang of Meerut vanished ; most members were eliminated. And that became his calling card. "Minister and politicians wanted me in their constituency after hearing about Meerut," says Jasvir.

They would soon know this young SP came as a package deal, warts and all: he doesn't listen to anyone when in uniform. Many politicians would unconsciously wince at any mention of Jasvir. His stint as SP in Allahabad was also eventful

and he had a great future. Or so he believed.

And that's when things began to sour. The don was a big man now, with an avowed mission to finish off Jasvir. The young SP was soon reduced to making rounds of courts and the administrative headquarters of UP police. Jasvir faced 16 departmental inquiries and four near-dismissals. These are not corruption cases or of violation of criminals' rights. But they drained him physically, emotionally and financially.

He had two attacks of facial paralysis, which laid him up at home for a year. And then, during a brief hospitalisation for a minor illness, he discovered he is diabetic.

"I mortgaged some village land," he says, "to pay the lawyers." Jasvir hired the best lawyers, who he says wryly "charged me their usual fees, thinking I have piles of corruption money - being an SP".

Appearing in court once, with reduced security, the don's goons caught up with him. He managed to escape with a torn shirt. But that's what life had become for him.

For many years now he is languishing in a department most IPS officers prefer only to retirement - food and civil supplies. But he is relishing it, raiding hoarders and defaulters.

His only satisfaction - perhaps a little twisted - after all this is this: "They don't want to give me a good posting, but no one wants to confront me. And here is the best part. No one wants to be my senior."

Jasvir has a big, loud laugh. His wiry frame unwinds as he laughs and then withdraws into a state of steely readiness that field operatives develop to protect themselves from surprises. Don't surprise him. ❖

A Path to God **Time Magazine (Monday, Sep. 14, 1959)**

TIME

A man's search for a faith can be long and arduous, and it can end in unusual vocations, unusual affiliations. Last week Eric Mellor, 28, sometime British soldier, became a full-fledged member of a faith that, beyond its name and warrior tradition, is little known in the West.

A London boy whose parents were killed in the Blitz when he was ten. Eric had spent his years in

the British army and in a variety of civilian jobs, exploring the paths man has made to God. First he tried the Salvation Army but left after two years, "because they were always criticizing and condemning people who didn't follow their own views." He became a Roman Catholic, joined the Third Order of St. Dominic and had notions of

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Right-Hand Man

by Paul Imbesi — April 3, 2008 (Courtesy: IndUS Business Journal)

For Lakhbir Singh, the formula for success has been simple: work hard, be sincere in work, follow through, and be disciplined.

“These are important things that you have to give the client”, he said.

These lessons have served Lakhbir Singh, 58, well, as he has risen from research assistant to executive vice president at Nathan Associates Inc., an economic consulting firm in Arlington, Virginia, U.S.A.

Founded in 1946, Nathan Associates employs over 140 full-time employees and 300 consultants worldwide. Nathan Associates has other offices in Memphis (Tennessee), Orange County (California), London (England) and another one opening in Chennai, India. The company has done work in 130 countries.

According to Lakhbir, Nathan Associates is a \$60 million company.

He has been employed at the company for over thirty years, focusing on anti-trust litigation and has worked for large clients, like U.S. Steel. According to Nathan Associates, he has conducted damages studies involving industries like finance and insurance, commercial real estate, and oil and gas production and distribution.

Currently, Lakhbir is the second-highest ranking person at Nathan Associates, behind president and chief executive officer John Beyer.

Originally from New Delhi, he came to the United States in 1974. He already had an undergraduate and a master’s degree in economics from Delhi University, but he was unable to get a job related to his academic background in the United States, so he started out working at Dart Drug, a local pharmacy chain in the Montgomery College area of Maryland.

He decided to go back to school to get back into economics and enrolled at Howard University in Washington, D.C. While at Howard, one of his teachers noticed Lakhbir’s classroom effort and wanted to know what he planned to do for the summer. The latter told him he was working at Dart Drug. The professor told him that he did not



understand his worth, and sent him to Nathan Associates, where he started out as a research assistant.

He received his doctorate in economics from Howard University in 1986.

According to Gary French, a senior vice president at Nathan Associates, Lakhbir is one of the most brilliant analysts he has ever met. In addition, he said Lakhbir is a man with high integrity and a strong work ethic who always puts the firm’s interests above his own.

“So, he’s pretty much ideal”, French said.

French has been working with Lakhbir for the past 28 years.

In Nathan Associates’ litigation practice, the firm serves as the expert witness in antitrust, securities, tax and contract and other legal cases. The company’s president, Beyer, is the main witness to testify in court.

French said Beyer is involved in ten to twenty cases at any point in time and Lakhbir is his case manager (Nathan Associates might work on approximately forty cases per year). As a result, Lakhbir handles most of the firm’s cases and works with the rest of the senior staff to prepare the research, analysis and expert reports that Beyer uses in court.

French points out that Beyer has so many cases, he hardly has time to do more than talk to the team about each case, approve it, and testify in depositions or trials. The supervision of these cases - many of which are huge, commercial litigation cases that have hundreds of millions of dollars at stake - falls on Lakhbir’s shoulders.

In this task, French said Lakhbir does a marvelous job. “Lakhbir is in charge of all that, and there’s not many people who can do all that”, he said.

French describes Lakhbir’s memory as amazing and photographic. “He doesn’t memorize them, he just reads them and they’re just stuck in his brain”, he said.

“I just don’t think there’s anyone better than im”,

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French added. “And I don’t know how John Beyer, our president, would get along without him”.

French expects Lakhbir to succeed Beyer as the president and chief executive officer of Nathan Associates. He added that Lakhbir is also the second largest stockholder at Nathan Associates, which is an employee-owned business. Beyer is the company’s largest stockholder.

Lakhbir was promoted to executive vice president in 2002, and called it a very proud achievement in his life.

“That was very important for me because I always thought that I may never reach a status like number two”, he said.

He recalled that when he was called in about the

promotion, the president told him that the company was creating a new position.

Lakhbir asked him if Nathan Associates was going to advertise the position and the president looked at him and laughed, because the latter was getting this job. He felt Lakhbir deserved the position.

Lakhbir’s duties are also expanding, as the company recently bought another firm and is opening an office in Chennai. He will serve as chairman of the board in India. He is also involved in Nathan Associates’ work in London.

Overall, Lakhbir said that what Nathan Associates saw in him that was so special was his development of economic models. In addition, he said he is sincere and is there to solve problems for the clients - not to simply make money. ❖

The Man Behind Elizabeth Taylor’s Smile

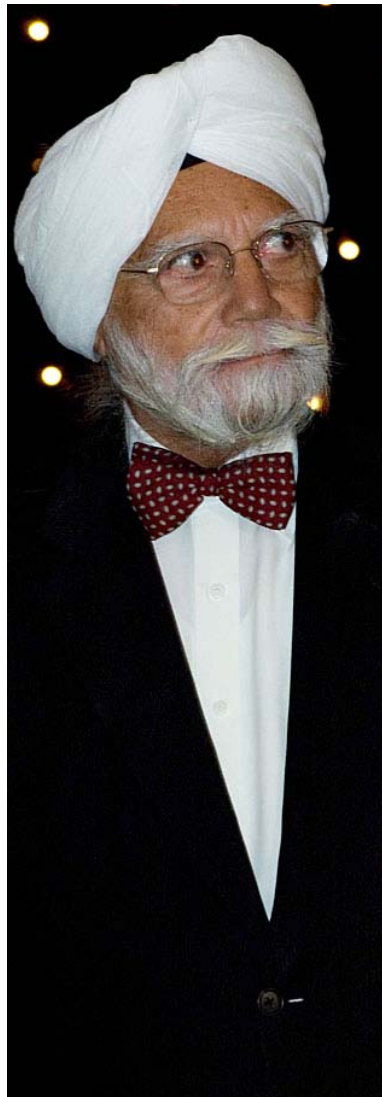
by NEHA SINGH GOHIL

When Dr. Amarjit Singh Marwah first set foot on American soil, Dwight Eisenhower was President, Elvis hadn’t yet hit the radio waves, segregation was still a part of everyday life in the U.S.A., and Lucy and Ricky represented the quintessential American couple.

Back in 1950, it took Dr. Marwah a month to get here on a ship from India. And when he reached the crowded New York City port, he was quite alone.

He had arrived on a fellowship from the Guggenheim Foundation as a dentist. Having lived through the harrowing experience of Partition as a young man just a few years before, Dr. Marwah was looking for a way to get the top-notch education unavailable at home and make a new start.

Over the next few years, his work took him from New York City to Illinois to Washington D.C., and finally to Southern California, where he now lives with his wife.



Proudly wearing a turban, Dr. Marwah was one of the first Sikhs to arrive in the United States from independent India. There was one gentleman at the United Nations, he says, and of course, the Sikhs who had arrived at the turn of the century in Central California. But that was pretty much it.

Since then, over the last sixty-odd years, Dr. Marwah has watched the Sikh-American community boom, and has done his part to help it along.

He was there when the first Sikh/Indian/Asian - Judge Dalip Singh Saund - was elected to the United States Congress in 1957.

“That was a tough fight”, Dr. Marwah remembers. “Nobody knew that he was Indian, because he was a clean-shaven Sikh married to a white woman, and he could pass as an ‘average’ American”.

That’s why Dr. Marwah, who was his manager, never appeared in

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public beside the candidate. The two waited until the day Judge Saund won the election. That is when Dr. Marwah took him to the steps of the Capitol building in Washington and introduced him to the press and the public as Dr. Dalip Singh Saund.

Another famous Sikh-American - probably the first Sikh who could really be called an American - counted Dr. Marwah as a close friend.

Dr. Bhagat Singh Thind, an Indian physician, arrived in the United States during World War I and became the first turbaned Sikh in the United States Army.

"He's the only one that I remember from that era who was able to keep his articles of faith", says Dr. Marwah, referring to Dr. Thind's turban and beard, unusual even for Sikhs at the time.

Though Dr. Thind had joined and served with the army as a doctor during World War I, he was denied American citizenship until 1935, when Congress passed a law requiring that all World War I veterans be awarded citizenship. "The disparities at that time were great", says Dr. Marwah. No Indian immigrants in the United States before 1947 had ever received even a green card, let alone a U.S. passport.

But Dr. Marwah didn't merely know the prominent Sikhs of his time: his patient list included the Beverly Hills A-list.

It included Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley, and stars ranging from Elizabeth Taylor to Gregory Peck.

Not surprisingly, Dr. Marwah became known as the man behind some of Hollywood's brightest smiles.

Mrs. Gregory Peck, Dr. Marwah says, was always a close friend. A few months ago, when he called her to say that Dev Anand was in town

and was a great fan of her husband's, she came along to a dinner hosted by Dr. Marwah in Mr. Anand's honor.

"She was very jovial and very nice - 96 years old, but still walking around, talking to everyone, and getting her photograph taken". She passed away just a few weeks later, but that is the image Dr. Marwah remembers of her most vividly.

Despite his ties to the glitterati of Hollywood, Dr. Marwah's commitment to the Sikh community and his homeland have always held strong.

His family has maintained their religious and cultural traditions. So much so that when he sent his three daughters to study at a private Catholic school in Los Angeles in 1962, Dr. Marwah made sure that they would be allowed to wear Indian clothes to school instead of the traditional school uniform. "The dean said no at first", Dr. Marwah remembers. "But they graduated from high school in their own dress".

Even now, when he's lived more of his life in the United States than India, Dr. Marwah considers it his duty to give back. "I owe it to my people and my country, who gave me the basics in life".

That is what motivates him to build schools and roads in his hometown of Faridkot, Punjab. Because of his constant involvement with his homeland, Dr. Marwah has long been a goodwill ambassador of India back in the United States.

And to give others like himself a chance in this foreign country, Dr. Marwah hosts annual lunches for Indian Fulbright students and Indian officials in California.

What would Dr. Marwah tell those among them who might ask him how he came to embody the American dream?

"I was very lucky", he would say in his trademark humility. "I looked like a stranger, but I was accepted by everyone". ❖

Vaheguroo by Manbir Kaur (13)

Magical are Vaheguroo's powers.
He is the one and only knower.
No one can define his strength.
To his love there is no length.
It's amazing that Guru only gives.

By remembering his virtues is how we should
live.
Come to Sachkhand Guru calls.
Cross the ocean, to see Guru stand tall.
Giving his blessings, he will say.
"Well done my child, you found the way!"

RB High alumnus receives apology from nightclub

By Andrea Moss—North County Times (Tuesday, January 29, 2008)

Costa Mesa business turned med student away for wearing Sikh turban

POWAY -- A Rancho Bernardo High School alumnus who was turned away from a Costa Mesa nightclub a year ago because he refused to remove his Sikh turban has received the apology and policy change he and members of the Sikh community were seeking.

Sanjum Paul Singh Samagh, 24, was a first-year student at UC Irvine's School of Medicine when the incident occurred Jan. 25, 2007, at the Pierce Street Annex.

Valedictorian of Rancho Bernardo High's class of 2001, Samagh had gone to the club with a large group of friends to celebrate a classmate's birthday but was stopped at the door.

The Sikh faith requires males to keep their hair wrapped in turbans. Samagh has said he tried to explain that to Pierce Street Annex owner Douglas Adsit, only to be told there were no exceptions to the club's ban on head wear.

The local Sikh community and the Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund in Washington, D.C. rallied around Samagh, citing the incident as an example of discrimination and people's lack of understanding of the Sikh

religion.

On Tuesday, Samagh's family released a copy of a letter they said Adsit sent Samagh on Jan. 14. In the letter, Adsit apologizes "for any inconvenience or embarrassment caused to you" and says the dress code was designed to help with crowd control, rather than to discriminate against anyone.

"In keeping with our policy to not discriminate against mandatory religious practices and requirements, we changed our policy in April of 2007, and all staff members have been trained to admit patrons that have mandatory head wear requirements due to religious practices," the letter says.

Adsit was not available for comment Tuesday.

Samagh, who is now in his second year at the medical school, said he was pleased with the outcome.

"I'm glad it's resolved," he said. "That's all I wanted out of it -- a policy change. And a written apology, because I felt somebody could just say something verbally but change it." ❖

Walking with Guru Arjan

by Kamalla Rose Kaur

A few days ago, I asked the Sri Guru Granth what I should write about and I got an absolutely wonderful poem on page 520, sung by Guru Arjan. I copied it, edited the sexist English language out and improved the word flow a bit. Then I saved the interpretation so that I could write an article about it when I had the time.

Days later, when I had a few moments to think about writing another article about the Sri Guru Granth, my mood no longer seemed to fit the Sri Guru's earlier offering, so I decided to ask the Sri Guru Granth for an alternate inspiration.

I sat down and prayed.

And then I opened the Sri Guru Granth to the same poem on the same page.

1430 pages to choose from and I landed on

exactly the same poem, on page 520 of the Sikh scripture.

"OK, OK!" I muttered my apologies, "You want me to write an article about this specific Guru Arjan poem. I get it!"

So I dutifully reread the hymn very carefully.

And I found I didn't have one thing to say about it.

Rather, it seemed while rereading it that I was suddenly out in nature, with the day off from all labors, including artistic, taking a walk with an ever youthful Guru Arjan - simply listening to his thoughts on life and God and love and people.

One moment I saw in my mind's eye Guru Arjan addressing the God force of Creation all around

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Sikhism And The Philosophy Of Spinoza (A Comparative Study)

By Jijo Panjikanan

It is interesting to discuss the relation between two philosophies that are extremely differentiated by tradition and region. They are Sikhism and the philosophy of Spinoza. The former is Eastern and developed in the religio-cultural pattern, whereas the latter is Western and developed in the reflective analytic tradition of Europe. Even then there is a scope for comparative study. This comparison is accidental since neither Sikhism nor the philosophy of Spinoza had any influence or impact from each other.

God of Spinoza

In the Western philosophical circle, Spinoza is known as a God-intoxicated man, because in his philosophy God plays an important role. It can be said that Spinoza begins and ends with God. In his philosophy, the term he uses to denote God is substance - meaning the first reality. He came to this conclusion from reflective analysis. Spinoza has given the following definition for substance: "By substance I understand that which is in itself and conceived through itself; in other words, that the conception of which does not need the conception of another thing from which it must be formed." The above statement shows the nature of the substance or God that the substance does not need any help in order to exist, then it will be an infinite entity. If it is infinite, there will be no compulsion by any one. "God acts from the Laws of His own nature only, and is compelled by no one."

The substance is infinite; then it is causeless. So, the nature of Spinoza's substance is infinite, self-caused and eternal reality from which all things follow necessarily. The philosophy of Spinoza mentions that God is the totality of whole. "As God or substance is an all-inclusive whole, outside of which nothing can lie."

God of Sikhism

Sikhism is a religious system in which God has a primary role to play as in Spinoza. Sikhism not only sticks on to God, but also on to the world. The opening lines of Japji, the Sikh morning prayer, clearly state the concept of God :

"There is one God,
He is the supreme truth,
He, the creator,
Is without fear and without hatred,
He, the omnipresent,

Pervades the Universe,
He is not born,
Nor does He die to be born again,
Before time itself,
There was truth,
When the time began to run its
course,
He was the truth."

The opening line of the verse proves strict monotheism. For Sikhism, there is one God; it is self-existent. If it is self-existent, then it will be infinite. Whatever is infinite, will be self-caused. These qualities can be derived from the concept of God of Sikhism.

Spinoza adds similar qualities to God, follows a strict monotheism that there is only one substance that is infinite and self-caused.

The chief quality attributed to God in Sikhism and in the philosophy of Spinoza can be seen that God is self-caused. In order to elucidate this quality, there are some more qualities attributed in the opening lines of Japji, i.e., He is beyond time and immortal. Nirbhai Singh in his book puts forward similar statement in order to compare Sikhism and Spinoza. "Spinoza is picturing reality through geometrical metaphors. So, he conceives the reality as a logical system in which time has no place." Therefore, he defines substance as eternal. Whatever is eternal is non-temporal, then it will become durationless.

The Sikh point of view is that God is beyond time. So, He is eternal. Eternal things are non-temporal, that is, spiritual. "The metaphysics of Sikhism gives priority to the spirit over the matter. Hence, it is spiritualism." Sikhism goes hand-in-hand with Spinoza regarding God.

The task is simple to dichotomize the world and God, and most of the philosophies do this. But Sikhism and the philosophy of Spinoza are different from the above position. So it is an interesting matter to discuss the status of the world in Sikhism as well as in Spinoza.

Status of the World in Spinoza

Most of the religious thoughts consider the status of the world as secondary, and the primary status is attributed to God. Most of the Western philosophers do the same. This tendency to create a dichotomy is an easy task. But to eliminate this dichotomy of God and world is difficult. If we

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can unite or integrate these two aspects, it will be a positive approach in philosophy. The motive of the Sikh Gurus and Spinoza was to eliminate this dichotomy.

We are in a circle of relations; there may be eternal or infinite elements included in this circle. According to Spinoza, substance is the eternal element and the substance is the cause of the world. Two more aspects are in the philosophy of Spinoza, that is, attributes and modes. These two elements constitute the world. "There can be no substance without attributes. Attributes do belong to the substance as its essence. As substance is self-contained and is infinite, so it has infinite number of attributes." Human intellect cannot perceive all these attributes but only two. They are extension and thought. "God is extended as well as thinking."

Spinoza tries to prove the existence of the world from substance through attributes, but this state is eternal and infinite. But the world is finite and spatial. Hence, he comes to the realm of modes.

Individual minds and individual bodies are finite as temporal modes of substance. Attributes appear in specific ways or modes. In his doctrine of modes, Spinoza hopes to explain the world of finite and individual things. "By modes," says Spinoza, "I understand affections of substance or that which is in another thing through which also it is conceived." That is, a mode or modification cannot be conceived except as the mode of a thing.

By adding the activities of modes, Spinoza comes to the conclusion that the status of the world is temporal and world is the manifestation of the substance in the form of modes. "Every mode is in God, for nothing can exist without God." So, all the properties of the universe follow necessarily from the concept of substance. "God is eternally in a state of self-modification producing an infinite series of modes, which are manifested either of His attributes." Attributes act as agents to execute the will of God. This is the status of the world in Spinoza's philosophy. Here, world is real, and it is the manifestation of God. If we accept the reality of God and world, there is no scope for dichotomy, but integration.



Spinoza's effort to integrate or unite two realities with equal status is a positive approach in philosophy.

Here we can grasp the effort to unify two aspects, they are eternity and temporality. They are substance and modes or God and the world, respectively.

Status of World in Sikhism

Sikhism has a positive approach to the world as that of Spinoza. God and world have got equal status in Sikhism. God is the creator of the universe; before this universe, there was nothing except God. When He willed the creation of the world, he became manifest, is the tenet of Sikhism. The Sikh scripture and enough commentaries on Sikhism explain the above statement and most of them are in the form of verses.

"God is only one
His name is true
He is the Creator."

In Sikhism, God is not only the creator, but the universe moves according to the pre-ordained command and will of God.

"This earth is garden
God is the Gardener
He looks after everything
And none is beyond His care."

In the world there is hierarchy of elements. All these elements are the manifestations of God and these elements belong to God.

"My mind and body are His property
He is the Creator and the Destroyer."

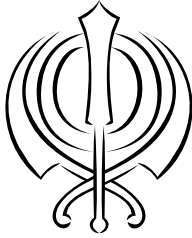
The above two verses clarify that world is the manifestation of God. It is because of this manifestation that Sikhism accepts the reality of the world.

The world and God are not dichotomised in Sikhism. This approach is the distinguishing mark of Sikhism, and it differentiates Sikhism from other religions. Sikhism is for unification of God and world in a systematic way. The difference between God and world is that God is eternal and self-caused and the world is temporal. It is a fact that there are two aspects that are temporality and non-temporality, but it is not dichotomy because there is a ground for unification, because world is the manifestation of God.

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In Sikhism, the whole system contains higher as well as lower elements. It is the hierarchical structure of the universe. This structure is governed by a cosmic principle that is known as Hukam.



Real elements can be finite and temporal. The Sikh concept of the world is finite and temporal, but it is real. So, there is transcendence and immanence of God. Because, on the one side God is eternal and causeless, and on the other, He manifests as immanence in the world, and the ultimate reality in Sikhism is the unification of transcendence and immanence. Hence, reality in Sikhism is a systematic unity of world and spirituality. This unity can be called as integrative monotheism.

Spinoza starts from substance to attributes and to the temporal status, i.e., modes. God is eternally in a state of self-modification, producing an infinite series of modes. Here also there is transcendence and immanence. Substance is in transcendental level and modes are in temporal status. "As nothing is over and above God, so all is God, and everything follows from God. For this reason, God is said to be the indwelling and pervading principle of the universe." The status of the world in Sikhism and in Spinoza shows similarity. Both of them accept that there is a cosmic principle and the ultimate reality is the unification of God and world. The suitable word to this unification is integration.

Integrative Monotheism

Many philosophies with Vedic background have tried to dichotomize God and world. They sometimes totally negate the reality of world by considering it as an illusion. Advaita Vedanta is the best example for this attitude. In contrary to this attitude, there are some other philosophies that keep positive approach to the world, accept the reality of the world. The philosophy of Spinoza from the west and Sikhism from the east are the best examples for the above said integral and holistic philosophical position.

Sikhism is a miri-piri system; it is a Punjabi word meaning worldliness-cum-spirituality. Reality in Sikhism is the systematic unity of worldliness and spirituality.

Spinoza says that God and nature are related, and that God is in self-modification. God is eternal whereas the modes are finite.

Windelband, a German thinker, seems to interpret

Spinoza's metaphysical system as a dynamic and concrete unity. He justifies his standpoint that "God then exists only in things as their universal essence and they only in Him as the modes of His reality. In this sense, Spinoza adopts ... the expression of *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*. God is nature as the universal world essence, he is the *natura naturans*; as sum total of the individual things in which this essence exists modified, he is *natura naturata*." Hence, Spinoza's philosophy is a dynamic system.

In a dynamic system, there will be unity. Diversity is the condition of unity, unity is a type of integration. Spinoza says "God is one", that is, He occupies a monistic position. Spinoza tries to unite God and world. This unification is an integration.

In Sikhism, God is both transcendent and immanent, as in Spinoza. He is both in the universe and outside it. The immanent aspect of God has been variously described here as His will that directs the universe. God created the universe, and became immanent in it, being at the same time transcendent, because He is self-caused, beyond time and eternal.

Daljeet Singh says, "This immanence of God is only a symbolic way of expression of God's connection with the world. When the world was not there, the question of his immanence did not arise." Here also, there is an integration of two realities.

The author of the article, Integrative Monotheism of Sikh Gurus, says that there is no dichotomy, but only integration in Sikhism. "The ideas of God and world acquire equal status in a specific way in the thought of the Sikh Gurus. God and the created world are found united in Sikhism. Not a discrimination towards the world, but a lovely bond and an active association with it are built in Sikhism. As the most important step towards unity of God and the world, Guru Nanak declares the reality of the world. In the context of Indian philosophy, the Sikh thesis of reality of world is a revolutionary one with all its implications."

In this comparative study, the meeting points between Sikhism and Spinoza can be divided into three fields : 1) idea of God, 2) status of world, and 3) how God and world are related. The viewpoints of Sikhism and the philosophy of Spinoza move in a similar direction regarding the above three themes. ❖

Sikh and Hindu officers a new era in Pakistan Army

Pakistan Daily (Sunday, 08 June 2008)

In the picturesque surroundings of Kakul, Abbottabad, in NWFP, stands a quaint colonial building housing the prestigious Pakistan Military Academy (PMA).

I'm consequently surprised to hear about the scene the PMA witnessed two years ago—as the sound of Azaan echoed in the PMA, a cadet in his room rolled out the jainamaz facing the west. His mate, however, turned to his own sacred corner, where symbols of Sikh religion were gathered.

Their prayers over, they returned to their chores, oblivious of the history they had created in the academy. This is Pakistan, the land where rampant strives to squash the remaining semblances of religious tolerance.

It wasn't that the PMA proscribed other forms of worship; there simply hadn't been a Sikh cadet till then.

Narrating this stirring story is Hercharin Singh, Pakistan's first Sikh officer and a symbol of the changing face of its army. Now 23, dressed in a smart khaki uniform and sporting a solitary star on his shoulder, Lieutenant Singh cannot help suppress the sense of pride he feels whenever he passes his juniors and the response is a smart salute to him!

He and I are sitting in the posh Officers Mess of Malir cantonment, Karachi. Providing us company are Capt Danish in his Ranger's uniform and Capt Aneel Kumar, both Hindu doctors of the Combined Military Hospital. Capt Danish is considered the first Hindu officer to have been drafted into the Pakistan army.

They display verve as we talk, and listen in rapt attention to the experiences of each other in the army. Says Singh about his PMA days, "At times I used to wonder what I had landed myself into. I stood out like a sore thumb and many of the cadets had never seen a Sikh in flesh. I had a tough time because of my appearance. Others — Hindu and Christian — at least look like 'ordinary' cadets."

For nearly two years, We had been relentlessly seeking access to Singh and the two Hindu officers. It took months of persistent lobbying by ISPR's Director-General Gen Athar Abbas before the army agreed to allow an interview with the three officers. As Col Atiq coordinated to fly to

Karachi last week, new obstacles kept surfacing. Lt Col Idrees Malik in Karachi had to implore his superiors to grant permission to Singh to miss a day's class in the course he's taking, and bring out Capt Danish from interior Sindh.

At the officers' mess, amidst smiles and show of palpable pride, Singh begins his story from the day his romance with the Pakistan army was sparked. Like all poignant stories, it was ignited with a chance glimpse and an irrepressible tug of the heartstrings. Nearly three years ago, he and his friends decided to apply to the prestigious National College of Arts (NCA) in Lahore. On their way they passed an army recruitment centre. Something was felt, perhaps. "But no-one had any idea of a Sikh being allowed entry into Pakistan's military institutions," Singh recalls.

Singh was granted admission to the NCA. But he decided to visit the recruitment centre and made inquiries. He was told the law didn't proscribe Sikhs from the army. Singh promptly submitted an application, arousing curiosity at the centre about the "Sikh who wants to join the army." He was selected, in the process grabbing headlines countrywide. But his family was opposed to his joining the army. The elders wanted him to head the business of his father who had died years ago. And Singh's mother believed a career in the army would shame the family. Shame? "All our lives our community had been ridiculed and humiliated. Especially in the electronic media Sikhs were portrayed as drunks, womanizers and villains. My mother said that I wouldn't be respected and this would bring shame to the family."

At the PMA, the callow, sensitive Sardarji was baffled to hear some ask him to convert to Islam. "I wondered, what kind of people are these who are not happy with the way I am and offered to convert me. I didn't mind jokes about Sikhs because these are so common," he says. At Kakul, sensing the irritating inquisitiveness of other cadets, he decided to ensure his religion or culture was not compromised. After all, he says, "My sergeant told me that I was free to follow my religion and that everything would be done to make me comfortable."

It was quite clear that the strict and strenuous

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rigors of the military had in no way broken the spirit and over confidence of Sardarji or his two Hindu colleagues. The Pakistan army has really changed in more than one ways. They are now

producing officers who are literally wearing their religion on their sleeves with pride, and the self-confidence of speaking to the media for hours is a change from interactions that this writer has had with young officers over the decades. ❖

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becoming a priest, but he gave that up because of his disgust at what he termed “commercialism.” He studied the Baptists, the Anglicans, the Methodists, the Hindus, the Buddhists, and pondered them all while he hitchhiked toward Australia—through Europe and the Middle East, through Pakistan, Burma, Thailand and Malaya. By the time he reached Singapore, Eric Mellor had decided to become a Sikh.

Every Man a Lion. Like Eric Mellor. Nanak, the founder of the Sikhs, who died in 1539, was troubled about religion. From boyhood, in a village near Lahore, he disputed with both Hindus and Moslems. He took to wandering and meditating until at last he arrived at his own synthesis of the two. Among the peasants of the Punjab he had many followers; they were called shish (Sanskrit for disciples) - eventually corrupted to Sikh.

Under the nine great gurus (teachers) who followed Nanak, the Sikhs developed into a monotheistic, militant sect, the symbol of whose God is steel. Each Sikh wears a steel bracelet on his right wrist and carries a sword, lets his hair and beard grow, carries a small comb under his turban and wears short trousers. Sikhs are not supposed to smoke, drink alcohol, must not eat meat prepared in the Semitic fashion, may have no sexual intercourse with Moslems. All Sikhs bear the same last name: Singh, which means “lion.” and the British lion made crack troops of these tough, turbaned fighting men in the days when India was under the British raj. Like the Hindus, the Sikhs believe in karma - the influence of present actions on future lives - but without the resigned passivity so often associated with

Hinduism. Like the Moslems, they revere a sacred scripture, the Granth Sahib, which is displayed under a canopy in all Sikh temples. Worshipers approach it barefoot, their heads covered; young people receive baptism (*pahul*) in front of it. wedding couples walk around it four times, the dying have it read aloud, and when they are cremated, hymns from the Granth are chanted as the flames rise.

Five Sikhs & God. Important decisions are reached by majority vote - a resolution passed by the elected representatives of the Sikh community can even rescind the rules laid down by the revered gurus themselves. As one saying expresses it:

Where there is one Sikh, there is one Sikh. Where there are two Sikhs, there is an assembly of saints. Where there are five Sikhs, there is God.

In Singapore last week, just before sailing for Australia, where he plans to study agriculture at Queensland University, Eric Mellor donned shorts, turban and sword and entered the temple to take five sips of holy water and repeat five times in Punjabi, “The victory is of God.” The Granth Sahib was opened at random; the first letter on the page was H, and Mellor was asked to choose a Punjabi name with this initial. His choice: Harbans, meaning “a member of God’s family.”

“This is a genuine religion with no hypocrisy about it.” said Harbans Singh. “Once you become a Sikh you are one of them no matter what color you are or what you were before - something few other religions can claim to practice.” ❖

Just for laughs

One day, the Pope decided that all the Sikhs had to leave Italy.

Naturally there was a big uproar from the Sikh community. So the Pope made a deal.

He would have a religious debate with a member of the Sikh community. If the Sikh won, the Sikhs could stay. If the Pope won, the Sikhs would leave.

The Sikhs realized that they had no choice. So they picked a middle-aged man named Harbinder Singh to represent them. Harbinder asked for one additional condition to the debate. To make it more interesting, neither side would be allowed to talk.

The Pope agreed.

The day of the great debate came. Harbinder Singh and the Pope sat opposite each other for a full minute.

Then the Pope raised his hand and showed three fingers. Harbinder looked back at him and raised one finger.

The Pope waved his fingers in a circle around his head. Harbinder pointed to the ground where he sat.

The Pope pulled out a wafer and a glass of wine. Harbinder pulled out an apple.

The Pope stood up and said, 'I give up. This man is too good. The Sikhs can stay.'

An hour later, the cardinals were gathered round the Pope asking him what had happened.

The Pope said, 'First I held up three fingers to represent the holy trinity. He responded by holding up one finger to remind me that there was still One God common to both our religions.

Then, I waved my finger around me to show him that God was all around us. He responded by pointing to the ground and showing that God was also right here with us.

Then, I pulled out the wine and wafer to show that God absolves us from our sins. He pulled out an apple to remind me of original sin.

He had an answer for everything. What could I do?'

Meanwhile, the Sikh community had crowded around Harbinder Singh.

'What happened?' they asked.

'Well,' said Harbinder, 'First he said to me that the Sikhs had three days to get out of here. I told him not one of us was leaving.

Then he told me that this whole city would be cleared of Sikhs. I let him know that we were staying right here.'

'Yes, and then???' asked the crowd.

'I don't know', said Harbinder,

'He took out his lunch, and I took out mine!! ❖'

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us, and then, in the next stanza, he would seem to turn and speak to me in an intimate tone - teaching me about humanity - specifically my own humanity. Then Guru Arjan would return to his praiseful conversation with the Great God of the forests, streams, rocks and wind - back and forth, talking to me and talking to the Creator/Creation as he walked the forest trail!

What an amazing friend the Sri Guru Granth is - the kind who leaves me speechless, and smiling, refreshed with humor restored! The Sri Guru is, I find, the very kind of friend that Guru Arjan describes in this hymn of his.

Guru Arjan writes:

Crossing the stream, my foot does not get stuck! I am filled with love for You, Creator/Creation!
O Infinite ONE, my heart is attached to Your Feet.
You are Nanak's raft and boat.

There are certain people in this world - the very sight of them banishes my evil-mindedness. They are my only real friends. I have searched the whole world; O Nanak, and how rare are such persons!
You come to mind, O God, when I behold Your true devotees. The filth of my mind is removed when I keep the company of the honestly humble and holy.
The fear of birth and death is dispelled while meditating on the Word of God's humble servants everywhere. Such saints untie the bonds, and all the demons evaporate. They inspire people on this planet to love the One who established the entire Universe.

The seat of the inaccessible and infinite Creator/Creation is the highest of the high. So night and day, with each and every breath, think on God.
When God becomes merciful we discover the society of compassionate people.

In this wondrous forest of the world, there is chaos and confusion - shrieks emanate from the highways.

I am in love with You, O my Divine Spouse, my Beloved One.

O Nanak, I travel through this jungle in joy.

- Sri Guru Granth Sahib, page 520.



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