INTRODUCTION
When Guru Gobind Singh was called upon to assume the leadership of Sikhs, the circumstances were not congenial. Sikh movement was committed to usher in an era of liberalism in politics, social affairs and religious field. The Government headed by Aurangzeb was not in a mood to tolerate any movement. Sarmad, a score of Muslim Sufis and Guru Tegh Bahadur had to suffer execution because of their liberal views in the sphere of religion and social system. Even the internal administrative organization of the Sikhs, known as Masand System, had gone rotten. The Masands had become corrupt and extremely selfish. Hindu masses were completely demoralized. Hill Rajas were more interested in their feudal interests than in their people. The Sikhs had yet to come out of the shock they had suffered in the wake of the unjust execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur. Besides this, the age factor also did not favour the Guru.

Guru’s resources, were also very scanty. Guru Ji was faced with a very daunting task of giving a suitable reply to different challenges without resorting to atrocities and meanness. A suitable reply he gave without relegating the moral values. Guru Gobind Singh, succeeded in leading the Sikhs in such a way that they became instrument of progress, not only of the community to which they belonged but also of their country, even of the whole humankind. In this process, he exhibited remarkable insight into the human nature, their psychological reactions and responses to different problems and challenges, and into the contemporary social mechanism.

Guru’s Vision
Guru Gobind Singh was a magnanimous soul. His vision, creation (the Khalsa) and his literary writing all have a common link. He gave expression to the doctrinal ideology of Gurmat through his writings. As a further elaboration and extension of this ideology, he started a war for the freedom and upliftment of society. Thereby devoting himself completely through discourses and deeds, Guru ji totally transformed the very face of Indian society.

With a view to create a society, free from exploitation and
tyranny, he spelt out his aim - "Dharam yudh ko chao" (Aspiration for a war of Righteousness). To create such a society, he envisioned an ideal human being imbued with absolute faith in the God. Departing from the purely idealistic tradition of Indian philosophy, which holds that the material world was unreal, he regarded material things a reality and wanted that men should endeavour to improve their material world. For that matter, the struggle of the Guru revolved around the establishment of the rule of the virtuous and the elimination of the evil-doers.

He wanted his followers to struggle and strive to be God-like. Even in the midst of the material battles, he stole time to sit and mutter ‘Thou art, Thou art’ the only reality. He preached genuine love for ‘God’ and his creation. He stressed that it meant to be loving, caring and being successful in this world. Thereby, a Sikh looks upon the world as a genuine place to live, enjoy and to elevate himself. Thus Khalsa, his creation, became an inspired group of men surcharged with the spirit of participating in the world, to improve and ensure its progress.

Guru’s Approach

He employed theology, literature, poetry and philosophy to prepare the mind of the people to serve his purpose. Through training and education, he succeeded in transforming the psyche of the people. Thereby the potentialities, which lay dormant under the killing weight of the Mughal despotism and the outworn social system as imposed by Hinduism, were awakened and forged into a
dynamic force to live and die for the sake of truth and righteousness.\(^4\)\(^5\).

He trained his followers to struggle, to improve and ensure its progress. observed that the cultural-pattern, which gives up its living separateness and neglects its self-defence, is bound to be swallowed up.

When they follow the ways of others, I will withdraw my full support.

While the Khalsa stays true, I will offer my full support.

Guru’s Mission and Vision as a Leader

His mission as a leader was not to lead the people in the context of contemporary circumstances but also to make them conscious of their role, even in the times to come. Guru did not allow his following to develop narrow religious patriotism. He exhorted them to enlarge their vision to awaken to the ideals of establishing the rule of the virtue all over the world\(^6\). The Khalsa was his noble creation with its face to the future.

Bravo to the soul of that person, who remembers the Lord through his mouth and reflects in his mind about the war of righteousness; who considers this body the war of righteousness; who considers this body as transient, ascends the boat of Lords’ praise and ferries across the dreadful ocean of the world; Who makes this body as the abode of forbearance and enlightens it with the lamp of intellect and who taking the broom of knowledge in his hand sweeps away the rubbish of cowardice.

He is the true Khalsa (Sikh), who remembers the ever-awakened Light throughout night and day and does not bring anyone else in the mind; he practices his vow with whole hearted affection and does not believe in even by oversight, the graves, Hindu monuments and monasteries; He does not recognize anyone else except One Lord, not even the bestowal of chari8es, performance of merciful acts, austeri8es and restraint on pilgrim-sta8ons; the perfect light of the Lord illuminates his heart, then consider him as the immaculate Khalsa.

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(Swayyas, Dasam Granth, Vol 1, p 712)

He enjoined⁷⁻¹⁰ upon his followers that they were Akal Purakh ki Fauj (Army of the Almighty) and they should continue to strive to see that a society, where there is no exploitation and no discrimination on the basis of cast, creed, clime, wealth, birth and sex and there is freedom of expression, of adopting any profession and where everyone has a right to hold his head high and where mutual love for each other is established.

O God, grant me this that I may not hesitate from performing good actions. I may not fear the enemy, when I go to fight and assuredly, I may become victorious. And I may give this instruction to my mind and have this temptation that I may ever utter Thy Praises. When the end of my life comes, then I may die fighting in the battlefield.

Epilogue to 'Chandi Charitar, Dasam Granth, Vol 1, p 99)

Though Guru Gobind Singh exhorted his followers to be ever ready for war of righteousness (Dhram Yudh), but use of arms was recommended¹¹ as the last resort when all other options of a peaceful resolution of a situation fail. Even then, Khalsa was censured to use the force of arms against helpless or weak.

When all other methods fail, it is proper to hold the sword in hand.

(Zafarnamah - The Epistle of Victory, Dasam Granth, p 1471)

belief and practices both on individual and corporate levels. For the Guru, this freedom was not an empirical expediency in religiously heterogeneous society, but had a transcendental value. This transcendental value was described by Guru Gobind Singh as Dharma in Bachittar Natak. According to him, Dharma, has a characteristic of multi-religious, multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society. Sikh Gurus sought to evolve a perspective consisting of composite integrated Indian/global society based on religion and political pluralism. It was in furtherance of this historical mission that the Sikh Gurus envisaged a non-sectarian, non-communal, all-inclusive integrated polity wherein there would be no room for religious, social or political exclusiveness.

Religious Vision

Guru Gobind Singh’s religious vision was also striking and tinged with the revolutionary fervour. He repeatedly pointed out that his religion did not consist in turning increasingly towards veiled stones, nor in approaching altars or in throwing one self-prostrated on the ground, nor raising the hands before gods, or deluging the temples with the blood of the beasts, not in keeping vows, but in beholding the height of God within a peaceful soul, in dedicating one’s mind, heart and soul to the service of humanity, which is the highest manifestation of the spirit of God²⁻³.

Someone worships stone and places it on his head. Someone hangs the phallus from his neck. Someone visualizes God in the South and someone bows his head towards the West. Some worship the idols and some worship the dead. The
whole world is entangled in false rituals and has not known the secret of Lord-God.
(Akaal Ustat, Dasam Granth, p 42)

**Guru's Social Vision**

A close study of the life of Guru Gobind Singh, his precepts and his utterances lead us to the conclusion that the Guru's Social Vision has four pronounced ingredients. These are social equality, universal-brotherhood, seeking well of all (altruism) and social service. These ingredients are inter-related and interactive. Altruism and social service are, in fact, practical measures to realize universal brotherhood. He was very vocal and copious in his comments upon the contemporary social institutions, which instead of unifying humankind on the principle of social equality propped up the inequitable and inquisitional social organisations and social ethics. Guru Gobind Singh subscribed to what his predecessor Gurus had determined and established. He carried forward the work they had commenced or had conceived to be done. The Guru spared no pains to see that the institutions of Guru Ka Langar (Guru's free kitchen), Sangat, Kirtan as they were great levelers and unifying agencies.

The Guru declared caste a taboo in the *Order of the Khalsa*. He declared categorically, "There is no consideration of caste or membership of Varnas." He is all sympathy for the downtrodden and the so-called low-caste people. He remarked, "True service is the service of those people, I am not inclined to serve others of higher castes. Charity will bear fruit, in this and the next world, if given to such worthy people as these. All other sacrifices and charities are profitless. From top to toe whatever I call my own, all I possess or carry, I dedicate to these people." It was in this context that Guru Gobind Singh spoke, "Consider all humankind of one caste alone." Sikhism teaches the followers to build a social structure based on universal goodwill, love for each other, equality, fraternity and Sarbat-Da-Bhala. It believes in individual as well as collective prosperity. It preaches that the human beings are sons and daughters of the same universal father (God). All of them have the same aim of realizing the ultimate Reality. Human race is one. Guru Gobind Singh proclaimed in his hymns of Akaal Ustat:

*वेंदिद वेंदिद तृतीयां तृतीयां मिलियां* (वेंदिद लोभ वेंदिद तिन भक्तिवाद वेंदिद)*

*हिंदु नूनः वेंदिद तुंदी धिनिया यथी मधु भक्तिवाद वेंदिद*

_Somebody became a Bairagi (recluse), somebody a Sannyasi (mendicant). somebody a Yogi, somebody a Brahmacari (student observing celibacy) and someone is considered a celibate. Someone is Hindu and someone a Muslim, then someone is Shia, and someone a Sunni, but all the human beings, as a species, are recognized as one and the same._

(Akaal Ustat, Dasam Granth, Vol 1, p 19)

Bhai Nand Lal, the court poet of Guru Gobind Singh, has recorded in his *Rehatnama* that the Guru had decided to merge four *Varnas* into one and lead them to God. On 2nd November, 1675, Bhai Jaita, the sweeper, known as Rangretta (a man of low caste) carried the sacred head of Guru Tegh Bahadur from Delhi to Kiratpur where Guru Gobind Singh, Mata Gujri and Reverend Mother Nanki came to receive it to carry it in a palanquin to Anandpur. Guru Gobind Singh greeted Bhai Jaita affectionately and blessed his whole clan by conferring on it the honorific *Rangetre Guru Ke Bete* (Rangettars are the Guru's sons). Significantly, the Guru's utterance embodied a message that the deeds determined the status and not the caste/profession or birth. The Guru's priorities from the day one were very clear that society based on caste/birth should be discarded and a fresh one be reconstructed on the bases of love for all, equal rights for all, divinity of individuals, dignity of labour and faith in the singularity and unicity of God with a commitment to improve upon the lot of the people.

A family, comprising of several individuals, is a basic unit of human society. Guru Gobind Singh emphasised the importance of family life, but one is advised to live a life free of five evils (lust, anger, greed, attachment and ego). He stressed that one must practice patience, humility, compassion and forgiveness.

*O mind! The asceticism be practised in this way: Consider your house as the forest and remain unattached within yourself.....Pause. Consider continence as the matted hair, Yoga as the ablation and daily observances as your nails, consider the knowledge as the preceptor giving lessons to you and apply the Name of the Lord as ashes.1. Eat less and sleep less, cherish mercy and forgiveness; Practise gentleness and contentment and remain free from three modes.2. Keep your mind unattached from lust, anger, greed, insinence and infatuation, then you will visualize the supreme essence and realise the supreme Purusha.3.1._

(Ramkali, Dasam Patshah, Dasam Granth, Page 1345)

**Legacy**

The main contribution of Guru Gobind Singh was developing the concept *Khalsa* or *Sant-Sipahi*. He through his creation of *Khalsa*, turned the concept of Sachiyar (being Truthful) of Guru Nanak, into a social ideal and an active ideal. *Khalsa* is the dialectical pair of the *Sachiyar*. As their foundations were the same, one...
easily turns into another. Sachiyar is more of a contemplative type whereas the Khalsa ideal is practical.

To understand the long term impact of Guru Gobind Singh on Indian and world map, it is good to see the appraisal of his contributions, as done by various writers, scholars and historians.

Hakim Allah Yaar Khan Jogi, a renowned poet, has elaborated on Guru Gobind Singh’s contribution towards opposition to the tyranny of Islamic rulers as; र व्यु अभ वी, र व्यु उद वी, अभ ल देखे जब दीर्घ सिख, मूंढ देखी मद वी।

Neither will I talk of present, nor of the future. Had there been no Guru Gobind Singh, all would have been under Islamic sway (circumcised).

Cunningham, a noted Historian proclaimed: "Through the creation of Khalsa, Guru Gobind Singh roused the dormant energies of a vanquished people and filled them with a lofty thoughtful longing for social freedom and national ascendency. Thus, the Khalsa, by virtue of their faith to fight tyranny at all costs, engendered by Guru Gobind Singh, rose as a political force to be reckoned with."

Field Marshal (Sir) Archibal Wavell, who has been Viceroy and Governor-General of India, during Oct. 1941- Feb. 1947 reported about the bravery of Sikhs as: "Never met a despondent Sikh in the front line, in a hospital, in the rear, he may moan over a small wound but in a fight, he will go on to his last breath and die laughing at the thought of paradise with the battle cry of “Bole so Nihal Sat Sri Akaal” as he falls”.

Pearl S. Buck, a Nobel Laureate, describes the legacy of Guru Gobind Singh as: "The creation of the Khalsa was the greatest work of the Guru. He created a type of superman, a universal man of God, casteless and country less.....The Khalsa was the spearhead of resistance against tyranny".

Dr. Zakir Hussain, The late President of India, reported on the indelible contributions of Sikh Gurus and their creation - Khalsa towards eradication of tyranny and injustice as: “So long as the instinctive dread and hatred of tyranny is alive in man, so long as quiet but unmistakable voice of his conscience, that brooks no compromise under political threat and pressure, is not stilled in him, and so long as the disgust for social inequalities, religious fanaticism, hollow ceremonies and rites remain an active condition of his mind, the world will not easily forget the name of Guru Nanak and of his supreme successor, Guru Gobind Singh.”

Swami Vivekananda, an Indian Hindu monk, has described the rejuvenation of the spirit of India by the Great Guru as: “Guru Gobind Singh by a flash of his sword filled the dying soul of India with life-giving light and truth, and Lo! It shone in its glory again in the life of newborn Khalsa! The light of reality had kindled the spark of life again in the dying soul of India.”

Professor Puran Singh, a renowned poet and litterateur, appraised Guru Gobind Singh’s contribution towards fight for justice as: “Khalsa lived poised in sword’s sharp edge, and died kissing its cold steel. Indeed iron had gone into his soul at his nativity. But it would be a great mistake to associate the Khalsa with wanton wars and bloodshed. He took to the sword because of a crisis of conscience.”

CONCLUSIONS
Guru Gobind Singh envisioned and worked to cultivate a society of saint-soldiers, which became a nation in its own right. To this end he laid an extreme emphasis on self-determination via weapons, both politically and spiritually. The political weapon, which he gave to the Sikhs is the sword, whereas the spiritual weapon is the sābd (Word). Along with this he gave a distinct identity and way of life to the Sikhs, which makes them unique from predecessor religious traditions.

The creation of Khalsa was an extraordinary mission of the Guru Gobind Singh. Just as the Guru (according to his own writings and belief) was the chosen instrument of God for restraining men from senseless acts, so his Sikhs of the Khalsa order were the willing agents for working out that mission. Thus, the Khalsa was the body of human kind always at war for destroying the evil and protecting righteousness.

The creation of the Khalsa was not merely an endeavour to integrate the members of his community; it was also a powerful bid for the culmination of the mission set in motion by his predecessors in the field of social and religious life. From sociological point of view, the Khalsa represented a new mosaic where tribal or caste affiliations had no room, nor were the superstitions, demeaning ceremonies and empty rituals given any accreditation status. It stood for broad outlook transcending parochial prejudices. Even the differences on the basis of religion were considered irrelevant. The Khalsa stood for righteousness, social equality, faith in Nirgun (formless) God, honest labour, and division of its fruit and repudiation of all types of exploitation. Evidently, this type of social pattern was greatly successful in arousing the dormant energies of the people and making them flow into the channel, which fed the national stream of the country.

In the religious sphere, Khalsa as a corporate body was equalitarian inter se, as well as in terms of relation to the Guru himself. In 1699, Guru Gobind Singh first administered baptism to the select five and then himself received baptism from them. By doing so, he underscored the point that there was complete identification between the Guru and the Khalsa. The fact has been very clearly brought out in Sarabh Loh Granth as well as in a Var by Bhai Gurdas Singh who overwhelmed by a sense of wonderment exclaimed, "Let all of us hail and greet Guru Gobind Singh who was Guru and Disciple at one and the same time."
By the Guru’s reforms, the Sikh community was not only strengthened but also converted into a great vehicle of revolution. Consequently, the Khalsa had to launch a titanic struggle first against the Mughals and then against the Afghans who ruled over Punjab, the territory where the overwhelming majority of the Sikhs lived. The struggle continued until the Khalsa emancipated the land and established their sovereignty in 1765 after the conquest of Sirhind. Later on rise of 11 Misls and thereafter establishment of the Kingdom of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in Punjab made the dream of Sikh sovereignty a reality. Thus, Guru Gobind Singh’s farsighted vision has laid down solid foundations for the success of his everlasting mission of fight for the righteousness and against tyranny and injustice. His teachings have great relevance for the modern man to build a global society with a commitment to peace and goodwill across all sorts of constraints and geographical boundaries.

REFERENCE
9. Gokal Chand Narang, Transformation of Sikhism, p. 82.