

**The Problem of Untouchability  
Among Sikhs in Punjab  
with Special reference to Mazabhi Sikhs**

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TO

THE LOVING MEMORY OF MY LATE

Father S. Ram Singh Ahluwalia

Mother Smt. Jaswant Kaur

and Chachaji

S. Harbans Singh Ahluwalia

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## **Introduction**

Since the dawn of history, Indian society has suffered from diverse types of social disabilities. Some of the most unscrupulous social inequalities and disabilities were centred around the institution of caste system. It is a genesis of untouchability. It is the basis of social stratification. This curse that has been woven into caste system and family life is still in force today in spite of several attempts in the modern times to do away with it.

At behavioural and value level, caste may be looked upon as a hierarchal ranking of social groups in society where the allocation of social, cultural and occupational role is decided by caste. At this level the main features of caste and caste system are fixidity of occupations by birth, practising of diacritical signs such as restrictions of inter-mixing, inter-dining, social avoidance and social distance. There is a definite system of super-ordinate and subservient relation in terms of mutual obligations towards different caste groups by each caste. The sub-servient relationship and practising of civil rules are based on the Hindu concept of superiority and inferiority and concept of pollution.

The institution of caste led to the crystalization

of many prejudices and behavioural patterns that alienated many sections of society from the main stream of Hinduism. The so-called untouchables, now designated as Scheduled castes were the most oppressed and downtrodden lot of the Indian society.

The history of Indian society shows that along the ages, the upliftment of untouchables have been taken in one way or the another. From time to time great reformers made their emphatic protest against the exclusiveness of castes and the notion of superiority and inferiority which they inevitably bred led to the formation of dissenting sects. Among these reformers a place of pride must be given to the Buddha. Early Buddhism believed only in a moral or virtuous life unfettered by rituals. It was a protest against tradition and it sought to provide a rational scheme for the ritual stricken, caste-ridden man to discover himself.

However, after the decline of Buddhism in India, the institution of caste system acquired greater rigidity as a result of the influence of Brahminical order. As a result the haul of untouchability became more rigid, though religious reformers in different centuries advocated removal of untouchability from the Hindu society. In the medieval period, the two movements Bhakti and Sufi laying emphasis on the

personal emotional relation of the individual with God, attacked the fundamental basis of caste system and thereby cleared the way for raising the status of the so-called untouchables. They challenged Brahminical authority and social inequality from time to time and gave thought to the upliftment of the untouchables in the Hindu society. The exponents in North India of this new religions approach were Kabir, Ravidas, Dadu and Guru Nanak.

The Sikh Gurus, right from Guru Nanak rejected the caste system and untouchability that had corrupted the Hindu society and condemned it in no uncertain terms. For, the entry into the Sikh fold was open to all irrespective of caste, community or status in life. The two institutions started by Guru Nanak himself - Sangat and Pangat- assured equality to all the members of the new faith. Untouchables rubbed shoulders with upper castes in religious congregations (Sangat) and dined together in the common kitchen (langer). Guru Arjan not only had the foundation stone of the Sikh temple (Harimandir) laid by a Muslim Sufi Saint, Mian Mir, but went further and incorporated the compositions of the low caste and some Muslims in the Granth Sahib which is now the Guru Eternal for the Sikhs. With the creation of the Khalsa this movement for a casteless society reached its culmination. It is

unfortunate that though the struggle to remove untouchability has been undertaken all along the history of Hindu and Sikh society, it is still practised. It is more vigorous in rural India and seems inseparable from villages. Urban people may not be experiencing this problem as the rural people do. The Chuhra (or Mazhabi Sikh) in villages remain Chuhra to the higher castes in the surrounding villages and towns even though they may have no direct occupational contact with them.

So, the objective of this study is to examine as to "whether untouchability is practised by the Sikhs" and if so "to what extent". For, the Sikh social structure have never been clearly analysed in relation to this problem, though the Sikh religious order does not favour caste system and untouchability. The Sikh social system may not be having the Hindu caste system. But they do possess an hierarchical order similar to but different from the Hindu caste hierarchy in several respects. Contemporary Sikhs deny the existence of caste and untouchability among the Sikhs. For there is a wide-spread belief that untouchability is no longer practised in Punjab so much so that even in the isolated villages governed by traditional way of life there is an established pattern of inter-group co-operation in which ritual pollution has very little place. But restraints and

prohibitions about inter-caste marriages continue even amongst the Sikhs which result in segregation and formation of separate groups among the Sikhs in practice leading to some kind of caste system and untouchability.

It is fact of Sikh society that there is a hierarchical arrangement with the Jat Sikhs at the top of the hierarchy. They still follow the Hindu caste rules of endogamy and commonsality. Among the Sikhs the ritual taboos between the castes have no place except in the case of the Mazhabi and Ramdasias. The classes among Sikhs have a particular rank and prestige in a hierarchy, not determined by religious ideas of purity and adherence to custom, but based on the prestige accorded to occupations, educational level or income. Since Sikh social classes exist together with castes, the prestige of an individual Sikh also depend on his status in his caste, as well as on the prestige of his social classes.

Thus, the nature of our enquiry is "whether Hindu caste system has penetrated the Sikh society?" and if it does, "to what extent" : Further, "how does it determine the relations of erstwhile untouchable converted to Sikhism with upper caste of Sikhs?" "To what extent Sikhs have been trying to eradicate it?" "Are the schemes of Shromani Gurudwara Prabandhak

Committee (SGPC) implemented in practice or they just remain in files?" "Is the stigma of untouchability washed out or still remains?" "Are they treated as equals at social ceremonies, in political roles and at other religions ceremonies?"

So keeping in mind the above questions the main thrust of this research was to understand and examine the social structure and conditions of untouchables in Punjab and circumstances which led to their conversion to Sikhism. The proposal is confined to Mazhabi Sikhs who were members of the scavenger class of Hindu Society. Their status in the Sikh society is also examined.

In view of the objectives and nature of the study the data is collected from primary and secondary sources and literature such as Census Reports, District Gazetteers, Books, Research Journals, News Papers, Pamphlets and propaganda material of Mazhabi Sikh organisations.

It was decided to collect field data through direct questions posed to Mazhabi Sikhs of rural and urban areas and through field observations to find out their attitude regarding behaviour of the upper castes towards them (Mazhabi Sikhs).

Two types of research tools were used in this study;

interviews and observations. Several interview schedules and questionnaires used in number of studies were reviewed. Two different interview schedules were used for both urban and rural studies.

Demographic factors such as age, sex, marital status, education and occupation of all respondents were listed.

The questionnaires were first framed in English then were translated into Punjabi, the language for the field work. The draft of interview schedules underwent several changes in the format of question and the language of the questions. A final version was prepared then researcher moved into villages of Amritsar where selected village respondents were interviewed.

It was decided to interview respondents of Amritsar District for rural survey. Decision to select Amritsar District was made because of concentration of Mazhabi Sikhs in this District. Villages as listed in 1971 Census report formed the basis from which study villages were chosen.

For urban data it was decided to interview respondents of Chandigarh because of the concentration of Mazhabi Sikh residents in city due to employment opportunities.

The choice of the field study could be made only after considering several factors. The researcher had to keep in mind the limited sources at her disposal. Because of the turbulent situation of Punjab in general and particularly in rural areas, it was difficult for the investigator to reach Amritsar, stay there to collect data.

Bearing these limitations in mind, it seemed that it might not be possible for the researcher to work with a sample of more than 250. It was felt that a sample of this size would give fairly reliable results. Once the sample size was decided upon, it seemed neither practical nor advisable to cover more than 8 villages for rural survey, as otherwise the sample would have to scatter.

In the succeeding chapters attempt has been made to interpret the social structure of the Hindu society especially with regard to untouchability. First chapter deals with the caste system which is responsible for the rigidity of untouchability. The second chapter takes up the study of Sikhism, highlighting the role played by the Sikh Gurus in eradicating this evil. The third chapter examines position of Mazhabi Sikhs in Sikh social system. The fourth chapter is confined to the survey based on

field study. Lastly a brief summary of conclusions and recommendations are given.

Appendixes and bibliography are given for further study of the subject. My earnest gratitude to Prof. (Dr.) S.L. Malhotra under whose able guidance, unflinching co-operation, constructive criticism and constant encouragement. I have been able to complete this thesis. I am also grateful to his wife Mrs. Rani Malhotra for the moral putting.

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I extend my gratitude to all my friends who have helped me in one way or the other. The help and understanding shown to me by office and library staff members of the Department of Gandhian Studies need special mention.

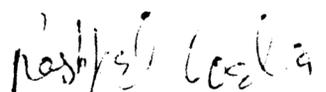
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RASHPAL WALIA.

## CHAPTER - 1

### UNTOUCHABILITY IN INDIAN SOCIETY

Untouchability is a unique feature of Hindu social system. It is believed in some quarters that it has sprang out of the economic backwardness of a certain class of people - the untouchables. But the economic problem cannot be the chief cause of the existence of untouchability in this country as many other countries besides India had similar economic problems. In fact, untouchability is the result of established Hindu caste system. It is a part and parcel of Hindu religious and social system. It should be clearly understood that untouchability is not a form of punishment inflicted on a certain class of society due to any fault of theirs under 'karma' doctrine, but is the general attitude adopted by the upper class is towards a poorer section of society, who are steeped in ignorance and poverty. Before taking up the study of its prevalence among upper caste Sikhs and Mazhabi Sikhs, it becomes necessary to study Hindu society, from which the Sikh society developed on an entirely different form. For in historical context in Indian society untouchability has played an important role in India. No organ of Hindu society could escape itself

from its fold and even today Hindu society is not free from its clutches.

Consequently, the Sikhs whose fundamental principles are deadly against it, are not free from its perversive impact. So, it becomes imperative to know briefly about caste system which is the basis of this pernicious systems.

**CASTE SYSTEM:-** There is a mass of conflicting opinions regarding the nature of caste. Because some scholar like Max Weber<sup>1</sup>, Ferdinand Toennis<sup>2</sup> and Bernerd Barber<sup>3</sup>, view caste as a particular rigid form of class and find its prevalance worldwide. Others

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1. Max Weber, Essays in sociology, trns. H.H.GERTH and C.Wright Mills (London, 1946, 2nd ed., New York 1958), pp.73, 398-404.
2. Ferdinand Toennies "Estate and classes,"(1931) in R.Bendix and S.M Lipset, Class Status and Power (The Free Press, Glencoe, III, 1953), pp.50-54
3. Bernard Barber, Social Startification (New York, 1957), pp.335-350.

like Kroeber<sup>4</sup>, Cox<sup>5</sup> and Hutton<sup>6</sup> believe it to be a system peculiar to India and its environs. There are those like Marvin Harris<sup>7</sup> who see caste as a rigid system of social stratification which may be paralleled in areas where the resemblance of minority -majority group relations to caste relationship could be seen in areas like the southern United states<sup>8</sup> where Negro white relations are cited as bearing resemblance to Indian caste relationships. Parallels have also been made with Japan<sup>9</sup>,

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4. Alfred L. Kroeber, "Caste" in Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences (New York, 1936), pp.254.
  5. Oliver Cromwell Cox, Caste, Class and Race (New York, 1948) p.XII.
  6. J.H.Hutton, Caste in India (London, 1946, 2nd ed., 1951) PP.133-147
  7. Marvin Harris, "Caste, Class and Minority, "in Social Forces, Vol.37, No.3 (Baltimore, 1959), pp.248-254.
  8. W.Lloyd Warner, M.Meeker and K.Eells, "Social Class in America" (Chicago, 1949) pp.20-21.
  9. J.D.Donoghue, "An Eta Community in Japan: The Social Persistence of Out Caste Groups, "American Anthropologist, LIX, December, 1957, pp.1000-1017

Gautemala<sup>10</sup>, Arabia<sup>11</sup>, and Africa<sup>12</sup> and Polynesia. On the other hand are those who consider caste as a typically Indian phenomenon. It is a mistake to consider the isolated resemblance in other areas, as the Hindu system of untouchability - since the coincidence of all the factors making up the Hindu caste system do not occur elsewhere because caste does not form the basis of any rigid system of social stratification elsewhere in the globe. It is true that that the ancient cultures of China, Japan, Egypt, Rome and other lands had class divisions but they did not have hereditary class divisions. For example, in pyramid-age of Egypt, the society was divided in seven classes<sup>13</sup>. Ancient Chinese society was also

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10. Melvin M.Tumin, *Caste in Peasant Society*, Princeton, N.J., 1952, PP.59 ff VII-VIII.
11. Alfred L.Kroeber, *Anthropology* (New York, 1948), p.278.
12. E.D.Chapple and C.S.Coon, *Principles of Anthropology* (New York, 1942) pp.435-437.
13. J.H.Hutton, *Caste in India*, Oxford University Press, 1980, pp.140-141 (The seven classes are Priests, fighting men, herdsmen, swineherdsmen, tradesmen. interpreters and Navigators).

divided into four classes<sup>14</sup>, but the division was not hereditary. For, every individual had the right to change his class. All men and women were theoretically equal and could marry any one of their choice from a different class. In Rome<sup>15</sup>, there was slavery system and the slaves outnumbered the citizens. In Ireland, the Fudhirs were treated as untouchables and were confined to the outskirts of villages. But today such habitations have totally disappeared. The curse of slavery was rampant in ancient Greece<sup>16</sup> too. The Germans also had the slavery system, which comprised the serfs or the Bhudas. At one time business of Spain was to trade Negroes of Africa to other regions of the world. The Japanese<sup>17</sup> society too had a community of outcastes. The society of Iran<sup>18</sup> was divided into four classes - Atharvas, Rathesstas, vasteria, Fashouyanta and Huiti. But they had no graded distinction in

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14. Ibid, p.134 (Four classes are gentlemen, agriculturists, Artists, and Businessmen).

15. Majumdar, D.N., Races and Cultures of India, New Delhi, Asia Publishing House, 1958, p 280.

16. Ibid. p.280

17. Ibid. p.280

18. Ibid. p.280

practical life. British<sup>19</sup> society was also divided into four sections or strata. Three races were prevalent in Mexico and there are records of social discrimination in the Arab world. The artisans lived on the outskirts of the villages, because of the lowly nature of their work. From this brief study, we may safely come to the conclusion that caste did not form the basis of any rigid system of social stratification elsewhere in the world. Three important elements e.g. heredity, endogamy and restrictions regarding food and drink distinguish Indian caste system from social divisions or classes of people in other countries. It is also true that India is the only country in the world, which had and still has the curse of untouchability deeply embedded into its social structure. Although other countries have shed off their social stigmas, India continues to embrace a social system which erect walls between men and men. Untouchability, the result of social discrimination is totally differentiated from the other social organisations of the world as it has a religious basis.

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19. Hutton, J.H. Caste in India, p.134 (Four sections are nobleman, ordinarymen, independentmen and servants).

It is true that in striking similarity to the untouchability in India, the idea of pollution was found in Africa, Ireland Greece, Rome. But today there is no such thing. Moreover their idea of pollution was associated with a particular event or touching a particular thing or an individual. But, such pollution was considered temporary and one could be cleansed off it by the performance of a particular ceremony. The existence of such classes has now totally disappeared from these countries.<sup>20</sup> But unfortunately the varna-vyavastha' of Hindu survives even today inspite of various reforms done by the Government and the reformist social movements. However the attitudes towards existing social divisions were radically different from what they are today.<sup>21</sup>

Caste is an institution of great complexity. The simplest definition of caste is that it is an

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20. Sagar, Sunder Lal, Hindu Culture and Caste System in India, New Delhi, Uppal Book Store, 1975, P. 91.

21. Andre' Beteille, The Backward Classes and the New Social Order, Oxford University Press Bombay, 1981, p.12.

hereditary endogamous group which is a part of strict hierarchical order. In the Hindu caste system, The Brahmans stand at the top of the hierarchy, followed by the Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and the Sudras. There are restrictions marriage between members of different castes. There are touch and distance taboos and ideas of pollution concerning food, sex and rituals. Castes are associated with traditional occupations. The formal ranking of castes depends on the belief in ritual purity and pollution, to which rules of social distance also relate. Castes are not localized, but extend over a number of villages in particular area. In each village, there are many castes living in economic interdependence, with their occupations determined by tradition and not performance.

In any description of the Hindu caste system, the difference between the varnas or the traditional fourfold division of society, and the jatis, or the actual functioning of hereditary endogamous groups must be kept in view. The four varnas or division of society specified in the Rigvedic texts are Brahmans or priests and learned men, who are at the top of the order, the kshatriyas or rulers and warriors, who are next in rank, the vaishyas or merchants and agriculturists, i.e. 'the people' and the sudras, who

are the workers or servile indigenes also called the untouchables. The first three varnas are also called the 'twice-born', since they may undergo a sacrament of initiation 'upaniyana', in which they are invested with the sacred thread and experience a ritual second birth. This is in contrast to the sudras, from whom men of higher varna or twice-born may not accept water or food or avoid contact.

Various early writers like Senart<sup>22</sup>, Blunt<sup>23</sup>, Bounge<sup>24</sup>, Ghurey<sup>25</sup> and Ketkar<sup>26</sup> have pointed out the salient features of the Hindu caste-system, namely that the members of different castes can marry only their castes, that there is avoidance of contact or sharing of meals with members of other castes, that castes

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22. Emile Senart, Caste in India, trans. E. Dennison Ross, London, 1930, pp. 10-11.
23. Blunt, E.A.H., The Caste System of Northern India, (Madras, 1931), P.5.
24. Bougle, C., Essai Sur Le Regime des Caste (Paris, 1908) P.32
25. Ghurye, G.S., Caste and Class in India, (Bombay, 1932, 2nd. ed. 1957), pp. 2-17.
26. Ketkar, Shridhar V., History of Caste in India, vol. I, Ithaco, New York, 1909, p.15.

have special names and assemblies called panchayats, that there are fixed occupation for the different castes, that birth alone determined a man's connection with his caste for life, unless he be expelled for violation of his caste rules, that the functioning group may be called caste or sub caste, depending on its size relative to the group of which it is a sub division and that transition from one caste to another is theoretically not possible .

Occupational status is seen by Hutton<sup>27</sup> as being clear cut throughout India where the Brahmins or untouchables are concerned, but less so far the other castes. The process of separation occurs after the segregation of the caste into a sub castes, which for a time has accepted wives from other sub caste but has refused to give daughters. This practice is known as hypergamy. It establishes the position of a superior sub caste while the claim to superiority is generally based on a change of occupations. The opposite of this practice is hypogamy, by which men marry women of a higher status.

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27. Hutton, J.H., Caste in India, p.169.

Jyotirmoyee Sarma<sup>28</sup> in her analysis of the caste-system of Bengal, points out that a caste on the move tends to create a new myth of origin and a new name, such features being common to all self conscious groups trying to acquire a new status there are steps by which sub caste develop and new castes emerge. castes aspiring to mobility tend to forsake lower occupations, and they do this as a group, by caste panchayat decisions.

**Untouchability** :- The origin untouchability is a chronological history, but it is difficult to trace the reasons and time of it. Sociologically, untouchability is the additional dimension of the caste. Now, the question before us is that how these characteristics of caste gave birth to untouchability. There are different factors which gave rise to this phenomenon.

**Racial factors**:- The caste system took its birth after the arrival of Aryans in India. The Aryans invasions of India resulted in destruction of the Harrapan

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28. Quoted by, Marengo, Ethne.K., The Transformation of Sikh Society (New Delhi, Heritage Publishers, 1976), P.11.

cities is now well acknowledged. The Rigveda itself displays traces of hostility towards non-Aryans and of abhorrence of their culture, both material and spiritual. Rigvedic literature stresses very significantly the differences between an Aryan a dasa, not only in their speech, religious practices and physical features. The Aryan conquerors made an invidious distinction between themselves and the indigenous inhabitants whom they called 'Dasas'.

Divided into clans, the dasa-people lived in fortified settlements and were often quite wealthy. They were dark skinned (Krasnatvac) noseless (anasa) and of harsh speech (mrddhravac). Dasa people were called restless (akarma), indifferent to gods (adevayu), not recognising Brahman (a Brahman) not sacrificing (ayajvanah), law-less (a-varta). They were also called anjadeveh, those having different gods<sup>29</sup>.

In the oldest period of the Rigveda we find that the Aryans and Dasas were in two opposing camps. They were

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29. Mitra Sisir Kumar and Chakravarti, Adhir Kumar, The Coming of Aryans and their Expansion, in History of the Punjab (ed.) L.M Joshi, vol. I., 1977, Punjabi University, Patiala.P.64

quite different in spheres of social and religious principles. So, having their own philosophy of religion, Aryans had feeling of social superiority in their mind. Thus, the diversity between two cultures was natural. Moreover, being warriors, internally they had inclinations towards exploitation. It is a known fact that where there are rules and ruled, the masters and slaves, the haves and haven'ts, the class distinction are naturally found. In Rigveda as we find that, though the Aryans themselves were divided into many tribes and fought among themselves, on the question of others, they were one and undivided racial and cultural unit. The army tradition of those days was that the defeated were either put to death or imprisoned as slaves. So, the defeated non-Aryans were given low-status in society by allotting them the duties to serve other people. They were made dasas, kept apart and were refused admission to religious rites and ceremonies. Later on, this attitude gradually took a more rigid form and they were entirely excluded from Aryan society, which later were called untouchables.

Political Factors:- In the post-vedic period, in which the samhitas, Brahmanas, aranyakas, upnishads were written, the battles between aryan and non-aryans

were stopped, but continued within the Aryan groups. These battles had two phases. In the first, there were clashes between kingdoms which were established till that time. In the second, varna struggle of upper two castes of Aryan society---Brahmins and kshatriyas. The latter wrote Upanishads against Brahmin's sacrificial ceremonies (The yajans) for knowledge, and the brahmins gave their own separate philosophy by writing Brahmana<sup>30</sup>.

This period of struggle was quite long which brought about supremacy and superiority of Brahmins. Both Brahmins and Kshatriyas extended their boundaries and stopped their mutual social interaction such as inter-dining and inter-varna marriages.

In the last phase of upnishad period the sutra period began. once again the Brahmins wanted to re-establish their hegemony and they did so. Dharam sutras (the religious rules) and kalap sutras (document of rituals) were the product of this period in which rules of scarifies and other religious ceremonies are fully explained. In graha-sutra are rules of conduct for individuals. These sutras gave a set of rules to

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30. History of the punjab vol.I.,p.19.

society and a long list of duties to varnas, under which sudras and women were debarred from any rights and put them into Dasa-varna. Later on the dharam gave the Brahmins position of 'Brahma' the creator and sudras 'a servant at mercy'.

Even the sympathetic interpreter of the Dharamshastras, P.V.Kane, was obliged to concede that "the life of a sudra was not worth much,"<sup>31</sup> at that time.

During this period, the brahmin was concious and active not only for this individual safety, but also for future of his own entire varna. Some of the injunctions in the Dharamshastras are plainly designed to safeguard the interests of the privileged at the expense of the under privileged. Some of their expressions seem to express pure and unalloyed malice, as for instance the one against the acquisition of wealth by the shudras on the ground that a shudra who has acquired wealth gives pain to brahmins<sup>32</sup>.

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31. Quoted by Andre Beteille in The Backward Classes and the New Social Order. P.11.

32. Andre Beteille, 'The Backward Classes and The New Social Order, P.11.

Religious Factors :- The membership in caste is believed of divine origin, was determined by the consideration of birth. The status of a person depended upon the traditional importance of the caste in which he had the fortune of being born. Certain Hindu theological notions like karma and dharma<sup>33</sup> have contributed very greatly to the strengthening of idea of hierarchy which is inherent in the caste system. The idea of karma teaches a Hindu that he is born in a particular sub-caste because he deserves to be born there. The actions he performed in a previous incarnation deserved such a reward or punishment. Thus the idea of deserts is associated with birth in particular caste. A man is born in a high caste because of good actions performed by him in his previous life, and another is born into a low caste because of bad actions performed in his previous life.

The other important concept is dharma, which has many meanings, one of which is 'that which is right or moral'. The existing moral code is identified with

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33. Srinivas, M.N., The Caste System in India in Andre Beteille, Social Inequality, New York, Penguin Books, 1978 (Published in 1969), PP. 266-267.

dharma. A man who accepts the caste system and the rules of his particular sub-caste is living according to dharma, while a man who questions them is violating dharma. Living according to dharma is rewarded, while violation of dharma is punished, both here and hereafter. If he observes the rules of dharma, he will be born in his next incarnation in a high caste, rich, whole and well endowed. If he does not observe them he will be born in a low-caste, poor, deformed and ill endowed. So worldly position and success indicate the kind of life a man had in his previous incarnation. It divided the society into high and low.

Moreover three upper castes were twice-born but sudras were not and therefore excluded from participating in vedic rituals or studying sacred texts. The caste-system gives the Brahmin uppermost position, because he is produced from the purest part of supreme being namely the mouth. Through this, at all socio religious occasions of life, Brahmins made their presence essential and unchallengable. He was entitled to whatever exists in the world. The whole world is his property and others live on his charity<sup>34</sup>.

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34. Ghurey, Caste, and Race in India, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1972, p. 90.

In contrast to brahmines the sudras were subjected to manifold disabilities. The sudra could not study the sacred literature. The school did not admit impure castes. They could not have their marriage rites conducted by the regular brahmin priest. The untouchables could not enter the temples. It is believed that God have created certain deities simultaneously with the castes. But no deities were created with sudras and hence They are disqualified for sacrifices. Severe punishments were prescribed for sudra in case he committed certain types of offences.

As the priestly influence grew in India, complicated rules of rituals and conduct were built up and incorporated into religious books. The brahmins closed their ranks and tried to maintain their superiority over other classes. In the beginning there were no rigid restrictions but slowly and gradually the idea of separation stiffened. The ritual and ceremonial purity as the time went on took an exaggerated aspect; things were made pure and impure. Restrictions were imposed on food and drink. When Brahmins closed their ranks, the other castes also followed suit.

Social factors:- Another element of caste is the complex of taboos by which the superior castes try to preserve their ceremonial purity, under which certain

restrictions are placed on the sudras to prevent social intercourse with them. So rigid were the rules about defilement that Brahmins were prohibited to perform even their ablutions within the precincts of a Sudra's habitation<sup>35</sup>. There were civil disabilities also, under which the impure castes were made to live on the outskirts of the city or village. There were some restrictions about their movement on roads. Even wells were considered as polluted if a low-caste person drew water from them. All over India the impure castes were not permitted to draw water from wells used by the members of higher castes. There were restrictions on their education and admission to educational institutions.

Ghurey writes, "Ideas of purity whether occupational or ceremonial, which are found to have been a factor in which the genesis of caste are very soul of the idea and practice of untouchability."<sup>36</sup> In the court of Justice, The sudras had to shout from the distance and take their chance to be heard. This was because, they were prohibited from entering the villages or towns and were prohibited from employment, business and contact with the people.

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35. Ibid, P.9.

36. Ibid. P. 307.

Food habits :- Ideas of purity also centered round food and drink, and taboos of giving and taking of these between one individual and another, whether without relationship or with closest of relationship. The food and drink taboos have played very significant role in the formation and development of the conception of untouchability in caste-system.

Even vegetarianism under the food habits gave rise to untouchability. Meat eating among all castes was common from vedic-age upto Budha-period. Budha revolted against the Brahminical social order, system of 'Yajna' and animal sacrifice and taught love and brother-hood, truth and non-violence. It was a heavy blow to the prestige of Brahmines. So, they banned meat-eating for upper three (twice-born) castes, but not for sudras. The untouchables continued to eat-meat.

Generally, there was no frequent exchange of food betwixt castes. Food was of two kinds, 'Pakka', means cooked food and 'kachcha' un-cooked food material. There are rules of pollution which do not apply to all food. The greatest strictness is observed in regard to what is called 'kachcha' food. 'Pakka' food which is cooked with 'ghi' or clarified butter, has less restrictions, since it is prepared with a product of

the sacred cow, which therefore, sanctifies it. 'kachcha' food generally should be cooked by and taken from a member of one's own caste or from a Brahmin. The low caste people could take food and water from all the upper castes but not vice-versa. There was general correlation between diet and status.

So, the idea of relative purity and consequent social inequality is involved in the rules of eating and drinking. No one may eat or drink with a man of lower caste. Castes of equal status may eat or drink together. But whenever caste is in the process of claiming higher status than another, it often marks its claim to superiority by refusing to share a meal with any member of a lower caste. The idea of contamination extends to culinary and drinking vessels. Food is similarly subject to pollution after which it is considered unfit for consumption. Some lowest castes are considered to have such power of contamination that, if any of their member castes his shadow over food, a high caste Hindu might throw it away. There are similar restrictions regarding the persons from whom water may be taken.

Pollution :- The idea of pollution governs relations between different castes and concerned a general stigma of impurity attaching to the lowest castes,

menstruations, childbirth, death and certain occupations. A man of higher caste maybe polluted by physical contact with a lower caste man e.g. by accidentally brushing against him, and this requires ceremonial ablutions. Some castes are believed to emanate impurity to the extent that their approach within a certain distance causes pollution. Those who cause pollution by contact or by proximity to the high castes are also held capable of polluting temples and therefore denied admission to them. Purification is necessary when there has been contact with a women during her monthly period, or within the taboo period after childbirth or with a man who has lit a funeral pyre, and is tainted by death pollution until purification. The purification is also necessary when there has been contact with certain low-castes, whose traditional occupation or mode of life put them outside the pale of Hindu society are untouchables.

So untouchability's rigid form is a logical outcome of a peculiar notion of pollution sanctioned by religion and codified by the Brahmnical discriminative laws. This not only institutionalized the caste-hierarchy and untouchability but gave it socio-religious and logical approval. In this way the concept of pollution governs relation between different castes.

In view of such restrictions and taboos D.N.Majumdar<sup>37</sup> aptly defined untouchables as "those who suffer from various social and political disabilities many of which are traditionally prescribed and socially enforced by higher castes," These social, religious, political and economic disabilities in every walk of life had birth to untouchability.

Endogamay :- Every caste is further divided into subcastes which are endogamous. An endogamous group means that one has to marry within one's own caste and intercaste marriages are forbidden. It also determines the customs, traditions and rituals regarding birth, marriages and death etc. As, all castes require their members to marry within their own caste, it is believed that its purpose was to maintain the solidarity of the caste. So, this was observed with such a sanctity and rigidity that intercaste marriages could never be performed. Punishment for offenders of the rules of caste endogamy were very harsh. They were excommunicated and were seldom re-admitted and were treated as outcaste. Even, their children had to be

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37. Majumdar, D.N.(1958) Races and Cultures of India, New Delhi, Asia Publishing House, P. 326.

outside the caste-fold. The fact is that these rules were much more important for the persistence of the society in the traditionally integrated way and hence they were given by religious traditions the same sanctions as was given to the formal rites and practices.

Consequently, the rigidity of endogamy bore the instant hatred towards each other. Even marriage was not possible out of the subcaste group. Marriage of upper varnas were considered sacred but not of sudras, whose marriages were considered as means of sex desire fulfillment.

Economic Factors :- In the ancient society, there were differences based on property ownership. Cultivated land was made over to individual and this step in turn paved way for the further development of inequality stemming from differences in property rights or social status. Question of inheritance became important. When people in groups grew rich, the poor members of the community lost their independence and gave rise to economic and social inequality.

Thus, the origin of varnas for one or the other reasons was also economic and the relationships and

clashes among groups were also born out of the economic causes. It may also be admitted that owing to cultural advancement division of labour arose and numerous arts and crafts developed and contributed to the complexities of the system of creating further division of occupational groups.

.Occupations :- According to occupational theory, the origin of the caste-system can be found in the nature and quality of work performed by the various groups of people. In the Dharma Granthas or other sources that deal with the description of the Hindu-system, we find the differentiation between the varnas.

The occupational castes gradually became hereditary in the later Vedic or Brahminic period. Certain occupations which involved dealing with dirty and unclear things i.e. leather work, removal of dead animals, removal of night-soil are generally regarded as hateful and unclean. So, all those who took under them were regarded as unclean and untouchables. Thus, these professions which were regarded as better and respectable made the persons who performed them superior to those who were engaged in dirty professions. So, with functional differentiation there came in occupational differentiation which in course of time created rigid social differences and at last a

hateful untouchability with numerous sub-castes, such as chamars, Bhangis, Nai, Teli, Kahar, Mali etc. came into existence.

Division of Labour :- With the increase of instruments of production, more productive forces were required. So, the war prisoners, who in earlier period were either put to death or imprisoned according to army conditions, now instead of killing them, were utilized for this labour purposes and were given a place in Aryan social structure as the fourth Varna Sudra. These new productive forces caused a revolution in society in its social and property relations. Social division of labour into Varnas destroyed the collectivity of production, gave place to the separate households with exchange created inequality of property which gave birth to classes-the rich & poor-the exploiters and exploited.

So, in brief, the view point acceptable to any one is that the economic disabilities are one of the root causes of this untouchability.

Impact of Manu Smirity and others :- The study of foundations of untouchability done for Mazhabi Sikhs, will be biased if we do not mention the impact of Manu smriti, because, Manu's laws and its further expansion have played a significant role in Indian society. Manu

Smriti is the only prominent historical document which explains all this in full details. Manu, through this granth thickened the faded colour of caste-system and further strengthened its roots. So, when sikh society with its entirely new phase came into existence, then converted people could not renounce it totally. The rigidity of caste system consciously or uncousciously carried its impact on life and act of Sikhs. Mazhabi Sikhs or ramgrettas or Hindu sudras or Chuhras or untouchables are same to whom the Manu smriti puts under strict laws.

As we have said before that equality was not one of the principles accepted by Hindu society. Infact, it was categorically denied by the system of caste, which we have discussed before.

How surprising these rules were that property of lowest person caused pain to a person who was declared as God, who needed nothing from this mortal and materialistic world. Impact of these rules was that the Brahmins having power in their hands always exploited the sudras in the name of religious-books. They exploited the people who were part and parcel of the Varna-culture. On the one hand Manu forbids the possession of property to Sudra and on the other hand gives the right to a Brahmin to snatch the property of

a sudra. It is strange that even the flesh and blood of a Sudra which alone were left with him as his property could be snatched by a Brahmin. Manu's laws made Sudras not less skeletons because he kept them away from all social, economic, religious and political facilities and rights. Manuscript "do not as a whole, represent a set of rules ever actually administered in Hindostan" adding that, in great part, an ideal picture of that which, in the view of the Brahmins, ought to be the law<sup>38</sup>.

According to Manu Smriti, the occupation or duties should be determined on the basis of caste or Varna only. All varnas then were made occupationally as rigid as possible and all possibilities of changing one's varna were ended. Duties were divided and were strictly to be followed by all varnas. Manu says "One occupation only the lord prescribed to the Sudra to serve meekly even these (other) three castes<sup>39</sup>".

Besides this assigned duty any sort of mixing with other castes has been declared a heinous crime. Sudra

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38. Sir Henry Maine, Ancient Law, Oxford University Press, 1959, 14.

39. Max Muller, Vol. 25 1:91; P.24.

also has no right to education and could never receive religious blessings. If any one did so, he was made afraid of being a party to sin. Many having been perplexed, writes about them ;

"For he who explains the sacred law (to a sudra) or dictates to him a penance, will sink together with that (Man) into the hell (called) Asamvrita.<sup>40</sup>

He also says, "Let him not recite (the texts) in distinctly, nor in the presence of Sudras<sup>41</sup>".

Further he writes, "Let him not give to a Sudra advice, nor the remnants (of his meals) nor food offered to gods nor let him explain the sacred law (to such a man) nor impose (upon him) a penance<sup>42</sup>."

Sudras were declared servants without paying any thing to them. They were condemned as untouchables because feeling of low and high grew in the minds of people. They were compelled to beg for their subsistence and were driven into fight among themselves like dogs. They were given torn clothes to wear, the remnants of

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40. Ibid, IV:81 p. 141

41. Ibid, IV:99 p. 144

42. Ibid, IV:80 p. 141

food to eat and slums to live in. Their houses were always in darkness because they had to live outside the village. They were forced to live in insanitary conditions.

For their food Manu says : "the remanants of their food must be given to him.as well as their old clothes, the refuse of their grain and their old household furniture.<sup>43</sup>"

And also says,"They declare the fragments which have fallen on the ground at a (srdha) to the manes,to be the share of honest dutiful servants.<sup>44</sup>"

For dwellings Manu says,"The dwellings of Chandallas and svapakas shall be outside the village they must be made Apapatras and their wealth (shall be) dogs and donkeys.<sup>45</sup>"

About dress Manu says : "Their dress (shall be) the garments of the dead, (they shall eat) their food from broken dishes, black iron (shall be) their

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43. Ibid. X : 125 p. 429 .

44. Ibid. III : 246, P.120

45. Ibid. X : 51, P.414

ornaments, and they must always wander from place to place.<sup>46</sup>"

The aforesaid said examples tell us about the duties of the varnas and their status in the caste hierarchy. As a result the Sudras were given menial work which in turn placed them in the lowest position in ritual purity. Serving the upper castes without grudging was the duty of a Sudra. The higher the caste he served, the greater could be the merit. It is said that if a Sudra serves his duties without complaining against the system, then he gains in this and in the next world. His mild speech, submissiveness to the Brahmins could give him a higher birth. It is said, "To serve Brahmins (who are) learned in the vadas, householders, and famous for (virtue) is the highest duty of a Sudra, which leads to beatitude."<sup>47</sup>"

"Let a (sudra) serve Brahmins either for the sake of heaven, or with a view to both (this life and the next) for he who is called the servant of a Brahmin thereby gains all his ends."<sup>48</sup>"

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46. Ibid. X : 52 p. 414

47. Ibid. IX, 334 P.401

48. Ibid. X, 122, PP.428-429

"(A Sudra who is) pure the servant of his betters gentle in his speech and free from pride and always seeks a refuge with Brahmanas,attains (in his next life) a higher caste.<sup>49</sup>"

So, through Dharma Shastras a Sudra was made to serve the Kshatriyas for subsistence, the vaishya for support of life and the Brahmin for the heaven. These laws made one thing very clear that higher was the position of a varna in the social hierarchy, more were the advantages to that varna from these rules.

The entire social system was governed by Brahmonic law which was regressive in its character and was used as an instrument by socially privileged 'Dvijas' (twice-born), who were economically and also politically powerful to keep the sudras in crushing and perpetual poverty. The principles were exactly practised and arrangements were made so that the masses could never rise even in future. As a result the untouchable castes were deprived of the economic power and property. In the course of time their duties, occupations and manners became totally different from

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49. Ibid. IX, 335, p. 401

the rest of the other varnas.

Even about the names of Sudras Manu declares that it should start from the letter which conveys the meanings of a dasa. He further says, "if he (Sudra) mentions the names of and castes of the (twice-born) with contumely, an iron nail, ten fingers long, shall be thrust red-hot into his mouth.<sup>50</sup>"

In this way, Manu created such social rules whereby Sudras were reduced to the level of animals. The position given to a female Sudra was the same as of male Sudra. In Manu's scheme of life the position of birds and animals has been described better than that of Sudra. The killing of cow is regarded as a sin. There is a provision for its repentance, but there is nothing to repent the killing of a Sudra. His murder was just like killing dogs and cats. See in Smriti:--

"having killed a cat, an ichneumon, a blue jay, a frog, a dog, an iguana, an owl, or a crow, he shall perform the penance for the murder of a Sudra,<sup>51</sup>"

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50. Ibid VIII, 271, p. 302

51. Ibid XI, 132, p. 457

Thus, with the ideal of fundamental religious and civil rights the segregated Sudras had no status as persons in the eyes of law as observed from Manu-Smriti. The whole situation restricted the mobility of Sudras. Sense of superiority and inferiority and social taboos became the factors of untouchability. Just as there are taboos for the higher castes inter-marrying, eating and mixing with lower castes, in the same way taboos were created preventing touching and even seeing the lower caste, who did the dirty work. One could be polluted by touching, talking and walking with a Sudra.

We may conclude that the classes of people called untouchables had slowly but surely deteriorated in their social position, upto the time of Manu. In the times of Manu they were excluded from the villages, and were considered as one sole class and distinguished only by their occupations. Although, all Dharam Shastras have described Sudras as the most fallen man, Yet, the Manu Smriti went a step further and closed all doors of progress and prosperity for all described in other smritis and sutras.

Besides Manu, Vasistha, Atri, Narads, Vyas Smritis, Dharam-Sutras, Grah-Sutras and Shastras say that the Sudra is only a servant of other Varnas. He has only

one right, that is to serve other people. He cannot pursue the Karma, Occupation, and dharma of other varnas. His welfare lies in doing his own dharma i.e. to serve others. And if he does some other occupation he is to face punishments. And if any Sudra did perform any religious act and wished to do prayer and austerity, he was killed by the king.

Like Manu, Goutama also prescribed that if a master of Sudra is troubled by some one's debt, the property of his servant be disposed off to relieve him of his distress. If a Sudra comes as a guest to some one's family, before giving him meals some work should be got done by him<sup>52</sup>.

Kautalya was more cruel to Sudras. According to him, "if a Sudra becomes a Brahmin his eyes be destroyed after filling them with poison, if a Sudra pollutes and corrupts a Brahmin, he must be killed by burning. If he abuses and attacks a Brahmin, the same part of his body be cut off with which he does so. On the contrary, if a man of higher caste enjoys a Sudra women, it was not regarded as a crime<sup>53</sup>."

According to Apastamba<sup>54</sup>, the Sudra has no right to

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52. Ibid. V, 139, p.193.

53. Kautalya, ArthSastra, 3,8 p.

54. Max Muller, vol II, Apastamba 1:5,p.1

education and initiation. If he listens to Veda mantras, his ears be filled with lead. Baudhyayana<sup>55</sup>, also supports the same points as adopted by manu and others. In the Buddhist literature Jataka, too, occurs the discription of the status of Sudras as discribed in this Dharma Shastras and Dharma Sutras.

It has been noted that caste has tended to destroy unity and harmony which was essentially necessary to national development, But the object of the early law givers was to keep power in the hands of a special class. The ancient Brahmanic law givers wished that the labouring class of people should remain in perpetual slavery. Manu and other law givers made laws to suit the interests of the governing class.

The social separteness of various castes and ethnic groups is reflected in their segregation in residential localities of a community. Individuals do not have much freedom of action in their social conduct. According to Iravati Karve<sup>56</sup>, "there is an

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55. Sacred laws of Aryas by Bhuler part II p, 143-334

56. Iravati Karve, 1961, Quoted by D'souza, VictorS., Does Urbanism Desegregate Schedule Casts! evidence from a Distt. in Punjab, in Contribution to Indian Sociology (NC) voII 1, 1977, P.219.

inherent tendency in the Indian culture to form separate groups and remain separate. Climax of the system was reached in the beginning of the medieval period, particularly after the downfall of rationalism and invasions of new tribes. The invaders continuously went on adding law to oppressed people as they could not raise their voice against the oppression and exploitation done by the invaders. They imposed more regressive laws. It continued from Muslim to British period.

Therefore the social oppression and economic exploitation and discriminative judgements are witnessed in one or the other form. Obviously the worst his victims of the system were the lowest among low in Indian society. This is the very section of society, which is known as untouchable caste in India.

In the medieval period several socio-religious movements arose namely Bhakti movement, sufism and sikhism. All these three movements worked against the rigid caste system and its further development into untouchability. Bhakti movement whose climax reached during the saints like kabir etc. took into its grip the whole of the country. As for as sufism is concerned, it put its impact on whole of the North India. Sikhism was only movement which affected all

the socio-religious and political aspects of contemporary northwest India and successfully tried to bring qualitative change in it. The problem which is to be discussed in next chapters, is related to that part of North-west India. Which is called Panjab. It is very much true that sikh religion and its philosophy is deadly against caste-system was so strong that after 1707 again consciously or in other words, conversion of lower castes in Sikhism was on other words, conversion of lower castes in Sikhism was on other part of an individual and sikh society. Consequently, the inner caste-conflicts and separation among converted upper castes and converted lowercastes remained the same. So, before talking about Mazhabi Sikhs, it is necessary to discuss the Sikh philosophy and Sikh religion which was against all such discriminative structure. It is also important to know about fundamental principles and thought of Sikh Gurus, which they gave against caste-system and its end product untouchability.

## CHAPTER -II

### SIKHISM AND UNTOUCHABILITY

The Sikhism is considered as the youngest among eleven living religions of world. It is significant from sociological and reconciliation points of view. The intensity of performance of this faith during its short span of time and the far-reaching changes that it has brought about in social structure in Northern India has raised its stature among the religions of the world. Being a spiritual, monotheistic and ethical faith, it gradually developed into a cohesive force with a deeply humanitarian and social out-look.

The firm social commitment of the Sikh movement prevented it from developing into a mere order of mystics. From the very beginning, no value was attached to renunciation of wordly life. Rather, all those who practised it, such as the yogis and siddhas, were condemned as shirkers of responsibility to the humanity. The Sikh Gurus and their followers lived among the masses performing the routine duties of life and never shrank from the obligations enjoined upon them as members of society, no matter whether their character was religious or social or

political. In consequence, there developed close identification between the movement and a large section of the people who realised the importance of its social purpose. The main reason that the people from different classes especially oppressed classes came into the fold of Sikhism in large numbers was that this new religion, with its principles of equality held to them the alluring prospects of elevation in social hierarchy. For, in the fold of Hindu-society, they stood at the bottom of the social hierarchy and they knew that as long as they remained Hindus, the rigidity of the caste-system would not permit any chance of improvement in their social status. Some of them had embraced Islam and achieved comparatively some better status, but there were still many of them who were reluctant to taking such a step. For such people, the Sikh movement came forward. This was the only movement which considered hereditary division and discrimination as enemy of humanity. All the Sikh Gurus gave primary importance to this problem. Because they saw the iniquity of the whole system and the stagnancy in which it had involved the society. They worked against it boldly and turned to no half-way measures. They offered an ideal, the long-sought after opportunity to improve their position in society. There was no question of reform, but the

system was to go, lock, stock and berrel.

The tradition and hymns of Sikh Gurus have universal uniqueness as it does not believe in any type of class differences, status, special rights of a particular class and untouchability. None of the Sikh Gurus hesitated to oppose it, rather they propagated "Universal Brotherhood" which is main theme of the Gurbani.

Thus, the foundations of Sikh religion were laid by the Sikh Gurus on unity, brotherhood, equality, harmony freedom and even scarifice for the implementation of these principles. The religion is deadly against Varna-system, caste-system, colour and creed prejudices, regional discriminations, superiority-inferiority complexes, purity and impurity, rich-poor differences, rigid and discriminatory religious rites and rituals. To practice the principles, steps were taken as to sit in Sangat i.e. congregation and to dine in Pangat sitting in one single line at Langar i.e. common kitchens collectively and equally, under the fold of Khalsa which means pure and caste-less.

Thus, the Sikh Gurus propageted and also practically

worked for its principles. Moreover, the teachings of Sikh gurus were not confined to one class, caste or region but for "Sarbat" which means Universe. Sikhism opens the door wide to all sections of society irrespective of any differences. In short, Sikhism wants social harmony to replace social rivalry and hatred and social unity to take place of social disunity. For this, Sikhism stressed the grandeur of the moral values like truthfulness, honesty, love, humanity, forgiveness, charitableness self-control, courage, contentment etc. which are, according to Sikhism, sure foundations for peace, harmony and happiness in society.

So, Guru Nanak, the founder master, travelled from East to West and North to South, throughout his life. Bhai Gurdas, an eminent Sikh divine and an interpreter of Sikh Philosophy writes about the mission of Guru Nanak. Thus;

The Guru Nanak united the four varnas into one,  
The Savarnas and avarnas all repeat His Name,  
in the Satsang.

The schools of philosophy are like six seasons,  
The way of Guru is to look at the one sun  
(that causes them).

Doing away with the twelve sects of yogis,  
 the Gurus Satsang gained great influence.  
 He sings the indestructible and unfathomable,  
 Word not continued in the Vedas and the Books.  
 The Gur-Sikhs fall at each other's feet.  
 That is the sign by which they are known.  
 Living in Maya they are unaffected by it.  
 Effacing their self they repeat the Name.  
 They are now beyond blessings and curses.<sup>1</sup>

The very first message which the founder Guru gave humanity was :-**Na ko Hindu Na Musalman** means there is neither anybody Hindu nor Muslim. He meant by this that basically all man-made divisive distinctions are meaningless. He called the caste barriers as false and baseless. As he says ;

"Nonsense is the caste,  
 Nonsense is the family name,  
 All living beings have one shelter."<sup>2</sup>

Guru Nanak called himself as the friend of downtrodden and said that God blesses those who serve the needy,

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1. Var Bhai Gurdas, 19 : 33.
2. Jodh Singh, Caste and untouchability in Sikhism, Amritsar, SGPC, 1936, P. 23 also see Adi Granth, 1:3 Var Sri Rag I, p.83.

discriminated low-caste, unprivileged people. He says:-

"Nanak is with those who are low caste  
amongst the low caste,  
The lowest of the low.  
I do not envy the big people.  
Where the low caste are looked after,  
Thou showerst thy blessings."<sup>3</sup>

The Sikh philosophy does not segregate the people but make them to live collectively. Guru Nanak's concept of the Supreme Being was of a Universal, all-embracing, all powerful, all knowing, all-merciful and ever-kind Fatherhood. His was a clarion call for a direct approach to the One Supreme Being through intense love, selfless service and universal brotherhood. All people, therefore, irrespective of their caste, colour, creed, clan and sex were united in Being, the creation of one and the same Father-God. He laid the greatest emphasis on the purity of heart on the upright conduct. It is the meditation on God and the constant awareness of His true name that constitute the essence of Bhakti in Sikhism. A

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3. Ibid, P. 25 and also Adi Granth 4:3 Sri Rag I, P. 15.

sternely ethical and severly practical life, centered on an overwhelming consciousness of graceful God, is the heart of Guru Nanak's teachings. Guru Nanak was deeply interested in the upliftment of the suppressed classes. In following chapter, we will see that to what extent after the Guru, these principles which he established practically are adopted and practiced by Sikh society.

He believed that discriminations done under the caste system were really eating the society like wood-worm since centuries. Under this system people had suffered from grave disparities and exploitations, subjugation, demoralization and absence of social justice with discrimination and lack of honour to human personality. The people had lost all self-respect. The medieval Bhaktas like Kabir, Ravidas and Namdev had bitterly challenged the so-called superiority and authority of Brahmins and opposed the caste system and propogated equality and work to accelerate the development of human society. Among them Kabir was prominent, who says :

"In the womb of mother,  
there is no caste and no race.  
All are begotten of the seed of Brahm.

Tell me, O Pandit  
 when did you become a Brahmin ?  
 Donot waste your life in Brahmin-mania.  
 If you are Brahmin of a Brahmin women,  
 why did not you came some other way ?  
 Of us two,  
 how are you a Brahmin  
 and I a Sudhra ?  
 Is there blood in my veins  
 and Milk in Yours ?  
 Saith Kabir,  
 who soever mediates on God  
 is called a Brahmin in our language.<sup>4</sup>

Bhakt Ravidas in one of his hymns boldly makes this assertion and says :

"What is the difference between me  
 and you and you and me ?  
 The same as exists between gold  
 and golden bangle  
 or the water and the wave on it.  
 Oh Infinite,  
 If I did not commit sins,

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4. Ibid, p.23; AD. 4:7, Gauri Kabir Ji, p. 324

how could you be called the saviour of sinners.  
 Oh Indweller,  
 you are called the Lord,  
 But the word Lord presupposes a servant  
 and the word servant presupposes a master.  
 Give me such understanding as this body  
 may propitiated you alone.  
 Oh Ravidas, let someone explain to me  
 how the One prevades all."<sup>5</sup>

Another famous Bhagat Namdev narrates his own experirnce and says:

"I came to Thy temple, Oh God,  
 in a mood of good Cheer.  
 And as I was worshipping Thee  
  
 Thy men cought hold of me and drove me out,  
 Oh king of Yadvas  
 they said my caste was low,  
 If that be so, then  
 why didst Thou give me birth  
 in a house of a low caste, Pray".<sup>6</sup>

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5. Ibid, P.3; AD 3:Sri Raj, Ravidas, P.93.

6. Gopal Singh, Dr. (1978), Sri Guru Granth Sahib  
 (English version) World Sikh University Press.  
 Vol IV, P.1114

He also writes :-

"The custodians of the temple  
assumes that everyone is cross with me,  
And dubbing me an 'untouchable'  
they have driven me out ; what  
am I to do now, Oh My God.<sup>7</sup>"

The man of Nanak's vision is of Divine lineage. So he essentially is good not evil. Evil according to Sikhism is not something in-built in the human situation. But it arises out of man's ignorance, out of his 'haumai' (pride or Ahamkara) which is cause of all sufferings. Also, the caste pride and egoism does not exist in Sikhism.

When the Sikhism shows the path of Thy name, which is Truth, it is said that equality and love among human beings are possible only if they have one religion or belief. Guru Nanak stopped people from idolworship and asked all varnas to worship One God i.e.  (Ek Onkar) which is as he says ;

"Before time itself,

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7. Ibid, Vol IV, P.1234 ; AD 3:1 Rag Malar, Namdev, P.1292 AD 3:6 : Rag Bhairon, Namdev, P.1164).

there was truth.

When time begin to run its courses

He was the truth.

Even now, He is Truth,

and ever more shall Truth prevail."<sup>8</sup>

The Sikh gurus gave too much importance to truth and said that during competition between castes and Truth, Truth will be victorious always. Sikh guru say that ;

"Truth is the highest of all virtues ;

But,

higher still is the living of Truth."<sup>9</sup>

It is said that at God's court neither the upper caste because of its power and status is preferred nor the lower caste is discriminated, because before God all are equal. Only good, truthful deeds will be counted. As it is written :

"Caste and power are of no avail hereafter,

None will be honoured or dishonoured

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8. Khushwant Singh, Japji, Mahalla 1.

9. Gopal Singh, Vol I, P.58 or AD 5:14 Sri Rag, Mahalla I, P.62

on account of them.

Those alone will be deemed good  
who have got faith to their credit."<sup>10</sup>

It is further said :-

"Nothing depends upon Caste,  
Truth alone will be tested."<sup>11</sup>

Therefore how can we divide men into high and low by  
birth, when Farid says :-

"Oh Farid,  
The creator dwells in the creation,  
and creation lives in the Lord.  
Whom to call low,  
when there is none outside of Him."<sup>12</sup>

And Kabir adds :-

"God first created light.  
All men have come into existence  
through His power.  
The whole world has emerged from one light.

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10. Jodh Singh, P.24 or AD 3:11 Asa di Var, Mahalla  
I, P.469.

11. Ibid, P.24 or AD 10 : Var Magh I , P.142.

12. Ibid, P.4 or AD Salok Farid, 75, P.1381

Who are high and who are low ?

Men, do not wander in superstitions.

Creation is from the Creator,  
and the Creator prevades  
the Creation everywhere.

One Clay has been moulded into different forms  
by the creator."<sup>13</sup>

It means that, in the eyes of God neither caste has any place nor one's birth in upper or lower family makes him high or low. Third Guru, Guru Amardas emphasized the same view and said:-

"Hereafter goes  
not caste not colour with thee.  
And one become as are one's deeds,  
Through the work,  
one become the highest of high,  
And one merges in the  
God's Truth for ever."<sup>14</sup>

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13. Jodh Singh pp.4-5, or AD 4:3 Parbhati, Kabir, pp.1349-50
14. Gopal Singh, Vol II, P.354 also AD 4 : 8 : 47, Asa Mahalla 3, p.363.

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He further adds :-

"He indeed is the High-born.  
 his Repute too is high  
 Through the Guru  
 he mounts to the highest state (of Bliss).<sup>15</sup>"

Guru Ramdas, the fourth Master by giving the examples of different Bhaktas who themselves were of lower castes like Ravidas, Namdev and Bidar, gave preference to values instead of caste. He says :-

"Contemplating the Lord,  
 men of low caste  
 attained a High station,  
 -- -- -- -- --  
 -- -- -- -- --  
 Ravidas, the tanner,  
 praised his Lord for a brief time.  
 And he from a low caste  
 wretch was Purified,  
 and all the four castes repaired to his feet.  
 Namdev Loved his Lord,  
 though people called him a calico-printer,

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15. Ibid, p.354 and AD 4:7 : 46, Rag Asa Mahalla 3  
 p.363.

Yet the Lord turned his back  
upon the high-castes,  
and hugged him,  
His Devotees, to his Bosom."<sup>16</sup>

Fifth Guru, Guru Arjan also appreciated only God's  
name and considered caste as useless, he wrote ;

"The Lord Redeems the Sinners  
and making them pure owns them.  
He, and then all pay obeisance to them.  
Now, no one minds their caste,  
and all seeks the Dust of their Feet.  
Oh Master, such is Thy Great Name!  
Thou are the Lord of all creation.,  
and Givest sungular support to Thy servant  
-- -- -- -- --  
-- -- -- -- --

For Thy Service has Redeemed  
Namdev, Trilochan, Kabir and Ravidas,  
He shoe-maker (and so will I be Redeemed)."<sup>17</sup>

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16. Ibid Vol.III, p.701 also AD 4:1:8 Suhi Mahalla  
4, p.733.
17. Ibid, Vol. II, p.491 also AD 2:1:10 Rag Gujri  
Mahalla 5,p.498.

According to Sikhism these people are also low caste who do not repeat Thy-Name. Only Lord's Name makes a person high or low as Gurbani says:-

He who forgets Him  
is indeed low- caste wretch;  
without the Lord's Name.  
Nanak, one is a low worm."<sup>18</sup>

Gurbani says that those who have attained the Truth and surrendered to God their body, soul and worldly desires, do not have worldly names and castes, only God's Name in their caste. As fourth Guru Ramdas adds:-

"The, Guru is my caste,  
my honour,  
I'm I sell-off to Guru."<sup>19</sup>

Thus, Guru Nanak challenged the foundations of caste division, to free the Indian masses from the hold of Brahmanic divisive social system. For he taught the people to seek supreme light and knowledge by

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18. Ibid, Vol.II p.339 also AD 4:2 Asa Mahalla I, p.349.

19. Ibid, Vol. III, P.699; AD 4:1:10, Suhi Mahalla 4, p.731.

identifying themselves with the food of others. Guru Nanak accepted those people who have discarded the caste rigidity and pride of highness and said that such people are few in number. He taught them to shed human weaknesses such as pride, egoism and greediness, that stand at the root of caste system. So he said :-

"Rare is the one in the world  
whom the God treasures,  
Testing him on His Touchstone,  
And who rises above colour and caste,  
and greed and sense of mine-ness."<sup>20</sup>

For the Sikh Gurus, caste-system, effects the mind, as it creates illusions in the persons about false status and baseless position in society. Under its influence people become egoistic, arrogant and considers themselves high and want false recognition and appreciation from the other around them. As Guru writes :-

"Followed, honoured, famed,  
All If he were from His Grace to fall.  
A worm among worms,  
a sinner among sinners."<sup>21</sup>

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20. Ibid, Vol. IV p. 1281; AD 7:7 Rag Prabhati  
Mahalla I, p.1345

21. Ibid Vol I p.3 AD Japji Mahalla I, Pauri 7, p.2

He further says:-

"I am Unclean, Oh God,  
While Thou art,  
Immaculate and Sublime.  
And if I call my self sublime,  
I become not so."<sup>22</sup>

So caste system adversely affect human relations as it rises ego and generates hostility. Caste pride is against Sikh way of life. Gurbani says :-

"I amness" and  
attachments are our caste,  
also wrath and Ego  
But if one merges in the Word,  
One is rid of One's 'caste'.  
And one's Light merges in Lord's Light."<sup>23</sup>

For attaining spiritual knowledge, the devotees must leave under 'His' will and act according to that. So they had rescued themselves from illusions of caste, varna and creed. As Gurbani says :-

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22. Ibid Vol.IV, P.1267 ; AD Prabhat Mahalla I, 3:12, p.1330.

23. Ibid, Vol II, p 426; AD 2:14:36 Asa Mahalla 3, P.429.

"This is how the Bride meets with her Spouse,  
and is beloved of Him,  
Yea Reflecting on the God's Word,  
I am rid of my colour,  
caste and Tribe."<sup>24</sup>

Gurbani further adds :-

"What can I say Thee, Oh God,  
Save that nothing is mine,  
And my caste and my Honour,  
are but through Thy Name."<sup>25</sup>

As the Sikhism gives importance to one's actions, so, it is wrong to attach social disabilities to it. Moreover, according to Sikh religion a low caste will reach the highest goal if he puts his faith in the 'word' i.e. 'The Name'. As it is said in Guru Granth:-

"Those who have meditated on the Lord  
Have become holy,  
They have become Holy,

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24. Ibid, Vol IV.P.1148 AD 1:3 Rag Sarang Mahalla I, P.1198.
25. Ibid Vol IV,P.1140. AD 3:5 Basant Mahalla I, P.1189,

who have meditated on the Lord,  
 Through the Guru,  
 They also purify their parents and family,  
 and the whole congregation

-- -- -- -- --  
 -- -- -- -- --

Saith Nanak,  
 They are purified  
 who meditate on the Lord through the Guru.<sup>26</sup>

Guru Ravidas Says :-

"Who else but Thou can do such a thing my Jewel?  
 My Lord exalts the Lowly  
 and covers them with glory.  
 Thy Heart alone melts for one,  
 whose touch pollutes the world.  
 My Lord raises the lowly,  
 and is afraid on none.  
 Namdev, Kabir, Trilochan, Sadhna  
 and Sain were saved,  
 saith Ravidas, here! Oh good men,  
 Hari can do everything.<sup>27</sup>

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26. Jodh Singh. PP.12-13; AD 17:Rag Ram Kali  
 Mahalla III, Anand 19.

27. Ibid, P.13: AD 2:1 Rag Maru, Ravidas, P.1106.

He further writes that :-

"A man who is born of a good family,  
and performs all the Six Karmas,  
but has no love of God in the heart,  
nor he likes the story of his Lotus feet  
is like a sweeper,  
Oh foolish mind !  
think of him.  
Why don't you look at Valmic ?  
From what caste he reached what position  
by devotion of Ram?  
Krishna loved a low caste who killed dogs.<sup>28</sup>

Fourth Guru Says :-

"Yea he is Highest of the high  
and Purest of the pure,  
in whose heart Abides the Lord.  
Nanak washes the Feet of such a Devotee,  
who dedicates himself to his Lord,  
Though he be a low-caste.<sup>29</sup>"

Fifth Guru, Guru Arjan writes :-

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28. Jodh Singh P.13. AD 3:1: Kedara, Ravidas P.1124.

29. Gopal Singh, Vol.3,P.871; AD 4:4 Gond Mahalla 4,  
P.861.

"Kabir, the servant of his servants  
 was esteemed,  
 the barber sain was raised.  
 Namdev who looked with an equal eye  
 on all became the highest of the high  
 and Ravidas was reconciled to the Lord.<sup>30</sup>

Bhagat Namdev himself writes :-

"What have I to do  
 with the distinction of caste,  
 For, I but Cherish ever  
 the name of the Lord.<sup>31</sup>"

Bhagat Ravidas Writes :-

"May he be a Brahmin or a Vaisha,  
 a Kshatriya or a Sudra,  
 and even if he be a Chandala of an unclean mind,  
 He becomes Immaculate  
 and Pure Contemplating his God,  
 and Saves himself  
 and all who belong to him.<sup>32</sup>"

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30. Jodh Singh, P.13 ; AD 1:4:18, Sarang, V,P.1207  
 31. Gopal Singh, Vol.2, P.480 ; AD 1:4 Rag Asa  
 Namdev, P.485.  
 32. Gopal Singh, Vol.III, P.815; AD 1:2 Bilawal Rag,  
 Bhagat Ravidas, P.858

Guru Arjan makes it more clear when he says :-

"The wretched one whom no one Known,  
 Contemplating the Lord's Name  
 he is acknowledged all over,  
 I seek Thee, Oh God,  
 Bless me with Thy Vision !  
 For who it is who  
 was saved not through Service of Thee ?  
 He whose nearness no one seeks,  
 His Feet the while world washes,  
 (IF, he is Attuned to the Lord Name).<sup>33</sup>"

In Adi Granth Sikh Gurus have written about the required character of so-called upper caste people and make it clear, the way of attaining salvation, equality and brotherly relations through practical actions for society. Hence the Sikh gurus thinks of that person to be a Brahmin who lives the right life.

About Brahmin the viewed that;

"He who knows God alone, is a Brahmin,  
 Yea he who walks in the Guru's Will,

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33. Gopal Singh, Vol.II, P.381; AD 2:12:63, Asa Mahalla,5, P.386.

and in whose heart is  
 Enshrined the Supremebeing,  
 and who is rid of his Ego,  
 and who in-gather Virtue and,  
 Contemplates Virtue and  
 whose Soul Merges in the Oversoul.  
 Rare are the Brahmins in this age,  
 who know there God with their whole mind.<sup>34</sup>

It is also said;

"Yea, blessed is that Brahmin,  
 who Realises the Wisdom of the Lord,  
 and Praises his God  
 and reads only of Him,  
 reflecting on the Guru's Word.  
 Yea, blessed is his birth,  
 who Emancipates his whole generation.  
 Hereafter, no one asks one's caste,  
 for Good (only) is the,  
 Practice of the Word.<sup>35</sup>"

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34. Gopal Singh Vol. III, p. 807; AD 1: Var Bilawal  
 Mahalla 3, pp. 849-850.

35. Gopal Singh Vol IV, pp. 1046. ; AD 12:1 Maru  
 Mahalla 3, pp.1093-94.

The fifth Guru Writes :-

"He alone is a Pandit,  
 Who teaches his mind,  
 And Meditates in his Soul  
 on the name of God,  
 And drinks the Essence of His Name.  
 On the teaching of such a one rests  
 the whole World.  
 Yea, he keeps company with  
 the Gospel of Lord :That Pandit is cast  
 not into the womb again.  
 He understands the essence of  
 the Vedas, Puranas & Smritis,  
 And finds the Apparent in the Subtle,  
 He instructs all the four Castes  
 in the Lord's Wisdom,  
 Nanak: such a Pandit I salute for ever.<sup>36</sup>"

It is also said :-

"Oh Pandit,  
 dwell thou on such Heavenly Wisdom,  
 And seek Piety through the Name,

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36. Gopal Singh, Vol. I, P. 266; AD Ashatpadi 4, Gauri  
 Sukhmani Mahalla 5, P. 274.

real only the name,  
 And make the Lords Name,  
 Thy conduct and works.<sup>37</sup>"

About the actions of a Kshatriya Gurbani writes :-

"He alone is a Khatri,  
 who is a Hero in Dead,  
 And dedicates his body  
 to Compassion and charity.  
 And Knowing the right Farm,  
 Sows the seed of Beneficence.  
 Then such a Khatri is  
 Approved of at the Lord's Court.  
 But he, who practices Falsehood  
 and avarise and Greed,  
 he Reaps forsooth What he sows.<sup>38</sup>"

In the same way. it is taught that a vaishnav's  
 actions should not be like this:-

"One calls one self a Vashnava  
 and practices six kinds of works

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37. Gopal Singh, Vol.II. P.354; AD 1:20, Asa Mahalla  
 I, P.355.
38. Gopal Singh, Vol.IV, P.1337 ;AD 17, salok  
 Mahalla I,Varan to Vadik, P.1411.

but with in one is a soil of Greed.<sup>39</sup>"

According to Sikh Gurus, realization of God truthful, careful and perfect management of ones own household are prime objectives and actual duties of every human being. Even all the Sikh Gurus themselves observed the normal social lives of self-restraint, meditation and wisdom. They made it clear that for salvation there is no need to renounce the world. Guru Nanak ridiculed the ascetics who considered themselves superior to householders by saying that for food they have to beg from householders.

According to Guru Nanak selfless service of mankind is the best worship of God and to live on one's own honest labour is the holiest way of life. The story of Bhai Lalc a low caste carpenter is well known and acknowledged. He proved that the bread earned by dint of hard work by a so called labourer was far better than the delicious food of a high caste leisured rich man Malik Bhago. The three most important principles which sikh Gurus especially Guru Nanak repeatedly stressed were 'Kirat Karni' (hard work), 'wand chhakna' (sharing), and 'Nam Japna' (worship). It

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39. Gopal Singh, Vol-4, P.1152; AD 1:1 Sarang Mahalla 5, P.1202.

means every one must earn his livelihood honestly through hard work and share it with other member of society. Guru Nanak chose finally the life of a farmer for himself at Kartarpur, where he settled during his last days. He set a personal example by working in the fields and by serving the people, propagating the house-holders way of life. He gave Sikhism two basic tenents, 'Kirat' (honest toil) and seva (service). At Kiratpur he established a institution of Langar (a common Kitchen) and sangat (congregation). Thus Guru Nanak stood for equality of all human beings i.e. the Universal brotherhood. Guru Nanak laid special emphasis on seva or self-obnegating deeds of service. By humble and devoted service one purifies one's body and mind. A key element in this process of restructuring of religious and social life was the spirit of seva or self-giving service.

Guru Nanak preached in the language of people. His disciples included both the Hindus and the Muslims. Guru Nanak believed in one-ness of God and regarded all places of worship as equally sacred. He rejected the myth of orthodox priests that God was present only at scared places. He revealed to the fanatical mullahs at Mecca that God prevades the entire universe and lay wherever one looks.

Thus, the first Sikh Guru was a very practical reformer. Though he was a religious leader, his utterances were flooded with social thought. He wanted to make religion a means of social change and material welfare of the people. His writings show that he thought much ahead of the times. He stood for a society in which no one is superior to another, where no one through greed or selfishness, encroached upon the rights of others. In short, he visualized a society where all persons live like members of one family, helping one another and supplying the requirements of their less-fortunate brothers. Bhagat Ravidas, a low caste cobbler was deadly against old rigid system and wanted to change and suggested the same type of society. He said :-

"Griefless is the name of my town,  
 where abide not either pain or care,  
 No anguish there on tax on goods,  
 Neither fear, nor error,  
 nor dread, nor decline.<sup>40</sup>

These ideas make Guru Nanak the world's first socialist who thought not only in terms of

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40. Gopal Singh, Vol I, p.335; AD 1:2 Rag Gauri, Ravidas, p.345.

developments of society as a whole, but also harmonized individual progress with the upliftment of community. Guru Nanak made his contemporaries understand the idea which promoted social harmony and discourage distinctions among men. Guru Nanak welcomed women to the Sangat and offered them seats side by side with men. He regarded women as men's equal in every sphere of life.

Guru Nanak worked sincerely for the establishment of a socialist society. He prepared the people to work for a socialist society as a part of religion, thus, making religion as an instrument of realising goals of a socialistic pattern of society. This seed was sown by Guru Nanak and the harvest was reaped by Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth and the last Master, who challenged the kingship of Aurangzeb. Guru Nanak because of his kind nature, sweet and simple style of teaching was dear to Hindus and Muslims alike. He tried to put both of them on right path, that is why he was called :-

Baba Nanak Shah Faqir,  
Hindu Ka Guru,  
Muslim Ka Peer.

### 1. Compilization of Adi Granth :-

The hymns compiled in Guru Granth Sahib are written by different religious persons who are from different castes, religions and regions. It is ordered by Sikhism to every Sikh to consider Gurbani (Guru's Words) as its Guru and to act according to its principles only. When Sikhs bow before Guru Granth Sahib with respect, along with Sikh Guru's they pay their homage to Kabir of weaver's caste, Namdev of tailor caste, Ravidas a shoe-maker, Dhanna a jat by caste and Baba Farid a Muslim, a Sufi saint. It is really a unique uncomparable example of human-equality, human unity and harmony. Such order of universal brotherhood continued from first Guru till the tenth guru.

### 2. Sangat (Congregation) :-

The organization of the Sangat System by Sikh Gurus was a revolutionary step. It practically helped in levelling down distinctions of caste, creed and colour in the society. Removing the barriers of rigid Hindu social system, it worked for equality and brotherhood of mankind and elevated the spiritual life of the people.

The idea of Sangat had existed much earlier. Buddha founded the religious Sangha known as Bikkhu Sangha or the temple of Bhakkhus. The Buddha told his Bhikkhus the seven principles of the welfare of the community. The community of the monks (Sangha) and of lay men also form the Chief disciplinary regulations in Jainism, with specific moral and spiritual codes prescribed.<sup>41</sup>

Originally, the unity of God and important rituals for example daily prayers, fasts, alms, pilgrimage and belief in Mahammad as the prophet of God were the main pillars of Islam. On the social side, it preached equality and brotherhood and hence the absence of priestly class. But with the passage of time, this simple faith was divided into various sects and systems under the pressure of life and logic for example Shias, Sunnis, Murjias and Qadiriya etc. The rise of sufism in Islam developed the organisation of monistic orders which provided the companionship of saints which was necessary for spiritual welfare. The Sufi Kanqahs were congregation i.e. Sangats.

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41. Munshi, K.M., Majumdar, R.C.Pusalkar, A.D., The age of Imperial Unity, P.362.

During the life time of Guru Nanak Sikhism had acquired certain institutional features the Sangat i.e. holy fellowship, the dharamshalas and the Langar that is common kitchen. Dharamsal, originally dharamshala in Sanskrit, meaning a court of justice, tribunal or charitable asylum, was the place where the Sikhs gathered in the name of 'Akal', the timeless lord, to pray and sing holy hymns. The term also began to be used differently with different meanings. For instance, in Japuji, Guru Nanak described the earth as a dharamsal, i.e. the field for virtuous action. Likewise human body was dharamsal agent for good and pious deeds. As a place of worship, the first dharamsal was established at Tulumba, now in Multan district of Pakistan, where Guru Nanak had reformed a robber by the name of Sajjan<sup>42</sup>. Dharamsals were established in many distant places in the wake of Guru Nanak's extensive travels. Bhai Gurdas (1551-1636), contemporary of the fifth guru, Guru Arjan, writing about how widely Guru Nanak's message had spread and said in his poetic style in stanza 27 of his Var I that faith was restored to the householder,

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42. Vir Singh, Bhai (Ed), Puratan Janam Sakhi, Sakhi-13.

"and every home has become a dharamsal where prayer and adoration are practiced." About the dharamsal instituted by Guru Nanak at Kartarpur, Bhai Gurdas says, " in establishing dharamsals at Karatpur, with its holy fellowship, Guru Nanak brought the heaven on earth<sup>43</sup>."

These dharamsals played an important role in the growth of the Sikh-society. Dharamsals eventually become the gurudwara literally, the Guru's door or house, which is Sikh place of worship now-a-days. The term came into use after sikh Scripture, the Guru Granth Sahib, was proclaimed Guru by Guru Gobind Singh. Thus, Gurudwara is the Sikh holy place where the Guru Granth is installed.

Sangat, originally from Sanskrit 'Sangati' meaning Union, association or company, is the word used for Sikhs gathered for prayer or religious ceremony. It had a social implication as well; it united Sikhs in a particular locality or region into a brotherhood or fraternity. A member of the Sangat, that is. every Sikh was known as 'Bhai' literally brother, signifying one of holy living. The Sangat brought together men

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43. Var XXIV, I.

not only in spiritual pursuit but also in worldly affairs, foregoing society of purpose as well as of action based on mutual equality and brotherhood. These Sangats formed a single entity owing loyalty to the world of Guru Nanak.

Guru Nanak attached great importance to the setting up of Sangats, holy assemblies and wherever possible, he tried to establish them, in which the Guru-oriented persons i.e. 'Gurumukhs', 'Gurubani', or 'Sabad' that is the holy composition of the Guru, the 'Kirtan' means the singing of hymns in these sangats. The congregations were concerned with religious devotion. The sangat acquired more and more functions as the range of interests of the Sikh movement widened and gradually attained a status even superior to that of the Guru himself. The Sangat being an assembly of the true Sikhs was assigned even a higher position because an important doctrine of Sikhism affirmed that there was no essential difference between the Guru and true Sikh. In these Sangats the disciples mixed together without consideration of caste or status.

The Sikh Sangat was thus, the melting pot for the high and the low, twice born and the untouchables. It was a new fraternity emerging as the participants

response of discipleship to the Guru. The Sikh Guru's enjoined upon the Sikhs to join 'satsang' or 'sadh-sangat' (congregation) as the company of the holy people had manifold advantages. they believe that the influence of 'satsang' was great on one's personality and even bad and wicked people could be reformed in the company of good people. They repudiated distinctions of caste and birth and advocated the worship of only one God. the society of truth seekers and worshippers of God and 'Nam' was encouraged by them.

The 'Nam' (God's Name) is a symbol in Sikhism to devote the all-pervading and omnipresent spirit that sustains the universe. The constant meditation on the 'Nam' destroys one's ego altogether. His is life of active service to all. As it is written :-

"How is satsangat,  
the society of the holy known,  
The name of the one God  
is mentioned there<sup>44</sup>."

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44. Gopal singh Vol. I P.66.; AD 1:Sri Rag, Mohalla I, P.72.

The first Guru Further writes :-

"In the society of Holy,  
one becomes the Holy,  
And one runs after Virtue,  
forsaking his Sins<sup>45</sup>".

The Fourth Guru Says :-

"There are four castes  
and four stages of life,  
But he, who Contemplates the Lord,  
is Supreme among men.  
As the bitter 'Arinda' (castor) plant,  
abiding near the sweet smelling chandan tree,  
becomes as fragrant as its neighbour  
So does the Sinner,  
associating with the Saints,  
becomes the saints<sup>46</sup>".

The Fifth Guru more clears this and says :-

"He who gambles away sheds his lust,

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45. Gopal singh Vol.,P.411; AD Rag Asa, Ashtpadi 7,  
Mohalla I, P.414.

46. Gopal Singh,Vol ,III,P.817; AD Rag gond, Mohalla  
4, P.861

Wrath, Envy and the conceit of 'Maya'  
 Brings into his Self Virtue,  
 Contentment, Compassion and Righteousness.  
 And the Load of birth and death is off his head  
 and joining the society (of the Holy)  
 his Mind becomes Pure,  
 And the Perfect Guru Ferries him Across.  
 And then one's mind becomes like  
 the dust for others to tread upon.  
 And all creation seems to him to consist  
 of no others but of loved friends<sup>47</sup>."

Bhagat Kabir also gives importance to sangat and  
 says:-

"Kabir, blessed is the 'chandan' tree,  
 girdled by useless growth :  
 But this too becomes fragrant like the  
 Chandan, for it, too in its nearness lives<sup>48</sup>."

Bhai Gurdas Says :-

"Without holy company  
 man is caught in the web of transmigration

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47. Gopal Singh Vol II.P.372; AD 2:36 Rag Asa,  
 Mohalla 5, P.379

48 Ibid, Vol. IV, P.1300; AD Salok Kabir, P.1365.

of the soul  
and cannot get peace of mind<sup>49</sup>."

The Sikh Guru laid great stress on 'sangat' as, in their view only 'satsang' could initiate one in the worship of the Nam. Satsang could remove all the evils of one's mind and thus help one in developing the power of control over one's emotions and so effect the purification of one's soul. The Gurus attached much sanctity to 'satsang' that they, considered that in it lay the true dwelling of 'God'. The Gurus believed that satsang (congregation) helped in the concentration of mind. They regarded the 'Gurumukhs' as wiser agents of God on earth.

The importance given by the Sikh Gurus to 'sangat' in promoting spiritual life was not limited only to purification of one's thought. The Sikh gurus believed in the miraculous effects of the sangat in changing and transforming the very lives of the people, and they raised this institution everywhere they went and highlighted its importance to who-so-ever they met.

As the foundations of this institution were laid by Guru Nanak, during the course of his travels, he felt

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49. Bhai Gurdas, Vol. 38, Pauri 12.

that the real cause of the people's misery was their disunity born out of the diversity of beliefs. He dispelled darkness and ignorance of the people and condemned the useless religious ceremonies of the Hindus and Muslims in a very tactful and convincing manner. He enjoined upon sikhs to live in harmony and along with that truth, contentment restraint and restraint of the senses should be practiced daily. The practice of singing the hymns was initiated by the Guru for both morning and evening assemblies. As a result of these activities of the guru, Sikh societies sprang up where ever he went.

The holding of religious assemblies Sangats of Sikhs was continued by Guru Angad at Khadur. In the times of Guru Amardas, the Sangat used to assemble at Goindwal where the sikhs met and treated one another affectionately, as if they were brothers. He established the Manji system. This was the first step towards the organization of the Sikhs. As the influence of the Sikh Gurus was developing since Guru Nanak, their message reached far and wide, the numbers of Sikhs followers thus increased. So, it became difficult to preach and teach them properly. It also affected the supervision and administration of spiritual needs of followers. Thus, Guru Amardas took

a great administrative step to solve the problem and divided the whole country inhabited by his followers into twenty-two provinces, each called a 'Manji' and each being divided further into 52 smaller section called 'Piris' each comprising a number of sangat. Guru Ramdas who succeeded Guru Amardas established a nucleus of new order of missionaries, called 'masands' of vicars, to look after sangats in different regions. This new order was reorganized and eleborated by fifth Guru, Arjan Dev. These measures led to the emergence of a large number of new Sikh sangats in country. A pious and influential sikh was placed at the head of each province who acted as a bishop and vice-gerent of the Guru, whose duty was to preach the sikhs followers in a locality. The charge of these Manjis was given without any discrimination under the name of religion, sex or caste. Even a muslim of Kapurthala was incharge of one Manji, and several of them were placed under the control of women.

A 'baoli' (a well with a pakka staircase reaching down to the water surface) was constructed at Goindwal under the instruction and personal supervision of the third guru. Through this step two problems were solved, one the problem of the shortage of water was overcome, second the system of separate wells for

separate castes was abolished and everybody who came to gurudwara without any distinction of castes and other, was also to use the water of this 'baoli' without any hesitation or discrimination. He also gave a separate social structure by creating separate sikh practices. He directed the followers that sikh gathering should be held on every first day of the month of Baisakh i.e 13th of April and Magh and on the day of Diwali. This step gave an opportunity to the sangats of far off places to meet in large number at least thrice a year, which strengthened the sikh brotherhood.

Later the two masters who succeeded Guru Amardas, one after the other, also showed great interest in enhancing the sangat system by building new religious centres for their followers. Guru Amardas founded the town of chak Ramdas which got its present name Amritsar, from the holy waters of pool of Immortality built there. The work of this tank was commenced by Guru Ramdas, But it reached its completion under his son and successor, Guru Arjan Dev, who as well built the gurudwara in the center of tank calling it Hari Mandir, i.e. God's House. Similarly Guru Arjan constructed a big tank and a temple at Taran-Taran, a place near Amritsar. He also founded the Towns of

Kartarpur (Distt. Jalandhar) and Shri Hargobindpur (Distt. Gurdaspur). Guru Hargobind laid foundations of the Akal Takhat' in 1663 A.D. and took his seat in it. Har Rai used to hold his congregations at Kiratpur, and Guru Teg Bahadur laid the foundations of the town of Anandpur. The religious centres thus built up formed a great cementing force for the rising Sikh community. The Sikh Sangats from far and near were drawn towards them as their holy places, and visited them whenever they could, some of them even making regular annual visits. During these visits the various sangat had the opportunity not only of meeting the Holy Guru and have his blessings, but also of coming into close contact with one another. They were provided free accommodation and free food during their stay. Guru Ka langer (free common kitchen) which had gradually developed into an enduring institution, was adequate for the purpose of feeding all the people who wanted to eat their. the food of the langer was considered so sacred that there was hardly any one who would miss it.

'Simran' (participation in the daily religious service, some of them conducted in the presence of Guru himself) and 'seva' (participation in the common projects and Guru ka langar) were two major

constituents of the daily routine of the visiting sikhs. In consequence, endurable bonds of union were formed which imparting solidarity and cohesion to the Sikh ranks. fuse the far flung and diverse units with a single, well-integrated organisation. Sangat was the precursor to the khalsa inaugurated by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699.

### 3. Langar (common kitchen):-

Along with Sangat developed the institution of 'langar' or 'pangat' (free common messing) langar more properly 'Guru ka langar', a persian word, means an 'alms house', an asylum for the poor and the destitute or a public kitchen kept by a great man for his followers and defendants. Some Sufi khanqahs ran langars or kitchens. In the Sikh tradition, langar become an integral part of Sikh society. A Sikh place of worship must have a langar attached to it. Its origin go back to the time of Guru Nanak himself. He instituted the langar and made it into a dynamic instrument for social regeneration. from an alms house or asylum, it turned into a center of positive and active brotherhood where all contributed the labour of their hands and sat together in a 'pangat' or row to eat. It trained people in 'seva' and served as a means of emphasizing the unity and equality of mankind.

This institution performed four fold functions. First it imparted a secular dimension to the Sangat. Secondly, it added to the functional efficiency of the Sikh organization. Thirdly, it translated the principle of equality into practice, making it obligatory for all people, whatever their status in life, to sit on ground and eat together. It was used as powerful institution for the upliftment of down-trodden who had been groaning under the yoke of socio-economic-cum-political inequalities and religious discrimination prevalent in the society at that time. Fourthly, it served as a cementing force among the followers of Sikhism.

Guru Nanak understood that the real cause of the misery of the people was there disunity born out of special prejudice and social barriers. Since the low caste were being exploited by priestly class for their personal ends and created dissensions, social discriminations, hatred and untouchability in society, Guru Nanak started the langar as a crusade against such social injustice, oppression and tyranny of the caste-system. Through his institution, the ideas of love and service, fraternity and equality were taught and practiced by the followers and the Gurus. he taught the people that all men were the children of

God and as such, all were brothers. The Guru's langar was open to all, where all were to be seated and served food together, irrespective of class or social status. He laid stress upon earning one's bread by honest labour, to follow the ideal "work is worship" as one's motto, to share one's earnings with others willingly and to meditate on the holy Nam. He told the people that charity was to be given willingly, with love and devotion. He preached that the real worship of God lay in selfless service of the masses who were all the creation of one and the same God. Thus, the Service of the people was the service of God.

The 'Guru ka Langar' thus, grew into an institution where lessons in social service and practical ethics were given and practiced. It has helped the Sikhs in sublimating their personal ego for the service of mankind. This is born out by the various hymns of the Gurus incorporated into the Guru Granth :-

"He alone, Oh Nanak,  
knowes the Way Who  
earnes with the sweat of his brow ,  
and then shares it with others<sup>50</sup>."

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50. Gopal Singh Vol.IV, P.1191; AD Var Sarang, Mahalla I, p.1245.

"Those who put the hard work and labour  
and repeat the Name,  
their faces will glow with an inner light,  
their efforts shall bear fruit  
and they will be saved from  
the cycle of transmigration<sup>51</sup>."

"Making an earnest effort,  
(on the Gods Way)  
live thou whole; earning,  
and abide (His) Pleasure, thou in joy.  
Contemplating thy Lord,  
meet thou Him,  
and Thy Anxieties will be dispelled<sup>52</sup>."

"The true disciples are those,  
who, are humble  
and earn their bread  
by the sweat of their brow  
and share their food with their brother<sup>53</sup>."

The Sikh Gurus not only laid stress on earning one's

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51. AD Japuji, Salok Mahalla I, p.8.

52. Gopal Singh Vol.II, P.513; Ad Var Gujri, Mahalla  
5, p.522.

53. Bhai Gurdas, Var.32.

bread with honest labour and sharing it with others, but also tried to inculcate the high ideals of love and service in the Sikhs to attain salvation. They enjoined upon them the service of humanity as whole and told them that unless their earnings were shared voluntarily and willingly, the charity given was useless.

"One should serve mankind  
in this world  
for a better life in the next<sup>54</sup>."  
"The whole creation is Thy kingdom,  
but none can achieve anything  
without service<sup>55</sup>."  
"Service done under compulsion  
is of no avail  
Nanak Says,  
one should serve others  
ungrudgingly and with pleasure<sup>56</sup>."

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54. AD Sri Rag, Mahalla I, p.26.

55. Gopal Singh Vol.II P.354; AD Asa Mahalla I, p.354.

56. Var Suhi Mahalla 2, p.787.

"The service of the people is supreme<sup>57</sup>."

"One can get happiness  
only with selfless service<sup>58</sup>."

"One should go on serving  
till the last breath,  
only then one meet the lord<sup>59</sup>."

"I pray Oh God,  
bless me with the company of the Gursikhs,  
so that I may serve them by fanning,  
fetching water for them,  
serving food to them<sup>60</sup>."

"The Gursikhs should serve one another,  
Only by serving,  
one can attain happiness.

One should cultivate humility,  
and share one's food with others<sup>61</sup>."

Guru Nanak enjoined upon his followers to consider the  
kitchen in their house as 'Guru ka Langar' and to have

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57. Gopal Singh Vol I, P.157; AD 2:2:40 Gauri Gureri  
Mahalla 4, p.164.

58. AD Gond, Mahalla 4, p.861.

59. AD Ramkali, Mahalla 5, p.883.

60. AD Suhi Mahalla 5, p.749.

61. Bhai Gurdas, Vol. 2, Pauri 10.

great love and sympathy for the poor and needy. Guru even as a child, used to visit and serve the holy persons irrespective of their religion, who were living in the neighbourhood of 'Talwandi' and distributed food and clothing. This was the reason that when his father once gave him money to start a trade, he instead of doing a profitable bargain, fed the hungry saints, considering that act to be the best bargain. Guru refused to join the grand feast given by rich Malik Bhago. Rather he preferred to stay with the poor carpenter, Bhai Lalo who earned his bread by hard labour. When Malik Bhago personally met the Guru and asked him why he had refused to join his feast and instead had eaten the food from Lalo who was a sudra by caste, the Guru replied that he had no caste distinctions but had preferred to eat coarsed food earned with hard labour and not dainty dishes prepared by using money earned with evil means. Malik realized it and Guru asked him to make it a principle of life to earn his living honestly, to distribute wealth among poor and needy, to love and serve with devotion. Malik's house became a dharamsal, where he started langar for everybody without any distinction of caste, creed rich or poor, high or low. In this way, Guru removed his false pride of high pure caste and

inculcated in him the spirit of doing 'kirt' (earning) and sharing the fruits of it with others.

In the same way the Guru converted robber Sajjan who, like Malik Bhago, distributed everything among the needy and converted his house into 'the temple of truth' and started serving food and giving shelter to all irrespective of caste and creed. Guru Nanak visited the dacoit Bhoomia's kitchen by saying that it was saturated with the blood of the poor. After realizing it, Bhoomia promised to obey the Guru with all sincerity and served food to all in the name of God and his kitchen became the 'Guru ka Langar'.

The Guru settled as a farmer during the latter part of his life at Kartarpur, along with Sangat he attached to it the langar or a free kitchen, which became a distinctive feature. The corn which was produced by the sweat of his own brow as he tilled his land himself, was used for feeding those who came to see him. Gradually, the people started working together for this common cause and brought their earnings for the Langar as their contributions, whenever they visited him. He thus, gave a practical demonstration of his teachings, which is earning one's bread by

honest labour and sharing one's earnings with others by starting free kitchen at Kartarpur.

The example set by Guru Nanak was followed by succeeding Gurus, who nurtured and strengthened the institution and tried to make it as a living force to unite the people on a common platform. Guru Angad organized the 'langar' on a large scale. In his times 'langar' was known for the rich variety of its virtuais. Sikh Chronicals record that the Guru's wife Mata Khivi providing shade or comfort to everyone like a thickly leafed tree- lovingly supervised the langar. Guru Angad got practical experience of service, while working in Guru Nanak's kitchen at Kartarpur, where he used to bring provisions for the langar and also helped the Guru in tilling the land. He always volunteered himself for all types of service to the Guru. Once he carried three wet bundles on his head for the cows and buffaloes. He always willingly and readily carried out the order of the Guru<sup>62</sup>.

Guru Angad spent all the offerings which he received on the langar at khadur, where free food was

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62. Macauliffe, Max Arthur, The Sikh Religion, Vol. II pp.4-15.

distributed to persons of all creeds, and pilgrims who came to see the Guru from distant places. The Guru's kitchen provided delicious dishes like rice boiled in milk and ghee (Kheer), but the Guru never touched that food and took coarse food earned by twisting strings of 'Munj'<sup>63</sup>. The service in langar was done by the Sikhs, who cooked and served the food and cleaned the utensils in the kitchen. In the days of Guru Amardas, the maxim became prevalent : 'pachele pangat peeche sangat' -- "Eating together takes precedence over meeting together". He expected all his visitors to pretake of

visitors to pre take of food in the langar with others before seeing him. According to the Sikh chronicles, even Emperor Akbar who once visited the Guru at Goindwal, had to eat out of the common kitchen like any other pilgrim. The Guru's kitchen remained open till late in the night.

The Guru instructed his followers that there was nothing like doing good to others and sharing one's earnings with others, giving food and clothes to the

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63. Teja Singh and Ganda Singh, A Short History of the Sikhs.pp. 17-18.

poor and asked them to get together on 'Baisakhi' and 'Diwali' prepare and distribute the food to the assembly. He asked them to shed the social prejudices and the superstitions of the 'Chauka' i.e. kitchen pollution and made them sit in the same row and eat together.

Guru Ramdas had received practical training in service while working in the langar of Guru Amardas. He used to cook, bring firewoods from the jungles and draw water for the Sikh sangat, and was always busy in serving the people. He used to earn his bread by selling boiled lentils and gave away one-fourth of his earning in charity. When he was married to Bibi Bhani both husband and wife continued to serve the sangat and worked in the kitchen day and night. Guru Ramdas started his langar at Ramdaspur (the present city of Amritsar) under his direct supervision. The supervision of the Langars at Kartarpur, Khadur and Goindwal was entrusted to different devout Sikhs.

Guru Arjan organised the system of contributions to the common pool by laying down that every Sikh should contribute one-tenth of his income for the common welfare. The money, Thus collected was to be spent on running the free kitchen. The Sikh voluntarily

contributed to the food of the kitchen in the form of cash, corn and wood and those who could not give anything contributed labour with love and there was never dearth of anything for the Guru's kitchen. the Guru and his wife, Mata Ganga, set personal examples of service by serving in the langar and also by sitting along with the people to take food and attended the visitor by serving them with water and food.

Guru Hargobind introduced the langar in the army which he kept at Amritsar. He also started two big langars at Hargobindpur and Kiratpur. He also kept a mobile kitchen for his army because of his constant movement from place to place.

The author of Dabistan-i-Mazahib, a Muslim Historian of that period, wrote that during the time of Guru Hargobind whosoever, with the Guru's name on his lips entered the house of any Sikh was received with warmth and served with food. Because, upto that time, the langar grew into a regular institution and devout Sikhs started running regular free kitchen in their houses. Everybody was served with food and nobody was refused food or allowed to starve. Visitors were served with love and devotion. Big congregations of

the Sikhs were fed by pooling provisions and contributions in the name of the Guru. Individual charity normally leads to personal ego, whereas the collective contributions and a system of collective distribution helped the Sikhs in rising above their petty selves.

Guru Har Rai continued and further developed the institution of langar even to other countries. Bhai Ganda, who was a sincere and devout Sikh, was sent to Kabul by the Guru with instructions to start the langar there and preach the true faith and feed holy men and pilgrims with the offerings. He built a sikh temple there and also started a free kitchen<sup>64</sup>.

Thus, Guru made no distinctions between the rich and the poor. All valuable offerings received by him were spent on the welfare of the guests and on running of the free kitchen.<sup>65</sup> The Sikh gurus gave instructions to the sikhs to serve others at the cost

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64. Santokh Singh, Bhai, Suraj Prakash, Vol IX, pp.3561-64.

65. Prakash Singh, The Sikh Gurus and the Temple of Bread, pp.85-86.

of their ownelves. They told them to keep extra food ready to feed the guests so that none went disappointed. They told that wealth should be given in charity and shared with others and one should try to accumulate the wealth in God's name and give up all pride.

As a great apostle of democracy Guru Gobind Singh stood for the equality of all and forbade the observance of caste distinctions among the khalsa. He disguised himself to test his sikhs by visiting different langars to find out, whether these langars were running according to the standing instructions. Langars of Bhai Nand Lal, Bhai Ram Kaur, Bhai Dewan Chand and Munshi Sahib Chand were popular at that time. Guru ordered his Sikhs that food, cooked or uncooked must be served at all times and without delays to those who came to their doors. There was no greater virtue than serving of food at all times without any consideration of the social status or position of the visitor. To turning away of the hungry amounted to turning away of the Guru himself. Whosoever served the poor and the needy served the Guru.

Thus, the institution of langar had become an essential accompaniment of the Sikh temples. The 'Parshad' from langar was looked upon as something very sacred. 'Guru ka Langar' thus, was adequate for the purpose of feeding all the people who wanted to eat there. The food of the langar being considered sacred, there was hardly anyone who would miss it. simran and seva i.e. participation in the daily religious services and participation in Guru ka langar and other common projects respectively, were two major constituents of the daily routine of the visiting Sikhs. In consequence unbreakable bonds of union were formed which imparting solidarity and cohesion to the Sikh ranks, fused the far - flung and diverse units into a single, well integrated organisation. Both langar together with sangat helped to establish a positive, democratic tradition among sikhs. Work is worship and mutual sharing symbolized the essential feature of the Sikh.

#### 4. The Khalsa Brotherhood :-

Guru Gobind Singh created the Khalsa on the principles of equality, fraternity and liberty. Its practical role are assumed significance when in 1699 AD the Khalsa was created to fulfill his mission. The Guru selected five beloved ones. All of them were from

different regions and belonged to different castes. For example Daya Ram, was a Kshatriya from Lahore, Dharam Das, a Jat of Haryana ; Sahib Chand, a barber of Bider ; Himat, a low caste Jhiver (water-carrier) of Jagan Nath Puri and Muhkum Chand, was a washerman of Dwarka. Guru gave them equal status and said : "my brethern, you are in my form and I am in yours. He who thinks there is any difference between us is mistaken."<sup>66</sup>.

Such was a revolutionary step of unique significance in Sikh history which brought about a complete change in the outlook of the lifeless, oppressed and downtrodden people, who were groaning under the yoke of the caste-system and the tyrannical rule of Mughals. A supreme genius, Guru Gobind Singh infused a new spirit into the life of the people and transformed them into virile race of saint-soldiers. A religioius community thus born, turned into a fraternity, free from hypocrisy and superstitions and devoid of fear and hatred.

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66. Teja Singh and Ganda Singh, A Short History of the Sikhs. pp. 68-71.

As it is noted earlier, Hinduism had lost its original luster. The Punjab had to bear the brunt of foreign invaders<sup>67</sup>, The perpetual yoke of bondage had demoralised the people and they took oppression and persecution laying down. Even having the heritage of brave and noble Aryans, could not protect their prestige and honour and they were so much intimidated that they could do nothing when their wives, sisters and daughters were being driven away like flocks of sheep and goats by the ruthless invaders and were sold as slaves at nominal prices in Afghanistan. In brief the whole society of that time presented a very depressing picture<sup>68</sup>.

Those were the days of rank superstitions and gross ignorance. Hinduism had lost its purity and dogmatism, whereas the power-intoxicated Muslims had ceased to abide by the tenets of Islam<sup>69</sup>. The Hindu corporate

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67. Lachhman Singh, Guru Gobind Singh, pp.30-31.

68. The Tenth Master, the Guru Gobind Singh Foundation, p.147.

69. The Ten Masters, Guru Gobind Singh Foundations. p.30.

life had become extent because of their own social inequalities. Thus, the Guru wanted to give the fallen godliness saintliness and manliness.

The Guru helped the Hindu Hill Rajas during the Pre-Khalsa period against the Mughal force. the combined forces gave a crushing defeat to the Mughals under Mian Khan and Alif Khan at Nadaun<sup>70</sup>. But this political unity could not last long, as the Guru's liberal and democratic teachings were felt as a serious menace to the power of the Hill rajas. The Guru's holding of conferences in their territorial limits, where he taught the people to challenge the birth-rights of priests and princes, where the brotherhood of the man was taught and practiced, where all ate from the same langar regardless of the fact as to who cooked the food and who distributed it, were considered a serious menace to their prestige and power by the Hill Rajas<sup>71</sup>. Then, Guru fought single-handed against the combined armies of the Hill Rajas

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70. Narang, K.S., Gupta, H.R., History of the Punjab. p.154.

71. Ahluwalia, Rajinder Singh, Guru Gobind Singh, pp.31 - 32.

and the Mugals and defeated them. It is true that, this incident encouraged the Sikhs, but at the same me time it convinced the Guru that he must create in them a strength with a will to resist the tyranny and oppression of the Mughals.

Besides, the seeds of disintegration had started sprouting among the Sikhs themselves. The Masand institution had deteriorated with the passage of time. The masands had become corrupt and greedy in every sense. they embezzeled offerings made to the Guru and committed many sins like taking of intoxicants and enjoying the society of courtesans. They started boasting that Guru was of their own making and would starve, if they did not look after him. The Guru received many complaints against them<sup>72</sup>. The Guru punished the masands for their misdeeds. He listened to the every case to the defense put forth by them and punished those who were not successful in proving their innocence. The institution of the masands was thus abolished for ever. It was announced that offerings to the Guru should be made direct<sup>73</sup>.

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72. Ganda Singh (Dr.) (ed.) Gur Sobha. p.39.

73. Ganda Singh (ed.) Hukamnamas, pp.142, 160, 170 & 178.

All those factors, which gave rise to the caste-system were opposed to the Guru's universal outlook. The ancient idea of the division of labour had developed into rigid castes with deep-rooted prejudices. A general renaissance and awakening had already been started by the predecessors of Guru Gobind Singh. The work of reform of religious and social institutions had been carried on more than two centuries by Guru Nanak and successive Gurus who had condemned the caste-system and other social evils in the society and preached the unity of God and brotherhood of man and taught the people not to believe in false ceremonies or rituals and idolatry. But the chasm between the social level of the low-caste sudras and the high-born Brahmins and Kshatriyas continued to be great and they could not join together in a common cause.

Institutions of sangat and pangat or langar had gone a long way in demolishing the old prejudices of caste and had inculcated into them the ideals of love, service and brotherhood and the worship of one God. Guru Arjan was martyred for upholding these beliefs and maintaining these institutions. Guru Hargobind taught them how to fight for the protection of their self-respect and transformed them into saint-soldiers, opposed the oppression and injustice. Guru Teg Bahadur

laid down his life in 1675 A.D. in the cause of religious freedom and rights of people<sup>74</sup>.

By this time the Sikhs had come to acquire a definite language, script and a definite scripture which made them a distinct religious group. The techniques of the Gurus as well as the unique example of Martyrdom had elevated the spirits of the Sikhs, but the old shackles of the Hindu society polluted by the caste-system had yet not been completely broken.

Guru Gobind Singh, thus, found the atmosphere suffocating. He found the people of the country slaves to prejudices, pride and passion. They attached undue importance to conventions and customs. The Guru had to face the political tyranny of the Mughals and the spectre of the caste-system, apart from the vested interests of various sections. He worked ceaselessly to change the psychosis of his countrymen and to infuse into them a strong spirit of unity, liberty and freedom<sup>75</sup>. He instilled into them a strong

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74. Narang, K.S. Gupta, H.P. History of Punjab, p.147.

75. Narang, G.C. Transformation of Sikhism, p.80

determination to fight aggression and tyranny and to root out evils, both political and social, wherever they existed. It was not an easy task. The Guru had to raise the society from the depths of social and moral degradation to which it had fallen. For that, the Guru had to sacrifice everything i.e. his home, his father, his family, his children and at last his own life. There is no such parallel of such supreme sacrifice in the pages of world History.

Through Khalsa, Guru preached universal as the essential of true religion. He said that all men belong to the same race. He repudiated the old beliefs of primal and divine origin theory of the institution of 'Varna ashramdharma'. He aimed at bringing a complete and basic revolution in social ideals to make the people feel as equal and active members of fraternity. for this purpose, the Guru created the order of the Khalsa to build up a community of the purified ones, free from fear and selfishness. He knighted the Sikhs as 'Singhs' or 'Khalsa' which means according to the Guru, one who has realised the self and shed his ego. He is in constant communion with God and is an embodiment of purity in thought, word and deed. He is free from all impurities and doubts. The Khalsa in spite of its separate entity is above any

discrimination of caste, colour, creed, sex and region.

Guru Gobind Singh exhorted the Khalsa to practice the three 'jewels' of the creed of 'Deg'. 'Teg' and 'Fateh'. 'Deg' stands for honest earnings. The 'Teg' stands for heroism to fight against evil and oppression, while 'Fateh' for the victory of the wonderful Lord. The victory of the divine principles of goodness, truth, justice and bravery.

When Guru Gobind Singh blessed The Five Beloved one's as equivalent to the Guru, he declared that whenever five of his Sikhs would assemble, he would permeate them. The Five Sikhs would have an authority superior to that of his own.

Thus, the khalsa brotherhood was created by the Guru on the principles of equality and democracy. Guru decentralized all powers in the collective hands. After creating khalsa the Guru undertook no task, great or small, without consulting his council of 'The Five' before undertaking anything important. This was the true spirit of democracy, which the Guru preached and practiced. Thus, khalsa brotherhood was model of perfect manhood.

## CHAPTER - III

### **Status of Mazhabi Sikhs : A Historical Analysis**

The Mazhabis or Rangrettas were Chuhra Hindus or Chuhra Muslims converted to Sikhism. The chuhra Hindus of Panjab were sweepers or scavengers by profession traditionally. They swept houses and village streets, collected cowdung, kneaded it into cakes, worked with manure, helping with cattle and taking them from a village. In the Sikh villages were added to their functions the work at the plough and in the fields. The Chuhra Hindu occupied the lowest place in the social scale. He was avoided by all and his touch was considered as polluted. When converted to Sikhism, he was still a village menial but was no longer the remover of night-soil. By taking the pahu, wearing the long hair and abstaining from tobacco, his standing in the social hierarchy had improved to some extent.

However there was no change for them with regard to endogammy and commonsality as the Sikhs still followed the Hindu Caste rules in such matters, though there

religious dogma was against caste.

So the converts to Sikhism, with the motive of gaining upward mobility continued to marry other converts of the same caste type. One such group was the Mazhabi Sikhs.

The history of the Sikhs in Panjab is incomplete without the study of Mazhabi Sikhs. They constitute an important organ of sikh society. In all the social and religious movements of the Sikhs, the Mazhabis contributed a great deal by their service and sacrifices. From Guru Nanak, the first Sikh Guru till today, the service rendered by them to the Sikh community cannot be passed over. The dasas, Asurs or Malechhas of the older times became Ranghrattas or Mazhabi Sikhs at the time of Guru Gobind Singh as an inseparable part of Sikh body. After adopting the Sikh principles they discarded all those lowly, functions which were attached to lowest castes. When the tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh created the 'Khalsa' the Mazhabi Sikhs adopted Khalsa principles by

taking pahul<sup>1</sup> and performed countless deeds of bravery throughout the course of Sikh history, till today these people strictly observe all such principles as they have given them equality with the rest of the community which is evident from the

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1. Pahul or the Baptism is a ceremony which is conducted as follows :- The candidate after they had bathed and put on clean clothes, takes their seats in the midst of the assembly, generally called together for the purpose. Five Sikhs (representing the beloved five) who have reputation of being regular in the observance of Sikh rules of conduct mix some sugar with water in a iron basin in and stir it with khanda ( a double edged dagger), at the same time chanting by turn some verses from two Granths i.e Adi Granth and Dasam Granth. After that this solution is sprinkle over the hair and body of every candidate and part, of it is given to them one by one to drink). Then all are made to repeat certain vows which constitute the Reht or the Sikh rules of conduct. the solution is called Amrit (Nector) and is supposed to confer and make them 'Singh' (Lions), to knit together in brotherly love, destroying the distinction of caste and creed.

tradition they receive in Sangat and Pangat. In fact, the role of Mazhabi Sikhs in Sikh history came to limelight when a Mazhabi Sikh Bhai Jaita who latter on came to be known as Bhai Jiwan Singh after taking Pahul, brought the mutilated head of Ninth Guru, Guru Teg Bahadur from Chandni Chowk, Delhi to Anandpur<sup>2</sup>. The tenth Guru , Guru Gobind Singh, was only 9 (Nine) years old at that time who received his father's head at Kiratpur, embrassed Bhai Jaita for his brave act and blessed him saying, "Rangretta, Guru ka Beta", which means 'untouchables are sons of Guru'<sup>3</sup>. This event raised the status of Mazhabis since an untouchable had performed a great act of bravery demonstrating that acts of bravery are exclusive sphere of the upper castes.

It is commonly believed that Mazhabi Sikhs came in the fold of Sikhism during the times of 9th Guru Tegh

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2. Ethne K. Marenom The Transformation of Sikh Society, Heritage Publishers, New Delhi, 1976, p.20
  3. Samsheer Singh Ashok, Mazhabi Sikhian da Itihas, Baba Jiwan Singh Memorial and Research Trust, London, 1987, p.69.

Bahadur. But it is not true, for the Mazhabi Sikhs have been serving since the times of first Guru. The entry of Mazhabis Sikhs into Sikhism was made through a prominent Sikh personality Baba Budda, who belonged to village Kathu Nangal situated on the bank of river Ravi opposite Kartarpur, where Guru Nanak spent his last days. The elders of Bhai Jaita also belonged to the same village, i.e. Kathu Nangal<sup>4</sup>. As a result of the life-style, teachings and the missionary zeal of Baba Budda the untouchables of his own village got into the fold of Sikhism.

When Guru Nanak, in his old age after completing his long missionary journeys decided to settle down permanently in 1585 at Kartarpur, as a house-holder in order to give a practical shape to his teachings, the people from far and near, coming to him to seek the blessings of their guru. His teachings about 'Pangat' and 'Sangat' were practised under his own supervision. At this very time, a child name Bhura of village Kathu Nangal came to seek Nanak's blessings. This child Bhura's innocent conversation impressed guru Nanak so much that while blessing him he said that the child

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4. Ibid, p.66.

was far more mature than his age. So, from that day, child Bhura became 'Baba Budda' for ever, and remained not only with Guru Nanak but also later on with six Gurus<sup>5</sup>. He and his family became true followers of Sikh religion and after Baba Budda his successors continued serving the Sikh Gurus<sup>6</sup>.

Baba Budda was the son of a former Bhai Sangha, a Randhawa Jat by caste. Baba Budda's maturity, truthfulness, selfless service and his direct association with the founder of Sikh religion right from the childhood raised his status among the Sikhs. Baba Budda made a lasting contribution to Sikh missionary work and gave a practical shape to Sikh philosophy. Whenever the new missionary centers were established at different places to propagate Sikh principles, Baba Budda's presence was considered necessary and noble. Important missionary centers of sikhs e.g. Amritsar, Akal Takhat, Khadur Sahib, Goindwal, Dera Baba Nanak, Kiratpur and Bawlis (the water tanks) at different places were constructed

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5. Giani Amar Singh, Jiwan Itihas Baba Budda ji, Prit Pal Singh 'Pal', Chowk Chhoti Khuhi, Amritsar, 1964, PP. 15-20.

6. Ibid, PP. 162-164.

under his supervision. When Guru Arjan, the fifth Sikh Guru, compiled the Guru Granth Sahib, the first recital was done at Harimandir, Amritsar by Baba Buddha, who then became the fifth priest of Sikh religion<sup>8</sup>. Thus being the head of missionary work, his prominence increased day by day. Also being the old person of Guru Nanak's times, not only Sikh followers, but succeeding Sikh Gurus also respected him and no new task was performed without taking his constant.

After Baba Buddha, as already stated, the succeeding generations of his family, his sons, great grand sons remained with Sikh Gurus and became the part and parcel of Sikh Society. All of them did contribute in the same manner and got the same respect and status as a reward of their true services. Till the time of Sixth Guru Har Gobind, Baba Buddha himself was there. But after that at the time of seventh Guru Har Rai, Baba's son Bhai Bhanna, eighth Guru Har Krishan's time Bhai Bhanna's son Bhai Jhanda and at Ninth Guru, Guru Teg Bahadur, Bhai Jhanda's son Bhai Gurditta and the last tenth Guru Gobind Singh's time Bhai Gurditta's son Bhai Ram Kuer ji (who later was known as Bhai

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7. Ibid. P.16.

8. Ibid, P. 96.

Gurbakhsh Singh after taking Pahul) are few names worthy of mention. It shows that Baba Bhudda's whole family followed Sikh religion making great contributions to Sikh religion and principles.

So the untouchables of the village Kathu Nangal, were well known to Sikh religion preached by Guru Nanak through this prominent Sikh Baba Buddha, who belonged to the same village. According to Sikh History, Guru Nanak visited this village to attend the last Prayers of Buddha's Father and Mother<sup>9</sup>, People especially the Untouchables of this village were influenced by Guru Nanak's teaching which lay emphasis on love, equality and brotherhood. So, through Baba Buddha, the untouchables who adopted Sikh religion were those who were traditionally attached to Baba family as Kamins. They were ancestors of Bhai Jaita, who later on came to be known as Mazhabi Sikhs. Since then, these people always remained under the fold of Sikhism. Rather they were very close to Sikh Gurus.

Bhai Jaita, whose contribution to Sikh History gave the Mazhabi Sikhs a status in Sikh Society, was born in November, 1649, at village Gago Mahel<sup>10</sup>. This

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9. Ibid, P. 35-36.

10. Sham Sher Singh Ashok, Mazhabi Sikhan da Itihas, P. 64.

village is situated in-between Ramdas and Ajnala, District Amritsar. According to a prominent Sikh historian S. Shamsheer Singh Ashok<sup>11</sup>, Bhai Jaita belonged to Rai Kalian's clan. In Sikh history we find that village Kathu Nangal in district Gurdaspur was ancestral village of Rai Kalian Rangretta, which was inhabited by Bhai Kathu, who was one of the elders of Baba Buddha. When Bhai Gago, again a person from Baba Buddha's clan established a new village Gago Mehal, on his own name, the untouchables of this village also migrated to this village. After this in 1627, Baba Buddha's grandson Sawan Singh was blessed with a son. To celebrate this happy occasion they laid down the foundations of a new village after the name of the newly born child, Jhanda Ramdaspur. In this new Village people from different places, of different castes settled down. The traditionally attached untouchable family of Rai Kalian to Baba Buddha's family also shifted to this village<sup>12</sup>.

Till the time of Guru Arjan, Baba Buddha's missionary activities and the co-operation of Bhai Jaita's elders carried the untouchables of that period towards this

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11. Ibid, P.66.

12. Ibid P. 64-66.

new socio-religions movement. A noticeable facts is that in the houses of Sikh Gurus the ladies of these untouchable families worked as nurses of their children and also worked freely in their houses including the kitchens. When the untouchable men were doing out-door jobs and sometimes even missionary work, the untouchable women were doing indoor household work. This humanitarian treatment carried them towards the Sikh religion as they had never received such a treatment earlier.

Then under Sixth Guru Har Gobind, some of the Mazhabi Sikhs joined his army and made tremendous sacrifices that further raised their status among Sikhs.

Till the time of Guru Teg Bahadur, these untouchables had shown their loyalty, love and devotion to Sikh Gurus in particular and to Sikh religion in general. Because of these qualities they got equal status in society. They accompanied the ninth Guru Teg Bahadur to Patna, because the Guru had faith in them. From Patna to Anandpur and then from Anandpur to Delhi, till the time of martyrdom of the Guru, they remained with him also during his hard times and worked as his right hand. Bhai Jaita who brought the beheaded head of ninth Guru from Chandni Chowk Delhi to Anandpur was a brave and real Sikh from this low community.

When Guru Gobind Singh started giving military training to his followers and reorganized the military, the Mazhabi Sikhs joined his forces in large numbers. As a result, the Guru made Bhai Jaita incharge of Ranjeet Nagara (a big drum). According to his warfare strategy, Guru Gobind Singh built many forts at different places like, Kesgarh, Anandgarh, Lohgarh, Holgarh, Fatehgarh, Ajitgarh and Agamgarh, which were training centers. Each fort was under the change of a trained brave commander.

After fighting several battles especially of Bhagani and Nadun, the Guru thought of strengthening his army not only by infusing a new spirit among his soldiers but also by riding them out of the clutches of caste, colour, creed and untouchability. So, at Anandpur, he organized the 'Khalsa' through the ceremony of Pahul. At this important occasion, a member of Baba Buddha's family, Bhai Ram Kaier, took the Pahul, changed his name and became Bhai Gurbakhsh Singh. Along with him Bhai Jaita also took Pahul and became Bhai Jiwan Singh.

When Guru had to move to Chamkaur Sahib fort after vacating Anandpur fort as a strategic measure, Bhai Jiwan Singh joined him alongwith several other soldiers. Here, too, the enemy did not allow him to

rest and he had to move to Machhiwara forests leaving behind only forty brave soldiers and his two sons to stop enemys' advance. They were outnumbered and Bhai Jiwan Singh as a true soldier of the Guru laid down his life along with other soldiers and Guru's two sons<sup>13</sup>.

After the battle of Muktsar, the Guru proceeded to Sabo Ki Talwandi, where a person presented him with a gun. The Guru asked several soldiers of Dhallah head of that place to ask some of his soldiers to become a target for testing the gun. None of Dhallah's soldiers came forward. Then he asked his own Soldiers. Immediately Bhai Vir Singh and his son Hasir Singh who belonged to Mazhabi Sikhs offered their services. Even at the last moment of the Guru's life, the two Mazhabi Sikhs Bhai Daya Singh and Bhai Dharam Singh were with him at Nader (Deccan)<sup>14</sup>.

The Mazhabi Sikhs extended their whole hearted co-operation to Banda Bahadur even in the most difficult times when the command of the military came into his hands in 1708 after the death of the tenth Guru. Even

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13. Ibid, PP. 69-74.

14. Ibid, PP. 76-77.

after Banda Bahadur, for more than a decade the annals of Sikh history are replete with the sacrifices of the Mazhabi Sikhs in the struggle of the Sikhs against the subedar of Lahore. The names of Bhai Mani Singh, Bhai Guljara Singh, Bhai Bota Singh and Bhai Ganga Singh are worth mentioning.

However living like vagabonds for sometime without a commander after the martyrdom of Banda Bahadur, they reorganized themselves under a collective leadership named 'Khalsa Dal' which unfortunately was split into two groups called 'Budda Dal' and 'Tarna Dal'.

Later on when Kapur Singh on receiving a grant of twelve (12) villages from the governor of Lahore Nawab Jakria Khan, divided his Jagir into five groups, appointed a Mazhabi Sikh Bhai Beer Singh as a head of one of the groups which had 2300 horses.

However, during the misle period of Sikh history, the Mazhabi Sikhs did not receive fond treatment at the hands of heads of the misles as they all belonged to higher castes and the Mazhabis were in the minority. In spirit, the Mazhabis did a lot for the upper castes. Infact the Sikh principles of equality and brotherhood were not well adhered to after the death

of the last Guru who was keen to establish them strongly among the sikhs. Even Banda Bahadur could not do anything in this direction, because his whole life was spent in facing Mughal Armies. So he could not attend to social reform.

Consequently, after the Sikh Gurus, slowly and slowly the whole of equality and brotherhood principles were thrown into the background as a result of the hold of Hindu caste-style among the Sikhs. So the old caste-practices of separateness, high and low differences and untouchability got their entry into Sikh society. The people who had seen just a single beam of brotherhood and equality after many centuries during the times of Sikh Gurus, again came under the hold of centuries-old suffocating caste practices. No doubt, a few movements did try to break the shackles of caste system and untouchability but all in vain as the caste barriers were too strong for the efforts made to remove them. However, they did soften the hold of caste-system to the extent that Mazhabis could move amongst the Sikhs, that the touch of this particular class of people would not pollute other upper castes. But this did not improve the real position of the Mazhabis amongst the Sikhs.

The situation deteriorated to the extent that their very survival among the Sikhs was at stake. On the one hand they were facing Mughal persecution and on the other were suffering under the discriminatory caste-system. In 1745, When Shah Nawaj Khan, the governor of Lahore appointed Jaspat Rai, as his military commander of Emnabad, his cruelty towards Sikhs led to his murder by a Mazhabi Sikh Nibhau Singh.

It is a fact that, when twelve misles came into existence, no Mazhabi Sikh was appointed head of any army, though Mazhabis had contributed a great deal towards the establishment of these misles. A particular gotra of a particular Sikh caste are seen as caste in the way as the Hindu caste divides its main castes into many sub-castes which are called gotras. In the same manner each misle was composed along caste lines, e.g. Ramgharia Misle would be all member of Tarkhan or carpenter caste. The Dhaliwal misle was composed of Khatri Sikhs and Phoolkia misle of Rajputs. The other misle were of the Jat Sikhs.

However, in the armies of Sikh Misle Chiefs, Mazhabi Sikhs did get status, honour and high posts, not because of the acceptance of religious equality with rest of Sikh community, but in recognition of their

valour and bravery during the times of Guru Gobind Singh. In fact glorious past and strong commitment to Sikhism were exploited by the misle Chiefs. Besides Rangretta (Mazhabi) Sikh, other untouchable castes like Ravidasias also took part in strengthening the political position of the Sikhs. But socially they remained at the bottom of the Sikh society.

Further Maharaja Ranjit Singh made every attempt to preserve caste division. In his cavalry, according to Gulshan Lal Chopra<sup>15</sup>. Ranjit Singh's Irregular cavalry was dominated by the Jat Sikhs, and the Mazhabis were given the position of dependents. The Jat Sikhs were in all probability, promoted to Officers positions and were better paid than members of the regular cavalry. This means caste prejudices determined Ranjit Singh's military policies against the religious principles of Sikhs.

In the army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh 'Nihang Singh' were out numbered among whom were mostly Rangretta Sikhs. A large number of Nihang Singhs of Buddha Dal were Mazhabi sikhs, who worked as a well organised

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15. Gulshan Lal Chopra, Punjab as Sovereign State  
Lahore, 1928 P. 103.

Akal regiment in Sikh wars and even after that also in Sikh states of Punjab like Nabha, Patiala and Jind. As a result of the defeat of the Sikhs in the Anglo-Sikh War, there was an Akal Regiment of the Mazhabis when the English army captured Lahore. It affected the soldiers because Sir Henry ordered in 1846-47 that the captured soldiers either be shot or be hanged because of mutiny.

During Sikh empire period, a new caste hierarchy had been formed, as a result of the political prominence of the Jat Sikhs, with the Jat Sikhs at the top of that hierarchy. The original conversion of Sikhism was striving for upward mobility, particularly of the lower Hindu castes. But the situation changed subsequently. The fact that the Sikhs mentioned caste practices was noticed by European historians and analysts such as George Forster in 1798<sup>16</sup>, Sir John Malcolm in 1812<sup>17</sup>, Major E.C. Archer in 1833<sup>18</sup>,

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16. George Forster, A Journey from Bengal to England, Vol.1. London, 1798.

17. Sir John Malcolm, Sketch of Sikhs, London, 1812.

18. Major E.C. Archer, Touss in Upper India, Vol.I. London, 1833.

Charles Masson in 1842<sup>19</sup> and Joseph Davey Cunningham in 1849<sup>20</sup>. They also pointed out that the Sikhs had become a distinct religious group by the 19th century and not merely a set of Hinduism, having two major divisions, Sahaj Dharis also called Nanak Panthis and Kesh Dharis also called Khalsa.

Both Forster and Malcom noted the persistence of caste practices regarding endogamy and commonsality among the Sikhs. The Latter noted that the caste alignments were mentioned for the new converts during Sikh empire. The process was a constant one as the Sikh society originally Hindu, could not do away with their old caste background on conversion. It was quite natural as they lived amidst caste ridden Hindu society. Malcom<sup>21</sup> noted that Sikh interdined and inter-married with Hindus of the same caste from which they had been converted. He tells us also that the

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19. Charles Masson, Narrative of various Journeys in Balochistan, Afghanistan and the Punjab, Vol.I.London, 1842.

20. Joseph Davey Cunningham, A History of the Sikhs, London, 1849.

21. Sir John Malcolm, Sketch of the Sikhs, London, 1812, P.64.

converts of Sikhism for the highest caste, continued to intermarry with convert from the same castes, but not with Hindus of other castes. With regard to the position of the Jat Sikhs in the hierarchy of the Sikhs, it is pointed out that they held the upper most position. In the caste hierarchy rights over land and its produce and thereby holding control over the economic resources. Cunningham in 1840<sup>22</sup>, also noted a dissenting sect among Sikhs, which was organized along caste lines. However the caste hierarchy among the Sikhs is different from that of the Hindus.

Thus in the socio-economic environment, the Mazhabi Sikhs, as village menials acquired the lowest position in the Sikh caste hierarchy, as they preferred the position of scavengers<sup>23</sup>, for the position of any social group in the Punjab was based on two considerations : descent and calling<sup>24</sup>. Though

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22. Joseph Davey Cunningham, A history of the Sikhs, London, 1849, P. 63.

23. D C J Ibbetsan, Punjab Castes, Language Department, Patiala, 1970 (first Published 1916), P.3.

24. D C J Ibbetsan Census Report of Punjab 1881, Vol. I. Report Central Coal Press, Lahore, 1883, P.317.

Mazhabis took the Pahul and obeyed all the principles of Sikh religion in order to blot out the memory of their former degraded position in society<sup>25</sup>, they still held the lowest position in the eyes of their co-religiousts.

In the agricultural society of the Punjab, the prestige and power of any group was determined by the possession of land<sup>26</sup>. The traditional socio-economic set-up was based on agricultural productivity and customary relationships. The Jats as land owners looked down upon all other villagers and claimed their services under the relationship which were called 'Jajmani relationship'<sup>27</sup>. Each family of 'sepidar' was

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25. A.H. Bingley, Sikhs : A Class Handbook For The Indian Army, Govt. printing. Calcutta, 1918, P.64.
26. Punjab Castes, P.102. or P.H.M. Van Dan Dungen, "Changes in Status and Occupation in 19th century Punjab," (Ed D.H.Low), Soundings in Modern South Asian History, Wieldenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1968, P.63.
27. William Henrikes Wiser, The Hindu Jajmani System, Lucknow Publishing House, Lucknow, 1958 (First Printing in 1936), PP. XI & XXII.

attached to a particular family of land owner of jajmans to whom they provided their services at the time of harvest<sup>28</sup>. They helped the agriculturists in ploughing, irrigation, manuring and weeding there fields<sup>29</sup>. Besides this, they performed duties of removing the refuse of the dwelling houses and streets and the dung from the byre (cattle-barn) to the owners' dung-hill. This latter task, however, was more usually done by their womenfolk<sup>30</sup>. They also made the 'chhaj' or winnowing pan, and the 'sirki' or grass thatch used for covering carts and barns. For all these services they were paid in kind as a fixed share of the crop<sup>31</sup>.

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28. Harish Chander Sharma, "Artisans in the Punjab (1849-1947) Occupational Change and New Social Relations." *Journal of Regional History*, Vol. I, 1980, P.109.
29. Himadri Banerjee, *Agrarian structure of the Punjab (1849-1901)*, Manchar Publication, New Delhi, 1982, P. 175.
30. P.E. Parry, *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, Offset Master Printers, Delhi, 1970, P.61.
31. Tom G. Kessinges, *Vilyatpur 1848-1968 : Social and Economic Change in North Indian Villages*, P. 64.

In some rural areas, the Mazhabi 'sepi' were also known as 'Kamins'. They were divided into two broad groups, 'Khangi' and 'vadee' or 'Athris'<sup>32</sup>. As the Khangi Kamins, the Mazhabis were domestic and stable servants. In the eastern Punjab they were the scavengers of the house, made the dung fuel cakes, and took the cattle out for grazing<sup>33</sup>. they were paid separately for the duties as 'Khangi Kamins' in addition to their customary dues. In some parts of Punjab they were employed on occasion also to winnow the grain or keep the fire under the 'gur' furnace alight. The Athris were entirely employed in the field and had to cultivate and irrigate the land, carry manure and attend to the cattle<sup>34</sup>. During the harvest time most of the reaping and winnowing fell to their lot, and this was the hardest in the whole year round of the field work<sup>35</sup>.

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32. Himadri Banergee, Agrarian Structure of the Punjab (1849-1901) P.6 and 175.

33. Punjab Castes, P.293.

34. Gazetteer of Amritsar District 1892-93, P.93.

35. Himadri Banergee, P. 177.

For all these services remuneration of the Mazhabis were determined by local custom and they were paid in kind by fixed share of produce of the land. Their share was deducted from the gross produce<sup>36</sup>. As customary payment they got a certain number of sheeves of wheat or a stated weight of grain, in some cases the dues were entered in the village records as taking the form of percentage of the grain harvested. For example, for their services as Athhris, they were supplied with food every day and grain at the time of harvest. The female family members of the Mazhabis were also engaged as khangi kamins and were given wheat at the rabi harvest and some amount of Gur every year. Mazhabis working occasionally as agricultural labourers received a share of grain during rabi harvest only. The harvest rate was paid to those who were practically whole time servants of the cultivator and did any work required of them.

The land holders maintained their economic power and social superiority over the Mazhabi Sikhs by keeping

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36. Harish Chander Sharma, "Artisans in the Panjab (1849 - 1947) :Occupational Change and New Social Relations." p.110.

them at a low economic level. They were also subjected to all sorts of hardships and humiliation.<sup>37</sup> The jats often complained of the large amount of grain which they had to give to the labourers and scavengers at the harvest time. They forgot that this was a small remuneration for the amount of work which the Mazhabis had performed throughout the year.

So far as their social status was concerned, the high caste Sikhs did not keep any association with them. The danger of pollution from lower castes reinforced the social distance. They could not have any matrimonial relationship with higher castes of the Punjab and they often arranged marriages with 'Lal Begi' and Hindu Chuhras<sup>38</sup>. These 'Lal Begi' were Chuhras, who also read Granth Sahib or respected the teachings of Guru Nanak, in consequence of resident in Sikh villages<sup>39</sup>. The Mazhabis had numerous gotras

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37. Ibid, p.112.

38. Satish Saberwal, Mobile Man, pp. 6 & 32.

39. Pandit Hari Krishan Kaul, Census Report Punjab 1917, VI-XIV, Pt.I-report, Civil and Military Gazette Press, Lahore, 1912, p.158 : H.A. Hose. Glossary of Tribes and Castes, Vol - III (L-2) Panjab Languages Department, Patiala 1970 (Reprint) p.75.

like Adiwāl. Gill, Bhatti, Nath, Borat, Sahota, Khokhar, Mathu, Palima, Balu, Atwal, Hans, Sindhu, Ladhar and Dhariwal<sup>40</sup>. Some of these were the same as those of Jats. It appears that the Mazhabis would borrow the surname of a dominant caste of their villages as their own<sup>41</sup>. They had also adopted the customs of Jats performed at wedding, birth and death<sup>42</sup>.

The lower castes, including the Chuhras were expected to live apart from the high-classes. The children of the Mazhabis especially those who were economically at low position, were seated apart from the high-castes students in the schools and had to sit at the back<sup>43</sup>. In the Punjab, although there were no separate wells for Mazhabi Sikhs, they were not allowed to use water directly. Usually, they drew water from a pit or

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41. B.D. Maclagan, Census Report of Panjab and Its Foundatories 1891, Vol XIX, Pt. I-Report, Office of the Superintendent of Govt Printing, Calcutta, 1892, p.288.

42. Ibbeston, Glossary of Tribes, p.75.

43. Satish Saberwal, Mobile Man, p. 194.

tank<sup>44</sup>. They were not allowed to cremate their dead at the place used by high-castes.<sup>45</sup> They had their own places to perform cremation ceremonies<sup>46</sup>. They lived on the outskirts of the village or near the village in a separate area known as 'thaathi'. Here they lived along with the menials of other faiths<sup>47</sup>. Naturally their standard of living was lower than the members of other castes. They generally lived in small thached huts on the outskirts of the villages, as they

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44. B.S.Saini, The Social and Economic History of Panjab, Ess Ess Publications, Delhi 1975, p.52.
45. J.R.Kambla, Rise and Awakening of Depressed Classes in India, National Publishing House, New Delhi, 1979. pp.13-14.
46. This information is based on interviews of Mazhabis Sikhs conducted for the Project 'Untouchability in Rural Punjab' Sponsored by ICSSR unpublished Report 1991, by H.S.Takulia, department of Gandhian Studies, Panjab University, Chandigarh.
47. Harish Chander Sharma, "Artisans in the Punjab (1849- 1947) Occupational Change and New relations, p.113 : and A.Macfarquhar, Dutt, Gazetter of Amritsar, 1947, p.72.

were economically low and socially of an impure caste<sup>48</sup>.

Till 1920<sup>49</sup>, Mazhabi Sikhs had always been excluded from participation in the common worship<sup>50</sup>. They were not allowed to offer prayer at the Gurudwara<sup>51</sup>. They were not allowed to visit the Golden Temple. The ban on their entry to the Golden Temple was lifted in 1920 under the influence of Singh-Sabha movement and Gurudwara Reform Movement at the instance of Sardar Sunder Singh Majithia. The teachers and students of Khalsa college dined with the Mazhabis and on the morning of 13th October-1920, they marched in

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48. Gazette of India, Punjab ; Amritsar, 1976, Revenue Department Chandigarh, 1976, p.531.

49. Shymala Bhatia, 'Military Recruitment and Revival of Sikhism, "Proceedings Punjab History Conference, sixteenth session, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1982, p.295.

50. Census Report, Punjab, 1881, Vol. I-Report, p.137.

51. Fauja Singh, The City of Amritsar, Oriental Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi, 1978, p.95 and 99.

congregation towards the Golden temple to offer the 'Prashad'. The priests of the Golden temple were reluctant initially to extend this privileges to Mazhabis. They refused to accept their 'Prashad'. Many appeals and remonstrances were made and the priests agreed to accept the offerings after the following shabad was recited :-

"The Lord himself Forgives  
 His Meritless Creatures,  
 and Yokes them to Service of the True Guru.  
 Sublime is the Service of the True Guru  
 (for through it).  
 One is Attuned of Lord's Name.  
 The Lord Himself, is His Merses,  
 forgives and unites us with Himself.  
 However Sinning and Meritless creatures we may be,  
 The True Guru makes us His own.  
 Countless of the Sinners were  
 forgiven by the Guru,  
 if they reflect on the True Word.  
 They boarder the Boat of the Guru  
 and he Ferried them Across.  
 The rested iron (of the mind) is transmuted  
 into gold, coming into contact with  
 Philosopher's stone of Gunis.

And then one loses one's self-hood,  
 and the Name abiding in the mind,  
 One's soul merges in the oversoul,  
 Sacrifice am I to the Guru,  
 I am forever dedicated to the True Guru,  
 Who bless me with the Treasure of the Name,  
 through the Guru's wisdom,  
 I merge in Equipoism,  
 Without the Guru,  
 poise comes not in the mind,  
 ask the wise one's if thou may.  
 So serve ever thy Guru, dying to thy-self.  
 through the Guru's word  
 is God's fear instilled in mind,  
 and thou what ever one does is pious and pure,  
 And then one is Blest, with the Lord's love  
 and learns ever, on the True Name.  
 They also serve their Guru,  
 I repair to their Feet,  
 They fulfill their human birth  
 and procure,  
 Forgiveness even for their associates.  
 The True Word alone is True,  
 it is by the Guru's Grace  
 that one is Blest with it.  
 Nanak :

when the Lord's Name comes to abide in the Mind,  
there is no obstacle on one's Path.<sup>52</sup>.

After this 'Shabad' the ardasa for 'krahah prasad' was said and it was distributed among the congregation in which Mazhabis were also there. Only after this incident the Mazhabis were allowed to enter the Golden Temple at special hours, and were allowed to offer prasad in the form of cash or uncooked stuff which was prepared by the high caste sikhs themselves.<sup>53</sup>. Some of the Mazhabis interviewed by the author, gave the information that in villages, they were not allowed to enter the Gurudwara till 1947. It is also observed during the survey that there are separate Gurudwaras for low castes, though religious occasions are celebrated together in the villages in upper caste Gurudwaras. The upper caste do not visit

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52. Sri Guru Granth Sahib, (Trans by Dr. Gopal Singh) Vol 2, World Sikh University Press, 1978, p.615. Adi Granth 8 : 2 sorath Mohalla 3, p.638-639.

53. Pushpa Suri, Caste in Prem Sumarg, Punjab History Conference Eleventh Session, Punjabi University Patiala, pp.201 -202.

low caste Gurudwaras.<sup>54</sup>

Although Singh sabha leaders were deeply concerned with the problem of untouchability and they did a great deal for its removal, yet the Brahmanical ideas continued to have its impact on the minds of some of the Sikhs as they had not fully imbibed the spirit of Sikhism in their practical life. This is evident from an incident that occurs at the end of the 19th century<sup>55</sup>. It is stated that the powerful Singh sabha editor Giani Dit Singh, had to withdraw himself from the Sikh congregation at the time of distribution of Karah Prasad as he was a Mazhabi.

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54. Unpublished report by H.S.Thkulia for the project 'Untouchability in Rural Punjab', Sponsored by the Indian Council of Social Sciences Research (ICSSR) Deptt. of Gandhian Studies, P.U.Chandigarh. pp. 234-235.
55. Harbans Singh, "Origins of the Singh Sabha' Punjab past and present : Essays in the Honour of Dr. Ganda Singh, Punjabi University Patiala, 1976, p.275, and Surjit Singh Narang, "Chief Khalsa Diwan - A Study of Socio-religious Organisation", Journal of Sikh Studies, VOL VIII, No. I, 2 ; Amritsar 1981, p.105.

The British Rule offered an opportunity to some of the Mazhabis to get out of their traditionally degraded position and low paid occupations as a result of social, economic and political changes. Developments in the system of education, commercialisation of agriculture, means of transport and communication, industries, army and governmental facilities, helped them to change their occupations and economic positions to a great extent and to improve their social position.

Education was considered the basic input for bringing about change in the social and economic fortunes of the untouchables castes. Western Education fostered the idea of equality and education did not remain the monopoly of higher castes<sup>56</sup>. There are important changes in the educational system and amount of literacy in India. Bernard Barber<sup>57</sup> points out that new values and new ideologies were imparted to some people in all castes, also with the undermining of

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56. L.Middleton and S.M.Jacob, Census report of Panjab, 1921, Vol. XV. pt. I-Report, Civil and Military Gazette Press, Lahore, 1923, p.344.

57. Bernerd Barber, Social Stratification, New York, 1959, p.490.

religious beliefs and social ideologies supporting the caste system. education provided the new knowledge and skills necessary for movement into new and more highly valued social roles than those formerly occupied by them under rigid system. Thus, the increase in the amount and the availability of education led to an increase in the amount of social mobility.

The major development in the second half of the 19th century was a steady commercialization of agricultural produce in the province<sup>58</sup>, which brought it in contact with the world capitalist Market, that resulted in agriculture becoming commercialized and the peasantry a little better off. After this, a great change took place in the means of transportation and communication in the Punjab, to tackle the output of agricultural produce<sup>59</sup>. The means of communication and transportation were afforded by railways and matalled on unmatalled roads<sup>60</sup>. and were used to cater to

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58. Himadri Banerjee, Agrarian Society of the Punjab (1849- 1901) Manohar Publications, New Delhi, p. 51.

59. Census Report , Punjab 1911, Vol.XIV, Pt. I- Report, p.54.

60. Ibid, p.55.

trading to distant places. The construction of railway and roads created new avenues of employment<sup>61</sup>. The population of the Punjab living in the rural tracts represented services of some kind on the railways and roads<sup>62</sup>. The artisans and the labourers were employed for the construction. In social life, the railways and the roads affected the Punjab by bringing people who had remained isolated from one another by distance, race, religion or caste, into close contact<sup>63</sup>.

The new opportunities like educational and economic, developments like commercialization of agriculture and increase in the means of transportation and communication provided the Mazhabi Sikhs with new opportunities of employment<sup>64</sup>. The lowest and most dependent castes had been, infact

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61. B.S.Saini, *The Social and Economic History of Punjab*, Ess Ess publications , Delhi, 1975, p.171.

62. *Census Report, Punjab 1911, Vol XIV, Part-I-Report*, p.14.

63. *Ibid*, p.514.

64. G.S.Chabra, *Advance History of Punjab, Vol II*, Associated Printing Press, Jullundur City, p.249.

changing their occupations in order to improve their standing in society in which the Mazhabi Sikhs showed considerable shift in occupation and abandoned their traditional occupation<sup>65</sup>.

Under the changed circumstances, during the British rule the most notable tendency among the Mazhabi Sikhs was to take to agriculture because in the agrarian set up, land ownership was associated not only with prestige, but power also<sup>66</sup>. The acquisition of land became the most important means of raising their status in the villages. In census reports we find that Mazhabis were engaged in agriculture in different capacities, such as cultivating owners, agents and rent collectors or managers of landed estates and field labourers<sup>67</sup>. The cultivating owners or the

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65. H.C.Sharma, Artisan in the Punjab (1849 - 1947)  
: Occupational Changes and New Social Relations,  
"Journal of New History, Vol I, 1980, p.108 and  
114 - 115..

66. William Henricks Wiser, The Hindu Jajmani System, Lucknow Publishing House, Lucknow, 1958, (First Printed in 1936), p.XII.

67. P.H.M. Van de Dungen "Changes in Status and Occupation in the Nineteen Century Punjab ; p.66.

peasant proprietors among the Mazhabis were in number than non-cultivating proprietors<sup>68</sup>. The number of agents and managers of landed estates among the Mazhabis was small and they were working as platters, clerks and rent collectors<sup>69</sup>.

The Mazhabi Sikhs turned to agricultural labour quite frequently as a means of escaping from their hereditary calling<sup>70</sup>. In the villages of the Punjab Mazhabi either owned or rented a small plot or held a plot free of revenue, which they cultivated to their ordinary duties, otherwise they always worked as field labourers during the harvest season<sup>71</sup>. We also find

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68. Census Report Punjab 1911, Vol XIV, Pt. - II Tables, p.424-25.

69. Ibid, p. 425 ; Census Report Punjab 1921, Vol XV, Pt- II, tables, P.381 ; and Census Report Punjab 1931 Vol XVII, Pt.-II, tables, p.221.

70. Ethne K. Marenco, The Transformation of The Sikh Society, Heritage Publishers, New Delhi, 1979, p.257.

71. E.D. Maclagan, Census Report Punjab 1891, Vol XIX, Pt. - I, Report Superintendent of Govt. Printing, Calcutta, 1892, p.355.

wood cutters among the Mazhabi Sikhs. Women and children also helped their family members in cultivation and were sometimes employed as agricultural labourers especially at Harvest-times<sup>72</sup>. Number of female agricultural labourer among Mazhabis was much larger than any other caste.

Those of Mazhabi Sikhs who could not earn much from agriculture availed themselves of the opportunities of employment in new industries which of course, did not develop so much in Punjab as in other parts of India<sup>73</sup>. Most of industries were cottage based. The persons employed in manufacturing were engaged in Hand trades or a cottage or a small scale basis, during work as independent workers with the help of family labour in rural areas. The number of Mazhabis who owned or managed industries was small while those who worked as skilled and unskilled workers in industries

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72. Census Report, Punjab 1921, Vol XV, Pt. -I, report, p. 369 :also based on interview of Mazhabis.

73. J.S.Khanna, "Lagging Industries Development in Punjab : An analysis" , Vol II , 1980, p.83.

was large<sup>74</sup>. Mazhabi Sikhs among the other scavenging castes certainly took advantages of the new situations and they were quick enough to take a new opportunities.

As the industrial development was confined mainly to primary industry and so the industries involved were simply manufacturing process such as food stuffs industries, textiles, leather and leather products, electrical goods, processing and manufacturing of metal, chemicals and chemical products and engineering<sup>75</sup>. A large number of smaller factories chiefly soap, hosiery factories, handloom weaving industries, embroidery, calico-printing, foundries, flour and rice mills, printing presses, furniture making factories and tanneries were established<sup>76</sup>.

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74. Census Report Punjab 1911, Vol XIV, Pt. II, Table, p.425.

Census Report Punjab 1921, Vol XV, Pt. II, Tables p.381.

Census Report Punjab 1931, Vol XVII Pt. II, p.224.

75. Census Report Punjab 1931, Vol XVII Pt.I Report, p.42.

76. Ibid, p.42.

The foundary , oil-milling weaving and hosiery industries received considerable inputs<sup>77</sup>.

Industrialization meant expanding employment opportunities. The workers in industries came from those labouring classes whose economic opportunities were very meager<sup>78</sup>. In the factories there were no hard and fast rules for the fixation of the wages. The competitive rates along with the experience and skill of the workers were deciding factors while fixing the initial wages of a worker<sup>79</sup>.

In these industries the labour came from the agricultural population, escaping the pressure of landowners<sup>80</sup>. The Mazhabis discovered that they were likely to be free and better off in the towns than in the villages. In the towns, they got work for cash, and on high wages, they escaped a lot of drugary and oppression they had to endure in the villages. They

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77. Ibid, p.42.

78. B.S.Saini, The Social and Economic History of Punjab, p.291.

79. Ibid, p.293.

80. Census Report Punjab, Vol XVII, Pt-I-Report, p.43.

felt more secure and independent. In the cities occupational restrictions were absent. There were associational ties and work situation in which there was a multi-caste interaction, which affected the rigid caste practices<sup>81</sup>. The old village industries had become unprofitable and the people from all castes flocked towards increasing number of mills, mines workshops, with the result that the traditional ties were abandoned<sup>82</sup>.

With the destruction of unity and complementarity between agriculture and industry in rural areas, the social and professional relationships between the low castes and agriculturists were affected<sup>83</sup>. The labourers began to be paid in cash, which changed the

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81. M.S.A. Rao, Urban Sociology in India, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1974, p.336.

82. Census Report Punjab 1921, Vol XV, Pt-I-Report, p.334.

83. H.C.Sharma, Artisan in the Punjab (1849 - 1947) :Occupational Changes and New Social Relations, p.114.

general trend of wages in kind in the villages<sup>84</sup>. An extraordinary demand of labour force led to upward mobility of wages and labourers from the densely populated areas migrated in search of higher and cash wages<sup>85</sup>. This hit the regular income of Mazhabis and pushed them out of their traditional socio-economic order to find new opportunities outside<sup>86</sup>. The Mazhabis engaged in work at customary rates from the immemorial times, now felt emancipated and demanded competitive wages. The great mobility of the Mazhabis as labourers became a striking feature of the situation. They were moving freely to the places where they obtained most remunerative employment<sup>87</sup>.

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84. Himadri Banerjee, "Agricultural Labourers of the Punjab During the second Half of the Nineteenth Century. "The Punjab past and Present, Vol. XI, Pt-I, Sr.No.21, April 1977, p.106.

85. Ethne K. Marrenco. The Transformation of Sikh Society, p.257.

86. H.C.Sharma, Artisian in the Punjab (1849- 1947) : Occupational Changes and New Social Relations, p.114.

87. Census Report, 1911, Vol. XIV, Pt.-I-Report, p.50.

Construction of the canal colonies by the British was one of the most notable achievements to bring about changes in the socio-economic history of Punjab. The building of canals led to the establishment of canal colonies, to which certain group migrated. The new canal colonies had set an example of formation of new centers of trade and agriculture<sup>88</sup>. The most frequent migrants to the colonies were the Jats, Banias (traders) and untouchables. The canals opened new areas of cultivation and attracted the sweeper and scavenger castes as earth-workers. These castes also worked on the rail roads, and became unskilled labourers. In 1921, the Chanab colony had many Mazhabis Sikhs mostly retired soldiers. Thus, the canal colonies provided new occupations for the non-agriculturist Castes<sup>89</sup>.

New opportunities came to the Mazhabi Sikhs through army too. Mazhabi Sikhs were particular section among the Sikhs who benefitted most from the changes

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88. Census Report Punjab 1921, Vol XV, Pt-I-Report, p.49.

89. Ibid, p.49.

brought about in the military services in India<sup>90</sup>. They began to be recruited in the army to work as sappers and minners<sup>91</sup>. In 1851, two Mazhabi coolie corps were raised, one for the construction of the Grand Trunk Road between Nowshere and Peshwar, and the other for the similar work in Cylone<sup>92</sup>. So, with the new avenues of employment in the army, many Mazhabis became valient and valued soldiers and lost all the memory of their degraded calling<sup>93</sup>. As the Mazhabis Sikhs were physically strong, they fully availed themselves of the opportunity to earn livelihood by working as labourers in the extensive public work undertaken by the public works Department<sup>94</sup>.

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90. Ethne K. Marenco, The Rransformation Of the Sikk Society, p.108
91. A.H.Bingley, Sikhs : Hand Book Of The Indian Army, Govt. Printing, Calcutta, 1918, p.48.
92. Sir George Macminu, The History of Sikh Pioneers, Sampson Low Marston and Co. Ltd. London, N.D.. p/19
93. A.H.Bingley, Sikhs : Hand Book Of the Indian Army, Govt. Printing, Calcutta, 1918, p.48.
94. Rev.J.Cave Brown, The Punjab and Delhi in 1857, Vol I, Punjab National Press, Delhi, 1970. (First Published in 1861) pp. 296-97.

After the uprising of 1857, the military system in India was reorganised<sup>95</sup>. The most important work of John Lawrence's administration of the Punjab was the recruitment of the Sikh peasants in the army and Mazhabi Sikhs utilised this opportunity fully well<sup>96</sup>. The Mazhabi Sikhs as soldiers had proved the change in the traditional occupation and they were the sixth largest caste in the imperial army<sup>97</sup>.

The Mazhabi Sikhs , who earlier were recruited only as labourers to build roads and earth workers to dig canals, were now elevated from gangs of labourers to a Corps of pioneers. In 1958, a second Mazhabi Sikh Battalion was formed<sup>98</sup>. They were recruited in the

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95. A.C.Arora, "British policy Regarding Imperial Service Troops in The Punjab States, 1889 -1905, "Panjab History Conference, Tenth Session, 1976, pp. 253-267.

96. Sohan Singh Sahote, The Destiny of the Sikhs, Sterling Publishers (p) Ltd., New Delhi, 1971, p.143.

97. Census Report Punjab 1911, Vol XIV, Pt-I-Report p.524.

98. Sir, George Macminu, The History of Sikh Pioneers, p.50 and 131.

23rd, 32nd and 34th pioneers Regiments. There were later designated as the Sikh Light Infantry<sup>99</sup>. the performance of the Mazhabi soldiers was commendable over since their induction into the Indian Army<sup>100</sup>.

Mazhabi Sikhs got several military grants as reward for their services. In November, 1890, came the most commanding move in the upliftment of the Mazhabi community<sup>101</sup>. Thus, the military members of Mazhabi Sikhs became the landowning yeomen and enjoyed the reward of good services<sup>102</sup>.

After the partition in 1947, the Punjab was one of the first states to enact legislation for the abolition of untouchability. In 1948, the 'Punjab removal of the Religious and Social Disabilities Act' was passed with the view to remove some of the social and

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99. Ibid, p.87 ; and Joseph Dovey Conninghan, A History of Sikhs (Ed. by H.O.T. O. Garret) S.Chand Co., New Delhi, 1966, p.64.

100. Sir George Macmin, The History of Sikh Pioneers, p.50.

101. Ibid, p.278.

102. Ibid, p.282.

religious disabilities from which members of untouchable classes suffered in the Punjab<sup>103</sup>. This act removed the disabilities of the Mazhabi Sikhs in the matter of access to places of worship such as Gurudwaras and other public places<sup>104</sup>. In 1948-49, "The Minimum Wages Act" was enacted to fix the minimum rates of wages for the inferior employees of local authorities. This helped to improve the economic conditions of low paid Mazhabi Sikhs as belonged to untouchable class<sup>105</sup>.

The Punjab Tenants (security of Tannure) Act' was passed in the year 1950. This was replaced by the 'Punjab Security of Land Tannure Act' in 1953. This helped to safeguard the interests of the landless Mazhabis. A customary due paid by 'Khandi Kamins' or the Mazhabis for the use of ponds and the samlat land, had been abolished through the enactment of the "Punjab abolition of village class (Khandi Kamins) Act 1950."

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103. Harijan Welfare in Punjab, The Public Relations Department , Punjab, 1976, p.531.

104. Gazetteer of India : Punjab : Amritsar : 1976, Revenue Department Chandigarh, 1976, p.531.

105. Harijan Welfare in Punjab, pp. 10 -11.

Under the new constitution of India equality of status, and opportunity was assured to all sections of the population. The practice of social discrimination on the basis of caste or creed has been forbidden<sup>106</sup>. The duty of taking further steps to raise the social and economic status of the hitherto untouchable classes has been laid on the shoulders of Government<sup>107</sup>.

The Punjab Government had been following a policy of placing schools, hospitals, good seeds, improved implements of agriculture, pure drinking water and co-operative societies and other numerous facilities for physical, moral and economic, self-advancement particularly in rural areas. The co-operative departments were making special efforts to encourage to spirit of cooperative self-help among the members of untouchable classes<sup>108</sup>. Some other facilities had been given to them like subsidy for the construction and purchase of new houses, for the purchase of the agricultural land on lease or on 'batai', facilities

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106. Ibid, p.2.

107. Ibid, p.I.

108. The Tribune, March-3, 1940, p.12.

for drinking water and facilities for legal assistance<sup>109</sup>. The exaction of 'begar' or forced labour of any kind by government officials without any proper remuneration had already been prohibited in Punjab<sup>110</sup>.

Thus, all the sources discussed above helped the Mazhabi Sikhs to leave the barriers of their traditional social relationships in the villages and move towards cities for more remunerative jobs. The Mazhabis were more responsive to the new opportunities that came their way under the British and also after partition and independence. This helped them to shift from their traditional occupations. As the occupations under the British were based on one's capability, the Mazhabi Sikhs started to adopt respectable and high-paid jobs. This led to emergence of new social classes in cities which were based on the acquisition of wealth.

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109. Gazetteer of India : Punjab : Amritsar : 1976, pp.532-537.

110. The Tribune, March 3, 1940, p.13.

In this way the Mazhabis tried to improve their position in the tradition socio-economic order in villages by changing their traditional and unclean occupations. By doing so, they also sanskritized their life style by elevation themselves from their caste-positions. The mobility of such a nature signified changes in standard of living and education.

Changes of occupations in the direction of agriculture were done on a group basis. But Mazhabis who moved to towns and cities, their change of occupation was more on the individual basis and type of class mobility. In other words, those who in entering the ranks of the business, managerial, professional, skilled or unskilled worker class, did so much for himself and his family only.

Cash-economy, educational changes, western ideology affected the pre-existing ideas of caste. The Mazhabi Sikhs were more frequent in dropping their traditional occupations.

It is true that Sikh Chuhras or Mazhabis Sikhs, who undoubtedly fared better than any of the others, they

generally turned to agriculture, a situation well within the frame work of the corporate type of upward mobility. They ranked higher than Hindu Chuhras but even though, sometimes they are not admitted to Gurudwaras with the high castes of the Sikhs. In Sikh society and social hierachy, they were still at a disadvantage despite the caste breaking doctrine of Sikhism and later also efforts were made by different governments. The Sikh menials functioned in their traditional roles primarily in Sikh villages i.e. villages with the predominance of Sikhs. Many castes moved together to the cities and towns taking their menials with them and reconstituting their home village relationships there. The adoption of agriculture a favourite means of changing occupation was the old way of rising in the caste hierachy and by doing this, the menial caste gained status within the caste framework.

## Chapter - IV

### Socio-economic conditions of Mazhabi Sikhs

Introduction :- As indicated earlier the major objectives of the field study was to identify the 'Problem of untouchability among Sikhs in Punjab with special reference to Mazhabi Sikhs'. The question before us is : whether the caste system and its end-product untouchability exists among Sikhs or not. Even, if it does, how far does it determine their relations with erstwhile untouchables who have converted to Sikhism. More precisely 'what is their position in Sikh Social System'. 'Is the stigma of untouchability washed out or does it still remain? 'Are the equal opportunities given to them at social ceremonies, in political roles and at other religious occasions?

So, keeping all these objectives and questions in mind, it was decided to do field survey because contemporary Sikhs deny the existence of caste and untouchability among the Sikhs. But in practice Sikhism has not broken the caste system and untouchability successfully, since prohibition on inter-marriages between the castes continues even

after conversion from the different Hindus Castes. The problem of segregation raises several question, 'Is the changing socio-economic structure as a result of industrialization, urbanization and political forces affecting the pattern of segregation?

Since the Mazhabi Sikhs, before conversion to Sikhism were members of the scavenger caste, to what extent have they improved their status in society by becoming converts to Sikhism in Punjab? It is a very important question to be answered. So, it involved identifying the perceptions of untouchability of Mazhabi Sikhs of Punjab, residing in rural and urban areas. An effort was made to investigate the extent of inter-caste inter-dinning, inter-caste friendship, practice of untouchability in and around places of religious worship, inter-caste contact on such social occasions as child births, marriages and deaths.

Answer to questions regarding inter-caste marriages and desirability/objections to removing untouchability from the society were analysed and compared.

Field data were collected mainly through direct questions posed to the respondents of rural and urban areas. The data were collected in villages of Ajnala

Tehsil of Amritsar District for rural study and union territory of Chandigarh for Urban study. Eight villages of Ajnala Tehsil of Amritsar were covered. In every village 16 respondents of Mazhabi Sikhs Castes were interviewed. Then Mazhabi Sikhs of Chandigarh were interviewed. The data presented is based on the total of 250 field interviews.

The-Study Area:- Amritsar is one of the border districts lying in the North-West frontier of the Punjab State. It has an international boundary with Pakistan extending to about 240 Kilometer. It lies between 31 - 07' and 32 - 03' North latitude and 74 - 29 and 75 - 23' East longitude. As regards its other topographical details, the district is surrounded by Gurdaspur District, in the North-East, Kapurthala District, in the East and Ferozepur District, in the South. The river Bias separates it from Kapurthala District, in the North-East and Ferozepur District, in the South - East.

As regards the climate, this district experiences extremes of climate. The temperature begins to rise from the middle of March and touches or even crosses 116 celsius on some days during the months of May and June. Rainfall generally occurs between June and

September in summer and winter rains are generally received between November and February.

Amritsar, the biggest city in the Punjab State, lies 27 Kms. from the Indo-Pak border on the West and about 448 Kms. from Delhi which is located towards its South-East.

Amritsar means "The tank of nectar or the tank of "immortality" and the district derives its name from the sacred tank in the Amritsar City. The present Golden Temple is surrounded by this tank which was originally a small natural pool and is said to have been visited by Guru Nanak Dev<sup>1</sup>. The Site was permanently occupied by the fourth Guru Ram Das, who in 1577 obtained more land in its neighbourhood. The pool soon acquired a reputation for sanctity, and the followers of the Guru migrated to the sacred spot, and there a small town grew up and was known at first as Ramdaspur or Guru-Ka-Chak, and later as the pool was converted into a tank, the town came to be known as Amritsar.

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1. Bhai Gian Singh Giani, Tawarikh, Gurukhalsa, Vol.1, (reprint Patiala, 1970), pp.63, 343.

This Shrine is considered as the most important religious place of the Sikh Community. Amritsar is the biggest centre of the Sikh religion. Guru Angad Dev, Guru Amardas, Guru Ram Das, Guru Arjun Dev and Guru Hargobind mostly resided in the district.

The district of Amritsar is well served by roads and railways. All places in the district are connected either by road or rail. Amritsar city is an important railway junction in the North.

Agriculture continues to be the mainstay of the population. A large majority of the cultivators in the district are hard working small peasant proprietors. Except for Ajnala Tehsil which is exposed to the havocs of floods and waterloggings, the alluvial soil of the district is highly productive. Seventy four percent of the total area of the district is under cultivation and 64 percent of the cropped area is irrigated. The principal crops are wheat, sugar cane, paddy, cotton and maize.

Amritsar District occupies a place of pride on the industrial map of the state. It has been widely known for its textiles, carpets, etc. over the centuries. Great progress has been achieved also in various other

fields of industry in the recent past, e.g. manufacturing of engineering goods, electrical appliances, etc.

The district also flourished in trade and commerce. Its location on the National Highway No. 1 is a significant factor adding to its importance as a centre of surface route trade and commerce. Prior to partition of the country in 1947, it had a flourishing trade with Afghanistan, Iran etc.. But for the tensions, resulting from Indo-Pak conflicts, this district would have shown much better results in the field of industry, trade and commerce.

Brief Historical Sketch of Amritsar:- Special interest in the history of this portion of the Punjab, commences with the rise of the Sikh religion and power.

After the final overthrow of the Shahi Kingdom in 1008, then ruled by Anangpal, son of Jaipal, Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni launched a series of predatory invasions of the Punjab. From that time, until the final overthrow of the Muhammadan Supremacy, the Amritsar District was attached to the Suba or

province of Lahore. This district lies on the road usually taken by the invading Muhammadan armies, and was liable to be plundered and devastated during each incursion<sup>2</sup>.

From the eleventh century to the end of the fifteenth, century, there is little to call for special notice in the history of this part of the Punjab. It was shortly after the middle of the fifteenth century in 1469 that Guru Nanak Dev, the first Guru, founded the Sikh religion.

At the end of two centuries, the Sikh faith was established as a prevailing sentiment and guiding principles to work its way in the world. The repeated invasions of Ahmed Shah Abdali, has not only exposed the hallowness of the Mughal empire, but had given the Sikh misls the long-awaited chance of proclaiming their independence and assumption of political power in whatever territory they could acquire.

Several of these principalities had their headquarters at Amritsar, which was the seat of their most sacred

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2. Amritsar District Gazetteer, 1976, published by Revenue Department, Punjab, Chandigarh. p.26.

shrine and was treated as the sanctum sanctorum of their religion.

Under the Lahore Darbar, Amritsar, which had already assumed the most important place as the religious and commercial centre of the Sikhs, became the second capital of the kingdom of Maharaja Ranjit Singh frequently visited the Darbar Sahib on all important religious occasions to take a dip into the Holy Tank and to make offerings at the Holy temple<sup>3</sup>.

Amritsar was the place where Ranjit Singh met Maratha Chief Jaswant Rao Holkar in 1805. The historic meeting with Metcalfe, resulting in the famous Treaty of Amritsar in 1809, also took place in this town. In 1838-39, Amritsar was the venue of the memorable meeting between Maharaja Ranjit Singh and British Governor-General, Lord Auckland. Amritsar suffered persistent disorders after the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.<sup>4</sup>

A big conference of all Chiefs and notable persons of the Punjab was held at Amritsar in 1853 to eradicate a number of social evils like Sati, female infanticide

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3. Ibid, p.33

and burying alive of lepers<sup>4</sup>.

Amritsar had assumed a pre-eminent position of a commercial town in the whole of northern India. It continued to receive good attention as a great commercial centre, from the British. On February 8, 1859 the railway linking Amritsar, Lahore and Multan was inaugurated.

By March, 1907, the atmosphere in the cities had become tense. Students of the Khalsa College Amritsar staged a hostile demonstration at farewell gathering organised for the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Charles Rivaz. A New Song was on the lips of the people "Pagri Sambal Jatta" - "O Peasant, guard your turban". Great uprising of 1857 was chosen as the occasion for province-wide protest<sup>5</sup>.

The Ghadar Movement, 1913-15, was organised with its headquarters at San Francisco. Its aim was to liberate India from force. Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna, the founder

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4. Ibid, p. 37

5. Khushwant Singh, A History of the Sikhs, Vol-II, 1839-1964 (London, 1966), p.158.

President of this revolutionary organisation, hailed from the Amritsar Distt. He died in 1969.

Under the headship of Baba Gurdit Singh of Sirhali, District Amritsar on September 27, 1914, Kamagatta Maru brought 400 Sikhs and 60 Muslims from the Far East in Hoogly". Early in 1915, the Ghadarites made contacts with terrorist organisations in other parts of the country. In January, the famous revolutionery, Rash Behari Bose (leader of the group which tried to assassinate Lord Hardinge in 1912) arrived at Amritsar and took over the general direction of the revolution. The Chief liaison with Punjabis was through the youthful Kartar Singh Saraba.

The Home Rule Movement was founded in 1916, among others by Mrs. Annie Besant, and by B.G. Tilak at Poona, with Home rule or self-government for India as their object, this movement spread like wild fire and its branches were established all over the country. In Amritsar, the movement was led by Dr. Saif-ud-Din Kitchlew, Bar-at-law, who was of a pronounced anti-British views<sup>6</sup>. A branch of the Indian National

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6. V.N. Dutta, Jallianwala Bagh (Ludhiana, 1969), p.61

Congress was formed at Amritsar towards the end of 1917.

Madan Lal Dhingra, who later shot Sir William Curzon Wylie, Aide-de Camp to the Secretary of State of India, was resident of Amritsar. In 1919 Amritsar hosted the annual Indian National Congress Session, which enhanced the prestige of Amritsar. Railway-Platform Ticket Agitation, February, 1919 was successfully launched under the leadership of Dr. Satya Pal and Dr. Kitchlew.

Anti-Rowlatt Act Agitation, 1918-19, Jallianwala Bagh Massacre, April 13, 1919 came to signify a nationalist revolt marking a turning point in the Indo-British relations. The city of Amritsar earned an enviable position in the political annals of the country and people of Amritsar suddenly spearheaded the nation's anger against the British rulers. In the wake of Jallianwala Bagh tragedy the historic session of Indian National Congress which was held at Gol Bagh, during Christmas of 1919, was presided over by Pandit Moti Lal Nehru. The city had the honour of the visits of outstanding national leaders, like B.G. Tilak, Annie Besant, B.C. Pal, C.R. Das, Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya, M.K. Gandhi, Shrinivas Shastri, Pandit

Jawahar Lal Nehru and M.A. Jinnah. The Ali Brothers - Maulanas Muhammed Ali and Shauket Ali - also visited the city and were given a rousing reception. Sardar Bhagat Singh, the great national martyr from the Punjab was also one of the early trainees at the Swaraj Ashram built outside the Chatiwind gate.

Struggle for Sikh Shrines :- 175 members' Shromany Gurudwara Prabandak Committee (S.G.P.C.) was formed to manage, reform and control important Sikh Shrines or Gurudwaras. Gurudwara Act of 1925 placed all the important Gurudwaras in the Punjab under the control of S.G.P.C. certain actions of authorities led to agitation following the 'Keys Affair;' in 1921.

In 1935, the All India Trade Union Congress set up a branch at Amritsar. A branch of the Servants of People society was also established in the city.

During the 'Quit India Movement 1942' nationalistic activities at Amritsar were accelerated. Mahasha Parma Nand and Pandit Amar Nath Vidyalnkar were then president and Secretary respectively of the District Congress Committee, Amritsar.

Independence and After :- Amritsar occupied the key position and was used as a base for the incoming and the outgoing refugees, numbering millions.

During NEFA and Ladakh campaigns (1962-63) the military personnel from the Amritsar Distt. showed conspicuous valour and devotion to duty, against the Chinese aggression in 1962. The total number of military personnel, belonging to Amritsar Distt. killed was 114. Owing to its geographical position Amritsar is exposed to Pakistan's air and land attacks. In Indo-Pakistan conflict in 1965 a total number of 85 military personnel belonging to the Distt. were killed<sup>7</sup>.

Caste Distribution:- The Sikhs form the majority and the Hindus come next. In the urban areas, however the Hindus form the majority. A majority of the Sikhs reside in rural areas. The persons belonging to the various Scheduled Castes in the

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7. Hari Ram Gupta, Indo-Pakistan War, 1965, Vol. I, pp. 283-86, also V.N. Gupta, Amritsar Past and Present, P.108.

district numbered 418,146. (1,787 males and 193,959 females) and formed 19.6 percent of the total population.

Casteism is not a problem amongst the Hindus alone. Christian, Muslims and Sikhs have also caste divisions among them.

Mazhabi Sikhs:- The number of Mazhabi Sikhs in the district is 310,482. They have also like higher castes various gotras.

Industrial Development:- Amritsar was not only a leading centre of trade, it was also famous for its various industries like Pashmina, silk goods, carpets and thick serge. Besides, acids and other chemicals, soap, gold thread, silver thread etc. are also manufactured in small quantities. Carving is done in ivory, wood and metal. Utensils making also forms an old and important industry in the district. Jandiala Guru is famous for metal wares. Other industries like distilling of spirits, ice-making, printing presses, printing of textiles, tanning and weaving also came into being. Most of these industries are at Chheharta, Verka and Goindwal. There are also a Government Milk Plant at Verka and a distillery at Khasa.

**FIELD SURVEY RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study was undertaken with the following objective:

1. To examine and understand the social structure and historical conditions of untouchables in Punjab viz. what were the conditions which led to the conversion of the present day Mazhabi Sikhs to Sikh faith.
2. To examine the status of the Mazhabi Sikhs in the Sikh society:
  1. To identify the nature and practice of untouchability as experienced by Mazhabi Sikhs in rural and urban Punjab.
  2. To find out the state of relationships between the Mazhabi and (upper-caste) Sikhs.
  3. To find out the nature of intercaste contacts on such socio-religious occasions, child-birth, Namkaran, marriages and deaths.
  4. To gather their opinions as to the methods of improving their status in the society including improvement of their socio-economic status through reservations as provided under the 1950 Constitution.

To achieve the above objectives the concerned literature from the rare manuscripts, books and journals under the following heads was collected:

- a) Socio-economic and political History of India.
- b) Socio-economic and political History of Punjab.
- c) Hindu religion.
- d) Sikh religion
- e) Hindu and Sikh rituals, ethics and morals.

The objective of the field survey was to identify the experiences of the Mazhabi Sikhs in rural and urban situations and their perception of how the upper castes treat them.

It was decided to collect data through direct questions to Mazhabi Sikhs of rural and urban areas and through field observations to find out their attitude regarding behaviour of the upper castes towards them (the Mazhabi Sikhs) in situations of social interaction including in places of religious worship.

### PREPARATION OF RESEARCH TOOLS

Two types of research tools were used in this study; interview schedules and observations. Drafts included in the research proposals were modified with appropriate additions, deletions and suitable modifications through the questions listed in the original study proposal. Separate interview schedules and questionnaires used in a number of studies were reviewed. These included a number of Ph.D., M.Phil and M.A. dissertations available in the Department of Sociology and the Panjab University Library.

Based on persual of these materials a set of questions seeking information on the following were developed.

Demographic factors as age, sex marital status, education, occupation for all respondents were listed. It was planned to group the remaining questions in the following sub-head of analysis:

- a) Behaviour patterns reflecting the practice of untouchability:

Question in Rural interview schedule 5.2., 5.3, 5.5., 10.6, 10.7.

Question in urban interview schedule  
10,14,21,22,23,25 and 28.

b) Inter-Caste interactions on ceremonies  
related to births, marriages and deaths;

Rural : 10.5, 10.11, 10.12, 10.13

Urban : 13, 10.

c) Mazhabi Sikh participation in S.G.P.C.

Rural : 9.1

Urban : 16, 17, 18, 19

d) Their opinion as to how can untouchability be  
removed in society;

Urban : 9,31

e) Their experience in benefits from the  
concessions offered under the government  
policies of reservations for members of the  
scheduled castes;

Urban : 30

The questions were framed in English. These were translated into Punjabi, the language for field work. The translation was referred to a scholar in the department of Punjabi for accuracy. The draft of interview schedules underwent several changes in the format of question and language of the questions. A final version was then prepared for field study. The researcher then moved into villages of Amritsar where randomly selected village, respondents were interviewed.

#### **SAMPLING PROCEDURE FOR RURAL DATA**

It was decided to interview 125 respondents of Amritsar District for Rural Survey. Decision to select Amritsar District was made because of concentration of Mazhabi Sikhs in this district according to Census Report 1971.\*

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\* The field data collection in Amritsar rural area was done in 1984. The population figures for Amritsar rural for scheduled castes were not available at the time of preparation of the survey. Consequently the investigator had used 1971 Census Data.

Table No.1 showing population of Schedule Castes and Mazhabi SIKhs by districts in Punjab (1971-1981 Census Figures)<sup>8</sup>.

Name of District	Total S.C. Population		Rank Order		Total Mazhabi Sikh Population		Rank Order	
	1971	1981	1971	1981	1971	1981	1971	1981
Gurdaspur	2,67,100	3,58,540	8	7	53,690	81,771	5	6
Amritsar	4,18,146	5,73,394	3	2	3,33,706	4,66,232	1	1
Ferozepur	4,34,395	2,73,328	2	10	2,19,254	1,12,715	2	4
Ludhiana	3,37,315	4,78,012	5	3	47,572	79,397	6	7
Jalandhar	4,77,853	6,29,297	1	1	5,451	9,006	9	10
Kapurthala	1,06,201	1,47,151	11	12	8,623	13,805	8	9
Hoshiarpur	3,03,521	3,83,523	6	5	1,295	1,686	11	12
Ropar	1,23,325	1,74,729	10	11	3,912	2,811	10	11
Patiala	2,53,948	3,47,102	9	9	20,454	27,936	7	8
Sangrur	2,71,322	3,59,259	7	6	61,881	92,796	4	5
Bathinda	3,54,581	3,52,489	4	8	2,01,708	1,85,685	3	3
Faridkot	--	4,54,879	-	4	--	2,99,002	-	2

8. Census of India 1971, Series-17, Punjab Part-II-C (i) and Part V-A, Distribution of population by Religion and Scheduled Castes P.3 and 120-173 and Census of India 1981, Series-17, Punjab Part-11-C(i) and Part V-A, Total Population Alongwith Scheduled Castes Population in Punjab, P.1 1-11.

The scheduled caste population is highest in Jalandhar district and Mazhabi Sikh population is highest in Amritsar district but lowest in Hoshiarpur district (as per 1971<sup>9</sup> and 1981<sup>10</sup> Census). Hoshiarpur district ranked 6th (in 1971) and 5th (in 1981) in the state in regard to scheduled caste population but had lowest 11th (1971) and 12th (1981) rank in the terms Mazhabi Sikh population, because bulk of the Scheduled Caste population were Balmikis and Chamars. Variation of ranks of District Hoshiarpur in two Census reports is because of addition of one district Faridkot in 1981 Census.

For this purpose census reports consulted which were available in Punjab University Library, in Punjab Census Department, Chandigarh, and in the Punjab Scheduled caste Welfare Department, Chandigarh, In

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9. Census of India 1971, series-17, Punjab, Part-II-C (i) and Part V-A, Distribution of Population by Religion and Scheduled Castes, P.3 and 120-173.
  10. Census of India 1981, series-17, Punjab, Part-IX, Special Tables for Scheduled Castes. P.6-213.

Amritsar Distt. Villages as listed in 1971 census report formed the basis from which study villages were chosen. It was decided to interview respondents in Ramdas Rural and adjoining villages. The area was chosen because the selected village include the native place of Bhai Jaita later called Bhai Jiwan Singh, a Mazhabi Sikh, a well known and respected martyr of Sikh history. Thus villages also have the largest concentration of Mazhabi Sikhs in the state. All these villages including Ramdas Rural fall in Ajnala Tehsil of Amritsar District.

The list of voters registered for legislative assembly elections were obtained from Election Commission, Punjab, Chandigarh. Similarly lists of Panchayat members including scheduled caste members were prepared with help of the Directorate of Gram Panchayats Punjab, Chandigarh.

These lists were shown to sarpanchs and Panchayat members of these villages during survey, and their help sought in locating the Mazhabi Sikh respondents in these villages for interviewing.

Then individual Mazhabi Sikh male and females were interviewed.

First of all respondents were told about the purposes of study. Then investigator read the questions to be asked to the respondents and their responses recorded verbatim in Punjabi. All the 125 questionnaire were filled by investigator.

#### RURAL RESPONDENTS

Table No.2 showing information collected in;

one contact	18
Two contacts	32
Two or more contacts	75
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Total	125
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It was decided to interview a minimum of 15 respondents selected in each village. The data was collected in 8 villages.

Table No. 3 showing distribution of respondents interviewed by study villages:

Sr.No.	Name of Village	No of respondents interviewed
1.	Awan	16
2.	Mohamad Mandran Wala	15
3.	Katla	16
4.	Kot Gurbakhsh	16
5.	Ramdas (Rural)	16
6.	Pandori	15
7.	Kotli Shah Habib	16
8.	Talibpur	15

#### **SAMPLING PROCEDURE FOR URBAN DATA**

It was decided to interview 125 respondents of Chandigarh for urban survey. Chandigarh was selected as the venue for urban survey because of concentration of Mazhabi Sikhs in the city due to employment opportunities etc. For this purpose, contact with Bhai Jaita Khoj Mission, an organization of Mazhabi Sikhs engaged in social, religious and cultural activities among Mazhabi Sikhs were made. Through its 1992 President S. Gurudev Singh and an important worker in the organization S. Gurbax Singh Hans who provided a list of 327 members of the Mission resident in Chandigarh. The respondents were then regrouped

according to the nature of their employment as shown in the table No.4 given below:

Sr.No.	Categories	No. in list	No. of of Contacted persons	No. of persons actually inter-viewed
1.	Legislators	8	4	2
2.	University Employees			
	Teachers	5	3	2
	Others	10	5	5
3.	Govt. Employees:			
	Sen. Officers	82	41	17
	Admn. Staff	187	93	84
4.	School Teachers	15	7	7
5.	Businessmen	20	10	8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>125</b>

Every alternate respondent in the list was contacted and cooperation sought from (163) members of the organization. Questionnaires were left with them to be filled in at their convenience. The interview schedules were filled by the investigator on the spot.

## URBAN RESPONDENTS

Table No. 5 showing information collected;

In one contact	30
Two contacts	28
Three or more contacts	67
Refusal Cases*	38
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Total	163
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- \* These 38 Respondents initially agreed to provide information but later on refused to fill in the questionnaire.

DIFFICULTIES IN DATA COLLECTION IN RURAL AREA

The main problem for investigator was to reach Amritsar 243 kilometers from Chandigarh and stay there to collect data. Because of the turbulent situation of Panjab in general, it was particularly difficult in rural areas for a female investigator to go about unescorted. At first, it was decided to stay at Amritsar and operate from there to collect data. But daily travelling from Amritsar to villages under study and then return to Amritsar was even more difficult.

Thus, Ramdas was made as a starting point for all field work. To reach these villages only local transport was available. The schedule of bus service was erratic, their timings being uncertain even in the best of circumstances. The buses usually started late in the morning and returned early in the evening. This curtailed the time available in the field, only one or two respondents could be contacted and interviewed in a day.

The respondents were almost always suspicious and fearful and hesitated to answer questions about their relations with upper caste villagers. At every village first of all investigator had to convince and keep in confidence Sarpanch or some other Panchayat member or elderly person of village and only then to go to respondents.

#### Difficulties during Urban data collection

Non-availability of selected respondents during the first visit necessitated re-visits which created problems ; Visits and re-visit being very time consuming. Usually the respondents could be contacted on second visits even when prior appointment had been made. Respondents were unwilling to talk in the

offices because of their desire to keep their Mazhabi Sikh background a secret. Consequently additional visits had to be made to their homes. They were suspicious about the nature of the investigation. Help of office bearers of the organization had to be sought which added to number of visits to be made. Unwillingness of female respondents to fill in the questionnaires unless their spouses approved or at least did not object. Female respondents like males were also, reluctant to talk about their relationships with upper castes.

#### Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

A total of 250 respondents were interviewed for the study. These included 125 residents of rural area and an equal number in the city.

Age Structure:- In Rural sample 40 percent of the respondents were between 35-54 age group; 28.2 percent were less than 35 years old while remaining 31.8 percent were more than 55 years old.

In urban sample 78.4 percent respondents of the respondents were between 35-54 age group; 15 percent were less than 35 years old while remaining 6.4 percent were more than 55 years old.

Number of young female respondents in urban sample is more because here lived young couples from nuclear families in which the males were the bread winners. Moreover data was collected from houses after office hours because it was difficult to find out persons belonging to a particular low caste who did not want their low caste identity to be known in their working situation. So, male respondents preferred to respond, only when contacted at their homes. The females hesitated to respond without the approval of their spouse's or other male members of the family. More male respondents in urban sample had to be interviewed because males are traditional bread winners and migrate to cities in search of jobs.

Educational Status:- The rural sample included 65 males (53%) against 82 per cent men among the urban respondents. Thirty three per cent of rural respondents were illiterate and included 12 out of 41 (27%) males among illiterates. There was no illiterate respondent among the urban respondents. Male persons outnumbered the females both in urban and rural sample in all educational groupings, particularly with higher educational achievements.

Marital Status:- Ninetysix percent urban and 77 percent rural respondents were married, while 4 percent urban and 4.8 percent rural respondents were unmarried. Those who reported unmarried in both rural and urban sample were less than 25 years age category. Less than per cent rural respondents were widowed/widower while there was no urban respondent in this category.

Occupational distribution:- Sixty per cent urban respondents were government employees, whereas almost only 18.4 per cent rural respondents fall in this category, out of which 10.6 per cent urban and 17.4 were females. Out of 48 per cent rural and 17.6 per cent urban female respondents 36.4 per cent were from urban and 6.7 from rural areas. 9.6 urban and 4 per cent rural respondents were teachers. 8 per cent urban and 33 per cent rural female respondents were household workers, whereas 9.6 per cent urban and 5.6 per cent rural shopkeepers were only male respondents. Same was the case with factory workers where 8 percent rural and 0.8 urban factory workers were male only. 2.4 per cent were agriculturists. 7.2 per cent agricultural labourers and 4 per cent unemployed were only rural respondents. There was no unemployed respondent in urban data.

Table No.6 showing Distribution of respondents by residence age and sex :

	URBAN			RURAL		
	M	F	T	M	F	T
< 25	2	2	4	5	6	11
25-34	12	3	15	10	13	23
35-44	43	14	57	10	11	21
45-54	38	3	41	9	10	19
55-64	5	0	5	12	8	20
65-74	1	0	1	7	8	15
75+	2	0	2	12	4	16
	103	22	125	65	60	125

Table No. 7 showing distribution of respondents by residence age, sex and Marital Status:

	URBAN					RURAL				
	M	F	Ma	Unma	Wid	M	F	Ma	Unma	Wid
<25-	2	2	1	3	-	5	6	6	5	-
25-34	12	3	13	2	-	10	13	21	1	1
35-44	43	14	57	-	-	10	11	21	-	-
45-54	38	3	41	-	-	9	10	18	-	1
55-64	5	0	5	-	-	12	8	19	-	1
65-74	1	0	1	-	-	7	8	7	-	8
75+	2	0	2	-	-	12	4	4	-	12
Total	103	22	120	5	-	65	60	96	6	23

# 125 Note:- Ma : Married, Unma : Unmarried  
Wid : Widower/Widowed

Table No.8 showing distribution of respondent by residence, sex and educational status.

	URBAN			RURAL		
	M	F	T	M	F	T
Illiterates	0	0	0	12	29	41
Literates but no schooling.	0	0	0	13	6	19
Primary	4	2	6	2	6	8
Middle	8	4	12	8	5	13
10+ other courses	40	9	49	22	11	33
B.A.+ other courses	40	3	43	8	3	11
M.A.+ other	11	4	15	-	-	-
-----						
	103	22	125	65	60	125
-----						
	82.4%	17.6%		52.0%	48.0%	

Table No. 9 showing distribution of respondent by residence, sex and occupation.

	URBAN			RURAL		
	M	F	T	M	F	T
Agriculture	-	-	-	2	1	3
Agriculture work	-	-	-	4	5	9
Daily wage workers	-	-	-	3	-	3
Household workers.	-	10	10	-	41	41
Shop owners	12	-	12	7	-	7
Factory Workers.	1	-	1	10	-	10
Govt. Employees	67	8	75	19	4	23
Ex Service-police man.	10	-	10	6	-	6
Teachers	10	2	12	4	1	5
Props/workman	2	-	2	5	1	6
Students	1	2	3	1	1	2
Granthis	-	-	-	1	-	1
Domestic workers	-	-	-	-	4	4
Unemployed	-	-	-	3	2	5
	103	22	125	65	60	125

Conversion to Sikhism:-

To the question 'who in your family adopted Sikh faith' 35 (28%) claimed that their families embraced Sikhism from the times the Sikh faith was established.

Half of the respondents claimed that either their grand-father or great-grand-father became Sikh.

Only 28 (22.4) respondents gave no information.

Table No. 10 showing number of rural respondents:-

N = 125

	NUMBER	PERCENT
Father	-	-
Grandfather	31	24.8
Great Grandfather	31	24.8
Since origin of Sikhism	35	28.0
No information	28	22.4

The rural respondents were asked if the decision to convert was taken by their ancestors individually or as members of their village community in a group.

Out of 107 respondents who responded 38 (35.5%) said that individuals got converted to the new faith and 69 (64.5 %) said that conversion was collective in their ancestral village, based on caste group decisions.

The conversion ceremony was the traditional 'Amrit pan' ceremony. The respondents claimed that those converted were well aware of the principles of Sikh religion.

To the question 'who motivated your elders to embrace Sikhism' 108 (86.4 %) responded.

Out of 108 urban respondents 63 (58.3%) claimed that some individual motivated their elders to adopt Sikh faith. 45 (41.7 %) reported that their elders themselves were motivated by the principles of Sikhism. None of the respondents claimed that any institution or organization motivated them to become a Sikh.

The question, "whether they knew what led their elders to adopt Sikh faith' was asked from rural respondents as well. One hundred and thirteen 113 (90.4%) responded, while 12(9.6%) did not answer the question.

Of those who provided out answer to this question 44.25% (50/113) reported that when elders adopted Sikh faith, caste system and untouchability were being rigidly practised. "Members of our caste (Mazhabi Sikhs) followed the "dirty occupations" ;getting away from the traditional occupation was the principal motivating factor in adopting the new faith.

85.8% reported that their elders adopted Sikh faith because Sikh religion was a little more "open" as compared with Hinduism. Equality and brotherhood as preached by Sikh religion through the adoption of the "Pangat" and "Sangat" system attracted the downtrodden. Sikhism, at the time of conversion of our elders, was perhaps the only religion that threw open places of religious worship to everyone.

56 (49.6%) rural respondents reported that perhaps their elders also wanted to improve their social status, get away from caste restrictions imposed by Hinduism, so as a biradri of Balmikis they took a collective decision and converted to Sikhism.

Urban respondents were asked the question, 'with what expectations a Balmiki becomes a Sikh.' All the 125 respondents reported multiple answers which are as follows:

1. Social Equality: Inter-dinning & Inter-caste marriages, get rid of untouchability to avoid open discrimination, escape the rigidities of caste system and discard the "inferiority complex". 107

2. Economic betterment : to get away from traditional occupations, i.e., removal of night soil etc., and to get employment in various departments to engage in various small and big trades, establish industries or become agriculturists. 98

3. Religious equality : he/she will adopt fundamental principles of Sikhism and be a true Sikh ; there will be change in his/her daily routine, i.e., cleanliness, change in dress carryout his/her obligations as a Sikh like daily reciting of the five 'Banies' and visiting the gurudwara. 87

Perceived Changes among Mazhabi Sikhs: The respondents' version

All the respondents interviewed were asked 'if there

has been a change in their social status following adoption of Sikh faith.' Three-fourth urban respondents and less than one third rural respondents claimed that there has been a change in their social status. There has been no change felt by 2/3 rural and 1/4 urban respondents indicating a continuation of low status for their people in the society despite change in their religious affiliation. This is evident because among the Sikhs they are still called Mazhabis or Sikhs of 'Chautha Paura' though Sikhism does not approve of either such nomenclature or the caste system perse.

Even the urban upper caste Sikhs continue to be conscious of their social and economic superiority. If there, any change in their attitude, it is superficial. In their homes, they continue to practice discrimination against numbers of all scheduled castes including Mazhabi Sikhs.

103 urban respondents (82.4%) and 10 rural respondents (8%) claimed that they were discriminated against even though they professed Sikhism. None of the respondents however, complained about such positive or promotive discrimination nor any one suggested that such concession be done away with.

Table No. 11 showing the number of urban and rural respondents :

	N=125	N=125
	URBAN	RURAL
Yes	103	10
%	82.4	8.0
No	22	115
%	17.6	92.0

Those who reported that discrimination against Mazhabi Sikhs was widely practised in urban areas by Sikh in general also simultaneously claimed that individually they were never discriminated against. Caste becomes an insurmountable barrier at the times of arranging marriages. In admission to educational institutions and recruitment for jobs caste discriminations are encountered.

Main reason is economic backwardness. Those Mazhabi Sikhs who are economically better off, their social relations with other castes are good and even upper caste people want to develop social relations with them. 'Jats', 'Bhappas' (Farmers and traders classes) respectively are upper socially dominant castes among Sikhs. Both these castes are financially sound because

they have land, property and other sources of wealth. Mazhabi Sikhs lacking all these, are so financially weak. So upper castes never develop social relations, particularly inter-caste marriage etc. Both these castes have strong hold on religious organizations also. They believe both in caste system and intercaste separation. They openly discriminate against the lower castes. A Mazhabi Sikh may even be an officer, but in his absence he is referred to as 'Chuhrah'. In cities Mazhabi live by hiding their caste origin.

Reservation have created further gap and discrimination. The reservation policy of the government is rejected by the upper castes. In villages caste rigidity and separation are more because most of the village people are uneducated and poor. The minds of upper castes are not clear at the question of caste. Women of upper castes are more rigid and more discriminative towards members of the scheduled castes.

We asked the opinion of rural and Urban Mazhabi Sikhs 'Are you discriminated against because you are a Mazhabi Sikhs'. All the rural respondents said that upper caste do not discriminate but on the contrary urban respondents said that upper castes discriminate

and gave statements that how the upper castes discriminate. These answers however do not reflect realities on the ground. To study Psychological, Social and economic aspects of the problem they were asked many questions. So, we found the suppressed fear, doubts and suppressed anger in the minds of every Mazhabi Sikh of villages. It clearly came out when, most of the rural Mazhabi respondents reported that they were facing very hard social and economic problems. Because of their economic dependence on the upper castes they were obliged not to verbalize their difficulties.

In rural areas Mazhabi Sikhs are socially separated and are forced to live in separate residential localities. But from economic aspects, these people are fully dependent on upper castes. Rural based Mazhabi Sikhs are illiterate or less educated and landless. In villages agricultural work is only means of their livelihood. So, for this work on daily wages or share cropping basis was dependent on the mercy of upper castes. Low castes have to take this work since they have no other alternative. Even to get privileges which the government gives the low-castes, they depend on upper castes because in Panchayats, other government and semi-government departments every where

castes are dominating. In such crucial situation, if Mazhabi speaks truth of their grievances, even their day to day existence in villages would become more difficult.

In cities occupational rigidity is of a different variety. Urbanization has somewhat reduced social discrimination. Mazhabi Sikhs have organized themselves for a variety of social activities. They are doing jobs in government and semi-government departments or do their own business. They are not dependent on the upper castes for their living as in the villages. They are educated, aware of their rights and privileges and can afford to be more vocal in assertion of their rights. They analyse the situation and when they reel they can criticize the upper castes strongly and even protest against discrimination practiced by the upper castes. Even though, urban Mazhabis hide their caste background and pass as upper caste sikh . They have adopted caste names of upper caste Sikhs specially of Jat Sikhs, to mix themselves in upper castes of Sikhs. But in government records they like to identify themselves as 'Mazhabi Sikhs' because they can secure benefits offered by the government to the scheduled castes.

The question "Do you think you were able to select your present occupation because you were converted to Sikhism?" was asked only from rural respondents. One hundred eleven (88.8%) respondents linked their present occupations to the concessions given to them under government patronage to the scheduled castes and not to their professing allegiance to Sikhism. They claimed that they could get away from their dirty traditional occupations in villages because they could migrate to towns which made it possible for them to adopt other non-traditional occupations.

They could demonstrate their physical strength and valor only after becoming Sikh during Guru Gobind Singh's times. They were later recruited in the armed forces and declared a martial community by the British. This changed their entire life style, particularly their economic position. There after they were, because they had regular income able to provide education to their children which opened new avenues of employment for them. This they believe they could do only because their ancestors adopted Sikh faith.

The practice of untouchability: The respondent's perception.

The respondents were asked the question 'Do the low caste feelings come in their mind when are in company of upper caste Sikhs'.

Table No. 12 showing responses of urban and Rural respondents to the question :

	Number	Yes	No
Urban	125	56	69
	%	44.8	55.2
Rural	125	44	81
	%	33.2	64.8

In reply 44 (35.2%) of rural and 56 (44.8%) of urban respondents said they do feel a sense of inferiority. 81 (64.8%) rural and 69 (55.2%) of urban respondents made opposite claims. Those who respond yes to the question both urban and rural respondents gave almost same reasons, that, what type of feeling comes in their mind. They say that:

Mazhabi Sikhs being still socially and economically backward, a feeling of caste centered inferiority is inevitable.

Upper castes are proud of their higher social status and "keep us at distance". They do not identify us by our name but add the term mazhabi, an indication of our lower social status. Our individual skills, qualities, qualifications and position are ignored and only our caste mentioned is pointed out as a mark of identification. In their homes upper castes particularly women practice rigid untouchability.

Both rural and urban respondents were asked the question, "It is known that there are separate Gurudwaras for Mazhabi Sikhs, why?" All the study respondents in both rural and urban areas confirmed the existence of separate Gurudwaras for Mazhabi Sikhs in rural areas.

Table No. 13 showing reasons given by urban and rural respondents for separate Gurudwaras for Mazhabi Sikhs in villages:-

	N=125 Urban	N=125 Rural
1. The low status of Traditional Mazhabi occupation and consequent inter-caste avoidance, based on traditions and customs.	82	82

- |  |    |    |
|--|----|----|
| 2. Inadequate education of the Sikh masses by Sikhs religions preachers regarding Sangat and Pangat traditions of Sikhism.                   | 25 | 28 |
| 3. Exigencies of Caste-based residential segregation in villages and the Congregational nature of Sikh pattern of praying in the Gurudwaras. | 15 | 25 |
| 4. Built long-time ago these have not been replaced by common gurudwaras for village congregations.  | 10 | 8  |
| 5. Gurudwaras built to commemorate some brave Mazhabi Sikhs cannot be destroyed.   | 4  | 5  |

136\*      151\*

\* number of respondents

Rural respondents were asked the question that, 'Do they visit common Gurudwaras'. 68 (54.4 %) said that they visit common gurudwara occasionally on Gurburbs or at other ceremonial occasions ; 26(20.8%) said Daily 24 (19.2%) once in a month, and 7 (5.6%)

reported that they visit common Gurudwaras on a weekly basis.

The urban respondents were asked the question, 'Do you know any Mazhabi Sikh who is working as an official, as Granthi, as Ragi and Sewadar of an upper caste Gurudwara.

Thirty two respondents denied acquaintance with gurudwara officials, 52 with Granthis, 59 with Ragis and 48 with Sewadars belonging to the mazhabi caste.

Respondents also explained that at historical Gurudwaras officials like Managers etc. are appointed by S.G.P.C. without any caste considerations. In cities Mazhabi Sikhs do all such jobs, but by hiding their caste. In villages mostly the jobs of Granthis and Ragis are performed by single person, with appropriate background. But at many places where there are separate gurudwaras for different castes exist such services are done by persons of that respective caste. Number of Mazhabi Sikh officials at gurudwaras is very low ; mostly sewadars are Mazhabi Sikhs.

Then respondents were asked, "Do persons with mazhabi caste background face any problems in the performance of their duties in the gurudwaras?"

Forty six (37%) admitted that there were problems while 40 (32%) denied that any difficulties arise. The complainants of difficulties were asked to explain the type of problems these persons faced. They identified the following :-

Discrimination at the time of appointment. Mazhabi Sikhs are not assigned senior/responsible position/tasks, specifically handling of gurudwara money.

Caste is not washed out totally from the minds of upper caste Sikhs. Discriminative attitude towards the lower caste are deeply entrenched in hearts and minds of upper castes. Superficially everybody respects those holding respectable posts in the gurudwaras but it is expected those with low caste backgrounds perform their duties only under the supervision of the upper castes. They have to be their yes-men and do relatively unimportant jobs in the gurudwaras.

Problems were faced by mazhabi Sikh persons at Gurudawara management. When Mazhabi Sikh functionaries assist themselves and claim their rights or refuse to be upper castes yes-men and resist constant interference/dictation in work and want to

work as sewadar in Gurudawara premises only instead of domestic servants in upper caste homes, they get in trouble and problems arise.

As long as the caste background is hidden no problem arises but when it becomes known discriminatory practices start . Because upper castes never want a low caste person in a senior position. Obstacles are created which hinder the smooth gurudwara operations. The low caste persons are not treated as their equal and face humiliations constantly.

The services of Mazhabi Sikh gurudwara employees are terminated when their caste become known. Several specific examples were cited by the respondents\*.

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\* Ragi Bhai Amritpal Singh, Gurudwara sector 19 Chandigarh, Bhai Manna Singh Head Grandhi Harimandir Sahin, Amritsar, Bhai Bakhshish Singh Ragi Darbar Sahib Amritsar, Bhai Gurdial Singh Kanwar.

Interview schedules No. 33 and 41.

The urban respondents were asked "Do the upper castes visit Mazhabi Sikhs Gurudwaras". While 118 (94.4%) responded affirmatively only 7 (5.6%) did not answer the question.

Of those 118 (94.4%) respondents who replied affirmatively 89 (75.4%) reported that such visits made only on special religious gatherings; 14(11.9%) claimed that members of the upper castes never visited lower caste gurudwaras. Only 15 lower caste respondents were of the opinion that upper castes attended Mazhabi Sikh gurudwara without any extraneous caste consideration. On asking about the upper castes joining at community kitchen in the lower caste gurudwaras ,56(47.5%) Complained that they never did; 43.2% said that they sometimes did partake. Less than 10% reported that the upper castes always sat with the lower castes to eat.Regarding the upper castes volunteering to distribute prashad at the end of the congregation 41(34.7%) reported that such a thing never happened 65(55.08%) reported that such volunteering happened sometimes and 12(10.2%) said that this always happened.

Table No. 14 showing the number of urban respondent on question upper caste attending at Mazhabi Sikh gurudawars:-

N=125 (URBAN)					
	Never	Sometimes	Always	No reply	Total
Only on religious gathering	14 (11.9%)	89 (75.4%)	15 (17.7%)	7	125
Joining service at Community Kitchen	56 (47.5%)	51 (43.2%)	11 (9.3%)	7	125
Voluntee- ring to distribute parshad	41 (34.7%)	65 (55.08%)	12 (10.2%)	7	125

All the rural and urban respondents interviewed were asked, "Do the Mazhabi Sikhs have, separate dharamshalas or Janjghar and cremation grounds in rural area". 117 (93.6%) of the urban respondents and all the rural respondents claimed that there are separate dharamshalas for caste groups. 109 (87.2%) urban respondents and all the 125 (100%) rural (Mazhabi) respondents claimed that cremation grounds for mazhabi and upper caste Sikhs residing in the villages are different.

Table No. 15 showing number of urban and rural respondents : reporting the existence of separate Dharamshalas, Janjghars and Shamshan Bhoomies:

	NUMBER	URBAN	RURAL
Dharamshala or Janjghar	125	117	125
%		93.6	100
Shamshan Bhoomi	125	109	125
%		87.2	100

Reasons for lower caste people building separate dharamshalas and Janjghars : The respondents claim that separate facilities are necessitated by compulsion of residential segregation and availability of limited space, in lower caste residential areas for social gatherings.

They also mentioned inconvenience and harassment caused to members of the lower caste when a conflict arose between families of different castes to use a common facility at the same time.

Separate facilities were setup following availability of financial assistance from the government to build dharamshalas in low-caste residential area for their

exclusive use.

Members of the schedule castes did not see any reason in not having separate dharamshalas when separate residential areas and gurudwaras have been in existence since long.

Reasons of separate cremation grounds for lower castes also came up during the field survey.

Because of caste-rigidity untouchability in practice still exists. Caste and religious rules are so rigidly practiced that even dead bodies cannot be cremated at the same common place.

In villages, small towns and old cities separate cremation grounds for low-castes are a common practice. Separate cremation ground was found in Hoshiarpur city only.

To the question, "what in your opinion is social status of Mazhabi Sikhs in the Sikh Society", all respondents both in urban and rural areas said that the Mazhabi Sikhs are still assigned the lowest status in the Sikh society. Sikh religion assures of equality to every faithful regardless of the caste into which

one is born but in practice at social level caste based differentiation is rigidly followed. Mazhabi Sikhs are designated as belonging to the 'Chautha Paura' occupying the lowest position in the social order.

Sikh sects like the Nirmalas and the Nihangs include Mazhabi Sikhs, but their separate entity, identity is kept up. Food for them in the gurudwara Kitchen (Langar) is separately prepared and served. Their 'Chhaunies' (establishments) are separate. Nihangs with upper caste background don't partake of food cooked for those with Mazhabi Sikh origin. Even at the important 'Amritpan' ceremony in the Nihang group where all are required to touch the bowl containing 'Amrit' (baptized water) with their lips-as a symbolic gesture of equality- those with upper caste background are invited first.

Among the Sikhs, the upper caste continue to practice untouchability, with little departure from the traditional pattern. In urban situations, physical avoidance because of fear of ritual pollution, is no longer a norm. In places of religious worship there is no caste differentiation or avoidance. Yet, at homes a Mazhabi Sikh is not acceptable as an equal . Inter-

caste marriages are a rare phenomenon. In rural areas, the cremation grounds residential quarters and Gurudwaras are separate as non use of these facilities by them ensures/represents their low status, caste rigidity and inequality.

The sacrifices made by Mazhabi Sikhs in Sikh history are unique. Even though Mazhabis are not given an equal status. Upper caste Sikhs do consider them as a part of the Sikh community, if only to increase their numbers, which lacks missionary work.

Marriages among upper caste Sikhs and lowest caste Sikhs are very rare. When such marriage are contracted, the life of couple becomes miserable. In most or almost all cases, these end in separation and divorce. Upper caste marry girls from low caste but never give girls to Mazhabis. Urban Mazhabi Sikhs live in cities only by hiding caste, by adopting caste names of upper castes.

Economic backwardsness is also a reason for inequality. Social relations starting with mutual visiting are established with those Mazhabi Sikhs who are economically betteroff and occupy well paid jobs. Poor Mazhabis in rural areas are low paid workers.

Lower caste villagers known as 'Kamins' are often made to perform "begar" (free unpaid physical and other chores). Even their women and children are attached to upper caste households where they perform undesirable physical labour. Division of poor-rich exist among Mazhabis themselves. The rich Mazhabis discriminate their own poor brothers and keep them away and avoid all social relations with them. Rich Mazhabis hesitate to publically recognize their poor relations and feel insulted if the latter come to meet them. The poor relations are not invited at social and family gatherings. They practice avoidance amongst themselves.

Upper caste persons are jealous of development, and are resentful of continuously improving social and economic position of Mazhabi Sikhs. They do not want to work under the low caste officer. Superficially everything works smoothly but not in fact. Status of Mazhabis in comparison to Hindu Balmiks is better, but use of word identification of lower caste people as "Mazhabi" indicates discriminatory attitude and behaviour towards them.

Contacts with upper castes Sikhs on religious and social occasions :-

All the rural and urban respondents were asked the question 'Whom do you visit more often, your own caste men or upper caste people'. Then both the Urban 114(91.2%) and rural 125(100%) respondents reported a preference for their own caste men. Only 11 (8.8%) urban claimed that their dealing with their own caste men are less. On the other hand 34(27.2%) urban almost same number of rural 33(26.4%) respondents claimed that they had greater dealings with upper castes.

Table No. 16 showing number of responses given by urban and rural respondents:-

		N=125	
		Urban	Rural
Preferred to have	More	114	125
dealings with fellow	%	91.2	100
caste men	Less	11	---
	%	8.8	---
Preferred to have	More	34	33
dealings with upper	%	27.2	26.4
caste men	Less	91	92
	%	72.8	73.6

Urban respondents were asked the question 'Do the upper castes visit Mazhabi Sikhs homes on special occasions such as Child birth, Marriages and Death's. These three occasions were further detailed as follows; 112(89.6%) respondents reported that upper caste families attended religious ceremony (recitation of Adi Granth) in their homes, more than 79%(99) respondents reported the upper castes people even partake food cooked in lower caste homes. A slightly higher proportion 82.4% (103) reported that drinking in lower caste homes occurred in which upper caste people joined.

At the time of marriages 106(84.8%) attend post marriage ceremony celebration 103(82.6%) give gifts to the newly weds and 87 (69.6%) reported that upper caste people accompany marriage party with their lower castes hosts.

At the times of deaths 117(93.6%) visits Mazhabi Sikh homes only to offer condolences and join the final prayers for peace of the departed soul, 111(88.8%) accompany the dead body for cremation.

Mazhabi Sikhs also explained that only those Mazhabis who are financially sound or hold some respectable

job or politically influential or occupy position of power are invited to upper caste homes. Poor persons are not invited as guests but only as workers, they complained.

Without consideration regarding the economic status of the affected family people generally visit the bereaved family to console and be present at the last prayers. But funerals in rural areas are mostly attended by relatives and members of the same castes and rarely by few caste individuals.

A little over one-fifth of urban 28 (22.4%) and one seventh of rural 19 (15.2%) respondents expressed approval of inter-caste marriages "provided marriages such become more widespread than presently." Those who disapproved inter-caste marriages included 77.6% and 85.6% urban and rural respondents respectively. They give the following reasons their disapproval:

Caste system still exists in our society, there is no equality. So, caste groups of both upper and lower castes do not allow their caste members to contract inter-caste marriages.

Table No. 17 showing Special occasions when Upper caste Sikhs visit Mazhabi Sikhs households :

At Child Birth -----	Yes	%	No	%	Total
Name Karan (christening the child)	99	79.2	26	20.8	125
Dastarbandi (ceremonial tying of turban first time)	99	79.2	26	20.8	125
Recitation of Holy Granth (sadharan or Akhand Path i.e. leisured or uninterrupted reading of the Holy Book)	112	89.6	13	10.4	125
Partaking a home cooked meal	99	79.2	26	20.8	125
For drinking (involving only men)	103	82.4	22	17.6	125
Marriages -----					
Merrymaking before wedding	82	65.6	43	34.4	125
Post marriage ceremony celebrations	106	84.8	19	15.2	125
Accompanying of the marriage party	87	69.6	38	30.4	125
Giving gift to the newly weds	103	82.6	22	17.6	125
Deaths -----					
Only to offer condolences	117	93.6	8	6.4	125
Accompanying the dead body for cremation	111	88.8	14	11.2	125
Joining the final prayer for peace for the departed soul	117	93.6	8	6.4	125

"Upper caste people do not object marrying girls from our caste, but do not give girls to us". They complained as one of their reasons in disapproving inter-caste marriages.

Upper caste girl in a low-caste family they fear will not give due regard to elders in the home of her husband. Because despite marrying into a low caste family she may not be able to overcome her sense of superiority and the practice of untouchability. A girl of low caste in upper caste family may constantly remain focus of biting comments and humiliation. Thus a lower caste girl in an upper caste family may not feel accepted.

The avowed claims of religious tolerance and brotherhood does not contain caste based social discrimination. Upper castes discriminate against lower caste regardless of religious affiliation. Mazhabi Sikhs and Balmikis are members of same caste but when they adopt Sikh faith they become totally different. Mazhabis consider themselves socially superior to Balmikis and there are no inter caste marriages among them.

When inter-caste marriages are contracted they are almost always against the wishes of parents. The caste groups of the contracting parties do not approve of them.

When the boys or girls of the lower caste after obtaining higher education improve their financial status decide to marry a higher caste person they are considered as having been loss to "our caste group". Because, the higher castes enjoy the fruits of our caste children's hard labour. Such marriages thus hinder development of the lower castes, it is felt.

Urban respondents were asked the question, "Do you know any intercaste marriage in which boy or girl belongs to Mazhabi Sikh family. Eighty eight (70.4%) claimed acquaintance with such couples. These included 14 of upper caste boys who married Mazhabi Sikh girls and 18 upper caste girls are married to Mazhabi Sikh boys. Mostly these marriages involved spouses who belonged to all castes - Khattris, Ahluwalia, Tonk-Kashatrias and even Brahmians.

Among the 88 respondents who claimed to be acquainted with such couples reported that they were aware of the problems they faced as a consequence of contracting such inter-caste marriages.

Following statements shows the Problems the couple had faced in inter caste marriages :

Naming the Children:-In inter-caste, inter-religious marriages naming the children causes tensions. Girl from upper caste preferred to select names for her children from her own religion which the boys family did not approve. Similar difficulties and problems arose during selection of mates for their children, each partner opting for spouses for their children from their own caste group. Occasionally such inter-caste marriages ended in separation and later divorce affecting the life and future of children.

Problems with parents:- When boys and girls marry despite parental disapprovals often they were forced to leave the husband's family and live separately. They occasionally faced abusive and vulgar language which made any inter-family communication difficult.

The respondents were of the opinion that usually upper caste girls did not adjust in the lower caste families. The family elders usually complain that the daughter-in-law does not give them due respect.

Problems in social gatherings:-Sometimes caste groups do not recognize the marriage and even excommunicate local family involved. Sometimes the low caste

daughter-in-law in upper caste family is routinely addressed in such derogatory term as "Choochri". When low caste boy marries an upper-caste girl the marriage, it is alleged, has not been contracted by mutual agreement. It is generally considered that boy has abducted the girl. In such cases police is involved and girls are forced to return to their parental home. Sometimes the lower caste bridegroom is physically assaulted as a part of pressure to annul the marriage partners in such unions.

In social gatherings both low caste girls and boys face constant humiliation.

Mazhabi Sikhs and Shromani Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee

The question "Do the Mazhabi Sikhs enjoy a status of equality in S.G.P.C. was asked to respondents".

Nine out of 10 respondents (72%) claimed that the Mazhabi Sikhs are recognized in the S.G.P.C. set-up. The remaining did not seem aware of the place Mazhabi Sikhs enjoyed in the S.G.P.C. set-up.

Those who respond that Mazhabi Sikhs are recognized in the S.G.P.C. set-up added that we are taken as a low-caste group among the Sikhs.

Half of those answering the question (numbering 45) claimed that in the S.G.P.C. their representation is very small and is more or less limited to minimum provided under the Act. The upper castes, they complained continue to dominate in the exercise of control over the body.

6/90 (6.7%) respondents said that there are some S.G.P.C. officials who are members of the Mazhabi Sikh caste.

Urban respondents were asked the question, "Is there any chalked out programme of S.G.P.C. aimed at improving the social status of Mazhabi sikhs among the sikhs? Only 22 out of 150 urban respondents (17.6%) reported that S.G.P.C. have a definite programme benefiting the Mazhabi Sikhs. 73 (58.4%) did know of any such programme.

Thirty (24%) did not seem aware of any S.G.P.C. activities focussing on Mazhabi Sikhs.

Those who reported that S.G.P.C have programmes to enhance social status of Mazhabi Sikhs said that in colleges, schools and other institutions run by S.G.P.C. seats have been reserved for Mazhabi Sikhs. Few persons do get some benefits from very childhood, get education and acquire high posts including

membership in legislative Assembly (for example S. Prem Singh Tung).

There were open complaints that reservation and other benefits go mainly to those in the cities. The Mazhabi Sikhs and residents in urban areas who are already well-off enjoy these facilities. All the benefits given by S.G.P.C. it is alleged, are usurped by the rich among the low-caste people. The poor village Mazhabi Sikhs lack resources, and lag behind. They cannot even struggle to get their share of the S.G.P.C.s largesse because they do not even know about benefits which S.G.P.C. offers.

Another reason is that S.G.P.C. is dominated by upper castes. Political group operate along caste lines and Mazhabi Sikhs are not even organized to articulate their demands and to struggle for their cause by themselves.

Respondents were asked the question "Did the S.G.P.C. give equal rights to Mazhabi Sikhs in its administration and policy making?"

Eighty four (74%) urban 72 (77%) rural respondents gave negative response indicating that the Mazhabi Sikhs are not given their due in S.G.P.C. administration and policy making . Thirty two percent

urban and 23% rural respondents said that equal rights are given to them .

Table No. 18 showing opinions of urban and rural study respondents regarding the rights of Mazhabi Sikhs in S.G.P.C.administration :-

Mazhabi Sikhs enjoy equal rights	Urban	Rural
Yes	30	21
%	32.0	23.0
No	84	72
%	74.0	77.0
No answer	32	11
%	25.0	9.0

Those who reported 'yes' that rights are given supported their answers by claiming that:

Seat of junior Vice-President in S.G.P.C. is reserved for Scheduled Castes under the Sikh Gurudawara Act 1925, Punjab Act viii of 1925. It is always occupied by a Mazhabi Sikh.

Mazhabi Sikhs are appointed as Granthis, Sewaders missionaries and managers in the institutions run by S.G.P.C.

Those who reported that S.G.P.C. does not ensure equal rights for the Mazhabi Sikhs gave the following reasons in support of their claims:

1. The caste system militates against complete equality among the Sikhs of various castes. The Mazhabis are regarded as lower in status among Sikhs and no one even the S.G.P.C. can bring about equality.
2. In Panjab Jats, Khattris and Ramgharias are dominating castes and the Mazhabis occupy the lowest social position in the caste hierarchy; further more their economic backwardness does not help.
3. "Rights are written on papers only, nothing is forcefully done to improve the lot of Mazhabis". Policies concessional to the Scheduled castes in general adopted by the S.G.P.C. are not implemented with the speed that they should be. Moreover these benefits are snatched by urban rich and powerful persons among our low caste group. When some from the rural areas are identified for receiving benefits, they turn out to be the yes-man of the dominant leaders in the villages not necessarily the most deserving.

4. S.G.P.C. has never in its annual budget provided for educational expenditure benefiting the Mazhabi Sikhs specifically.

5. S.G.P.C. missionary work is essentially religious in nature. It should concentrate on liquidating caste rigidity if it is to benefit the Mazhabi Sikhs.

All the urban respondents were asked the question, 'How can the S.G.P.C. help the Mazhabi Sikh to achieve a status of equality with other Sikhs.'

Nearly 93% respondents gave the following answers:-

1. S.G.P.C. should accelerate its missionary work and concentrate specially on basic principles of Sikh religion in its real sense. By doing this the caste differences may wither away itself and social equality may be achieved. S.G.P.C. should promote inter-caste marriages among the Mazhabi and upper caste Sikhs.

2. S.G.P.C. should adopt such policies as would promote the basic principles of Sikh religion particularly rural areas. The present emphasis on building gurudwaras are worthy objective to work towards. But there is a crying need to integrate the sikh society particularly in the face of caste bond

centrifugal tendencies. Similarly while starting educational institutions - colleges or schools - should be started in rural areas so as to benefit the rural population. In these institutions Mazhani Sikhs should be given free education, free boarding-lodging and other financial assistance. Some students because of their economic disabilities could neither start their educational process much less use higher education facilities. In government schools fees are not charged from scheduled caste students, but some families cannot find money to buy clothes and books etc. much less pay school fees and bear other expenses. S.G.P.C. should include self-employment schemes in its budget aimed at giving help to the needy Mazhani Sikh families.

3. The Mazhabi Sikhs themselves should propagate their glorious past and not expect other to carry out this important educational task. They should also work hard to get all the reserved seats filled in every field with properly motivated Mazhabi Sikh candidate.

To the question "you find the Mazhabi Sikhs have a say in affairs of the Sikhs?" nearly three fourth (91) respondents replied in the negative. Then the

respondents who said 'no' were asked to give reasons for their opinion. They gave following reasons :

1. Those who run the SGPC consult the Mazhabi Sikh members when the question under discussion affects the lower castes in villages. Then also only men are asked their opinions. Women are rarely, if at all consulted on any question.

2. The village panchyats are dominated by upper castes. Lower castes are generally not consulted in taking any decisions. Sometimes opinions of old experienced male members from lower castes are sought. Customarily not everybody in the village participates in decision making.

3. In villages decisions are taken by the leader. Others are sometimes only consulted, they do not participate in decision-making. This generally applies to everyone in the villages regardless of their castes.

4. Poor people including poor Mazhabi Sikhs have no say in any problem solving. They have no time for any thing other than earning their two meals.

When respondents were asked "Did the Sikh religion contribute in improving your social status' 69 (55.2%)

answered affirmatively whereas 56 (44.8%) reacted negatively.

Then it was asked 'If yes then, how'. The following Table shows the statements given by respondents.

Table No. 19 showing ways in which the Sikh religion contributed to improving their social status in society :-

Converts to Sikhism : were able to	Number of respondents giving multiple answers	%age
Give up dirty occupations; Mazhabi Sikhs Slowly adopted occupations traditionally practiced by high castes usually after Shifting to cities from villages.	60	86.9
Escape the rigours of caste rigidity and open discrimination. Greater contacts with other castes also softened their attitude towards Mazhabi Sikhs.	39	56.5
Increasing access to gurudwaras and participation in all religions ceremonies.	34	49.3
Improvement in our living conditions following changes described above particularly after moving into cities.	31	44.9

The question 'How the Sikh religion contributed to enhance the social status of Mazhabi Sikhs' was asked from urban and rural respondents.

Forty (32%) urban respondents said that Sikh religion has made effective contribution enhancing their social status. All the rural respondents and 85 (68%) urban respondents held the opinion that Sikhism as such has not enhanced their social status.

Two religious bodies Chief Khalsa Diwan and S.G.P.C. are engaged in religious educational work among Mazhabi Sikhs. They have facilitated the admission of Mazhabi Sikh young people to schools and colleges started by them. They also provided some financial help to deserving students from this community.

Table No. 20 shows the statements made by urban respondents:

	Number of urban respondents reporting
Admission to Schools and colleges	18
Financial help to Mazhabi Sikh Students	15
Mazhabi Sikh (students) trained as Ragis, granthis, parcharks	7

Both organizations the SGPC and Chief Khalsa Diwan try to promote integration of Mazhabi Sikhs in the Sikh mainstream and have in the past initiated steps to open up their participation in Sikh religious affairs. Because of these efforts some Mazhabi Sikhs have been trained to and function as Ragis, Granthis and parcharks working on behalf of these organizations.

All the urban and rural respondents were asked the question, what efforts the Mazhabi Sikhs make to get representation in administration sphere. All the urban respondents (125) and 115 (92%) rural respondents reported efforts to get reservation. They said that :

Above all Dr. Ambedkar Struggled to get reservation of seats in legislatures and jobs for the scheduled castes (Mazhabi Sikhs included) incorporated in the Constitution of India.

In Punjab in 1976 (when Giani Zail Singh was the Chief Minister of Punjab) 50% seats were reserved for Mazhabi Sikhs and Balmikis among total scheduled castes under the clause 16(4) of constitution.

Mazhabi Sikhs had to lay their lives to claim their place in Sikh society based on their unique record of service in Sikh history. During the Sikh rule and

later under the British they were rewarded for their services and received honours and agricultural land. These enabled some of them to better their lot.

Individually, many Mazhabi Sikhs worked very hard to become financially sound, and educate their children thereby consolidating their gains and improve the social position of their group.

Respondents were also asked to explain the reasons why Mazhabi Sikhs do not have representation in services and politics of the country proportionate to their strength in the population. They gave following reasons:-

The attitude of the upper castes was cited as the most unfavourable factor in this regard. When they (the upper castes) have to do something to help us they keep a distance and do not do much but continue to discriminate against us. When Mazhabi Sikhs served in the armed forces and an opportunity arises when they have to be rewarded, they are allotted smaller plots of lands than the Jat Sikhs who have to be rewarded for similar or equivalent services.

Two major castes among Sikhs, Jat-Sikhs(land holders) and Khatri Sikhs (Trader's group) are not only

financially dominant but also have a hold an every sphere of life. They do every thing for their own caste people. Mazhabi Sikhs neither have land nor have the benefit of being Traders. So, economic backwardness of Mazhabi's keep them behind. They cannot get the benefit of because many of them cannot get higher education, consequently the benefits of the available job reservations also allude them.

Government policies and benefits are not implemented honestly. The upper caste people already hold the levers of power and are not willing to accept a low caste person above them. When a lower caste person is to be promoted, often in token implementation of concessions they do everything to ensure that only their "yes-men" are allowed to occupy such positions.

Mazhabi Sikhs are not well organized. They struggle for their cause individually not collectively, unlike other low caste like chamars. Because being organized, chamars these days are economically stronger, cover all benefits and are far ahead in education as well as in enjoying facilities of job reservations.

Mazhabi Sikhs on the other hand withhold their caste identity a factor which prevents them from organizing themselves and claim their legitimate share of the

benefits provided by the government under the law of land.

The urban respondents were asked the question, How have the provisions of reservation helped Mazhabi Sikhs to enhance their social status? They gave the following answers:-

Before reservation Mazahabi Sikhs when not engaged in traditional occupations were working in army, railways and in lower rank jobs. Overwhelmingly they were agricultural labourers. But after adoption of reservation policy, unprecedented job opportunities according to their qualification and interest became open to them.

In schools they got free education, which had opened their path to choose various occupations after obtaining appropriate skills educational qualifications. It changed their economic and social situations. It improved their styles of living and got opened up opportunities relate with other upper castes. Fifty percent reservation only for Mazhabi and Balmikis from total of the pool, further increased their chances to improve their lot.

Reservation in its early phase could give benefits only to those families, who were financially better off already. Because of this, they left villages also its rigidity and shifted to cities and got educational and job opportunities or even start other business etc.. Mazhabis who remained in villages because of their financial backwardness are still in same condition. Now a class amongst the caste group has emerged, who are exploiting their own caste brothers.

How untouchability can be removed- The respondents opinions.

To the question, "How Mazhabi Sikhs can enhance their social status to be equal to other Sikhs", the urban respondents gave following answers:-

1. By giving education to their children: 110  
When children will get higher education; they will get good jobs, adopt new professions and acquire new skills, preparing them for better life.
2. By getting jobs their economic status 64  
will be enhanced. Their living conditions will also improve. Children socialized in a non-

restrictive atmosphere will adopt good habits which will further help them to change their environment for the better.

3. Education people will enable them to enter all types of vocations. 43

4. Mazhabis should keep away from intoxicants and other social evils. 42

5. Mazhabi Sikhs should organize and create consciousness among themselves to fight for their rights. 32

The question, 'what should be done to enhance the social status of Mazhabi Sikhs in society' was asked from urban respondents.

They recommended the following measures:-

Government:-

1. Government can help to enhance the social status of Mazhabi Sikhs by enabling them to give higher education to their children.

2. The reservation should be continued, but basis of reservation should now be economic instead of social, conditions of the recipient and not their social or caste background.

3. Mazhabi Sikhs specially of villages should be given interest free loans for starting small scale industries. The landless among them should be allotted land to enable them to throw off dependence on upper caste landlords.

Government and S.G.P.C.:-

1. Along with government, S.G.P.C. should give financial aid to needy and deserving Mazhabi Sikhs students in schools and colleges in the state.

2. Appropriate help should be given to Mazhabi Sikhs artisans and enterpreneurs and promote and support self-employment schemes in rural areas.

3. For higher education outside the village Mazhabi Sikh Students should be provided free boardings and lodging.

Government, S.G.P.C. and Social Organisations of Mazhabi Sikhs:-

1. All of them should support the movement against use of alcohol and other intoxicants among Mazhabi Sikhs.

Mazhabi Sikhs themselves:-

1. Mazhabi Sikhs should organize themselves to get their rights. They should be made conscious of their rights and duties towards themselves and their society.
2. Mazhabi Sikhs should start self respect movement among themselves. They should organize themselves and refuse to cooperate with these upper caste elements who regard them an inferior people.
3. On the one side Mazhabi Sikhs grumble that they are not getting benefits and on the other they hide their caste. Instead of this should compete with confidence and struggle to improve their social, educational and economic status.
4. Mazhabi Sikhs themselves should do away with caste-differences among themselves.
5. Mazhabi Sikhs themselves should avoid extravagance and cultivate the habits of thrift and wisely invest in their children' education.

### **Major findings of the field Survey**

The following observations are based on field data gathered during the field survey in rural areas of Amritsar and Chandigarh. These observations have been arranged in accordance with the field study objectives.

#### Conversion to Sikhism:-

The elders of present Mazhabi Sikhs it was widely claimed by survey respondents were converted to Sikhism mostly when the Sikh faith was established. It was decided upon collectively although the moves initiated by some motivated elders.

The Hindu Balmiki converted to Sikhism with the hope that they would get social and religious equality, get rid of rigidity of caste system and receive love and respect. They adopt basic principles of Sikhism and tried to be true Sikhs.

They hoped that they will be able, by becoming Sikhs, to give up the traditional job of removal of night soil and adopt engage in other occupation(s).

Equality, brotherhood, pangat-sangat system attracted the downtrodden Balmikis. After conversion the Mazhabi Sikh left their dirty traditional occupation in

villages and came out to adopt various other occupations.

They got an opportunity to show their physical power after joining army. During the gurudom of the tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh they were declared a martial community. Under the British when they were recruited in the armed forces, it improved their economic situation particularly because they received regular cash income. This changed their lives. They were able to educate their children improve their living standards. This education and financial independence changed their life style.

Preceived Changes among Mazhabi Sikhs: The respondents' version:-

There has been a very little change in the attitude of upper caste Sikhs who still consider the Mazhabis as lower caste people to be avoided. The upper caste Sikhs continue to regard themselves as their social and economic superiors. Outside their homes, their attitude towards the Mazhabi Sikhs has only marginally changed.

Upper castes develop social relations with economically better-off Mazahabi Sikhs. Farmer's and trader's classes among sikhs are economically and socially better so they dominate at every sphere of

life and grumble about the Mazhabi Sikhs the scheduled castes) at times of admission to institutes of technical and professional education, recruitment to government jobs and promotions and whenever they can discriminate against the lower castes.

In rural areas caste rigidity and separation is deeply entrenched because mostly rural Mazhabis are uneducated and poor and are dependent upon the higher land holding sikhs for agricultural work.

The practice of untouchability:-

It is observed that untouchability is still practiced among Sikhs. Mazhabi Sikhs are still socially and economically backward and upper castes keep the poor Mazhabi Sikhs at a distance and call them "Chautha Paura" Sikhs (Sikhs of the fourth level).

Caste discrimination is reflected among Sikhs when instead of Mazhabi's acquired abilities, qualifications and position. They are still identified as members of the Mazhabi caste.

Upper caste women both in rural and urban areas rigidly practice untouchability, and avoid physical contacts with the untouchables castes including Mazhabi Sikhs.

In rural areas separate gurudwaras for low castes are common. Mazhabi Sikhs live in separate residential localities, in the villages. Upper castes rarely attend religious functions at Mazhabi Sikhs gurudwaras.

Very few Mazhabi Sikhs are appointed to position in gurudwaras as officials, Granthis, Ragis, although no caste distinction are made in Gurudwaras controlled by the S.G.P.C. Mostly sewadars are appointed from this caste people. These persons who are appointed in gurudwaras face number of problems on the basis of their caste. They are not given responsible posts particularly involving handling gurudwara money. In many cases Mazhabi Sikhs hide their castes to secure and hold position.

The upper caste visit low caste gurudwaras rarely. There are Sikh sects like Nirmalas and Nihangs where Mazhabi Sikhs are treated as a separate entity. They are made to sit and eat separately. Most important, the 'Amritpan' ceremony for the Mazhabi Sikhs among the Nihangs is also separately performed.

In villages and small towns there are separate dharamshalas, Janjghars and cremation grounds for Mazhabi Sikhs.

The most important characteristic of untouchability "physical avoidance" is not widely practised particularly outside homes.

Inter-caste marriages are very rare. When they occur, the couples have herd occasionally miserable time. Urban Mazhabi Sikhs live in cities by hiding caste, or by adopting caste names of upper castes. Only economically better off and well paid Mazhabis have social relations with upper caste Sikhs.

Contacts with upper caste Sikhs on religious and Social Functions:-

Mazahabi Sikhs have more dealings with their own caste men and less with upper castes on religious and social occasions.

On happy occasions the upper castes invitations are limited to their caste friends. Only financially better off persons of the lower castes may be invited. Poor Mazhabis are invited only as workers. However, outside their homes the upper caste youngster sometimes invites lower caste youth to drinking bouts.

On deaths people visit each other without any economic or social considerations. Intercaste marriages are not approved both by urban and rural

Mazhabi Sikhs. The Mazhabi Sikhs themselves practice caste rigidity in matter matrimonial. Another reason is that inter-caste couples are not respectfully received by even their own caste groups. They face all round family and social disapproval. Upper caste girls do not adjust in low caste families and low caste girls are not given respectful status in upper caste families. First they face non acceptance, later. their children also have difficult time.

Only 32 intercaste marriages with proportion of 14 boys and 18 girls of upper caster to Mazhabi girls and boys were identified during the survey. And almost all the intercaste couples reportedly faced grave problems. Some of these marriages ended in separation and later in divorce.

Rights are given only in papers, nothing practically is done. Policies facilitating the social and economic position of the scheduled castes in general, but its benefits are monopolized by urban rich and powerful rural persons of low caste potential beneficiaries. S.G.P.C.'s religious work is very slow in showing its impact. If caste rigidity is to be done away with and/or intercaste marriages are to be promoted, education of the society will need to be intensified. Only then inter-caste integration might be achieved.

S.G.P.C. should concentrate its policies favouring rural Mazhabi Sikhs. Some of them cannot even afford to clothe their children, much less send them to schools.

How untouchability can be removed: the respondents opinion:-

Education is the most important requirement of the lower castes. With education they will be able to get good jobs, acquire new skills enter new professions and prepare coming generations for better life.

Economic Status will improve their way of life, children will be socialized in open surroundings. Thus the lower castes will be able to wash out centuries old distresses and narrowness in their minds.

Government should allot adequate funds and provide free education to Mazhabi Sikh students. Reservation should continue but its basis should be economic to ensure that deserving and needy are helped.

Self employment schemes should be promoted among mazhabi Sikhs for which liberal loans and subsidies should be made available.

Mazhabi Sikhs themselves should live a ideal life and stop use of alcohol and drugs.

They should organize themselves outside political parties to fight against all forms of discrimination and social evils. They should work hard to became good and responsible citizens.

## CONCLUSION

The observance of untouchability is perhaps, the worst kind of atrocity on the sudras which is based on the idea of purity or impurity specially connected with occupations clean and unclean. The existence of such discrimination could date back to ancient times. In the traditional Hindu society the individual has very little freedom of action but also has to follow the pattern set by groups like caste in which he is born. The social separateness of the various castes and ethnic groups is reflected in their segregation in residential localities of a community. Mainly in Indian villages, this principle is strictly enforced in the case of groups in the lower extreme, namely the untouchable castes now known as the Scheduled castes.

In the oldest period of Rig-Veda we find Aryans and dasas were in two opposing camps in sphere the social and religious spheres. Consequently, for individual safety and for the future of whole varna, Brahmins wrote religious rules. Some of the injunctions in these 'granthas' are plainly designed to safeguard the interests of the privileged at the expense of the under-privileged.

'Karma' and 'dharma' have contributed very greatly to the strengthening of the idea of hierarchy which is inherent in the caste system. As the priestly influence grew in India complicated rules of rituals and conduct were built up and incorporated into Hindu religious books.

The ideas of purity centered round food and drink. The concept of pollution, vegetarianism, endogamy and differences based on property ownership, property rights, social status, inheritance paved way for further social inequality. This rigidity bore instant hatred towards each other.

Manu Smriti thickened the faded colour of caste-system and further strengthened its roots. Manu closed all doors of progress and prosperity for sudras and their social position was surely deteriorated. Laws were made to keep power in the hands of a special class or to suit to the interests of governing class and to keep lower castes in perpetual slavery.

It is observed that in the medieval period, Sikh movement tried to build up a society free from caste system. Guru Nanak's concept of the Supreme Being was of a universal, all-embracing, all-powerful, all-

knowing, all-merciful and even kind fatherhood. All people irrespective of their caste, creed, colour, clan and sex are creation of one and the same fatherhood. Sikhism recognizes no distinction between the high and low, the rich and poor, the ruler and the subject. It equates the low-caste sudra with high castes. Sikhism wants social harmony to replace social rivalry and social unity to take the place of social disunity. According to Sikhism the rituals that masquarad as religion are meaningless, rather wasteful. Even religious symbols carries no sense if they fail to convey what they stand for. Sikhism stresses the purity of mind and sincerity of purpose. The Sikh Gurus actively struggled against the anti-social and anti-human institutions like caste, inequality of status, sexes and religious and political domination. The Sikh philosophy does not segregate the people but make them to live collectively. It laid the greatest emphasis on the purity of heart on the upright conduct. The Sikh Gurus were deeply interested in the upliftment of the suppressed classes. They wanted social and political inequality including the injustice of caste system to be combated and eliminated.

One of the main targets behind the compilation of Adi Granth was to establish casteless society. Both Pangat and Sangat translated the principle of equality into practice for the upliftment of the downtrodden who had been groaning under the yoke of socio-economic and political disabilities and discrimination prevalent in the society at that time. Both these institutions helped to establish a positive, democratic tradition among Sikhs.

Guru Gobind Singh's creation of 'Khalsa' brought about a complete change in the outlook of the lifeless, oppressed and downtrodden people and infused a new spirit into their life.

Such was the philosophy of Sikh Gurus which attracted the depressed and downtrodden castes towards Sikhism. For those who stood at the bottom of the Hindu society and they knew that as long as they remained Hindus, the rigidity of the caste system would not admit any chance of improvement in their status. For such people Sikhism offered an ideal opportunity, especially for the Mazhabis to improve their position in society. The Mazhabi Sikhs were chuhra Hindus converted to Sikhism. Chuhra Hindus occupied the lowest place in the social scale and were scavengers by profession and socially untouchables.

The history of sikhs in Punjab is incomplete without the study of the role of Mazhabi Sikhs. For, in all the social and religious movements of the Sikhs, the Mazhabi Sikhs contributed a great deal by their service and sacrifices.

Till the time of Guru Arjun, the fifth Sikh Guru, the situation of Mazhabi Sikhs improved to the extent that in the houses of Sikh Gurus the untouchable ladies worked as nurses and cooks and men did out door jobs even missionary work.

Under the Guru Hargobind the Mazhabi Sikhs joined his army. Till the time of guru Tegh Bahadur, these untouchables were loyal, honest and devoted Sikhs of the Guru.

When Guru Gobind Singh organized 'Khalsa' through the ceremony of 'Pahul' these untouchables took 'Pahul' and became Singhs, fought battles and laid down their lives like true, brave and devoted soldiers.

Mazhabi Sikhs also extended their whole hearted co-operation to Banda Bahadur and annals of Sikh history are replete with the sacrifices of Mazhabi Sikhs in the struggle of the Sikhs against Mughals.

During the misle period, the golden period of Mazhabī Sikhs was over because they did not receive the fond treatment at the hands of heads of the misles who belonged to higher castes. Actually their glorious past and strong commitment to Sikhism were exploited by the misle chiefs. Infact, the Sikh Principle of equality, brotherhood were thrown into background. Even Banda Bahadur could not attend to the reform. Old caste practices of saperateness high and low differences and untouchability again rose its head in Sikh Society. The people who had seen just a single beam of brotherhood and equality after centuries during the times of Sikh Gurus, were again thrown into suffocating caste practices.

Some efforts were made to raise the status of the Mazhabī Sikhs to the extent that they could move amongst upper caste Sikhs and their touch would not pollute other upper Sikh Castes. But this did not improve their position. Like Hindu Castes, Sikh castes also were divided into sub-castes called gotras. The situation deteriorated to extent that the existence of Mazhabī Sikhs among Sikhs became a question.

Maharaja Ranjeet Singh made every attempt to preserve caste division. In his irregular Cavalry Mazhabi Sikhs were given position of dependents, and were less paid. During Sikh empire a new caste hierarchy had been formed with Jat Sikhs at the top.

The traditional set-up was based on agricultural productivity and customary relationships in which the land holders maintain their economic power and social superiority over the Mazhabi Sikhs by keeping them at a low economic level. As the position of any social group based on two consideration : descent and calling, so the Mazhabi Sikhs are village menial attached to a particular family of land holder, though they took 'Pahul' and obey all the principles of Sikh religion to blot out the past stigma.

The Sikh society originally, Hindu, could not completely do away with their old caste background on conversion. Their social relations like inter-dinning and inter-marriage with Hindus of the same caste continued because they lived amidst caste ridden Hindu Society. However, caste hierarchy among the Sikhs is different from that of the Hindus.

So far as their social status is concerned, upper castes did not keep any association with them and

social distance was also there. They could not have any instrumental relations with upper caste Sikhs. But Mazhabi Sikhs have adopted gotras of Jat Sikhs to inter-mingle with them and also adopted their customs performed at wedding, birth and deaths. Till 1920, they were not accepted in common worship even in Golden Temple. But after protest by Singh Sabha Movement and Gurudwara Reform Movement the ban was lifted and were allowed to enter at special hours with prashad prepared by high castes.

Later, the British rule offered an opportunity to some of the Mazhabi Sikhs to get out of traditional bounds of villages and move to towns. Development in system of education, urbanization, commercialization of agriculture, means of transportation and communication, road construction, industries, establishment of canal colonies, army and other government facilities helped them to change their occupations and economic position that resulted in the improvement of their social position to a great extent. Education provided new knowledge and skills necessary for highly valued social roles.

As a favour from the British, they were declared to be an agricultural caste and so some of them turned to

agriculture. The Mazhabi Sikhs were notable as soldiers, being the second most numerous Sikh group in the imperial Army. In their move to towns or cities, Mazhabis were quite numerous among the migrants. Mazhabi Sikhs were more frequent in dropping their traditional occupation than Hindu or Muslim Chuhras.

After partition in 1947, Panjab government passed act for abolition of untouchability. It was followed by several other acts for the removal of social and religious disabilities, for the improvement of the economic conditions of low-paid Mazhabi Sikhs, and for safeguarding the interests of the land-less Mazhabis to use ponds and samlet land without paying customary due.

It is unfortunate that though the struggle to remove untouchability has been under taken by Sikh Gurus and social and religious reform movements such equality by the Sikhs and Hindus, it is still practised. It is more vigorous in rural India. Urban people may not be experiencing this problem as the rural ones do. In the survey carried out, it is revealed that untouchability is unseparable from villages. The chuhra in villages remain Chuhras or Mazhabis to the higher castes in the surrounding villages and towns even though they may have no direct occupational contact with them.

At present both the rural and urban Mazhabi Sikhs feel that their status in Sikh society is still lowest. At social level caste bound differentiation is rigidly followed by upper caste Sikhs. Mazhabi Sikhs still are designated as belonging to 'Chautha Paura' occupying lowest position in the social order, though, they are not removers of night soil.

Status of Mazhabi Sikhs in comparison to Hindu Balmikis is better but use of word 'Mazhabi' indicates discriminatory attitude and behaviour towards them. Mazhabi Sikhs and Balmikis are members of the same caste but the former consider themselves socially superior to the later and there are no social relations between them.

In the villages and small old towns, residential areas continue to be as rigidly segregated as in past. Despite land consolidation and occasional housing relocation the practice of segregated housing continues to be the source of discrimination.

Unfortunately the pattern of use of government assistance for developing common facilities in the villages does not integrate different castes in the

villages but further separates them. The use of government funds in building 'Janj Ghars' for members of scheduled castes deepens caste exclusiveness.

There are separate gurudwaras for Mazhabi Sikhs in most of the villages. Only on a few special occasions like Guru Nanak Birthday. Guru Gobind Singh Birthday and Martyrdom days of Guru Arjan and Guru Tegh Bahadur, they celebrate together with other castes in the gurudwaras of upper castes. Otherwise daily congregations are held separately at separate caste gurudwaras. Upper castes rarely visit low-caste gurudwaras and seldom join community kitchen. The practice continues unchanged in the villages although in historical or big Gurudwaras where large number provide anonymity such practices are not doserved.

In historical Gurudwaras or Gurudwaras managed by S.G.P.C. officials and Granthis are appointed without any caste distinctions but at separate caste gurudwaras, persons are appointed from that particular caste to which the gurudwara belongs. Mazhabi Sikhs officials are few, and they mostly function as sewardars. However, in cities the low caste persons do perform various functions by hiding

caste background. There are a few cases where Mazhabi Sikh persons have faced certain difficulties while performing their duties because of their low caste background.

Sikh sects of Nihang Singhs include Mazhabi Sikhs but are treated separately. They are not allowed in a kitchen where langar for upper caste Nihangs is being prepared. They are separately served. They live in separate Chhauries. Even at the most important ceremony of 'Amritpan' among Nihangs low caste persons or 'Chutha Paura' Sikhs are served after upper castes.

Upper caste Sikhs continue to practise untouchability with a little departure from the traditional pattern. Physical avoidance, because of fear of ritual pollution is no longer a norm. In Schools or in outer sphere there is no caste differentiation or avoidance, but at homes or social gatherings Mazhabi Sikhs are not treated or accepted as equals. Upper caste women are more rigid in practising such differences.

Inter-caste marriages especially among upper caste Sikhs and Mazhabi Sikhs are a rare phenomenon. Upper

caste accept girls from low untouchable castes, but do not give girls to low caste boys which reflects social humiliation. If in a few cases, such marriages occur, the life of couple becomes miserable because they are not accepted as equals. The couple face double torture, one from family and another from society only because of caste difference. There is no inter-caste inter-dinning at homes. Out side the homes there may be some socializing including drinking.

Upper caste Sikhs establish social relations only with those Mazhabi Sikhs who are economically well-off and occupy well paid jobs. Poor Mazhabi Sikhs are not invited as equal or guests but as workers. Division of rich and poor and physical avoidance exists even among Mazhabi Sikhs themselves. Rich Mazhabis discriminate their own poor brothers, keep them away and avoid social relations with them and hesitate to publically recognize their poor relations. The urban rich Mazhabi also exploits economic backwardness of his rural poor Mazhabi who lacks resources, so he lags behind. The goverment facilities and other economic benefits, reservation facilities are enjoyed by these rich Mazhabi only. A section amongst these caste groups has emerged who is exploiting its own caste brother specially in the villages.

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Farmers and traders are two socially and economically dominant castes among Sikhs. They also have an hold over religious bodies. They do not like lower castes to rise and never want to work under the low-caste officers. Superficially everything works smoothly but at the back, caste background of the officer is kept in view while determining his social status in the caste hierarchy. Reservations have created further problems and discrimination.

Psychological, social and economic aspects of problem reflect the suppressed fear, doubt and suppressed anger in the minds of Mazhabi Sikhs because of social problems they are facing in villages. Their economic dependence on the upper castes keep them silent about their difficulties in the rural areas.

In cities, situation is different because their occupational dependence is of different type. Urbanization has reduced social discrimination. Urban Mazhabis, educated, working in government or semi-government departments or doing business and being organized, and aware of their rights and privileges, analyze the situation and criticize and protest against discriminatory practices. Even though their

social life is such that they live along with upper castes by hiding their caste identity and by adopting caste names of other upper caste, fear of losing of their caste secret always remains in their minds. But in offices they are keen to identify themselves with their backward caste in order to obtain government benefits which reflect their suppressed discriminative and separateness from the upper castes.

SGPC is a lone religious body of Sikh which is dominated by upper castes. Herein also Mazhabi Sikhs have representation as a low caste group.. There are Mazhabi Sikh officials in S.G.P.C. Seats are reserved for Mazhabi Sikhs in educational institutions run by S.G.P.C. But these educational institutions are mostly in urban areas. So benefits of reservation go merely to those in the cities.

Concessional policies to Scheduled Castes in general adopted by S.G.P.C.'s are not implemented speedily by S.G.P.C. Missionary work is religions in nature. It should concentrate on liquidating caste rigidity on the basis of principles of Sikh religions, if it is to benefit the Mazhabi Sikh. S.G.P.C. should promote intercaste marriages between Mazhabis and upper caste Sikh, if it has to carry out the ideas of the Sikh Gurus.

Mazhabi Sikhs are not well organized. They struggle for their cause individually not collectively unlike other low castes like Ramdasias (Chamars). Being organized, Chamars these days are economically stronger, cover all benefits and are far ahead in education as well as in enjoying facilities of job reservation. Mazhabi Sikhs on other hand withhold their caste identity which prevents them from organizing themselves and claim their share of benefits provided by Government.

Those families of Mazhabis, who worked in armies and left the village and its rigidity, came to cities to do various jobs, are more benefited. They got cash which benefited them to improve their economic condition. Their children got education which opened greater opportunities to them to choose various occupations after obtaining appropriate skills and educational qualifications. It improved their style of living and opened opportunities to them to take advantage of the fifty per cent reservation reserved for Mazhabi and Balmikis out of total Scheduled caste reservation that brought them at the level of upper castes. Mazhabi Sikhs who remained in villages because of their financial backwardness and

illiterate are still in same condition. So, education is the main measure through which status of Mazhabi Sikhs has improved.

## Appendix-I

Table showing Scheduled Caste and Mazhabi Sikhs and total Population of The State by District. (Census 1971)

Name of District	State Population By District	% by District	Number Scheduled Castes by District	% Scheduled Castes to District Population	Number Mazhabi Sikhs by District	% Mazhabi Sikhs to Scheduled Castes in the District	% Mazhabi Sikhs to District Poulation
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Gurdaspur	1,229,249	9.07	2,67,110	21.73	53,690	20.10	4.36
Amritsar	1,835,500	13.54	4,18,746	22.81	3,38,706	80.89	18.45
Ferozpur	1,905,833	14.06	4,34,395	22.79	2,19,254	50.47	11.50
Ludhiana	1,419,421	10.48	3,37,315	23.76	47,572	14.10	3.35
Jalandhar	1,454,501	10.73	4,77,853	32.85	5,451	1.14	0.37
Kapurthala	429,514	3.18	1,06,201	24.73	8,623	8.12	2.01
Hoshiarpur	1,052,153	7.76	3,03,521	28.85	1,295	0.43	0.12
Ropar	545,005	4.02	1,23,225	22.61	3,912	3.17	0.72
Patiala	1,215,100	8.97	2,53,948	20.90	20,454	8.05	1.68
Sangrur	1,146,650	8.46	2,71,322	23.66	61,881	22.81	5.39
Bhatinda	1,318,134	9.73	3,54,581	26.90	201,708	56.89	15.30
Total	13,551,960	100.00	3,348,217	24.71	9,62,546	28.75	7.10

Source: Census of India 1971 series 17- PUNJAB Part-II-c-(i) and Part V-A, Distribution of Population by Religion and Scheduled Castes. P.3 and 120-173

## Appendix-II

Table showing Scheduled Caste and Mazhabi Sikhs and total Population of The State by District. (Census 1981)

Name of District	State Population By District	% by District	Number Scheduled Castes by District	% Scheduled Castes to District Population	Number Mazhabi Sikhs by District	% Mazhabi Sikhs to Scheduled Castes in the District	% Mazhabi Sikhs to Poulation District
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Gurdaspur	1,513,435	9.0	3,58,540	23.7	81,771	22.8	5.4
Amritsar	2,188,490	13.0	5,73,394	26.2	4,66,232	81.3	21.3
Ferozepur	1,307,804	8.0	2,73,328	20.9	1,12,715	41.2	8.6
Ludhiana	1,818,912	11.0	4,58,012	25.2	79,397	17.3	4.4
Jalandhar	1,734,574	10.3	6,29,297	36.3	9,006	1.4	0.5
Kapurthala	545,249	3.2	1,47,151	27.0	13,805	9.3	2.5
Hoshiarpur	1,243,807	7.4	3,83,523	30.9	1,686	0.4	0.1
Ropar	716,662	4.2	1,74,729	24.4	2,811	1.6	0.4
Patiala	1,568,898	9.3	3,47,102	22.1	27,936	8.0	1.8
Sangrur	1,410,250	8.3	3,59,259	25.4	92,796	25.8	6.6
Bhatinda	1,304,606	7.8	3,52,489	25.5	1,85,685	52.6	14.2
Faridkot	1,436,228	8.5	4,54,879	31.7	2,99,002	65.7	20.8
Total	16,788,915	100	4,511,703	26.87	13,72,842	30.42	8.17

Source: Census of India 1981, Series 17- PUNJAB, Part-IX Special Tables for Schedule Castes, Directorate of Census Operations Punjab, PP.6 - 213.

## Appendix-III

Table showing total Sikh Population by District and Population of Mazhabi Sikhs. (Census 1971)

Name of District	Total Population of District	Total Sikh Population of District	% of Sikh Population to total Population	Total Mazhabi Sikh Population of the District	% of Mazhabi Sikhs of District to Sikh Population of District
Gurdaspur	1,229,249	5,50,996	44.82	53,690	9.74
Amritsar	1,835,500	13,62,291	74.22	3,38,706	24.86
Ferozepur	1,905,833	12,40,218	65.07	2,19,254	17.70
Ludhiana	1,419,421	9,39,712	65.71	47,572	5.10
Jalandhar	1,454,501	6,53,018	44.90	5,451	0.83
Kapurthala	429,514	2,63,130	61.26	8,623	3.28
Hoshiarpur	1,052,153	4,14,323	39.38	1,295	0.31
Ropar	545,005	3,03,102	55.61	3,912	1.29
Patiala	1,215,100	6,59,020	54.24	20,454	3.10
Sangrur	1,46,650	7,67,071	66.90	61,881	8.07
Bhatinda	1,318,134	10,14,091	76.93	201,708	19.90
Total	13,551,960	8,159,972	60.22	9,62,546	11.80

Source: Census of India 1971, Series 17- PUNJAB Part-II-c-(i) and Part V-A, Distribution of Population by Religion and Scheduled Castes. P.2 and 120-173

## Appendix-IV

Table showing total Sikh Population by District and Population of Mazhabi Sikhs. (Census 1981)

Name of District	Total Population of District	Total Sikh Population of District	% of Sikh Population to total Population	Total Mazhabi Sikh Population of the District	% of Mazhabi Sikhs of District to Sikh Population of District
Gurdaspur	1,513,435	675,400	44.6	81,771	12.1
Amritsar	2,188,490	1,655,205	75.6	4,66,232	28.2
Ferozpur	1,307,804	709,571	54.2	1,12,715	15.9
Ludhiana	1,818,912	1,209,986	66.5	79,397	6.6
Jalandhar	1,734,574	743,366	42.8	9,006	1.2
Kapurthala	545,249	328,145	60.2	13,805	4.2
Hoshiarpur	1,243,807	487,047	39.1	1,686	0.4
Ropar	716,662	405,490	56.6	2,811	0.7
Patiala	1,568,898	877,765	55.9	27,936	3.2
Sangrur	1,410,250	981,940	69.6	92,796	9.5
Bhatinda	1,304,606	994,865	76.2	1,85,685	18.7
Faridkot	1,436,228	1,130,361	78.7	2,99,002	26.4
Total	16,788,915	10,199,141	60.75	13,72,843	13.5

Source: Census of India, Series 17- PUNJAB Part-I of 1984 Household Population by Religion of Head of Household, Census Operations, Punjab, pp. 14-47

## Appendix-V

Table showing distribution Chandigarh respondents by place of their origin.

Region	Name & District	Number of Respondenst	Sub totals by region
Mazha	Amritsar	40	
	Gurdaspur	13	53
Malwa	Firozpur	5	
	Ropar	17	
	Sangrur	6	
	Bathinda	7	
	Faridkot	7	
	Patiala	7	
	Ludhiana	6	
	Fathegarh Sahib	5	60
Doaba	Jallandar	7	
	Hoshiarpur	1	
	Kapurthala	4	12
Grand Total		125	125

## Appendix VI

Confidential

Interview Schedule (Urban) for the Ph.D. Thesis on "Problem of Untouchability Among Sikhs in Punjab with Special Reference to Mazhabi Sikhs", Department of Gandhian Studies, Punjab University, Chandigarh.

1. Name
2. Age
3. Sex Male/Female
4. Marital Status
5. Educational Qualifications.
6. Occupation
7. Your father's occupation
8. Whether you know, what lead your ancestors to adopt Sikh faith?

Give Specific reasons \_\_\_\_\_

9. With what expectations a Balmiki became a Sikh?
10. Whether you know the basic principles of Sikhism?

Give details

11. Is there has been a change in your social status following adoption of Sikh Faith? Yes/No

If yes, of what type \_\_\_\_\_

If no, why not \_\_\_\_\_

12. Did the Sikhism enhanced your present status in society?

Yes/No.

If yes, specify how \_\_\_\_\_

If No, give reasons \_\_\_\_\_

13. How Mazhabi Sikhs can improve their social status to be equal to other upper caste Sikhs?

14. Are you discriminated against because you are a Mazhabi Sikh in Sikh Society?

15. What in your opinion the social status of Mazhabi Sikhs in Sikh Society?

16. Will you give approval to intercaste marriage?  
Yes/No

If No, why not \_\_\_\_\_

17. Do you know any inter-caste marriage in which boy or girl belongs to Mazhabi Sikh family?

Yes/No

If yes, Tell, castes \_\_\_\_\_

18. Did they faced any family or social problems?

Yes/No.

If yes, what type of problems these couples faced?

They themselves \_\_\_\_\_

Their children \_\_\_\_\_

19. Did the Sikh religion contributed in improving your social status?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

20. What efforts the Mazhabi Sikhs made to get representation in administration sphere?

If yes, explain efforts made by you \_\_\_\_\_

If no, give reasons why you not get representation \_\_\_\_\_

21. Did the S.G.P.C. give equal rights to Mazhabi Sikhs in its administration and policy making?

If Yes, explain \_\_\_\_\_

If no, give reasons \_\_\_\_\_

22. How can the S.G.P.C. help the Mazhabi Sikhs to achieve status of equality with other Sikhs?

23. Is there any chalked out programme of S.G.P.C. aimed at improving the social status of Mazhabi Sikhs?

24. Do the upper castes visit Mazhabi Sikhs homes on special occasions such as:

Child Birth:

Namkaran (Christenning of the child) Dastarbandi  
(Ceremonial tying of Turban first time)  
Partaking a home cooked meal  
For drinking (Involving Only men)

Marriages:

Marry making before wedding  
Post marriages ceremony celebrations.  
Accompany of the Marriage party  
Giving gifts to the newly weds.

Deaths:

Only to offer condolence  
Accompany the dead body for cremation  
Joining the final prayer for peace for the departed soul

25. Do the low caste feeling comes in your mind, when are in company of upper caste Sikhs? Yes/No.

If yes, then what type of feeling comes in your mind?

26. Whom do you visit more

- a) Your own kith and kins
- b) Only high Caste people
- c) Only Scheduled caste people
- d) All \_\_\_\_\_

27. It is known that there are separate gurudwaras for Mazhabi Sikhs? Why so \_\_\_\_\_

28. Do you know any Mazhabi Sikh who is working in upper caste gurduwaras, as:

An official _____	Yes/No
Granthi _____	Yes/No
Ragi _____	Yes/No.
Sewadar _____	Yes/No.

29. If yes, do persons with Mazhabi caste background face any problems in the performance of their duties in the Gurudwaras? Yes/No.

30. If yes, what type of problems they faced? Please explain

31. Do the upper castes visit Mazhabi Sikh gurudwaras?

Only on special religions gatherings	Never
Sometimes Always	

Service of kitchen	_____
_____	

Distribution of Prashad	_____
_____	

32. Do the Mazhabi Sikhs have separate dharamshala or Janjghars? Yes/No.

33. Do the Mazhabi Sikhs have separate cremation grounds? Yes/No.

34. How have the reservation helped Mazhabi Sikhs to enhance their social status?

35. What should be done to enhance the social status of Mazhabi Sikhs in society?

## Appendix VII

Confidential

Interview Schedule (Rural) for the Ph.D. Thesis on "Problem of Untouchability Among Sikhs in Punjab with Special Reference to Mazhabi Sikhs", Department of Gandhian Studies, Punjab University, Chandigarh.

1. Name
2. Age
3. Sex Male/Female
4. Marital Status
5. Educational Qualifications.
6. Occupation
7. What was your father's occupation?
8. Whether you know, what lead your ancestors to adopt Sikh faith?

Give Specific reasons \_\_\_\_\_

9. Was this Conversion ;

Individual  
or  
in Group

10. Who motivated your ancestors to embrace Sikhism

Some Individual  
Some Organization  
Some Motivation

11. Do you Know the basic principles of Sikhism?
12. Did the Sikh religion contributed to enhance your present social status in Sikh society?

Yes/No.  
If Yes, specify how?  
if No, give reasons?

13. Is there has been a change in your social status following adoption of Sikh faith? Yes/No

If yes, of what type \_\_\_\_\_

If no, why not \_\_\_\_\_

14. Are you discriminated against because you are a Mazhabi Sikh?

15. What in your opinion the social status of Mazhabi Sikhs in Sikh Society?

16. Do you think you are respected more among Mazhabi Sikhs than the high caste Sikhs?

Yes/No

If Yes, describe the behaviour of high caste Sikhs towards Mazhabi Sikhs.

If No, why so.

17. How did the Sikh society helped Mazhabi Sikhs in raising the educational standard? Specify .....

18. Does Sikhs give equal opportunities to the Mazhabi Sikhs in its administrative and policy matters?

Yes/No.

If yes, please specify your role.

If no, please tell the reasons.

19. What efforts the Mazhabi Sikhs made to get representation in administrative sphere?

If yes, then give detailed efforts...

If no, give reasons.

20. Do the Mazhabi Sikhs enjoy a status of equality in S.G.P.C.?

21. Did the S.G.P.C. give equal rights to Mazhabi Sikhs in its administration and policy making?

If Yes, explain \_\_\_\_\_

If no, give reasons \_\_\_\_\_

22. Do you visit common Gurudwaras?

1. Occassionally on Gurupurbas.
2. Once in a month.
3. Weekly.
4. Daily.
5. Some times.

23. Do you give approval to the following:

Intercaste marriages	Yes/No.
Widow remarriage	Yes/No.
Divorce	Yes/No.
Child marriage	Yes/No.

24. Do the low caste feeling comes in your mind, when are in company of upper caste Sikhs? Yes/No.

If yes, then what type of feeling comes in your mind?

25. Whom do you visit more

- a) Your own kith and kins
- b) Only high Caste people
- c) Only Scheduled caste people
- d) All people \_\_\_\_\_

26. It is known that there are separate gurudwaras for Mazhabi Sikhs?

27. Do the Mazhabi Sikhs have separate dharamshala or Janjghars? Yes/No.

28. Do the Mazhabi Sikhs have separate cremation grounds? Yes/No.

29. Do the upper castes attend social functions of Mazhabi Sikhs?

30. Do the upper castes attend religious functions of Mazhabi Sikhs?

31. Do the upper caste frequently visit your homes?  
Yes/No.

Do these relations are formal. Yes/No.

Is there any purpose behind this Visit. Yes/No.

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