

# BIRTH OF THE KHALSA



Surinder Singh Johar

## **Birth Of the Khalsa**

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# **Birth of The Khalsa**

**Surinder Singh Johar**



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*Dedicated to all my family members with the hope that they will follow the teachings of the Sikh Gurus throughout their life.*



## Preface

On the Baisakhi day of 1699, the tenth Master of the Sikhs created the Khalsa at a huge gathering of his followers at Anandpur Sahib. This was a great event in the Sikh history. The people were expected to hear words of comfort and consolation from their Guru. They were upset to see him emerge from his tent with drawn sword in his hand. Slashing his sword he shouted, "My Bhagwati (sword) desires a human sacrifice before it is appeased and pacified".

There was a complete silence. He shouted again, "Is there none out of thousands assembled here who is ready to offer his life for the sake of the faith?"

At the third call, one person from the gathering rose from his seat and offered himself to the Guru. He was led into the tent and after a little while, the Guru again appeared before the assembly with his sword in hand and asked for another head.

Like this, five persons were taken into the tent, one after the other, but at the end of the ceremony all were brought out converted as Khalsa. To each of them, the Guru administered *Amrit*; they became the Beloved five of the Khalsa - *Panj Payars*.

The aim of the Guru in creating the Khalsa was to build up nation of fearless people who could fight against injustice. The creation of the Khalsa marked the rise of a new type of people, destined to play the role of the warriors.

The Guru created a new brotherhood, and all classes were merged into one. Everybody was equal and none is superior to the another.



In the book I have tried to narrate the story of what was the need of creating the Khalsa, how it was created, what are its duties and obligations and also how the Khalsa has to lead his life. What is the relevance of Khalsa today and its future have been dealt in detail.

How much I have been successful in my attempt, I leave it to my readers to judge.

**—*Surinder Singh Johar***

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## **Baisakh**

Beauteous Baisakh, when the Lough adorns itself a new the wife awaits the coming of her Lord with her eyes fixed on the door. My love, who alone can help me cross the turbulent waters of life, have compassion for me and come home, Without thee I am as worthless as a shell. Love, look thou upon me with favour and let our eyes mingle.

Then will I become priceless, beyond compare. Nanak asks: wilier see best thou the Lord? Whom awaits thou?

Thou best not for to go for the Lord is within thee, them out. If thy body and soul yearn for the Lord the Lord shall love thee and Baisakh will beautiful be” — Guru Arjan.

*Translated by*

**Khushwant Singh**



## CHAPTER

**Guru Gobind Singh - A Profile**

Guru Gobind Singh, the last Sikh prophet, was among the most dynamic figures of Indian nay world history. He was one of the greatest charismatic personalities of all times. He, throughout his life, fought for human values and freedom and stood for secularism and democratic principles, pleading for man's inalienable rights. Many "historians agree in eulogising the great merits of Guru Gobind Singh. In him were united the qualities of a religious leader and a warrior. He was a law giver in the pulpit, a champion in the field, a king on his *masand* and a *faqir* in the society of the Khalsa. He was the right man for the needs of the time".<sup>1</sup>

Thus, "it is undeniable that Guru Gobind Singh must be counted among the greatest of Indians of all ages. The object that he attempted was great and laudable, and the means which he adopted were such as a comprehensive mind could alone have. It will not do us good to forget that whatever else he might have been, Guru Gobind Singh was first and foremost a religious leader. None but a person of saintly disposition, highly spiritual and a complete resignation to the will of God could have behaved as he did during the acute crises of his life. Leaving his home and everything in the hands of the enemy, he bids farewell to Anandpur, and with his ranks depleted and his family dispersed, his two younger sons he knew not where, he arrives at Chamkaur and is at once surrounded by the Mughals and the hill chiefs. After a superhuman fight against the heaviest odds, in which he sees his two dearest sons and his chosen companions fall one after another before his very eyes, he stealingly leaves the place and for some time is haunted like a wild animal, now escaping in one disguise, now in another. When news arrives of the barbarous and brutal murder of his two younger

sons and the no less tragic death of his mother. He faces all this with the most supreme composure, and serenely goes on with his work as if nothing has happened<sup>2</sup>.”

Guru Gobind Singh throughout his life worked for the upliftment of the downtrodden of the entire humanity, irrespective of their caste, religion, race or sect. He stood for secularism and never performed a single act which was parochial in character. He always used the words “Hindustan” and “Hindustanis” in his writings. He stood for national unity and emotional integration of the Indian people. The democratic institutions created by him about three centuries ago are the shining lighthouses, showing new path to the man having faith in the democratic ideals. The Guru created the Khalsa, transferring sovereignty to the poor and downtrodden of this country so that they might remember in the days to come that there was in history, too, a Guru by the name of Gobind Singh.

Guru Gobind Singh was born at Patna on 26, December 1666. This was the time when the nation’s honour and prestige was at its lowest ebb. The morale of the people was very low. They were groaning under pain and agony. The Guru worked tirelessly for the restoration of this lost honour. He came into this world with a special mission. He was sent by the Lord to perform certain duties for the emancipation of mankind. The Guru has himself explained the mission, which the Lord desired him to fulfil :

“I have cherished thee as my son  
And made thee to extend my religion  
Go and spread my Name there  
And forbid the world from evil acts”.

{ *Bachitar Natak* }

And again :

“I have come into this world,  
To spread righteousness everywhere,  
To destroy the evil-doers and sinners, understand ye holy men,  
I was born in this world  
To help the good flourish, to save saints  
And to uproot all tyrants from this world”.

The child was named Gobind Rai. He spent the first five or six years of his life at Patna. Then the family was called to Anandpur by Guru Tegh Bahadur, who had earlier reached there. He kept himself busy in games and spent his mornings and evenings in meditation. He was the son of the spiritual ruler of the Sikhs – Guru Tegh Bahadur, *Sacha Padshah*, the True King. His mother and grandmother were universally respected and revered.

Gobind learnt Punjabi, Sanskrit and Persian. Special training was given to him in horsemanship and in the use of weapons.

When Gobind was hardly nine years old, Guru Tegh Bahadur was a martyred at the altar of *dharma*. Persecution of Hindus was feature of Aurangzeb's regime. Brahmins, being the custodians of Hindu religion and Hindu way of life, became special targets of Aurangzeb's policy of forced conversion. They were in search of a saviour and protector of their faith. They came to Guru Tegh Bahadur who was deeply moved by their tale of woe. Although Guru Tegh Bahadur did not believe in idolatry or in the sacred thread of the Hindus, he came to their rescue as he believed in the individual's right to worship God in his own way. He offered himself for supreme sacrifice.

After the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur, Guru Gobind Singh shouldered all the responsibilities left on his young shoulders.

He was formally installed on the *gaddi* on 1 *Baisakh* 1733 B.S. The people of India had realised that the bigoted ruler of Hindustan was soulless and, if they wanted to lead an honourable life, resistance was necessary. The Sikhs were in a very precarious position. There was dissension within the ranks of the Sikhs and dangers threatened them from outside too. The very existence of Sikhism was in danger and some drastic steps were needed to save it. The need for unity among the Sikhs was most vital. Several conflicting forces had to be organised and synthesised under one banner.

The young Guru had a great and glorious heritage. He was the successor to the throne of Guru Nanak, who had shown to the world the path of truth and had emancipated people from hypocrisy and superstition.



The Guru had to resist the evil and prepare for the future struggle. Peoples' determination had to be steeled, and they were to be indoctrinated for resistance, whatever form the struggle took. In short, the Guru realised that he had to turn the emasculated people of Punjab into a new nation of soldiers-cum-saints, strong in body, mind and soul, who could fight the tyranny of the rulers with faith and fortitude. He aimed at turning these people into fearless soldiers and freeing them from the shackles of orthodox religion. Their heart had to be purified and the different sects unified. The virtues of courage and bravery had to be instilled in them. Humiliating treatment of innocent people had to be resisted and a sense of self-respect and self-reliance infused.

Thus, for ten years (from 1676 to 1685), Guru Gobind Singh devoted himself to creative activities of education and inspiring the people with spiritual enlightenment. It is during this period that he started writing the life stories of heroes like Rama and Krishna. He told people not to worship them as *avtars* but as the greatest heroes of Indian history who had devoted all their lives fighting against tyranny and injustice, oppression and evil. A large number of poets and scholars were brought together. The Guru himself was a poet of the highest order. He developed a new style of poetry which remains unsurpassed in literature. The illustrious examples of their ancestors were held before the people and they were called upon to follow in their footsteps. Songs were sung by court bards, which had a deep effect on the people. Poetry was wedded to martial music. In a short span of time people were imbued with a martial spirit, so much so that even those who had never before seen swords or guns, were now practising them. The Guru started different types of sports and games for the followers to enable them to build themselves up both physically and mentally.

The Guru also started procuring all sorts of arms and weapons. He exhorted his followers to present him firearms. People with martial state and those whose forefathers had fought in the army of Guru Hargobind flocked to the Guru. Though the Guru's *darbar* at Anandpur looked like a military camp, all these preparations were not meant for any offensive purposes but for the protection and

defence of the oppressed and the downtrodden who had suffered great humiliation in the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur.

At Anandpur, besides military preparations, the Guru devoted himself to literary activities and the philosophic awakening and spiritual enlightenment of the people. He stuck to Guru Tegh Bahadur's dictum, "fear no one and strike fear in no one".

The Guru's "youthful promise gathered round him the disciples of Nanak, he was acknowledged as the head of the Sikhs and the neighbouring chiefs became impressed with a high sense of Guru's superiority and a vague dread of his ambition. Study and reflection had enlarged his mind, experience of the world had matured his judgement and under the mixed impulse of avenging his own and his country's wrongs, he resolved upon awakening his followers to a new life, and upon giving precision and aim to the broad and general institutions of Nanak".<sup>3</sup>

In 1685 or so, the Guru left Anandpur and came to stay at Paonta Sahib. This he did at the invitation of Raja Medni Prakash, the ruler of Nahan. The Guru took steps to develop Paonta. He continued composing verses in the pleasant environment and salubrious climate of Paonta. The cold breeze from Yamuna refreshed his mind and with every passing day he started devoting more and more time to reading and writing. The Guru used to rise in the early hours of the morning, take his bath and recite the *Japji*. He then walked along the bank of the river. "His purpose in creating literature was to infuse new spirit into his followers and to state their hearts against all injustice and tyranny. The tyranny that prevailed then in the country was not only political but religious as well. If some of the rulers subjected the people to certain disabilities and hardships, the *Brahmins* and *Mullas*, where they were concerned, were no less cruel in keeping millions of their countrymen in a sort of religious bondage. If the political rulers were treating their subject people like vermins, their religious leaders were doing no less in looking down upon so many of their fellowmen as untouchables. The political tyranny was discriminate and occasional but the religious tyranny was indiscriminate and continuous, being practised every day in kitchens, at village wells, in temples and hundreds of other places".<sup>4</sup> It was here at Paonta, that Pir Buddhu

Shah met the Guru and offered him the services of 500 Pathans for his army though they deserted him later. Then peace was broken; the hill Rajas marched towards Paonta Sahib. A bloody battle was fought at Bhangani. The Sikhs fought with courage and determination, and their patriotic fervour carried the day and victory was the Guru's.

Now the Guru became much stronger and very powerful. The battle was a great event in the history of Punjab. It set the ball rolling for a major clash between the Guru and the Mughals and the hill Rajas. The battle also gave the Guru an opportunity to understand the real character of his people. Wicked and unreliable persons who had joined the Guru's ranks simply for loot, were weeded out.

After the victory, the Guru returned to Anandpur and immediately restored it to its previous glory. Aurangzeb's policy of persecution of Hindus and other non-Muslims made people rally round him.

Two years later, the Mughal forces attacked the rulers of Kangra and Bilaspur as they did not pay tribute to the Emperor. They sought the Guru's help who readily agreed. A fierce battle was fought at Nadaun in 1687. The imperial forces were defeated. The Guru stayed at Nadaun for about a week, enjoying the beauty and splendour of the place by the bank of the river Beas and then left for Anandpur.

The Emperor was sore at the Guru's victories. Upset, he sent Prince Muazzam, who later came to be known as Bahadur Shah, with a large army to attack the Guru and arrest him. When the Prince reached Punjab, he was requested by Bhai Nand Lal Goya not to harm the Guru who was innocent; instead he should punish the persons who were trying to harm him. The Prince thereafter did not attack the Guru. Thus, after Muazzam's expedition the Guru got some respite to finalise his future plans. He had worked among the people of the semi-independent states of the Shivaliks and had tried to rouse them to a sense of national unity, but soon he discovered that being steeped in superstition and outdated ideas of religion, they could not rise above their caste and racial prejudices. Sometimes they would make common cause with the enemy and combine even against the Guru who was their deliverer. "Political reforms must

be preceded by a general renaissance and religious awakening. He, therefore, resolved to break the old shackles with greater precision than had been done before and reorganise society on the basis of common belief and common aspirations".<sup>5</sup>

The period of peace was utilised by the Guru for creative activities. He wrote philosophical works of a high order such as *Akal Ustat* and *Gyan Prabodh*. "Guru Gobind Singh has bequeathed to mankind a literary, historical and philosophical estate which time cannot destroy. He breathed into the nostrils of the heavenly Muse the breath of a new immortality. He sang of his God and soul. He sang of creation and the rise and fall of civilisation. He sang of the wars of *Dharma*, of the heroes, of the glorious past of India and of the figurative gods and goddesses of mythology. He sang of the lovers and martyrs of truth. The misery of the people, the degradation of the country and its culture, the mute appeals of the oppressed became the problems of his life which he solved with the pen, the sword and his god-like spirit. Guru Gobind Singh's mind was a resistless flood which deluged everything that came into contact with glory, strength and spiritual glow. He desired his Sikhs to develop all facets of their personality. He himself developed on all sides of exuberance of his powers without losing himself, in their multiplicity. He preached vehemently against hypocrisy, idolatry and the worship of personal gods. He belived in the philosophy of Light and the religion of Love".<sup>6</sup>

The Guru came into this world with a special mission. He was sent by the Lord to perform certain duties for the emancipation of mankind. In the year 1699, a day before the first of Baisakh, a large number of men, women and children had collected at Anandpur. The Guru created here the new order of the Khalsa. *Charanpahul* was replaced by *Khande Ka Amrit*. This nectar with steel, the Divine Word, and Guru's spirit dissolved in it, brought miraculous change in the person who partook of it. The Guru declared, "Let all embrace one creed and obliterate differences of religions. Let the four Hindu castes who have different rules for their guidance, abandon them, all adopt one form of adoration and become brothers. Let none deem himself superior to another. Let men of four castes receive my baptism, eat out of one dish, and feel no disgust or contempt for one another".<sup>7</sup>

The Guru abolished all distinctions of caste, creed and sex, and integrated his people into one homogenous fraternity. He introduced a new ideology but it was not a departure from the old ideals preached by Guru Nanak and his successors. Sikhism in essence remained the same as ordained by Guru Nanak. The Guru put great faith in his people. He wrote :

**All battles I have won  
With the love of these people,  
Their undying faith and affection  
Had been my sole protector  
All the glory, my home and heart enjoys  
Are their valuable gifts  
Through their untiring efforts and assistance  
I have acquired wisdom and knowledge  
It is only with the help of these people  
I have always overpowered my enemy,  
Only for them I was born,  
Through them I have attained greatness  
What am I without their loving support  
There are millions of creatures like me on earth.**

These sentiments were extraordinary during those days when things like the democratic way of life and democracy were unheard of. The Guru had deep faith in democratic ideals. He placed his faith in the collective wisdom of the people and not in the devotion of a favourite disciple.

The abolition of caste distinctions was not relished by the caste Hindus. The mingling of low caste persons in all the congregations perturbed the *Brahmins*. The fire of hatred against the Guru smouldered in their hearts and a sort of revolt grew against him. Peace was broken again. The hill Rajas hatched a conspiracy to destroy the Guru's power and attacked him many times. The final assault was made in 1704 when the combined forces of the Mughals and the hill Rajas attacked Anandpur. The Governors of Sirhind, Lahore and Multan took part in the campaign. The Sikhs fought

valiantly. The Guru told his disciples that a brave death on the battlefield for saving the *Dharma* was preferable to dying a coward's death. The Guru wrote :

Grant unto me this boon, O Lord  
I may never be debarred from performing good deeds  
I should have no fear of the enemy when  
I go to the battlefield,  
And victory be certainly on my side  
There is but one desire in my heart  
That I may always sing His praises,  
And when the final time comes  
I shall die fighting on the battlefield”.

The fighting continued for a long time. The Imperial viceroys were surprised at the tenacity of the Sikhs. After a certain day's fighting, it was complained to the Guru that a Sikh, Kanahiya by name, had been serving water and rendering first aid not only to the Sikhs but to the wounded enemy soldiers too. The Guru called Kanahiya and enquired from him if it was true. The humble devotee of the Guru replied that he had been serving all those who fell on the battlefield, “My eyes could not distinguish between Sikh and enemy as I saw Guru's face in every one”. The Guru blessed him and told his Sikhs that Kanahiya had truly understood his mission.

The enemy forces suffered heavy losses but succeeded in laying siege to the Anandgarh fort. The Sikhs continued fighting courageously with God's name on their lips. The fight went on for several months.

Inside the fort, provisions ran short and the Sikhs had to face starvation. Still their spirit remained undaunted. The position worsened day by day. At last, a suggestion was made to the Guru to evacuate the fort. The Guru did not agree. A few Sikhs lost heart, wrote a letter of renunciation and left the fort.

Finally, it became inevitable for the Guru to leave the fort as there were no more provisions left. The Guru left the fort in December 1704. The Mughal forces were in hot pursuit. While

crossing the Sirsa stream, the Guru's family was separated from him. Only the two elder sons and a batch of devotees remained with him. They all reached Chamkaur. Here another battle ensued.

At last, Guru Gobind Singh reached south-east Punjab. From Dina, the Guru wrote a historical letter to Aurangzeb called *Zafarnama*. When the Guru reached Khidrana, now known as Muketsar, the Imperial forces again attacked him.

When the Guru reached Talwandi Sabo, peace was restored and for some time the old atmosphere of Anandpur was created. The Guru bestowed *Namdan* on thousands of people who had gathered there.

Guru Gobind Singh now decided to proceed towards the south to meet Aurangzeb who had sent messengers inviting him to come to the Deccan. When the Guru reached Baghaur in Rajasthan, he heard the news of the death of the Emperor and returned to Delhi. At this point Prince Muazzam sought the Guru's help in the battle of succession to which the Guru readily agreed.

Bahadur Shah received Guru Gobind Singh with great honour and presented him, in token of his gratitude and reverence, a *Khillat*.

Early in September 1708, Guru Gobind Singh reached Nanded on the bank of Godavari. Here he met Banda Bahadur, converted him to his faith, and sent him along with some of his leading devotees to Punjab to punish the wrongdoers.

One day, while the Guru was addressing a big congregation, a Pathan came and bowed his head in reverence. When the Guru reached his camp, the Pathan stabbed him and the day of destiny came. Guru Gobind Singh left his mortal coil on 7 October 1708. His last injunctions to the Sikhs were : "He who wishes to behold the Guru, let him search the holy Granth. The Guru will dwell with Khalsa, be firm and faithful: wherever five Sikhs are assembled together there will I also be present".

Thus, at the age of forty-two, Guru Gobind Singh was immortalised. Throughout his life, he struggled against religious intolerance and oppression of the downtrodden. He did not fight for

capturing any land or worldly power. He had many Muslim followers. People of different faiths, castes and creeds were attracted to the Guru as he taught that all men were equal and that while only outer forms of worship differed, the fundamental truth remained the same. He said:

**The same God dwells in the temple and the mosque  
 The Hindus worship Him and the Muslims pray to Him.  
 Human beings are all one though of diverse forms  
 Gods, demons, *Yakshas* and the minstrels divine  
 The Muslims and Hindus are all one  
 Imbibe they the influence of environs they inhabit  
 Similar eyes, ears, body they have  
 They are made of earth, air, fire and water alike  
*Allah* and *Abekha* are the names of the same one  
 Whom adore the holy *Puranas* and *Quran*  
 All are of the same form  
 And one in their making.**

{*Akal Ustat*}

Thus, during his stormy career, Guru Gobind Singh performed miracles. His was an astonishing life story. "His literary, philosophical and military genius worked wonders and established a philosophy of life, war and peace, the proper study and application of which alone can teach our troubled world the art of creating unity in diversity, and establishing peace through preparedness and tolerance and building a human society able to understand its past and present, through the eternal values of truth, freedom and justice".<sup>8</sup>

"Though he did not live to see his high aims accomplished, Guru Gobind Singh's labours were not lost. Though he did not actually break the shackles that bound his nation he had set free souls of the people and filled their hearts with a lofty longing for freedom and national ascendancy. He had broken the charm of sanctity attached to the Lord of Delhi and destroyed the awe and terror inspired by Muslim tyranny. Guru Gobind Singh had seen what was yet vital in the Hindu race and he it with Promethean



fire. He had taken up sparrows first and had taught them to hunt down imperial hawks. He was the first Indian leader who taught democratic principles and made his followers regard each other as *Bhai* or brother, and act by *Gurmatta* or general counsel. He taught them to regard themselves as the chosen ones of the Lord, destined to crush tyranny and oppression and look upon themselves as the future rulers of their land".<sup>9</sup>

"We must agree that success in one's life time is thus not always the measure of one's greatness. The last apostle of the Sikhs did not live to see his own ideals accomplished but he effectively roused the dormant energies of a vanquished people and filled them with a lofty ideal although fitfully longing for social freedom and national ascendancy, the proper adjuncts of that purity of worship which had been preached by Nanak."<sup>10</sup> "The objectives he attempted were great and laudable. It was the emancipation of his tribe from oppression and persecution, and the means which he adopted were such as a comprehensive mind could alone have suggested".<sup>11</sup>

The Guru was not only the "beau ideal" of the Punjabis, he also stood for the whole humanity, irrespective of their caste, religion, sect or race. He stood for secularism and never performed a single act which was parochial in character. He fought battles and sacrificed his all for the honour of the entire nation. He was the "beauideal" of all the Indians inhabiting the subcontinent. He stood for national unity and emotional integration of the Indian people. The democratic institutions created by him three centuries ago are the shining lighthouses showing new paths to the human race having faith in democratic ideals. The Guru created the Khalsa, transferring sovereignty to the poor and oppressed of our country, so that they might remember in the days to come that there was in history, too, a Guru by the name of Gobind Singh who taught ideals of democracy, secularism, brotherhood and unity of mankind. He left footprints for posterity to follow – not to surrender to tyranny and injustice, come what may. He turned the sect of saints and martyrs gradually into a band of bold and courageous warriors. The Sikh movement reached its highest fulfilment under Guru Gobind Singh.

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## CHAPTER

**The City of Anandpur Sahib**

At long last, Guru Tegh Bahadur, decided to come to Bakala where he had spent a few years of his life after attaining Guruship. He preached the Name of the Almighty to the Sikhs who thronged to him from all parts of the country. But the Guru was not allowed to live there in peace by other Sodhis. Their jealousy and enmity increased day by day. The Guru decided to leave for Kiratpur. There was another reason for the Guru's decision to go to Kiratpur. Mata Sulakhani, mother of Guru Har Krishan, had sent a message to the Guru inviting him to come to Kiratpur.

When the Guru along with his family decided to leave Bakala, not only had the people become very sad his family members also became sad, feeling the pangs of separation. Mother Nanaki was very as she was forced to leave the place where she had been born and brought up. In fact, she had lived there for many years after her marriage too and it was a life of perfect peace and solitude. It was here that her son sat on the spiritual throne of Guru Nanak.

On the day of departure, Guru Tegh Bahadur, Makhan Shah, Bhai Mati Das and Dayal Das rode on horses. They were followed by a convoy, consisting of bullocks, camels, carts and chariots. The women sat in the chariots.

When Guru Tegh Bahadur arrived on the bank of river Beas, he saw some people carrying Sri Guru Granth Sahib in a palanquin. The Guru asked them as to what they were carrying. He was told that they were carrying the first volume of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. The Guru asked them whether this was the same copy which they had been asked to hand over to Dhir Mal. He had asked them to return the copy to him but his instructions were never carried out.

This was not proper. The Guru was annoyed, and asked them who had dared to disobey the orders and managed to keep the sacred book in his *darbar*. Why was it not returned to Dhir Mal ? Kirpal Chand said that it was desired by all of them not to return the holy book to Dhir Mal who did not have any right to retain it. It should be kept in the holy *darbar*. No imposter could keep it with him. The Guru told them that they had also forcibly taken the holy book from him. It had to be returned to Dhir Mal. They had got other authentic copies of Guru Granth Sahib and they could benefit from them. The book should be returned to Dhir Mal without any delay, the Guru said.

As nobody was prepared to meet Dhir Mal, the Guru ordered that the book be carried in a boat to the other bank of the river. The river was crossed and the holy book was kept in a box and a pit was dug to keep it safely. The Guru told the people to tell Dhir Mal to collect the holy book whenever he desired.

The Guru's convoy moved on. By the evening it reached the village of Hazara near Kartarpur. Many people come to have the *darshan* of the Guru. In the morning, the party reached Durga near Nawanshir. At last they reached Kiratpur, via Ropar and after a short sojourn there, the Guru reached the place founded by his father, Guru Har Gobind.

Hearing the news of Guru's arrival, *masands* from all parts of the country started reaching there. The Guru held *darbar* in which valuable gifts were offered to him in token of their respect. The Guru blessed them and presented them with the robes of honour.

Then the day came when Guru Tegh Bahadur thought of building a new township for his residence as well as the centre for preaching the Name of God. Since it was to be the nucleus of a religious centre, the Guru thought of investing it with distinct qualities. More place were required for lodging the people coming from a distance, a big hall for religious congregations, and a beautiful place for the Guru's residence were planned. The Guru selected the place near Kiratpur in the foothills with excellent surroundings. The Guru purchased a piece of land in a village Makhawal, about six kilometres from Kiratpur, from the Raja of Kehlor. "Though, then Anandpur

was off the centre and remote, yet expediency warranted the choice as the circumstances soon confirmed".<sup>1</sup>

A new township came into existence. It was named Nanaki Chak. The Guru's house was known as *Guru Ke Mahal*. Later, it came to be known as Anandpur – the abode of bliss. When the work of building the township started, first of all the construction of namely, three building, the Guru's residence, place for worship and a rest house was taken in hand. It was necessary that the missionary work had to be continued unhampered. Already many people had come from all parts of the country and had to be provided with suitable accommodation for their stay. Free land was provided to them. Peasants were asked to till the barren land so that the local requirements of foodgrains and vegetables were met. They were asked to give a portion of their produce for *Guru Ka Langar* that is, the free kitchen.

In 1665, Guru Tegh Bahadur left Anandpur alongwith his mother Nanaki and wife Gujari on a missionary tour. The management of the affairs of the new township was entrusted to some faithful devotees. While at Allahabad Mata Nanaki one day approached Guru Tegh Bahadur and told him that while all her desires had been fulfilled there was yet another desire which had remained unfulfilled. She told the Guru that her husband, Guru Har Gobind, had promised that a great soul would take birth in the house of Tegh Bahadur and all these years she had been waiting for the happy event to take place. The Guru replied that God would surely fulfil her desire and she would soon be blessed with a grandson who would fight against injustice and tyranny and would ultimately save the true religion from extinction. She should meditate, pray, always remember God and sing the hymns of Guru Nanak. At this time Guru Tegh Bahadur was forty-five years old and Mata Gujari was of about forty-three year of age.

Guru Tegh Bahadur stayed at Allahabad for about a month. Then, the Guru proceeded further and in due course of time, he reached Patna. The city had a unique distinction of being honoured by great prophets like Buddha, Guru Nanak, etc. The town was got further sanctified when Guru Gobind Singh was born there. Now, Guru Tegh Bahadur received a humble request from the Dacca

*Sangat* to visit Bengal and spread the Name of God in that part of the country. The Guru told his mother Nanaki, that she should stay at Patna with his wife as he was going to Bengal. It was God's command to spread his Name. The light ignited by Guru Nanak must be kept burning. The Guru entrusted the management of his household affairs to Bhai Kirpal Chand. The Guru reached Dacca in October 1666. He was still at Dacca when he received the news of the birth of a son, Gobind, on 26 December 1666. After spending some time in the eastern region, the Guru reached Patna. Many people came to pay homage to him. The Guru was much delighted to see his son, Gobind. He thanked the *Sangat* of Patna for looking after his family so well in his absence.

Guru Tegh Bahadur stayed at Patna for some time. Under his guidance, Gobind learnt shooting with a pellet bow and also learnt the use of arms. Then, Guru Tegh Bahadur along with his family at Patna, set out for Punjab. En route, he halted at Jaunpur, Ayodhya, Lucknow and Moradabad. But when he reached Delhi, he learnt with pain and agony that the people there were panic-stricken. The persecution of Hindus by the Emperor Aurangzeb was at its zenith and the people were even afraid of talking about the Emperor with one another, lest any *Khufia Navis* (secret news reporter) should hear them and report to the Emperor's courtiers. The Guru advised them to be brave. "He who fears nobody, nor strikes fear in anybody cannot be harmed even by the highest of authority".

From Delhi, the Guru reached Anandpur. The annual *Baisakhi* fair was fast approaching and preparations were being made to celebrate it in a befitting manner. Sikhs from all over the country started pouring in, to seek the Guru's blessings. The Guru continued to reside at Anandpur while his family was still at Patna. Gobind was eager to join his father at Anandpur. The Guru ultimately called Gobind and the rest of the family from Patna so that he was prepared for meeting any eventuality that might arise and he was able to remove his people to safety from any onslaught that might follow.

In February 1672, the Guru and his family left Patna for Anandpur. In the way halting at Varanasi, Ayodhya and Lucknow, they reached Lakhnaur near Ambala. From there they proceeded to Kiratpur and Anandpur. His arrival was hailed with great joy. Alms

were distributed among the poor and needy. People brought beautiful offerings including horses of good breed and bows and arrows of all kinds. Gobind was delighted to receive such presents even at that tender age.

At Anandpur, Gobind started organising armies of irregulars among his playmates and derived pleasure from shooting. Most of the time, he remained outside the house and played only outdoor games. Naturally this period of Gobind's life was the happiest. He enjoyed playing all sorts of games and organising army drills, which showed his bent of mind. He had the advantage of seeking spiritual guidance from Guru Tegh Bahadur. His mother and grandmother were revered by one and all. He spent his mornings and evenings in meditation. At night, before sleep, hymns from *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* were recited in his presence which he listened to with rapt attention. He learnt Punjabi, Sanskrit, and Persian. Special training was given to him in horsemanship and in the use of weapons. Meanwhile many learned scholars, lovers of freedom of thought and expression, poets and artists reached Anandpur. They were afraid of living at Delhi and Agra because of the terror of Aurangzeb. They sought asylum with the Guru. Gobind learnt archery and sword fighting from Sango Shah.

During 1672, Guru Tegh Bahadur organised and trained his disciples. He supervised the construction of the city, enlarged it further and got many new buildings constructed. The city was made the city of bliss in the real sense of the term. Roads were laid out and gardens planned.

But these halcyon days were a prelude to the mighty events which were to follow and Anandpur itself was to become the epicentre of these events. The signs of the coming tragic days were visible. The coming events were costing their shadows. A sense of foreboding overhung Anandpur. Guru Tegh Bahadur held his *darbars* daily and gave sermons to the people. He stressed that now *dharma*; (righteousness) was in jeopardy and what respectable people should do was to redeem it.

In 1672 Guru Tegh Bahadur left on his missionary tour. Aurangzeb's policy of persecution was continuing unabated and

many a saintly soul was caught in the whirlwind of his religious persecutions. But perhaps few religious executions had such far-reaching consequences as that of the Sikh Guru Tegh Bahadur which exercised a deciding influence upon the subsequent history of Punjab.

The experiment of wholesale conversion was first tried in Kashmir. There were important reasons for this. Firstly, the Kashmiri *Pandits* were supposed to be educated and it was presumed that if they were converted, others would follow suit and secondly, Kabul and Peshawar, two Muslim countries, were close to Kashmir and if the Hindus of Kashmir offered any resistance to their conversion, it was feared the Muslims might declare a religious war to destroy them.

In pursuance of this policy, Sher Afghan Khan, the Emperor's *Subedar* in Kashmir, set about converting Kashmiri *Brahmins* by sword and massacred those who persisted in their adhering to their faith. It is said that there piled up in Kashmir a heap of a maund and a quarter of sacred threads. The *Brahmins*, bewildered and perplexed, were caught between the devil and the deep sea. They sought the help of Guru Tegh Bahadur and five hundred *Brahmins* under the command of *Pandit* Kirpa Ram reached Anandpur.

When they reached Anandpur, the Guru was holding his daily *darbar*. After prayers, Kirpa Ram addressed the Guru and said that the bigoted Emperor was bent upon annihilating them. They appealed in the name of Guru Nanak that they and their religion be protected, along with the sacred thread and frontal marks. Their plight was miserable. "Protect us just as Lord Krishna had protected the honour of Draupadi" they appealed.

The Guru, looking serene and calm, consoled the *Brahmins* and told them that they were welcome to Guru Nanak's *darbar*, from where nobody returned without getting his wishes fulfilled. But some priestly and noble soul would have to lay down his life for protecting the *Dharma* (righteousness) and the honour of the depressed people. Some holiest of the holy was required for sacrificing his life so that the freedom of worship be maintained. There was hushed silence and, in a surcharged atmosphere, Gobind,



the lad of just nine years rushed to the lap of Guru Tegh Bahadur. The boy was in a trance. He told the Guru that these *Brahmins* had come to Guru Nanak's *darbar*, where healing balm was applied on the people's wounds, where sufferers got as sylum, where seekers of truth got peace. It also could save them from tyranny and injustice. It was only the Nanak's *darbar* which could come to their rescue. Gobind further said that none but he was the holiest of the holy in the country. Who could match him for understaking such a brave task than the Guru? He alone could show them the path of harmony and goodwill.

The Guru was delighted and told the *Pandits* to tell the Emperor that they were quite ready to embrace Islam if Tegh Bahadur could first be converted. *Brahmins* met Zalim Khan, the *Subedar* of Lahore, and presented him their petition to Aurangzeb. When the petition reached him, the Emperor was pleased. After some time, Guru Tegh Bahadur left Anandpur with his five devoted disciples and reached Agra in due course and from there the Guru was brought to Delhi by the Emperor's men and beheaded in Chandni Chowk, where the holy shrine Sis Ganj stands today.

Guru Tegh Bahadur was martyred at the altar of *Dharma*. Immediately after the martyrdom, Gobind was formally installed on the Gaddi on 12 November 1675. However, the investiture ceremony was held on 29 March 1676.

It was here at Anandpur, where Bhai Jaita took the head of Guru Tegh Bahadur for the last rites. A pyre of sandalwood was laid and the essence of roses sprinkled on the head which the young Guru placed solemnly on the pyre. He then recited verses from the *Japji* and ignited the pyre with his own hands. While the head was being consumed by flames the congregation recited hymns of Guru Tegh Bahadur and recalled the noble deeds of Guru Tegh Bahadur.

The *Sohila* was then read and concluded with its benediction. Then sacred food was distributed. When Guru Gobind reached home he arranged for the recitation of the Guru's hymns to be continued for ten days after which alms were freely distributed.

It was here at Anandpur, that Guru Gobind Singh created the Khalsa. He decided to evolve a new order with the sole object of

making the people realise the necessity of sacrificing their lives for the sake of *Dharma*. The people should fight against the tyranny of the rulers and refuse to live like slaves. At Anandpur, the Guru fulfilled his mission. He made it his headquarters and fought many battles for the nation's honour though he had to leave Anandpur in 1704 as the combined forces of the Mughals and the hill Rajas had laid a long siege on the fort of Anandpur. But even after that he fought two major battles at Chamkaur Sahib and Muketsar to save the Khalsa from annihilation. "Though he did not live to see his high aims accomplished, Guru Gobind Singh's labours were not lost. Though he did not actually break the shackles that bound his nation he had set their souls free, and filled their hearts with a lofty longing for freedom and ascendancy. He had broken the charm of sanctity attached to the Lord of Delhi and destroyed the awe and terror inspired by the Moslim tyranny. Govind had seen what was yet vital in the Hindu race and he relumed it with Promethean fire."

This is Anandpur, where a new order of Saint Soldiers was created. The important shrines built at Anandpur Sahib are described as under. On the way back from Patna Guru Gobind Singh reached Lakhnaur, from there Guru Gobind Singh and his party reached Kiratpur. Here the child Guru paid his respects at the shrines of Baba Gurditta, Guru Hargobind and Guru Hari Rai. Then he reached Anandpur Sahib. The child Guru's arrival was hailed with joy. Large multitudes thronged on both sides of the road and house tops to have the privilege of Gobind's *darshan*. Guru Tegh Bahadur distributed food among the poor and the needy.

The news of Gobind's arrival reached the people and disciples started coming from all parts of the country. They brought valuable offerings which included horses of good breed, bows and arrows and other weapons. The child Guru was delighted to receive such presents even at that tender age. He organised armies of irregulars among his playmates and felt pleasure and joy in shooting. Most of the time he remained outside his house.

## Damdama Sahib

After the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur, Guru Gobind Singh

was formally installed on the *gaddi* on 1 Baisakh, 1733 B.S. This was in accordance with the wishes of the departed soul, who had desired that the young Guru should spread the true religion after his death.

The ceremony of bestowing Guruship was performed by Bhai Ram, the youngest son of Baba Buddha. Guru Gobind Singh was proclaimed as the tenth Guru at the site where Gurdwara Damdama Sahib stands at Anandpur.

## Akal Bunga

After the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur, Bhai Jaita brought the severed head of Guru Tegh Bahadur to Anandpur where it was cremated. From Akal Bunga, Guru Gobind Singh consoled his mother, grandmother and thousands of devotees who had gathered there.

The young Guru told them to pray and not to mourn Guru Tegh Bahadur's death who had acted on God's will and had set a superb example for posterity. There should not be any mourning on the passing away of such a great soul. Gobind further said that the Guru had joined the realm of immortals. "We will abide in Anandpur and destroy the Turks", the Guru told his audience.

## Guru ke Mahal

The Mahal was constructed by Guru Tegh Bahadur. Guru Gobind Singh continued to stay there. His sons were brought up there. It became a sacred place of pilgrimage.

## Guru-Ke-Lahore

One day, Guru Gobind Singh was holding his *darbar*. A person, Bhikhia by name, came to have *darshan* of the Guru. He was deeply impressed by his personality and physical beauty and thought he would be the most suitable match for his daughter Jito. When the proposal was made to the Guru, he did not pay any heed to it. But his mother was pleased with the proposal and asked her brother Kripal Chand to persuade the Guru to accept the proposal. The Guru finally agreed and there was great rejoicing on the occasion

of his betrothal at Anandpur. After some time, the Guru was invited to Lahore for the celebration of his marriage. But, contrary to custom, the Guru said that he would make Lahore near Anandpur for the purpose. This was done. Many Sikhs from all parts of the land assisted the Guru in this project. A number of merchants and shopkeepers opened shops and remained there till the marriage was solemnised.

Guru Ke Lahore is situated in a fascinating valley. The *Gurdwara* here is a much revered place.

### **Keshgarh Sahib**

This is one of the five Takhts, and a high seat of authority of the Sikhs.

Guru Gobind Singh came into this world with a special mission. He was sent by the Lord to perform certain duties for the emancipation of mankind. The Guru himself said:

**I have cherished thee as my son  
And made thee to extend my religion  
Go and spread my Name there  
And forbid the world from foolish acts.**

The Guru thus decided to evolve a new order with the sole object of making people realise the necessity of sacrificing their lives for the cause of *dharma*, which means righteousness. People should fight against the tyranny of the rulers, he said.

It was here that a new order was created but Sikhism in essence remained the same as was ordained by Guru Nanak. The Sikhs returned to their homes kindled with a new spirit and enthusiasm. The inspiration which had guided them for several generations took a concrete shape at Anandpur.

*Gurdwara* Keshgarh Sahib has been built at the place where the historic ceremony of the creation of Khalsa had taken place. The present magnificent building was constructed in the forties of last century. It is a few metres away from the main road and one has to reach the *Gurdwara* by walking the cobbled path and climbing

a little to reach the hillock on which the shrine so majestically stands. After climbing up a few steps, a *deorhi* has to be crossed. After that there is a huge open marbled quadrangle at the end of which steps lead up to the main shrine. In the central portion of the hall are displayed the weapons of Guru Gobind Singh. On one side is placed *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* on a decorated seat. Around the room is the *Prakarma*. The floor above is again a hall, about 315 square metres, and on the top floor are domes of different sizes.

Anandpur is a small, silent and sleepy town, but on the occasion of *Hola Mohalla*, the town gains importance and recaptures its old glory and splendour. In the month of March the fair is celebrated on a large scale. Thousands of devotees come from all parts of the country to pay their homage to the Great Guru. The ceremony of baptism, as enjoined by Guru Gobind Singh, is held besides religious congregations in which *gurbani* is recited by prominent *ragis*. Affairs concerning the Sikhs and the country are also discussed. The fair reaches its climax with a large procession called *Hola Mohalla*. There is great enthusiasm among the participants who chant sacred hymns and display feats of horsemanship and soldiering as they march. Scenes of the days of Guru Gobind Singh are re-enacted. It is an occasion of great rejoicing and a gala atmosphere is created by the participation of a large number of *nihangs*.

In the *Gurdwara* are preserved some sacred arms connected with Sikh history. They are revered by the people as a living memory of their great Guru.

The most important of these is the *steel khanda*—a double-edged broad sword—which was used by Guru Gobind Singh when he prepared *amrit*, or the baptismal water, at the time of the inauguration of the Khalsa in 1699. The fresh waters of the Sutlej mixed with sugar crystals in an iron vessel, were stirred with this *khanda* to prepare *amrit* which conferred immortality of the life and spirit on the nation.

The second one is a *katar* or a short sword. Guru Gobind Singh wore this weapon on his person and used it on many occasions for fighting hand to hand in battle or in sport to kill tigers and leopards.

*Karpa barchha* is a broad spear with a blade fashioned in the style of the palm of the human hand. History records two occasions when it was used. First, it was used by the youthful Guru Gobind Singh on the occasion of his wedding at a place about 20 kilometres to the north of Anandpur Sahib known as Guru Ke Lahore. The Guru chose this beautiful spot, rich in natural hill scenery, for the celebration since he did not like to travel all the way to Lahore, the provincial capital of the Mughals. It was reported to him that there was scarcity of fresh drinking water for people who had assembled to attend the Guru's wedding. The Guru, who was in the prime of youth, came riding and pierced a rock thrice with this spear. Three streams of water gushed forth. They have been flowing ever since with their sweet and sparking waters, adding to the picturesque charm of the surroundings. This spear was used again during the famous siege of Anandpur Sahib. The siege had lasted for a long time and there were no signs of Sikhs surrendering. Kesri Chand, one of the chiefs, besieging the town proudly said that he would either bring Guru Gobind Singh dead or alive by the next sunset or not show his face to his comrades again. This was communicated to the Guru, who asked his chief of the army, Bhai Ude Singh, armed with weapons of offence and defence including this spear, to go out of the fort and challenge Raja Kesri Chand to fight with him. The challenge was accepted and in the fight that followed, Kesri Chand was killed and his severed head, pierced with this spear, was brought to the Guru's camp where it was laid to rest with honour.

*Nagni barchha* is another historical spear. Its blade is cast in the form of a snake. In the battle of Anandpur it was used by Bhai Bachittar Singh, a reputed Sikh warrior and a younger brother of Bhai Ude Singh. To break open the gates of the Guru's fort, the enemy brought a mighty drunken elephant. Seven plates of steel, one upon the other, covered the forehead of the animal, which was followed by a large number of soldiers. Bhai Bachittar Singh was commissioned by the Guru to fight the elephant. The great warrior went forth armed with the *Nagni barchha* and a sharp steel sword. Riding his horse and standing in the stirrups, he pierced with the spear the seven steel plates and wounded the elephant in the forehead. With lightning alacrity he attacked again and cut the

elephant's trunk with a blow of his sword. The wounded beast ran back in fury trampling under its feet those who were following it. The *Nagni barchha* keeps fresh memory of this brave deed of Bhai Bachittar Singh.

Guru Gobind Singh's musket is another precious relic preserved at Anandpur Sahib. After the battle of Mukersar, the Guru reached Sabo ki Talwandi, now Damdama Sahib, where Chaudhry Dalla, a local professing the Sikh faith, met him. The Chaudhry told the Guru that had he sent him word, his (Chaudhry's) brave followers would have fought on his side and changed the course of events. One day a Sikh craftsman from Lahore brought as an offering a musket he had made. The Guru, who always prized the gifts of weapons, asked Dalla to bring a couple of his followers to become targets for him to judge the range of his new musket. The Chaudhry went to his camp but failed to persuade any of his followers to come forward to comply with the Guru's wish. At last, Dalla reported to the Guru that his men were willing to die for him in battle, but not as targets in front of his musket. The Guru then sent word to his own camp. Two Sikhs, Bir Singh and Randhir Singh, father and son, came running to offer themselves as targets for the Guru's musket. The Guru asked them to stand one behind the other and aimed the musket at them. Each of them stood on his toes to be higher than the other so as to be the first one to receive the bullet. The Guru fired above their heads and afterwards embraced and blessed his devoted Sikhs. The idea was to prove to Dalla, who had talked proudly of his soldiers, that the Guru's Sikhs were not inferior to anyone in courage and sense of sacrifice.

The *saif* is double-edged broad sword of Arab origin. It is nearly 1300 years old and was used by the Caliphs of Islam in at least five battles. It bears Arabic inscriptions and was Aurangzeb's property once upon a time. The sword was presented to Guru Gobind Singh by Emperor Bahadur Shah, the eldest son and successor of Aurangzeb.

### **Anandgarh, Lohgarh, Keshgarh, Fatehgarh**

Guru Gobind Singh fought many battles in his lifetime. These were against the tyranny and injustice of the rulers. Of these five

battles were fought at Anandpur. Here, Guru Gobind Singh got made a new drum called *Ranjit nagara*. It was a big drum of the type usually carried by soldiers while marching and attacking the enemy. The necessity of such a drum was felt to summon a large number of people. The Guru felt that no war equipment was complete without the big drum.

The forts — Anandgarh, Lohgarh, Keshgarh and Fatehgarh — were built to strengthen the defences as attack from the Imperial forces was apprehended anytime.

## **Anandgarh**

The last battle of Anandpur was fought in 1704. Known as the fifth battle of Anandpur, it started on 20 May 1704. Anandpur was attacked from two sides. The offensive was launched by the combined forces of the Mughals and hill chiefs in full strength. The Sikhs engaged the enemy outside the city to check their advance. It was a terrific battle. There were dreadful shouts of “kill! kill! strike! strike!” from all sides. Death reigned everywhere. The Sikhs caused havoc in the enemy ranks. Horse riders lost control of their horses and the entire battlefield presented a ghastly spectacle.

The battle continued for a month or so. The Imperial viceroys were surprised at the tenacity of the Sikhs. One day, the Guru rode a beautiful horse with its saddle embroidered in gold, studded with diamonds. He had with him a green bow and his crest was studded with jewels. A glittering *kalghi*, (plume), was fixed on his turban. On seeing the Guru riding on horse, all efforts were made to shoot him down. The Guru shot arrows on all sides with wonderful accuracy. Men fell on the ground like ants, crying with pain and agony. The enemy attack was repulsed that day.

Anandpur was very small place and essential supplies were not available in adequate quantity. The Sikhs who had come from all parts of the country had brought with them eatables sufficient for the short period of their stay only. They had no idea that the seige would be prolonged indefinitely. Food supplies ran short and the Sikhs experienced considerable hardship. They were on the verge of starvation. The shortage of supplies made the situation



desperate but the enemy's dream that the Guru would surrender soon after was not realised. The Sikhs made several attacks on the raiders in the darkness of the night in self-defence. Nothing was obstructing their way in front of them. The Guru ordered his Sikhs to check the enemy's advance. A heroic battle was fought. The Sikhs were only a few in number and the enemy's strength was overwhelming. The advance was checked for a while. The Guru and his family got separated while crossing the stream. The Guru's mother and his two younger sons, Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh, who were escorted by their personal cook Ganga Ram, were separated from the Guru. The Guru, along with his two elder sons, Ajit Singh and Jujhar Singh, and few devoted Sikhs crossed the stream together at one point. Bhai Mani Singh escorted the Guru's two wives, Sundari and Sahib Kaur who were separated from the Guru's party. They reached Delhi after some time.

Anandgarh fort was constructed by Guru Gobind Singh for tightening defensive actions. It has a baolior, a well with 132 marble steps for taking the pilgrims down to the water level.

## Referencess

1. J.C. Archer, *The Sikhs*, pp.182-83
2. Gokul Chand Narang, *Transformation of Sikhism*. p.98

## CHAPTER

**Guru and the *Shakti* Cult**

The cult of Shakti is a very well known concept throughout the northern parts of the country. It has special appeal for the people. From time immemorial the worship of the Mother Goddess was practised in the Indus valley. Among the early Aryans male deities enjoyed an out of proportion preponderance. Yet the concept of *Shakti* is mentioned in Vedic literature. The cult of *Chandi* is widely described in the *Markandeya Purana*. The *Devi* was worshipped as the miniment cause of the entire creation. As the hold of Aryans increased in wider areas, the concept of *Shakti* too spread. It is mentioned in the *Upanishads Puranas* and *Tantras*. In the North-west of the country the *Shakti*, found a prominent place in Kashmir. The *Yogis* too were inspired by it. Though they were the devotees of *Shiva* they believed in the *Tantra* of which the major inspiration is *Shakti*.

There is also reference of the cult in *Jajji*, included in the *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*. The frequency of references to the *Yogis* in *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, especially in the *Sidh Gosht*, denotes its familiarity with the *Yogis*. In the hilly areas of Punjab, the abode of orthodox Hindus, the people worshipped *Devi*. In the districts of Hoshiarpur and Kangra and other parts of Punjab, it is believed that there were 360 *Devis*.

But with the advent of Guru Nanak, the worship of *Devi* became less prevalent. The Guru did not recognise any deity. His concept was of only the Supreme Being. He believed only in one God the Creator. It is clearly mentioned in the *Mul Mantra* that the Creator is only the *Purkh*. He believed that the *Purkh* does not require the participation of *Prakirti*. This is a fundamental departure

from the Hindu Philosophy. But the mention of the words in *Jappi* 'Eka nian Jugt viai tin chele parwan'. "One *Maya* in union with God gave birth to three children. The children are the creator, the providor and the sustainer. Anahata dhuni; unstuck music, is heard when the light of God is revealed in the soul and it is heard in the mystic experience of revelation."<sup>1</sup> But Guru Nanak did not use the word in the *Tantric* sense. In *Sri Rag I*, 18 Guru Nanak says :

"Throwing one's doubts aside when one meets the Guru, one can experience one's inner being - through meditation of the Guru one hears the melodious *anahad sabad*. When one hears it, his houmai (egoism) is destroyed".

References to *Tantra* in the compositions of the Sikh Gurus should not be interpreted as acceptance of the traditional meanings of those expressions. The Guru's compositions must be read as a whole and explained in the context of the basic principles of Sikh philosophy. For Guru Nanak, the ultimate stage of human experience in the spiritual world was *Sahaj* and it was certainly not through mechanical *Tantric* practices.

An attempt was made by some historians to associate Sikhism with *Tantra*, especially Guru Gobind Singh. He has been described as a preacher of the *Shakti* cult; or prophet of *Shakti* cult, where interpretation of the *Tantric* philosophy teaches man a new way of obtaining salvation. However, historians have recognised this fact that Guru Gobind Singh was not a worshipper of the Mother Goddess of the *Tantra* kind. He calls himself an idol-breaker in the *Zafarnama*. He says:

"Hill Rajas were idol worshippers while

I was the idol breaker".

The *Shakti* cult was much more than only the praise for the idea represented by the Mother Goddess. It has an abstruse philosophy and it prescribes many rituals. Guru Gobind Singh did not subscribe to that philosophy. Nor did he ever accept those rituals as necessary ways of spiritualism. The Guru did not recognise pilgrimages, alms, Hindu penance or austerities. He says :

**“O thou the Destroyer of births;  
 In the beginning, before the life began,  
 Even before creation thou wast present everywhere  
 O, you all pervading Lord;  
 Thou art merciful, kind, compassionate,  
 Thou art from the beginning,  
 Unconquerable and indestructible” .**

{33 Sawayas (3)}

The Guru who believed only in one God, can by no stretch of the imagination be described as a preacher or prophet of the *Shakti* cult. The Guru did not propagate the new ways of obtaining salvation through the use of arms. For him this was not an end in itself; it was the duty of man to fight against tyranny and injustice. He says :

**“When all avenues have been explored, all means tried, it is rightful to draw the sword out of the scabbard and wield it with your hand”.**

The Guru also says: “With such teachings as those of Baba Farid, if any one strike thee with his fists, strike him not back”. “The Sikhs had become faint hearted and ever suffered defeat. Now that the times had altered, and the Sikhs were obliged to defend themselves, he had established the Khalsa and whoever desired to abide in it should not fear the clash of arms, but be ever ready for the combat and the defence of his faith2.”

The emphasis on fearlessness is in full conformity with the Sikh tradition. Even Guru Nanak says : “He who is imbued with the fear of the Lord becometh fearless for one becometh like the one serveth”. Guru Gobind Singh elaborated the concept of fearlessness and says : “Blest is his life in this world who repeateth God’s Name with his mouth and meditateth war in his heart.

The body is fleeting and shall not abide forever; man embarking in the ship of fame shall cross the ocean of the world” .

**Make this body a house of resignation; light  
 Thine understanding as a lamp;**

**Take the broom of divine knowledge into thy  
Hand, and sweep away the filth of timidity”**

“The chronicler judiciously remarks that the Khalsa ought to be congratulated because though few in number, they had confidence in themselves to fight for their religion and delighted by anticipation in the approaching conflict”.<sup>3</sup>

The Guru thought that timidity was a bar to spiritual advancement as also to the proper performance of temporal duties. In Guru Gobind Singh’s concept of ideal Sikh society, these two aspects of man’s life were linked. He prays to All-Steel :

**I have heard of them but I know them not;  
It is only God’s feet I love.  
Great death, be thou my protector;  
All-steel, I am thy slave.  
Deeming me thine own preserve me ;  
Think of mine honour, whose arm thou hast taken.  
Deeming me thine own, cherish me,  
Single out and destroy mine enemies,  
May both my kitchen and my sword prevail in the world.**

*{Krishan Avtar}*

“The Guru’s primary concern was thus with his kitchen and his sword the one-the emblem of service to assist the weak, the helpless and the oppressed and the other - the emblem of power to extirpate the tyrants, and the Khalsa was the instrument that he created to achieve this two-fold purpose”.<sup>4</sup>

Guru Gobind Singh’s invocation to the Supreme Being as “All steel” is to be seen in the context of his mission as he understood it. It has absolutely no connection. He was born for the purpose of spreading the faith. He says :

**I have come into this world,  
To spread righteousness everywhere,  
To destroy the evil doers and sinners,  
Understand ye holy men,**

**I was born in this world  
To help good to flourish and to save Saints  
And to uproot all tyrants from this world.**

He was God's chosen personality who came into this world. He says, "I bow before the holy sword with love and devotion. O, God assist me to fulfil this task". (*Bachitar Natak*). Some misconceptions do exist due to some historians not understanding the Real Guru Gobind Singh. In this connection we may have a look at the views expressed by Rose. He said: "Surrounded during his childhood by Hindu influences Gobind Rai succeeded to his office under every temptation to remain within the pale of orthodox Hinduism".<sup>5</sup> But we have no reason to agree with these views as the known facts do not warrant this assumption. During his early years Guru Gobind Singh was under the influence of his father, mother, grandmother and uncle (Kirpal). At Patna there were influential Muslim friends of the family, such as Nawab Rahim Baksh and Nawab Karim Baksh.

"Guru Tegh Bahadur's intimate relations with his son are indicated by the role which the boy played in removing his anxieties about response to the Kashmiri Pandit's appeal as also by the interchange of compositions between them which took place on the eve of the martyrdom".<sup>6</sup> Guru Gobind Singh was well versed in *Puranas*. He was highly proficient in Persian too, which is indicated in *Zafarnama*.

He seems to have been deeply impressed by the idea which runs throughout the Puranic literature, the idea of the saviour appearing from time to time to uphold righteousness, to uproot evil and establish good, to destroy the oppressor and rescue the weak and the innocent. According to Hindu tradition, one was always an incarnation of God. But Guru Gobind Singh did not subscribe to this view as he never proclaimed himself as God. Rather, he says:

**All those who call me the Lord  
Shall fall into the pit of hell,  
Consider me as God's servant only,  
Have no doubt about this,**

**I am but the slave of the Lord  
Come to see the spectacle of the world**

{*Bachitar Natak*}

Thus, it was not necessary for Guru Gobind Singh to fall back on *Puranic* literature to formulate the idea of the mission entrusted to him by God. The tendency to discover a Hindu background for Guru's ideas and attributes is not proper. It reached its culmination in the story that he performed *Devi puja*. There is no basis for the such an assumption. His only ambition was to sing the glory of God. The Guru says:

**I propitiate not *Ganesh* in the beginning,  
Not invoke the aid of Krishna and Vishnu  
I have heard their names, but know them not,  
My love is all for His sacred feet  
The Lord eternal is my protector,  
Mighty steel; I am thy slave.  
Protect me as thy own :  
Uphold my honour, who hath sought Thy aid.**

{*Krishan Avtar*}

Such categorical statements were overlooked and the Guru was pictured as a worshipper of *Devi*. No doubt, initially, the Sikhs believed in some of the Hindu traditions but the third Master, Guru Amar Das, explicitly explained to his devotees these traditions. He says:

**After my death, sing God's praises,  
Call God instead of a Pandit and for  
The *Garud Puran*, read God's word.**

The Guru did not believe in any deity except the True and Deathless One. Regarding *Devi puja* by the Guru, it can be said that it did not match with the ideals and mission of the Guru. Sujan Rai, the author of *Khulasat-ut-Tawarikh* does not refer to any name in his account of Guru Gobind Singh's pontificate. According

to the Mughal newsletter, when the Guru created Khalsa, he urged his followers, "Let no one pay heed to the Ganges and other places of pilgrimage which are spoken with reverence in the Shastras or adore incarnations such as Ram, Krishan, Brahma and Durga but believe in Guru Nanak and the other Sikh Gurus only". Saina Pat, the author of *Gur Sobha*, did not make any mention of name but on the other hand says that all gods and goddesses took refuge at the Guru's feet. If the name was performed ever to demonstrate its brutality, these writers should have certainly mentioned it. The most decisive evidence in favour of total rejection of the *Durga* worship story can be found in Guru's own writings. He says:

**O men, worship none but God, not a**

**Thing made by Him. Know that He was in the**

**Beginning, unborn, invisible and indestructible is God".**

{*Shabad Hazare*}

And again, "without the support of the one Name all religious ceremonies are superstitions."

{*Sawaiyas*}

Some confusion might have arisen from the Guru's use of the name *Bhagwati* "May Bhagwati be my helper, having first remembered Bhagwati, meditate on Nanak. Here the *Bhagwati* stands for sword which the Guru identified for God. *Bhagwati* could be the creator of *Durga*, but it does not mean the worship of *Durga*."

The statements and the divergent views expressed by different authors make dismal reading and, in fact, a verdict of history against these historians themselves. These are contrary to the ideals for which the Guru lived and died. There is no place for idol worship in Sikhism, which is immune from all superstitions. The founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak preached the futility and hollowness of these ceremonies. Guru Gobind Singh advocated the worship of one God and condemned the worship of Goddesses in strong terms. He was the exponent of one God. He propagated the existence of one and only one God, and ridiculed the worship of minor gods and goddesses.

He says :



“Some worship Brahma and some worship Shiva as God. Some say the lord of Earth is Vishnu and if one worships him, all his sins are washed away. Ignorant men should think one thousand times. (before they worship these gods). None of these shall give them salvation in the end. Worship Him only and make Him dwell in your heart who was, who is and who ever shall remain”.

{Sawaiyas}

Thus, it is clear that the alleged worship of *Durga* by the Guru, and all the stories based thereon, are mere fiction.

### Referencess :

1. Tarlochan Singh, *Hymns of Guru Teg Bahadur*. p.37
2. M.A. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol - V, p.223
3. Ibid, pp.167-68
4. Indubhushan, Bannerjee, *Evolution of The Khalsa*, Vol.- II p.118
5. David Rose, *land of five Rivers*.
6. Tarlochan Singh, *life of Guru Teg Bahadur* . pp. 298-99

## CHAPTER

**Objects of creating the Khalsa Panth**

The creation of Khalsa was the result of Guru Gobind Singh's deep and sustained reverie. His sole object was the emancipation of the poor and downtrodden people, who were groaning under pain and agony from persecution and oppression. He had made up his mind to bring into being a moral force of intense and dynamic character to see that its followers either live with dignity and stand for righteousness or die for the same. His object was to revitalise the Sikhs by giving them a new programme of action. The sad plight in which he found his followers, the persecution policy of the Mughal emperor and the prevalent all round moral degradation, ignorance, illiteracy and superstition had generated in his mind an earnest desire to give to his followers a distinct personality so as to meet the situation with all the strength at their command. He was there to remove all the distinction of caste and creed.

Guru Gobind Singh came into this world with a specific mission. He was sent by the Lord to perform certain duties. It is believed that the Guru composed his famous classic *Bachitter Natak* when he was about to announce the creation of the Khalsa. The mission has been explained in it with his usual clarity by the Guru. He has also explained his object and also the means to achieve it. He said:

I have cherished thee as my son and made thee to extend my religion.

Go and spread the Name there and forbid the world from foolish acts.

Again, he said :

**I have come into this world,  
To spread righteousness everywhere,  
To destroy the evil doers and sinners,  
Understand ye holy men,  
I was born in this world  
To help good to flourish and to save saints  
And to uproot the tyrants from this world”.**

The Guru categorically said that he was born to spread the true religion and to uproot the tyrants. He does not abrogate to himself the role of the Lord, and, contrary to most other religious leaders, who have been described by their followers as incarnations of God, the Guru said :

**All those who call me the Lord  
Shall fall into the pit of hell,  
Consider me as God’s servant only,  
Have no doubt about this.  
I am but the slave of the Lord.  
And have come to see the spectacle of the world.**

The Guru was a great visionary who knew how to implement his ideas into practical reality. Under the trying circumstances of internal stresses among the Sikhs and the external pressures from the Hill Rajas and the Mughals, Guru Gobind Singh was preoccupied with the nature of his religious mission in particular. He had before his eyes the great heritage and the historical situation in which the country was placed, he was keen to save the *Dharma* from extinction.

The Guru had a glorious legacy of truth, justice, brotherhood and monotheism as inherited from his predecessors. He had before him the light shown by Guru Nanak. The doctrine of Guru Nanak that truth is greater than all sacrifices and pilgrimages and that love of God is better than all religious rites and ceremonies, had paved a new path for Guru Gobind Singh to follow. It was from Guru Nanak that he learnt to rise against tyranny and injustice, as Nanak was

the first among the Hindus to raise his voice against the evil forces prevailing at the time.

All the successors of Guru Nanak carried out his holy mission both in letter and in spirit. Guru Gobind Singh, it is said, "was an ambitious man and transformed the sect of peaceful devotees into a band of fanatical warriors. It was undoubtedly true that the political aspirations of the Sikhs became more pronounced under the leadership of the Tenth Guru, but a careful study of the Sikh history shows that the process of transformation had begun long before the time of Guru Gobind. Gobind himself, in fact, as well as his work was the natural product of the process of evolution that had been going on ever since the inception of the Sikh brotherhood. The seed which blossomed in the time of Guru Gobind Singh had been sown by Nanak and watered by his successors. The sword which carved the Khalsa's way to glory, was undoubtedly, forged by Gobind, but the steel had been provided by Nanak, who had obtained it, as it were, by smelting the Hindu ore, and burning out the dross of indifference and superstition of the masses and the hypocrisy and pharisaism of the priests".<sup>1</sup>

All religious movements are in reality political movements just as the inspiration for all the political movements comes from religion. Even Buddha, who was essentially a man of peace and believed in non-violence, gave birth to the political movement which led to the establishment and consolidation of Ashoka's empire. The Arab's who firmly believed in the teachings of Prophet Mohammad finally gave birth to a political movement. Puritanism led to the establishment of real liberty in England, and it was Puritanism that waged the war of American Independence. All high political inspirations come through religion.

In India, the mutiny of 1857 was mainly the result of the religious feelings of the Hindu and Muslim soldiers which were wounded by greased cartridges and the Khalsa revolted against the British under the religious inspiration of Baba Ram Singh. Shivaji did not found a new sect; he received his inspiration from Sararth's Guru Ram Das, a Maharashtra saint. He roused the religious spirit of the people and proclaimed himself as the champion of Hinduism; he was successful in establishing an empire.

The Guru Nanak thoroughly diagnosed the case of the Hindus of his time and found out that a religious revival was the only solution which could save it from disaster. At the time of Guru Nanak's birth in 1469, the Muslim rule was well established and thousands of people were being forcibly converted to Islam. Many Hindu temples were destroyed and demolished and Hindu schools were converted into mosques. Hinduism itself was on the verge of extinction. Not many Hindus were left in Punjab and those who had faced conversion had lost almost all that lends dignity and grace to life and distinguished religion from superstition or cant. Centuries of subjugation had broken and crushed the spirit of the Hindus. They had altogether forgotten the noble path of personal purity, social freedom and political independence, the lofty ideals to which their ancestors had adhered. They were so demoralised that the inhuman treatment meted out to them roused within them no thoughts of resistance, not even protests. Even the heroic and warlike Rajputs offered their daughters in marriage to Mohammedan rulers. They had ceased to feel the insults and mortal torture inflicted on them.

The external oppression was, no doubt, at its peak. The Hindus also suffered social tyranny at the hands of their co-religionists. It was unparalleled in the history of mankind and did not have any religious sanction. Religion was confined only to certain forms of eating, drinking and bathing in a mechanical way, to the worship of idols, pilgrimage to the Ganges, observance of birth and death ceremonies, to the extent allowed by the rulers. "The springs of true religion had been choked up by the weeds of meaningless ceremonials, debasing superstitions, the selfishness of the priests and the indifference of the people. Form had supplanted the reality and the highly spiritual character of Hinduism had been buried under the ostentatious paraphernalia of sects. The centuries of invasion, foreign misrule and persecution had produced the greatest depression and the spiritual subjection and stagnation had aggravated the demoralisation to an enormous degree".<sup>2</sup>

Guru Nanak declared that God alone was to be worshipped and that He was not to be degraded by making any images of Him and worshipping these images. He was to be worshipped in the spirit, by constantly meditating over His Name, and feeling and

realising His presence in every place, and at every time. Nanak's principles may be summed up in a single formula — the unity of God and the brotherhood of man. "For Nanak there was no such thing as a God or gods for the outer heathen; for him, there was but one God, not in the likeness of man, like Rama, not a creature of attributes and passions, like the Allah of Mohammed, but one sole indivisible, self-existent, incomprehensible, timeless, all-perwading, to be named, but otherwise the indescribable, adorable, and altogether lovely. Such was Nanak's idea of Creator and Sustainer of the Phenomenal world; and it was a conception which at once abrogated all paltry distinctions of creed and sect and dogma, and ceremony".<sup>3</sup>

Nanak boldly and fearlessly raised his voice against oppression. He diagnosed the evil and found that a religious revival was the only remedy to save it from destruction. He became a revolutionary and tried to ameliorate the condition of the masses in his own humble way. "Morality holds a higher place than in those of any other Hindu reformer. Few, ever of the world's greatest philosophers, have laid down a more exalted moral code than to be found in the pages of *Granth Sahib*. Purity of life is set forth as the highest object of human endeavour — loyalty, chatity, honesty, justice, mercy, charity and temperance are among the virtues on which vital stress is laid, while evil-speaking, covetousness, anger, selfishness, extravagance and cruelty are denounced with equal vigour".<sup>4</sup>

Guru Nanak attacked the citadel of caste system. "Not by virtue of birth but by devotion and noble deeds could salvation be obtained" he said. Guru Nanak talked to the people in their own language. He preached that to denounce the world was an admission of failure. One should live in the world and serve humanity, remove suffering and evil. "The best renunciation consisted in being in the world, drawing nourishment from it and passing the usual course of life in it, yet remaining aloof from it in mind and heart, verily like a Lotus in the water" he declared. Guru Nanak's message, as summed up by himself, is *kirt karo*, *nam japo* and *vand chhakko* — work, worship and share your food with others.

It was Guru Nanak's mission that Guru Gobind Singh preached.

Nanak's objectives were made the basis of his programme and the entire line of his action. He might have added something, but the fundamentals remained the same. "The only change brought in religion was to expose the other side of the medal; whereas Nanak had propagated goodness, Gobind Singh condemned evil. One preached the love of one's neighbour, the other punishment of transgressor. Nanak's God loved his saints; Gobind's destroyed his enemy".<sup>5</sup>

Guru Gobind Singh did not change the faith of Nanak. In the basics Guru Gobind Singh introduced no change. His faith was the same as that of Nanak. Believing in one God, who had no form or substance. He was beyond human comprehension. He condemned the worship of idols. He bestowed guruship to *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*. As he was well aware of the traditions, he was particularly conscious of the danger of his devotees imposing divinity on him. Guru Gobind Singh said :

**God hath no friends nor enemies,  
He heeds no praises nor cares about curses  
Being the first and timeless  
How could he manifest Himself through those  
Who are born and die.**

{*Jap Sahib*}

Thus, Guru Gobind Singh combined in himself all the qualities of his most illustrious predecessors besides being the perfect example of manhood—chivalrous and generous. He was a great visionary who knew how to translate his ideas into a practical reality.

Under the most trying circumstances of internal stress in the Sikh community and external interference by the rulers of the land, Guru Gobind Singh preoccupied himself in fulfilling his mission. After long and deep reflection on his glorious heritage and the historical situation which he was facing, he became the saviour of *Dharma* (righteousness). He was fully aware of the different path adopted by Guru Nanak and furthered by his successors. His primary concern was to do whatever his conscience guided and what he was ordained by the Almighty.

The Guru was a man of Destiny. He reminded his followers the perilous time in which they were living. He desired to remove their weaknesses and instil in them self confidence. He converted his followers into a class of saint - soldiers and gave them a distinct socio-religious fraternity. He vested the authority in the Khalsa. He wanted them to baptise and renounce their precious occupations; *Kirt Nas*, to renounce relations -family ties; *Kul Nas*, to renounce their earlier creed; *Dharm Nas* and to give up all rituals *Karam Nas*.

The Guru desired to raise the Khalsa to restore *Dharma* to its original form in the finest traditions. He gave utmost importance to Khalsa and said :

**Khalsa is my true image,  
In Khalsa do I dwell,  
Khalsa is my face and limbs  
With Khalsa do I live all the time  
Khalsa is my true faith,  
Khalsa is my known prestige.**

{Gyan Prabodh}

And again the Guru said :

**True service is the service of the people,  
I am not for serving people of high castes,  
Charity bears fruit in both worlds  
If given to worthy people.  
All other charities are futile and useless  
From top to toe whatever I call my own,  
Whatever I possess I dedicate to the people.**

{Akal Ustat}

Thus, the torch which was lit by Guru Nanak was kept burning and luminous by his successors in whom the spirit of Guru Nanak pervaded one after the other. It eventually came into the hands of Guru Gobind Singh, who gave it added brilliance. But instead of handing it over to an individual this time, he gave it over to the



Khalsa. He gave the Sikhs an appearance which singles them out among other faiths. The Guru said :

**As long as the Khalsa remain distinct**

**They have my blessings and power,**

**The moment the Khalsa adopts Brahanical tradition**

**I will not bother about them.**

However, "it was no part of Guru Gobind's object to displace the teachings of Nanak, but rather to adapt them to the new needs of his people. His desire was to see his Sikhs more completely separated from the Hindus than had hitherto been the case, to disconnect their outside sympathisers and to instil into the spirit of nationality. One of the main obstacles to the realisation of this desire was the caste system, and in dealing with it he went a step further than Nanak. The latter, though he had denounced caste distinction, had never actually forbidden their observance by his followers, many of whom laid as much stress on them as the Hindus themselves. Govind took the bull by the horns. He not only reformed the absolute equality of every Sikh in the eyes of God, but he altogether prohibited the observance of caste distinction within the Khalsa. Like Nanak, Govind attached the utmost importance to purity of life, but on a level with it he placed before brave deeds and devotion to the Sikh cause. There was no higher duty for a Sikh than to die fighting in defence of his faith".<sup>6</sup>

Guru Gobind Singh was a spiritual leader and a soldier. Under his inspiration, men who were afraid of the very name of sword or who had never fired a gun became warriors and inflicted crushing defeats on the enemy. He roused among the people a feeling of nationalism and infused in them a spirit which would not let them bow before aggression and persecution and taught them how to die for the sake of their motherland.

"The Guru infused a spirit of valour and emulation into the minds of his followers and inflamed them with zeal for deeds of heroism and bravery in the field. He incorporated in it a narrative of his own exploits in a glowing and even hyperbolic style. He placed the four great sects of the Hindus on the same level, and declared that none was greater than the other, thus adding materially to the

strength of his nation. He laid the foundation stone of that vast fabric which the Sikh nation was not long often, enabled to build on the ruins of the Mohammedan power in the Punjab and emancipated his tribe from thraldom and persecutions giving a character and rank of the military nation—his aims were high and the task which he had undertaken was great".<sup>7</sup>

Guru Gobind Singh desired to give the Khalsa a true democratic spirit which sustained them through all their trials and tribulations. He bestowed on the Khalsa democratic tradition and nationalistic fervour three hundred years ago, when these concepts were indicating unknown to mankind. There are numerous examples when Guru Gobind Singh bowed before the will of the people. When he was fighting a life and death battle staying in the fortress of Chamkaur Sahib, which was surrounded from all sides by the Mughal army, the Guru and many of his faithful followers were filled with great vigour and zeal notwithstanding the loss of his two sons. When the battle stopped at night and most of the men returned to their tents, the Guru along with only a few of his Sikhs pondered over the whole situation. It was a critical juncture in the annals of the Khalsa. Seeing the Guru in deep thought, the Sikhs begged of him with folded hands that they had come to the conclusion that the Guru should leave the fortress immediately and save his life. They requested him in all humility and told him that if he had any regard for their sentiments, they should not be disappointed. They had passed the *Gurmatta*. The Guru was also told that at the time of the birth of the Khalsa that it was the Guru and its resolve would be an order for him. Now the time had come that the Guru should accept the Khalsa's wishes. The Guru readily agreed and decided to leave the fortress at midnight. Thus he bowed before the will of people. He acted at the time in the democratic spirit. Yet, on another occasion, while proceeding towards south along with his followers, when the Guru was passing by the samadhi of Dadu, a saint of eminence, in order to test the faith of the Sikhs, he lowered his arrow before the samadhi in salute. The Sikhs immediately surrounded the Guru and asked him to come down from his horse and explain why he had lowered his arrow. He was told by the Sikhs that he had violated the tenets of Sikhism and demanded that the Guru should be punished as decided by the five Sikhs. The Guru

readily admitted his mistake and exculpated himself by paying a fine of Rs. 125. The Guru was very much pleased over the alertness of mind and sense of duty and the democratic spirit shown by the Sikhs. Sikhism taught obedience to principles and democratic institutions and not personalities.

Thus one of the most marvellous acts of Guru Gobind Singh was the conferment of Supreme Authority on the people, the Khalsa. This act is the cornerstone of all the development that followed in Sikh history, both spiritual and temporal. The Guru desired that personal apostleship of the Guru should cease, and the nascent faith would be left to adopt a kind of self-guiding process. The Guru in Sikhism should never be looked upon as a tutelary being who should grant boons and rewards of the world.

“In the character of this reformer of the Sikhs, it is impossible to recognise many of the greatnesses which have distinguished the most celebrated founders of political communities”.<sup>8</sup>

Guru Gobind Singh's object was to bring change in the ceremonial and social duties of his adherents. He desired to receive all men into the Khalsa's fold and endeavoured to weld them into one religious and political body.

“The object he attempted was great and laudable. It was the emancipation of his tribe from oppression and persecution and the means which he adopted were such as a comprehensive mind could alone have suggested. To an atmosphere of gloom and degradation he brought a message of hope and deliverance and a will to do or die. He not only brought into being a moral force of an intensely dynamic character but was careful to harness to it as much of national assistance as he possibly could. He was a saint as well as a soldier and his ideal was a brotherhood of soldier-saints. As he himself said he bore no enmity to anyone but he was the eternal enemy of tyranny and oppression, whatever might be their brand or form. He had declared on them a never ending war and created the Khalsa to carry it on”.<sup>9</sup>

## **Referencess**

1. Gokul Chand Narang, *Transformation of Sikhism*. p17
2. *Ibid.*, p20
3. Fredric Pincott, *The Sikhism*. p.13
4. C.H. Payne, *A short History of the Sikh*. p.27
5. Khushwant Singh, *History of the Sikh Vol - I* p.88
6. C.H. Payn, *op.cit.*, pp. pp.34-35
7. Mohd Latif, *History of the Punjab*. pp.270-71
8. Sir John Macdam, *Sketch of the Sikhs*. pp.106-7
9. Banerjee, *Evaluation of the Khalsa*. Vol - II p.116

## CHAPTER

**Creation of the khalsa**

It is alleged that the Guru sought the blessings of goddess Durga before the creation of the Khalsa for fulfilling his mission.

There are no basis for such an act on the part of the Guru, as the Guru never believed in idol worship or in anybody else except one God—the Almighty. The founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak, preached the futility and hollowness of these ceremonies. Other Gurus followed the same path and preached likewise.

Guru Gobind Singh always advocated the worship of one God and condemned the worship of gods and goddesses in strong terms. He propagated the existence of one and only one God, and ridiculed the worship of other gods and goddesses. He said :

**Some worship Brahma and some worship Shiva as God.  
Some say the Lord of earth is Vishnu and if  
One worships him, all sins are washed away.  
Ignorant men should think one thousand times  
Before they worship these gods.  
None of these shall give them salvation in the end  
Worship Him only and dwell Him in your heart,  
Who was, who is and who ever shall remain.**

*{Sawayas}*

Again the Guru said :

**I speak the truth, all should hear  
Only they who love Him will find the Lord,  
Some worship stones and put them on their heads,**

**Some suspend lingams from their necks;  
Some see God in the South, and some bow  
Their heads to the West.  
Some even worship idols and images,  
Some are busy worshipping the dead.  
The whole universe is entangled in futile  
ceremonies and has not obtained the truth about God.**

About deities and other goddesses, the Guru said :

**All deities are not immune from death.  
He alone is the immortal Lord.**

*{Bachittar Natak}*

**Do not worship anyone created by Him,  
Worship only the Creator, the Lord,  
Without a beginning, the unborn,  
The unconquerable as the Supreme Lord.**

*{Shabad Hazare}*

**I have discarded all other doors and have  
Taken shelter only at Your door.**

*{Epilogue of Ram Avtar }*

Such examples can be multiplied and numerous quotations can be produced from the Guru's writings. All these show that the Guru advocated the worship of one God. This worship meant satisfaction to the body, heart and soul, and creates love for Him. By worshipping Immortal God, one's personality develops. Mechanical performances of rites are avoided and one's heart is put in communion with one Almighty. The Guru confirmed his faith in God. He said :

**Since I have taken shelter at Thy feet,  
I have paid no heed to any other,  
Ram, Rahim, the Puran and the  
Quran speak different languages,  
But I accept none of them as final,  
The Smritis, the Shastras and the**

Vedas, all expound different doctrines,  
 But I accept none of them;  
 O holy God, all that I have said  
 hath not been spoken by me : but  
 By Thy favour, it hath been said by Thee.

It has been categorically declared by the Guru that he has faith only in one God. He does not believe in the divinity of any mortal being. It is clear that the time given for Durga worship is the same when the Guru was busy in creative literary work. His faith in God was unshaken. The Guru who had such views about God, could not have even dreamt of worshipping Durga, in whose existence he had no faith. He could not even think of worshipping Durga when his mind was deeply engrossed in such noble thoughts about God.

Bhai Nand Lal, a scholar at the court of the Guru, who remained with him most of the time and who has written several theses on Sikh religion and philosophy, has not mentioned at all the Guru's alleged Durga worship, (Rather he has showered praises on the Guru.) He was a devoted poet and has described how the Guru condemned gods and goddesses. In his notable book *Jot Bikas*, he has stated that thousands of Durgas and Vishnus, Shivas paid homage to the Guru who was above all of them. The man who has given this description of the Guru, would not have done so, if he had found him worshipping Durga, overtly or covertly.

Guru's own *Bachittar Natak* does not contain even a line about the *Hom* ceremony. If the Guru had so much faith in the bravery and courage of Durga he would have certainly mentioned this fact at least in his autobiography. In the *Natak* the Guru has praised the bravery and courage of the Sikhs who fought in many of his battles, but there is not a word about the glory of Durga. This clearly shows that the Devi had no meaning for the Guru. He never invoked the aid of Durga. Nor did he thank her for making him victorious. On the other hand, at every step, he prays for help to the Almighty—the Creator.

In the *Zafarnama*, a letter written in strong words to Emperor Aurangzeb, the Guru has clearly said that the main reason for his

differences with the Hill Rajas was that they were idol-worshippers while he was an idol-breaker. Had the Guru worshipped Durga he would not have written these words.

There was another problem faced by the Guru. The institution of *Masands* was deteriorating day by day. *Masands* were now sucking the blood of the Sikhs and were a stumbling block in the smooth implementation of the Guru's plans. The *Masands* formed the pivot of the organisation that Guru Arjan had created. It was necessary for the Guru to establish this vast organisation as he thought that they would be a great help in preaching the Sikh religion. The institution flourished rapidly under Guru Arjan, who patronized them for the sake of spreading the true religion. But, living on free rations and enjoying all the pleasures of life, these *Masands*, in the course of time, became corrupt and did not fulfil the purpose for which they had been installed. These collectors, at first chosen for their piety, integrity and high position, were probably, honorary officers. The office, however, soon became hereditary in the families of the first incumbents and after gradually falling into unworthy hands, became an instrument of jobbery and oppression.

Even during the days of Guru Hargobind some problems were created by the *Masands*. But the Guru by his force, strength and imagination put a curb on their activities and they could not act according to their own proclivities. However, after the death of Guru Hargobind, there were disputes about the succession to the Guruship. Rival claimants gave the *Masands* an excuse to misappropriate the devotees' money. "Moreover, the *Masands* themselves were more for power than would, at first sight, appear to be. They were not merely the collectors of the Guru's house but possessed episcopal functions as well. This enabled them to pose as persons of special sanctity and they gradually came to occupy the position of a sort of organised priesthood in Sikhism".<sup>1</sup> They gradually became extremely influential, in many cases independent of the Guru and had their own followings".

Thus, in course of time, these *Masands* became a nuisance and Guru Gobind Singh was convinced of their futility and he made a determined effort to free the Sikhs from their tyranny.



Thus, the Guru had no other alternative but to put awend to this evil root and branch. He had his own explicit views on the issue. He said :

**If anyone serve to Masands, they say,  
Bring and give us all thine offerings.  
Go immediately, and make a present to us of  
Whatever things are in thy house.  
Think about us night and day,  
And mention not others even by mistake.  
If they hear of any one giving,  
They run to him even at night,  
They are not at all pleased at not receiving.**

{*Sawaiyas - 29*}

**They put oil into their eyes to make people  
Believe that they are shedding tears,  
If they see any of their own worshippers wealthy,  
They serve sacred food and feed him with it.  
If they see him without wealth,  
They give him nothing though he begs for it,  
They will not even show him their faces.  
The beasts plunder men,  
And never sing the praises of the Lord.**

{*Sawaiyas - 30*}

The Guru received a large number of complaints against the *Masands*. Although he knew it fully well that doing away with *Masands* was likely to put the whole Sikh organisation out of gear for some time, yet he took drastic steps against them. "He felt that the risk was worth taking and might in the end prove beneficial. He did not compromise on half measures like trying to reform the *Masands* or separating the less corrupt from the thoroughly corrupt but with one stroke of his pen pronounced an excommunication on the whole lot of them".<sup>2</sup>

The Guru had yet another problem to face. When Guru Tegh

Bahadur succeeded to the apostleship, many Sodhis who were claimants to the *Gaddi* began to consider themselves entitled to receive the homage of the Sikhs, and appointed their own *Masands*. A great disruptive force was let loose on Sikhism. The greed of aspirants to the Guruship brought about disastrous results. The Guru, while denouncing *Masands*, also denounced the Dhir Mals and Ram Rais and prohibited Sikhs from having any relations with the descendants of Prithvi Chand, Dhir Mal and Ram Rai. "Thus, this was the most important of the measures that the Guru adopted to root out the evils that had made the history of Sikhism, since the death of Guru Hargobind, a story of progressive disintegration".<sup>3</sup>

Guru Gobind Singh came into this world for fulfilling a divine mission. He was sent by the Lord to perform certain duties for the emancipation of mankind. The Guru has explained the object which he desired to achieve, and the means by which that mission was to be fulfilled. He said :

"I have cherished thee as my son, made thee to extend my religion. Go and spread my Name there, and forbid the world from evil deeds".

{*Bachittar Natak*}

And then again :

I have come into this world,  
 To spread righteousness.  
 To destroy the evil-doers and sinners,  
 Understand, Ye holy men,  
 I was born in this world  
 To help good to flourish and to save the saints  
 And to uproot and tyrants from this world.

{*Bachittar Natak*}

The Guru categorically said that he was born to spread the true religion and to uproot the tyrants.

"The sad plight in which he found his followers as well as the Hindus in general, religious strifes brought about by the persecuting

policy of Aurangzeb, the prevailing corruption, ignorance, and superstition, and his own personal resentment at his father's execution must have generated in his mind an earnest conviction that it was undoubtedly the time for the rise of a saviour, and his strong impulses and the force of circumstances in which he was placed soon led him to work himself into a belief that he himself was the man needed".<sup>4</sup>

The Guru thus decided to evolve a new order with the sole object of making the people realise the necessity of sacrificing their lives for the sake of *Dharma*. The people should fight against the tyranny of the rulers and they should refuse to be slaves. "The Hindus at this time were too mild by nature; too contented, in their desires, too modest in their aspirations, too averse to physical exertion and terror-stricken and demoralised, even though strongly attached to their religion. They had religion, but no national feeling. Guru Gobind Singh sought to make nationalism their religion".<sup>5</sup>

The Guru advocated even the use of arms against the oppressors. He ordained that the sword was to be used as a weapon against the people who usurped the rights of others. He stood for the basic human rights of an individual, without any interference from State. He relied on the will of God and the strength of his sword. He realised that the earlier methods of mere prayers, humility and submission were outdated and he could now be successful only if he took up arms. He justified the taking up of arms when all other avenues have been explored. He said:

*cu kar az hamad hilate dar guzast  
halal ast bardan ba samsir dast.*

The Guru actually worshipped the arms. He felt and preached that the sword was God and the God was the sword. He said:

**I bow before the Holy  
Sword with love and devotion  
O, God; assist me to finish this task,  
Thou art the conqueror of countries,  
The Destroyer of the forces of the wicked,  
In the battlefield.**

**Thou greatly admirest the brave.  
I bow before the Arrow and the Musket  
I bow before the Sword, spotless, fearless, and unbreakable  
I bow before the Mace and Lance with which nothing is equal.  
I bow before the Arrow and the Cannon which destroy the enemy,  
I bow before the Sword and the Rapier which destroy the evil.**

*{Bachittar Natak}*

To fulfil his mission the Guru decided to create the Khalsa. The Guru sent letters to his Sikhs throughout the country to come to Anandpur for the festival of Baisakhi. It was a historic occasion. The Sikhs were exhorted to come in large numbers. It was *Hukamnama* for them. The Sikhs started coming like swarms of locusts. It was 1699. A day before first of Baisakh, a huge number of men, women and children collected at Anandpur. A vast *Shamiana* (tent) was pitched and decorated with buntings. Hymns from the sacred *Granth Sahib* were recited in the morning, and a fully surcharged divine atmosphere was created. The crowd was estimated to be about eight thousand people. The Guru was, present in the *Pandal* and listened attentively to the chanting of *Asa-Di-Var*. He sat motionless for some time and then stood up before the people. His eyes were red, and shining like the sun emitting rays of daring brilliance. He took out his sword from the scabbard. Flashing the naked sword in his hand, he thundered like a lion, "My devoted Sikhs, this goddess of power clamours for the head of a brave Sikh. Is there anyone among this huge gathering ready to sacrifice his dear life at this call?"

Complete silence prevailed for some time. The people were befuddled. They thought that there was something wrong with the Guru. The Guru once again roared, but again there was no reply. The whole assembly was thrown into consternation. The Guru repeated his call the third time. There was complete silence. What did the Guru want, nobody knew. No Guru before him had ever demanded the heads of Sikhs without any rhyme or reason? The Sikhs were surprised over the act of the Guru, who had all along been bestowing great affection on them. It was an amazing call. "Is there not one among the thousands who has faith in me" were

the last words uttered by Guru, flashing his eyes. The people trembled. Now, Bhai, Daya Ram, a Khatri of Lahore, stood up with folded hands before the Guru to the astonishment of the whole gathering. It was a unique scene—the Sikh offering his head. The Guru took him inside a tent, specially pitched for the purpose. He came out with his sword, dripping with blood. Blood flowed from the tent, too. The blood stained sword was seen by all the people present. He asked for another man. There was complete silence. Again the call. Bhai Dharam Das, a Jat of Delhi, offered his head. The same story was repeated. The horror-stricken people were fully convinced that the second Sikh had also been killed. The gathering began to thin out. Most of the people left for the sake of their lives. Panic prevailed. Some went to the Guru's mother and requested her to check the Guru for his insane act for he was killing his devoted Sikhs for nothing. The call of the Guru continued. The panicky people sat with lowered heads. Bhai Mohkam Chand, a washerman of Dwarka, was the third to offer his head. He, too, was taken inside the tent and the whisper went round that he too had met the same fate. This led to more terror, more panic, and more people leaving.

The Guru became more serious and made demand for yet another head. The crowd became dumb and motionless. Yet another devotee stood up. This time it was Bhai Sahib Chand of Bidar, a barber. He touched the Guru's feet and sought his pardon for not offering himself earlier. The same thing was repeated again. The Guru wanted a fifth one also. Bhai Himmat Chand of Jagannath, a water-carrier by caste, rose and bowed his head before the Guru. He had to undergo the same process.

Then the Guru went again inside the tent. He brought out the five Sikhs whom he had taken earlier into the tent, dressed in new clothes, with blue turbans on their heads and in loose long yellow shirts, with waist-bands, wearing underwears of a particular style, and with swords hanging by their sides. They looked handsome, attractive, and like soldiers of valour. They looked dedicated. The audience was awe-struck. They were named *Panj Payaras* — the Five Beloveds. The whole congregation shouted loudly with one voice. Sat—Sri—Akal—Victory to God. In that surcharged

atmosphere the Guru addressed the audience thus : "I wish you all to embrace one creed and follow one path, obliterating all differences of religion. Let the four Hindu castes, who have different rules for them in the Shastras, abandon them altogether and, adopting the way of co-operation, mix freely with one another. Let no one deem himself superior to another. Do not follow the old scriptures. Let none pay heed to the Ganges and other places of pilgrimage which are considered holy in the Hindu religion, or adore the Hindu deities, but all should believe in Guru Nanak and his successors. Let men of the four castes receive my baptism, eat out of the same vessel, and feel no disgust or contempt for one another".

The next day, on the first of Baisakh B. 5, 1756, A. D. 1699, the devotees again assembled in thousands. The people watched with rapt attention, the next step of the Guru. The Guru, dressed in white and with a smiling face, sat on the dais and addressed the audience :

"The manner of initiation in the past has been for the disciples to drink the water which the Guru had touched with his toe. It developed humility. But times have changed. Fearless bravery and skill in arms are now needed for the defence of the faith and the maintenance of the nation, which from today will be called the *Khalsa Panth*. So, for *Charnpauhal* I shall substitute *Khande-Ka-Amrit*, the system of baptism by water which has been stirred with the two-edged sword. This Nectar, with steel the Divine word, and my spirit, dissolved in it, shall work a miraculous change in those who partake of it. They shall shed all weakness and become brave as lions. They shall call themselves not mere Sikhs or disciples, but also Singhs or lions. They will be as brave as, nay braver than, the Rajputs whose names alone end in Singh so far. I shall transform jackals into lions. All castes are equally welcome for I mean to make all castes actually lose themselves in a single brotherhood where the lowest is equal to the highest".

After the address, the five beloved ones stood in a line. The Guru put some pure water in an iron—pan and stirred it with a double-edged sword. He recited hymns from the *Holy Granth* that is, *Japji*, *Anand*, and his compositions, the *Jap*, the *Swayas* and *Chaupayis*. When the Guru was still stirring the water the mother

of the Khalsa, Sahib Devan, came with some sugar crystals. The Guru appreciated the idea of bringing these and asked her to put them into the vessel. It is said that the Guru did this so that the Sikhs might be blessed not only with valour and courage but also with sweetness. There is legend that the Guru, in order to show his Sikhs the potency of the baptismal nectar which he had prepared, put some of it aside for birds to drink. Upon this two sparrows come and dipped their beaks in it. As they flew away after drinking a few drops they began to fight like two Rajas struggling for supremacy, and died by mutual slaughter. The inference was that all animals which drank the Guru's baptismal water should become powerful and warlike.

The Guru then stood before the beloved ones with an iron pan in his hands. He threw showers of *amrit* on their faces one by one and asked them to say loudly, *Wah-i-Guru Ji Ka Khalsa : Wah-I-Guru Ji Ki Fateh*—the Khalsa belongs to God—Victory to God. He then gave them five handfuls of the *amrit* to drink. He sprinkled it five times on their hair and their eyes. The beloved five were thus baptised by the Guru. They were asked to drink from the same vessel to create the spirit of oneness and brotherhood.

After the ceremony, the Guru himself requested the five beloved ones with folded hands to initiate him in the same manner in which they had been initiated by him. They were stunned at this strange request and told him that he was their Guru, their spiritual Master, both in this and the other world, their redeemer, their saviour and to whom they had dedicated their lives. It was not proper for them to bestow the *amrit* on him, who was their superior and the irpreceptor? The Guru replied that the new order had been created under the orders of the Almighty. There would be no high or low from that day onwards. They who accept this would be the Guru and the Guru, the Khalsa. There would be no difference between the two. Then they administered *amrit* to the Guru in the same way. The gathering watched the ceremony in silence. The whole spectacle was thrilling as it was amazing. The Guru and the five beloveds mingled into one. No difference remained between the Guru and the baptised Sikhs. They were the Khalsa of the Guru.

The Guru ordered that all those who were Sikhs should be baptised. They were told to lead a clean, pure and simple life, avoid strong drinks and shun the use of tobacco. They were to wear the five K's namely *Kesh* (long hair), *Kangha* (comb), *Kacchha* (underwear), *Kara* (iron bangle) and *Kirpan* (sword). They were to be called the Singhs or lions.

According to a chronicler of the period, the Guru said: "Let all embrace one creed and obliterate differences of religion. Let four Hindu castes, who have different rules for their guidance, abandon them all, adopt the one form of adoration and become brothers. Let no one deem himself, superior to another. Let men of four castes receive my baptism eat out of one dish, and feel no disgust of contempt for one another."

The Guru abolished all distinction of castes, creed and sex and integrated his Sikhs into one homogeneous fraternity. He abolished caste rather by implication than by a direct enactment. No room for any doubt was left and the Guru's instructions were very clear. Nobody was high or low. According to a historian, Ghulam Mohyuddin, the Emperor was informed about all that had happened by the chronicler who said: "He had abolished castes and customs, old rituals, beliefs and superstitions of the Hindus and bonded them in one single brotherhood. No one will be superior, or inferior, to one another. Men of all castes have been made to eat out of the same bowl. Though orthodox men have opposed him, about twenty thousand men and women have taken baptism of steel at his hands on the first day. The Guru has also told the gathering: I'll call myself Gobind Singh only if I can make the meek sparrows pounce upon the hawks and tear them; only if one combatant of my force equals a lakh and a quarter of the enemy".<sup>7</sup>

"The Guru aimed at creating a compact brotherhood in faith, which was also to be a brotherhood in arms. The Guru's reliance, as we have seen, was on the sword and he sought to exalt military prowess in all possible ways. He had transformed his Sikhs into Singhs or warriors and he withdrew his followers from that undivided attention which their forefathers had given to the plough, the loom and the pen, and he urged them to regard the sword as their principal



stay in this world. The sentiment of veneration which gives us power, our safety or our daily bread is common in human history and the sword became an object of worship with the Sikhs, God himself being given the name of "All-Steel".<sup>8</sup>

Guru Gobind Singh, through his baptism, poured his life into his Sikhs, and invested them with his own personality. There was about him a stern olympian air, which he imparted to his followers. His impress not only elevated and altered the constitution of their minds, but contrary to the experience of ethnological experts it also operated materially and gave amplitude to their physical frames. They came to be regarded as models of physical beauty and stateliness of manner. A tremendous change was effected in the whole tone and of national character. Even those people who had been considered as dregs of humanity were changed, as if by magic, into something rich and strange. The sweepers, barbers and confectioners who had never so much as touched the sword and whose entire generations had lived as grovelling slaves of the so-called higher classes, became, under the stimulating leadership of Guru Gobind Singh, doughty warriors who never shrank from fear and who were ready to rush into the jaws of death at the bidding of the Guru.

Although the Guru introduced a new ideology, it was not a departure from the old ideals preached by Guru Nanak and his successors. His Sikhism in essence remained the same as was ordained by Guru Nanak. Guru Gobind Singh also believed like his predecessors in the Almighty—the Supreme Creator, who was Eternal and Immortal. But the Guru condemned in the strongest words the ritual and worship of idols. The institution of Guruship was given a new form. He made any five Sikhs competent to represent the Khalsa and the Sikhs were told in clear terms that wherever five Sikhs gathered, the Guru would be found present among them.

"The torch which was lit by Guru Nanak was kept alive and luminous by his successors in whom the Spirit of Nanak pervaded one after the other. It eventually came into the hands of the Tenth Nanak, Guru Gobind Singh, who gave it added brilliance, but instead of handing it over to an individual as had been the practice hitherto, he gave it over to his Khalsa, who he created for carrying on the

noble mission onward to completion and fruition. He prescribed a particular form for his Khalsa, so that his Sikh, could be easily recognised. This distinction and appearance of the Sikh singles him out from the men of other faiths and religions. And the Guru said: 'As long as the Khalsa remains thus distinct he has my blessing and power'. "Thus, the Khalsa arose from the Guru and the Guru from the Khalsa. They are mutually protectors of each other".<sup>8</sup>

## References

1. Inderbushan Banerjee, *Evolution of the Khalsa*, Vol.- II. p.109
2. Khushwant Singh, *History of the Sikhs* Vol - I p. 82
3. Inderbushan Banerjee, *op.cit.*, . p.113
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## CHAPTER

**Sermon From the Mount of Anandpur**

The Guru, after addressing the huge gathering at Anandpur Sahib on 29 March, 1699, took his sword from the scabbard and flashing it naked in his hand thundered like a lion. "My devoted Sikhs, this goddess of power clamours for the head of a brave Sikh. Is there anyone among the people gathered here ready to sacrifice his dear life at my call".

The people were dazzled and complete silence prevailed. The Guru repeated his call. "Is there not one among the thousands who have faith in me?" were the last words uttered by the Guru. Then one by one devoted Sikhs came forward; Bhai Daya Ram Khatri of Lahore; Bhai Dharam Das, a jat of Delhi; Mohkam Chand, a washerman of Dwarka; Bhai Sahib Chand of Bidar, a barber and Bhai Himmat Chand of Jagannath Puri, They were taken into the tent and were brought before the audience, dressed in new clothes, with blue turbans on their heads and in loose long yellow shirts, with waist bands, wearing underwears of a particular style, and with swords hanging by their sides The people were awestruck. They were named *Panj Payaras*. The five beloveds. The whole congregation shouted loudly and with one voice, "Sat Sri Akal " Victory to God. The Guru, then addressed the sea of humanity thus, "I wish you all to embrace one creed and follow one path, obliterating all differences of religion. Let the four Hindu castes, who have different rules for them in the Shastras, abandon them altogether, mix freely with one another. Let no one deem himself superior to another. Do not follow the old scriptures. Let none pay heed to the Ganges and other places of pilgrimage which are considered holy in the Hindu religion, or adore the Hindu deities, but all should believe in Guru Nanak and his successors. Let men of the four castes

receive my baptism, eat of the same vessel, and feel no disgust or contempt for one another”.

The Guru continued, “My beloved Sikh *Sangat*, may *Akal Purkh*, the Almighty ever be with you and bless you with His manifold bounties. You have come here in large numbers in response to my call and have also brought your valuable offerings for Guru’s *Darbar*. I am extremely happy to see you here and welcome all of you. I know some of you have travelled long distances, crossing on the way perilous hills, rivers and jungles. Many have come from nearer places in Punjab, leaving their families and avocations behind. The purpose for which I have called you is a matter of serious concern for everyone. As you are aware Guru Nanak’s teachings were accepted both by the Hindus and Muslims alike. He preached the gospel of truth, unity of God and brotherhood of man. For him no one was high or low, good or bad – all were treated as the sons of the same Merciful Father. Only these whose deeds were noble were held by him in high esteem. He went to the religious places of both Hindus and Muslims and even to far off Muslim holy places like Mecca. He taught both Hindus and Muslims the meaning of religion and how to live virtuous life in the service of mankind”.

“Thereafter, the second Guru, Guru Angad Dev and the subsequent Gurus continued to spread the message of love, tolerance, and goodwill towards all, irrespective of caste or creed. Guru Arjan Dev collected the hymns of Hindu Bhagats as well as Muslim Sufi Fakirs and incorporated them in the Holy *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* for equal reverence for all. Thus along with the institutions of *Sangat*, congregation and *Pangat*, common kitchen brought Hindus and Muslims together. This was not liked by the bigoted Mughal Emperor Jahangir, Maulvis and others of their ilk. They, along with some envious Hindus and disgruntled persons from the Guru’s family itself, made false and baseless allegations to the Emperor against Guru Arjan Dev and had him tortured to death. This was the first martyrdom in the Sikh history. Guru Hargobind, my grandfather, was also imprisoned in the Gwalior Fort. But when reality dawned on the misguided Emperor, he was released along with 52 Hindu Rajas and hill chiefs who were held in the Gwalior Fort on frivolous charges”.

“Then came Emperor Aurangzeb who is still sitting on the Mughal throne. He had imprisoned his father, Shah Jahan, for the sake of preserving the throne for himself. For washing away his sins he has now become the custodian of Muslim *Shariat*. He has demolished many Hindu temples from the south northwards and has converted lakhs of Hindus to Islam. Those who resist conversions are beheaded. To stop this policy of repression, my father Guru Tegh Bahadur had to sacrifice his life, along with some of his trusted disciples, so as to melt the stony heart of the Emperor. He sacrificed his life for protecting the rights of Hindus:

**To wear sacred thread and caste symbols;  
 He performed the supreme sacrifice in the dark age.  
 He gave his head, but did not utter a word in pain.  
 He suffered martyrdom for the sake of *Dharma*.  
 He did this great heroic deed.  
 He readily gave up his head.  
 But did not give up his conviction,  
 He avoided performing miracles  
 A cheap act of fooling people  
 For such acts men of God are ashamed.**

{*Bachitter Natak*}

The Emperor, Aurangzeb has prompted the hill Rajas to fight against us, trying to weaken the spirit of resistance against his domination.

Times have now changed and reached intolerable limits. Reports are reaching here from all parts of the country that Emperor Aurangzeb has issued orders to his Subedars to see that all Hindus are brought to the fold of Islam and that their iconoclastic civilisation and culture are effaced. If we do not offer any resistance and this is allowed to happen, there will be no trace of Hindu religion in the country and the entire Hindu population will be wiped out. We have therefore to be ready and make preparation and face the prevailing situation with courage and bravery. We should prepare and see to it that the repression is stopped forthwith. It is for this very purpose that I have called you here”.

When the sermon ended, the Guru's face was exuberant with a hallowed glow. The audience gathered there also felt and realised that the situation was really grave. The cold blood of people warmed up. They were infused with a new national spirit and fervour. After a while, the Guru unsheathed his glistening sword and, moving it around, addressed the huge congregation again with a thundering voice. He said: "I worship the goddess of All Steel today" pointing to his sword. "She is the Kal, Durga or Bhagwati for me. She wants sacrifice. Be prepared for that."

Next day, on 30 March, 1699, the Guru prepared and administered Panj Payaras Khande Ka Amrit baptism of the double-edged sword and in turn, sought the same baptism from their hands, thus becoming their Guru as well as their *Chela*, disciple. They all became Singhs and were renamed Bhai Daya Singh, Bhai Dharam Singh, Bhai Himmant Singh, Bhai Mohkam Singh and Bhai Sahib Singh. The Guru himself was renamed Gobind Singh. Earlier he was called by the name Gobind Rai.

The Guru said that all those who were Sikhs should be baptised. They were told to lead a clean, pure and simple life, avoid drinking and shed the use of intoxicants. They were asked to wear the five K's, namely *Kesh*, *Kara*, *Kacchha*, *Kirpan* and *Kangha*.

According to a chronicler of the period, the Guru said: "Let all embrace one creed and obliterate differences of religion. Let the four Hindu castes, who have different rules for their guidance, abandon them all, adopt the one form of adoration and become brothers. Let no one deem himself superior to another. Let men of four castes receive my baptism, eat out of one dish, and feel no disgust or contempt for one another".

Thus, the Guru abolished all distinction of caste, creed and sex and integrated his Sikhs into one homogeneous fraternity. He abolished caste rather by implication than by a direct ordinance. No room for any doubt was left and the Guru's instructions were very clear. According to Ghulam Mohyiuddin, the Emperor was informed about all that had happened. The chronicler had said: "He has abolished castes and customs, old rituals, beliefs and superstitions of the Hindus and bonded them into one single brotherhood. No one

will be superior, or inferior to one another. Men of all castes have been made to eat out of the same bowl. Though orthodox men have opposed him, about twenty thousand men and women have taken baptism of steel at his hands on the first day itself”.

“All was designed to give the Sikhs a distinct national character in opposition to the ways of other people and to keep alive a sense of duty and profession of faith. The dry bones of an oppressed peasantry were stirred into life and the institution, of the Sikh baptismal rite at the hands of the few disciples anywhere in a place of worship, in the house or by the roadside brought about the more full and widespread development of the new faith”.<sup>1</sup> “Thus, one of the most important results of Gobind Singh’s activity was the large increase in the number of his followers”.<sup>2</sup>

The Guru desired to create a mass awakening and to show to the people that they were strong enough to check the tide of political tyranny and religious persecution. He admirably succeeded in the mission he had undertaken.

Under the new system, militarism was adopted as an article of faith. The sword became an object of worship with the Sikhs. The Guru says:

**All steel, I am Thy slave,  
Deeming me Thine own preserve me;  
Think of mine honour, whose arm thou hast taken,  
Deeming me Thine own, cherish me,  
Single out and destroy my enemies,  
May both my kitchen and my sword prevail in the world.  
‘O’, the great Lord, grant me this boon only.  
That from noble deeds I may never turn away.  
I may fear not him, whom I face in fight.  
Certain be my victory.  
And this be instilled in my mind.  
My desire be to sing Thy praises,  
When the period of my life draws to close**

**I may fight my foes valiantly  
And die a heroic death.**

{Epilogue to *Chandi Charitar-I*}

Guru Gobind Singh realised that the people had religion but no national feeling. The only way to make a nation was to make nationalism their religion. Thus, the Guru made nationalism the religion of the Sikhs.

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2. C.H. Payne, *A short History of the Sikhs*, p.28



## CHAPTER

**Genius and Nature of the Khalsa**

The Khalsa was not created suddenly by Guru Gobind Singh. Before the Guru his nine predecessors had already paved the way for the creation of Khalsa. Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, was born in 1469. He was a great reformist and revolutionary who tried to transform the society. He waged a relentless war against the malpractices and evils that had crept into the religious and social customs then prevalent in India. He preached the of God and told people in clear explicit terms that they were all the sons and daughters of the Creator and the Destroyer.

According to Guru Nanak, man is the source of spirituality and the society the centre of all moral and creative action. God is the end of all religious efforts. Guru Nanak's mission was to help the truth seeker to discover within a himself the light of perfection and realise God not only in a mystical experiences but also in the very life and existence of humanity. "Guru Nanak's religion stood distinguished from the sectarian schools in general by the simplicity and spiritualistic character of its worship and especially by its moderations in regard to mythology". says Barth in his book *religions of India*. From the very beginning, the great quality of Sikhism has been its reconciliation with secular life.

"Starting with a puritan quietists which repudiated outward rites, as meritorious in themselves and concerned the life of the believers as a continued communion with God, it developed temple and service and observance of ceremonial piety". Says Estlin Carpenter in his book *Medieval India*", Rejecting every kind of violence and enjoining the complete forgiveness of wrongs, it protected itself by military organisation, made disciples into warriors and devotees into the

saint soldiers. It denounced religion in the broadest terms, broke down all barriers of caste and race and then imposed the obligation of the sword with a rite of initiation which drew the highest of limits around the semi-national Church fellowship”.

"The Sikh is not a Hindu or Muslim, he is the disciple of the Eternal Guru of the world, and all who lean on him are truly Sikhs and must not corrupt his teachings with the confused utterances of men who live among them. Sikhism is not a disguised Hindu underlying all sects. It is no variant of Muslim teachings in that it too proclaims the love of God and the need for men who hold Him always in their heart. It too is a distinct religion like the other great religions of the world”.<sup>1</sup>

"The Sikh religion might be described, accurately as a vision of Hindu - Muslim common ground”. says Professor. Arnold Toynbee, to have discovered and embraced the deep harmony underlying the historic Hindu-Muslim discord has been a noble spiritual triumph, and the Sikhs may be proud of it”.

Guru Nanak thought of God as the Supreme being who was universal, all powerful and Truthful. He believed that truth was greater than all the sacrifices and pilgrimages to holy places. He considered Love of God as better than all the religious rites and ceremonies performed.

Guru Angad, Guru Amar Das and Guru Ram Das gave the Sikhs an individuality of their own and did not let them relapse into the old groove. Guru Arjan, by compiling the *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, provided a common scripture. Guru Arjan gave Sikhs their *Bible* and central place of worship Harimandir. He collected the hymns of the first four Gurus and to these added his own, while compiling *Sri Guru Granth*, Guru Arjan had invited several Saints and Fakirs, both Hindu and Muslim to suggest suitable hymns for insertion in the holy book. They recited hymns of their respective sects but the Guru included only those in the *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, which conformed to the spirit of Sikhism and were consistent with the teachings of Guru Nanak. In Hinduism it was a sin to listen to the teachings of Muslim and Sudra Saints. The Guru wanted to show to his disciples that there was no place for such a thing in

Sikhism and any saintly person belonging to any religion was worthy of honour and respect.

Guru Arjan followed this principles for inclusion of Saint's hymns in the *Guru Granth*. The hymns should praise God and denounce superstition and casteism. He included in the *Granth*, verses of those who believed in the Unity of God and brotherhood of man.

During Guru Arjan's pontificate, the seed sown by Guru Nanak bloomed in full. Guru Nanak's teachings as also of the other Gurus had been compiled in *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*. Guru Nanak's way of life had become an example of life Sikh communities of scattered all over the northern India. The Sikhs had become conscious that their religion was separate. They were neither Hindus Muslims, but belong to the *Third community Common wealth of their own*.

"The disciples of Nanak do not read the Mantra of the Hindus. They do not venerate the idols in their temples nor hold their Avatars in esteem. They have no regard for Sanskrit, which according to the Hindu is the language of God". \* Guru Arjan said:

Neither I fast like the Hindu nor like the Muslims  
 I observe them during month of Ramzan,  
 I serve only Him, who saveth me in the end,  
 The Supreme called the Lord on of the earth by the Hindu is also  
 the Allah of the Muslims.  
 I don't go to Mecca for a pilgrimage nor do  
 I worship at the holy places of Hindus.  
 I serve Him and nobody else,  
 I don't worship idols,  
 I cherish the formless in my heart,  
 We are neither Hindus nor Muslims,  
 Our bodies and soul are gifts from Allah-Ram,  
 Kabir says that he hath realised the Lord  
 Whether it be through meeting the Guru or the.

The martyrdom of Guru Arjan was a turning point in the history of the Punjab. "He was the embodiment of many things that Nanak

had preached and stood for. He had brought the Hindu and Musalman together by creating a scripture where both were represented and in raising a temple whose foundation was laid by a Muslim and the superstructure by Hindus and Sikhs. He was a builder of cities and a merchant - prince who brought prosperity to all the communities. Arjan's blood became the seed of the Sikh Church as well as of the Punjabi nation."\*

"There can be no doubt that the Sikhs looked upon this matter in a totally different light and naturally enough they ascribed the death of the beloved Guru, who was renowned for the saintliness of his character and to whom people had flocked from all quarters for spiritual solace and enlightenment to the bigotry and cruelty of the Mohammedan Government. The development of the Sikh community had to proceed without any interference from the state which had on the contrary, helped it in various ways. But now it became evident that the circumstances had changed and that it would no longer be possible to preserve the community without the aid of arms".\*

Guru Hargobind succeeded to apostleship in quite difficult circumstances. Before his death, Guru Arjan gave an injunction to the new Guru that he should sit on the throne fully armed and should maintain an army to the best of his ability. The young Guru, although only eleven years old, tried to give shape to the Guru's desire and forthwith became the nucleus of an army gathered around him. He told Bhai Buddha that his endeavour would be to fulfil the desire of Guru Arjan. His belt would be a sword belt and he would wear his turban with royal aigrette. Soon the people responded to his call and within a short span of time the number increased to 500 strong.

The sixth Guru led the people into battles against the forces of bigotry, repression and injustice. The seventh and eighth Gurus consolidated their positions and remained pacifists. The ninth Guru, Guru Tegh Bahadur had to sacrifice his life for the sake of *Dharma*. The Tenth Guru inherited a rich legacy. However, he had to face stupendous. He had only a few followers. There was fear in the peoples minds. "Then whole work had to be done from the beginning. Govind was obviously reduced, for a time, to a state of utter

helplessness. The whole province was terror stricken under the active bigotry of Aurangzeb, and for the time being it seemed to be sure death to Govind even to venture into the plains of Punjab. Thus, Sikhism was threatened with extinction root and branch, and it has been said that the Sikhs would have been left alone if they reverted to their earlier path and relapsed into a purely religious community of quietists".\*

The fear of the Emperor and his Subedars was evident. This was proved beyond doubt when Guru Tegh Bahadur was executed in Delhi and the crowd gathered there, disappeared in a matter of moments, leaving the chopped up body of the Guru at the spot. The Sikhs, though few in numbers did not come forward to claim the body. One devotee, Rangreta, Jaita no doubt, removed the Guru's head and took it to Anandpur. Another Sikh, Lakhi, Shah Banjara, concealed the Guru's body under bales of cotton and took it to Raisina village, where he cremated it at night, burning his own and others thatched houses. Generally most of the people behaved in a cowardly manner.

Guru Gobind had a uphill task before him which was to turn timid people into bold and fearless warriors. Guru Gobind Singh when he received the chopped off head of his father at Anandpur must have felt that the Sikhs must be given a separate identity, so that they could be recognised from a distance and did not think of hiding themselves.

The circumstances had changed. The odds were heavy. The Hill Rajas were hostile. They worshipped idols, and were entrenched in the caste system. The Guru's avowed determination was to break the shackles of caste system as also to root out idolatry. The people had also become so used to living as slaves that freedom had lost poignancy for them. The Hill Rajas were apprehensive that the Guru, would surely carve out a principality of his own within their territory. Though the Guru did not have such even faintest idea in his mind and he tried to dispel the fears of the Rajas, it was in vain. Then the danger from Aurangzeb was increasing day by day. He was bent upon converting the people of Hindustan to Islam. He wanted to convert the country from Dar-ul-Harm to Dar-ul-Islam. He believed in employing all means for conversion.

Guru Gobind Singh decided to prepare the Sikhs to fight against the onslaughts of the rulers. The values the Sikhs held were in jeopardy. The freedom of faith for which Guru Arjan and Guru Tegh Bahadur had sacrificed their lives was in peril. Only a disciplined force of well-knit and armed. Sikhs was the need of the hour.

He created the order of the Khalsa and infused a new life into the dead limbs of the people at large. "His persevering endurance in the midst of calamities and disasters was equal to his bravery and valour in the field and although he did not live to see his great end accomplished yet it is acknowledged on all hands that the conversion of a band of undisciplined Jats (given to rapine and plunder or to agricultural pursuits) into a body of conquerors and a political corporation, was due entirely to the genius of Gobind, whose history is closely interwoven with that of the Sikhs as a nation".\*

Though, Guru Gobind Singh advocated the use of arms in extraordinary circumstances, the fundamentals of Sikhism as preached by Guru Nanak did not undergo any change. Guru Gobind Singh created the Khalsa but its genius and nature is well known. Guru Nanak raised the moral status of the people but Guru Gobind Singh was the first leader of the Punjab who realised that the Hindus as a race were too mild in nature and contented in their desires, very modest in their aspirations and averse to physical exertion. The people were religious but had no national feeling. Guru Gobind Singh made nationalism their religins..

Guru Gobind Singh is credited not only making one caste out of four but he went a step further by removing all religious prerogatives by establishing a different type of democracy. He made the lowest as equal to the highest. The nature of his views of democratic equality were much more advanced than the mere equality understood by others. His views were explicit, which he propagated among his devotees. He advocated that all the men's names were to end with the word "Singh" which means a lion, all had to adopt one form of salutation in "Wahe-Guru-Ji-Ke-Khalsa; Wahe-Guru-ji-ki-Fateh obseriance; all homes to pay homage to *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* and all should pray to Hari Mandir. It was to be regarded as Mecca of the Sikhs.

Guru Gobind Singh understood human nature thoroughly. He was a philosopher who understood fully well how the imagination of the men could be worked upon. He realised the power of certain external forms and symbols and knew that the people drew their inspiration from them. The advent of Guru Gobind Singh on the Indian, only Rajputs were called Singhs but Guru Gobind Singh raised his followers with one stroke to a position of equality with the most warlike class in India.

Guru Gobind Singh was also aware that literature was a very useful weapon to fire the imagination of the people. The people who had not known what the war was like, took up the sword at Guru's behest.

The Guru himself practised whatever he preached. He was never haughty or arrogant in spite of his achievements. He followed in the footsteps of Guru Nanak who had preached the virtues of humility and simplicity. He never preached his "self" but always preached the message of God. The word "self" had no meaning for him. He was victorious in the battlefield against heavy odds. He was one of the greatest poets of the world who enriched the world's literature by his superb writings. His genius shines in his poetry yet he himself only praised the Lord.

The Guru, even in the battlefield, never lost his temper. He showered arrows on his enemy but never lost his poise and cool.

Such was Guru Gobind Singh who nurtured the genius of the Khalsa.

## References

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## CHAPTER

*Amrit* - The Nectar

“The Nectar which the gods, holy men, sages and the realised souls hunt for, the Amrit (Nectar) I have found with my Guru”, says Guru Ram Das, the fourth Guru. Guru Gobind Singh from his intensive study of Arjan for a period of over ten years, which he spent at Poanta on the banks of the river Yamuna in the lap of natural surroundings and peaceful environment, came to the novel decision of reconstructing and eternalising *Amrit*, on the analogy of the *Shiva Puran*, *Sagar Manthan*. The great visionary, as the Guru was, thought of his return to Anandpur in 1684, The Guru aimed at of the rejuvenation of the paralytic Hindu masses. He symbolised Meru and used his double-edged, all steel (Khanda), sword and churned it as *Madhani* in pure water in an all steel bowl, representing the divine words, gurubanian of his ancestors combined with his own martial poetic composition. The Guru’s consort, Mata Sahib Dewan, added sugar puffs, *Pattasas*, to the stirring of water sweetening it to impart a sense of love and harmony among the Guru’s disciples. When the *Amrit* was ready, the Guru said :

O, Thou the Timeless, I am in Thy refuge

O, Thou All-Steel, I am in Thy refuge,

The steel utensils were not used by Hindus and the great Innovator, invented *Amrit* to bring so-called untouchables to the fold of all human-beings, Thus the Hindu untouchables utensils were sanctified as sacred.

It is this *Amrit* which was in fact, packed with spiritual and temporal force and dynamism, a sip of which turned sparrows into hawks and jackals into lions, bringing about a complete transformation — a real shedding of the old self and putting on a new one.



Guru Gobind Singh invited all his followers as well as of the followers of his predecessors from all parts of the country. It was also ment to reinforce the Charan-Pahul administered by the earlier Gurus with *Khanda Ki Pahul his Amrit*. It was a great experiment of revival of lost glory. A small sip of the Guru's *Amrit* could make the Sikhs to challenge the mighty Mughal empire for the emancipation of the teeming millions from the yoke of Mughal tyranny.

In the administration of *Amrit* to his devotees and making them Singhs which means it implied the Guru, understood the requirements of those days to take up sword against the oppression. His views were clear and loudly voiced. The Guru said :

Eternal God, Thou art our shield,  
 The dagger, Knife, the sword we wield,  
 To us protector that is Guru,  
 The Timeless, Deathless, Lord of heaven,  
 To us All-Steels unvanquished might,  
 To us All-times resistless fight,  
 But chiefly Thou, protector brave,  
 All-Steel, wilt Thine own servants save

{*Akal Ustat*}

And again the Guru says :

Cu Kar az hama hilate dar guzast  
 halal as Burdan ba samsir dast

“When all avenues have been explored, all means exhausted, it is rightful to draw the sword out of the scabbard and wield it with your hand”.

{*Zafan Namah*}

Before Guru Gobind Singh, his predecessors for over 200 years poured their blood in consonance with the prevalent Shastric teachings in the sincere hope and faith that the Mughal rulers would be amenable to the call of the truth and realise the folly of their bigotry and fanaticism but it did not bear any fruit.

It may also be mentioned here that before the Guru commenced administering of *Amrit* to the five beloved ones, who had offered their heads to him, he ordered fresh water to be brought from the river in a *gaggar* : a metallic vessel. He washed his lotus feet in it, recited the prayers with *ardas* and tightly sealed the vessel. He ordered to be carried it back to the thrown in the river, symbolising that the ritual of the *Charan-Pahul*, prevailing since the days of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, had ceased to exist as it is replaced with *Khande-Ka-Amrit*.

His feet in the water he did wash,  
 And back the vessel paid,  
 He closed the vessel and had it sealed,  
 And ordered it back in the Sutlej laid  
 Khande-Ka-Amrit he did put on anew

{*Mahima Prakash*}

Then the *Amrit* was administered in the following manner. He offered the baptismal water five times to drink; five times he sprinkled on their eyes and five times on their heads, one after the other. He imparted to them the word *Nam* and renamed them as *Singhs* which process rendered them immune from all pathological ills and made them fearless and immortal to be able to embrace death. They were now called *Muktas* which means he would have no meaning for them. In this manner they were now to fight with *Dharama Yudh* in their hearts, and the God's name on the lips:

*Mukh mein Hari-Nam Chit mein yudh becharey.*

The five beloved ones were ordained into the order of the *Khalsa* - the pure - the new faith. They were enjoined to wear five *Ks* : *Keshas*, the unshorn hair, *Kanga*, comb, *Kirpan* sword, *Kaccha*, the shorts and *Kara*, The steel bangle.

After the ceremony, the Guru now addressed the five Beloved Ones. Which marked the fusion of the Guru-Beloved is the Sikh Beloved. Unique thought and deed. Perhaps the Guru gave them a bit of his mind He declared : "Without the power, *Dharma* cannot flourish. When *Dharma* is protected, it protects : when its ideals are violated it destroy."

It was the most significant act of the Master. The Guru though mighty, yet was humble. In all humility he kneeled before the five Beloved ones, begged of them *Amrit*-initiation from the pious hands of the *Panj Payars* himself indistinguishable from the Khalsa which he had created. He was now named *Guru Gobind Singh* from *Gobind Rai*.

“Hail : Hail : *Gobind Singh*, Himself the Guru and himself the disciple”. These were *Thakur* and *Sewak* balanced in the same scale.

There was jubilation all around. The new concept of equality and fraternity came into being. The beginning of a new transparent spiritual entity - Khalsa entity was to be seen”.

The five beloved ones were now the leaders of the Guru’s Khalsa, an army of Saint-soldiers, who could now challenge the mighty Mughal empire and free the people from slavery, bondage and oppression.

A new order was thus set up, a new organisation of Singhs or lions par excellence. By his action the Guru wrought a great miracle, the effect of which was sure and great. The destiny of humanity was sought to be changed.

After the entire process was over, the Guru said :

“You, my Khalsa, form a well knit organisation. You must regard yourselves as brothers, interdine and arrange marriages among yourselves and not with others. You must regard other’s woman as your daughters, sisters or mothers and never look at them with an evil eye. You must not even touch the Muslim women. You must keep your identity and I shall take care of you. Forget not that castes, idolatory and rituals are forbidden for you. Remember God and he shall save you. Have always a transcendental spirit”.

Nobody in India ever succeeded in removing the distinction of caste and creed to such an extent. In particular, no one before him and after him has established such a complete body by fusing people together. Says Dr. R. C. Majumdar, “Hindus and Muslims as he did by bringing them in the common fold of the Khalsa. It is a unique

example in Indian history and Guru Gobind Singh deserves the highest tribute, praise and appreciation of the Indians for the wonderful example of integration of different peoples of India which he accomplished. He succeeded even where Akbar, the great failed”.

This unfading glory was a marvellous miracle attesting to the tremendous powers of *Amrit* ; Drug of love, life and strength which made evasion of death, virtually a non-event. The abject state of the Hindu life which Guru Gobind Singh's *Amritdhari* inherited and put their hand at the hilt of their *Khandas* relieved the people of the fear of tyranny.

The Guru openly attacked all distinctions of caste, and insisted on the equality of all who would join him : and resuscitating the old baptismal rite of the Sikhs, he proclaimed it as the *pahul* or gate by which all might enter the fraternity, while he gave to its members the *parshad* or communion as a sacrament of union in which the four orders of Hindu society could eat from the same dish perceiving the great national weakness resulting from the disunion caused by caste, he proclaimed the social equality of all who were members of the Khalsa. Guru Gobind Singh did not live to see his mission accomplished, but had roused the dormant spirit of the people to that end”.

Guru Gobind Singh finally abolished caste distinctions among his followers, and admitted members of all castes in his army. In consequence of his military instincy, he was able to fight with determination against the Mohammedans, and also to win their respect by his bravery and success, so much so that it is reported that Bahadur Shah received him courteously.

By administering *Amrit* to his followers, Guru Gobind Singh infused a new spirit in the Khalsa. By taking *Amrit*, a Sikh purifies himself, becomes fearless which enables him to take hazardous tasks : he feels second to none, so he is prepared for the supreme sacrifice when the occasion arises. This is a unique thing which no other prophet could achieve during his lifetime.

It was the *Amrit*, which made Sikhs brave and fearless. Under the able guidance of the Guru, they accepted all sorts of challenges.

Guru Gobind Singh was distressed to see abject slavery and extreme poverty among the people social and economic scene depressed him. He noticed the acute misery and destitution of the people; he took measures to uplift the poor and the downtrodden. He did not tolerate the distinction prevailing among the haves and have-nots. He protected the weak against the tyranny of not only the rulers but also of the rich and strong. He exhorted his followers not to care about the wrath of the rulers of the day who were persecuting the people. The strong-willed Sikhs never gave up the cause which their Master asked them to perform. The Guru himself sacrificed his own sons. He asked his Sikhs to follow his instructions and carry them relentlessly no matter what the odds against him.

By administering *Amrit*, Guru Gobind Singh created a social order in which everyone was equal. The well-knit brotherhood created by the Guru could to a man stand behind any noble cause. The new social order created high hopes among all the people to be able to lead a better social life. The Guru created a new spirit among his followers which gave a unique dimension to the Khalsa. Guru Gobind Singh created a real dynamic brotherhood based on equality of mankind. The Guru placed service before self throughout his career. He had no axe of his own to grind as he toiled for the welfare of the masses. Undaunted, he led his Khalsa against the powerful Mughal army. The imperial forces could neither subdue him nor conquer him.

The Guru wrote in one of his letters to the Emperor Aurangzeb, "In the Name of the Lord of the sword and the axe. The Lord of the arrow, the spear and the shield. In the name of Him, who is God of warriors, and of the charges swift as the wind; He who gave to thee the kingship ; gave to us the wealth of faith and righteousness. Thine is aggression by guile and deceit : Mine is to reach redress by truth and sincerity, By the favour of *Akal Purkh*.

"Such a shower of steel shall I scatter that as Thou returnest unsuccessful from the Deccan Hills, and bitter and frustrated from Mewar - So, if thou ever turned hitherwards, Thine failure of bitterness shall increase manifold : Such a fire shall I ignite under the horse's hoofs, than thou shalt not be able to taste the water of

Punjab, So what by deceit and fraud has killed the two young cubs  
of a lion ? This fiery lion lives For sure, he will avenge this, outrage  
most foul,

*{Fatah Nama}*

Severely by the grace of God and the strength attained by  
partaking of the *Amrit*, the Guru could challenge the mighty Mughal  
Emperor.

## CHAPTER

**The Sikh Symbols**

The Sikh symbols are like soldier's uniform which marks off the initiated disciples of Guru Gobind Singh from those of the followers of other religions and the symbols remind the Sikhs of their duties they owe to God, *Panth* and man as this uniform reminds the wearer of his obligations to the great Guru. The services that our symbols have rendered to us are unique. *Keshas* and *Kirpan* especially have been a Godsent gift to the Sikhs. The Sikhs could not have lived through the terrible times through which they have passed ever since their birth. If they have escaped strangulation, if they have not submerged in the vast ocean of Hinduism, if they still retain their individuality in and separate identity, if they have still a spark of life in them it is due no small extent to these two main symbols. The obligation to keep long hair made it impossible for weak-minded, comfort loving person to accept Sikhism and it made those who had already become Sikhs braver and hardier than before. If the Sikhs had given up wearing long hair during the difficult and terrible times that followed after the Guru had left his mortal coil and had taken refuge in Hindu homes to escape Muslims persecution, they could have soon forgotten the sublime teachings of Guru Gobind Singh and would have drifted back to the superstitious practices from which the Guru had extricated them. They were saved, those who were brave enough not to succumb to the temptation of a peaceful luxurious life of comfort, from this tragedy by their long hair. The obligation to keep long hair took them to the jungles. The *Kirpan*, helped the Sikhs to protect themselves. The jungles became the home of the persecuted Sikhs and there they lived ideal Sikh lives which have proved a constant source of inspiration to those who have come after them. That is why the *Keshas* became so dear to the Sikhs. Men like Bhai Taru Singh preferred to suffer the

torture of persecutor and allowed their bodies to be minced rather than to part with their *Keshas*.

The Sikh symbols indeed have been of tremendous service to the Sikhs and their *Keshas* have preserved their identity. Their *Kirpan* has maintained their life, property and honour. The *Kara*, bangle, has taught the Sikhs the value of upright, self-controlled, stern, disciplined life. *Kaccha* under wear, has provided them with a convenient dress and the *Kangha* comb has been instrumental for keeping the hair clean and tidy. The symbols have kept constantly before their eyes the saintly figure of their saviour and preceptor, Guru Gobind Singh *Keshas* is the most important symbol of the Sikhs. It identifies them from the people of other religions. Guru Gobind Singh has in his wisdom laid down certain simple rules of conduct for the Sikhs' guidance and all Sikhs were ordained to observe the code of conduct. The *Keshas* attached the Sikhs to the personality and the ideals of Guru Gobind Singh. A love for the Guru was inculcated in the hearts of the Sikhs.

The keeping of long hair by the Sikhs has given them a good personality and martial appearance. It may be that Guru Gobind Singh in preparing his soldiers for action against the Mughals lent them an avesome appearance so that they may not be afraid of the Muslims, who were the rulers of the land then.

The Guru, in fact, wanted to raise a body of men who would not be able to deny their faith and whose external would invite persecution and produce strength and resistance. No one could be a Sikh secretly and the community relied only on the integrity of those men of steel who abided by the discipline of their Guru.

The hair also promotes group consciousness and fellow feeling, for a Sikh could be recognised from a distance or in the midst of a crowd. This symbol has also been very helpful in bringing the Sikhs together wherever they live, as it promotes solidarity and dignified behaviour. One European lady, Miss Jeanne Cuiler, has emphasized the importance of the hair. She says : "Eliminate symbols, my Sikhs and watch the Khalsa crumble.

Take off the turban, shave the beared, cut the hair or throw aside the *Kara*, I can tell you truthfully the result would be



embarrassing as well as disastrous. These five symbols have held the Sikhs in united brotherhood. They serve to make the Sikh feel and act as a Sikh. They endow them courage to accomplish feats, which other-wise would be impossible for an average man. To make a long story short, the symbols have psychological bearing on the man who wears them. They are a manifestation of the Guru eternal”.

The *Kanga* comb, stands for the quality of cleanliness and purity. Just as the hair needs cleanliness and for that purpose the comb stands for pure and clean character. Just as the vessel is cleaned by some sort of soap in the same way, the comb reminds the devotees to remain above jealousy, greed, ill-will against the fellow human—beings. The Guru says :

“Cleanse thy vessel, dry it up,  
And go for milk,  
Let then actions be pure as milk”.

The *Kara* bangle, should be of steel only. It is a sort of restraint enjoined by the Guru that one should not do wrong. Wrong things are generally done by hand and when one is about to do some misdeed, a simple look at the *Kara* reminds him of his pledge to the Guru. It also denotes that the one is a humble slave of the Guru and must not do anything which may cause displeasure to the Guru. The *Kara* also stands for power or iron will. The steel symbolises that an individual must be as strong and tough as the steel which has been tempered in the fire. It also establishes an unbreakable link with one’s brother-Sikhs.

The *Kirpan* sword is a mark of self-defence and self-respect and readiness to face any struggle or challenge. It is not to be used for aggression. It is meant for the protection of the poor and down-trodden. The Guru especially laid emphasis on the use of sword for survival against tyranny, injustice and oppression. It has always served as an insignia of dignity and sovereignty. The *Kirpan* instills confidence in one’s mind and gives him strength. It is not a mere decorative piece and should not be worn in miniature form embedded in the comb. At the time of upheavals and unwanted attacks on the Sikhs, it was used as a defensive measure. The

*Kirpan* always reminds the wearer that he was there to protect the women and the unarmed people. At the time of a sudden attack by one's foe, it should be taken out of the sheath and the foe attacked. Self-defence is a right of every Sikh granted to him by the Guru.

The *Kaccha* or underwear is very useful and conducive to activity and brisk movement. It also stands for chatity. The underwear gave the Sikhs freedom from the traditional dress during those days when the country was in turmoil. It stands for the dynamic life of a man of action.

The Sikhs should remember that Guru Gobind Singh devised these symbols after careful consideration and with the sole object of creating a band of saint soldiers, who may be strong in body, soul and mind. The Guru had in mind an idea that these symbols would hold the community together and serve as marks of inspiration and fulfilment. The symbols do not create any source of exclusiveness. They are meant to serve as aids to the corporate life of the community. Guru Gobind Singh visualised the dual aspect of the Khalsa—leonine in appearance and sharing the joys of life and at the same time committed to noble deeds.

The ideal man for Guru Gobind Singh was an ideal soldier ever engaged in battle against tyranny. It was to be the daily work of every such soldier to rise higher and higher by sheer force of character and at the sametime, to help his fellows.

The soldier has to be strong in body and become a man of amdamted will. He must overflow with energy—physical, mental and spiritual. Only in this way, he can perform his duty well and devotedly. Social service and patriotism can be given only when the saint - soldier is well endowed with these virtues.

The soldier is thus equipped with his arms and the five symbols. Only then is he ready for the battle of life. He becomes a great force for the upheavel of mankind. But it is to be made a sacrifice at the altar of humanity. Each soldier is supposed to be the member of a social group and should live as such not only for himself as for the fraternity. It is his duty to sacrifice his all to the welfare of corporate life as in this lay his own greatness and his own salvation. When every one was imbued with this spirit of sacrifice, the efforts

of each should bring richer fruits for himself and all the human beings that is possible.

The inner uniform for the soul of a soldier who has to fight the battle of life consists in the cultivation of the five virtues—purity, honesty, chatity, power and sacrifice. The outer symbols are expressive of inward virtues and serve as distinguishing marks for those who have taken a vow to serve in the order of the pure ones—the Khalsa and who have dedicated their lives to service of God and humanity.

The symbols are sacred to the Khalsa, as the army uniform to an ordinary soldier, but with this difference that the other soldiers do not wear the uniform for all the day and night as they are not always on duty, but the Khalsa is always on duty and must have these virtues ready to help him at all times this is because his battle never ends. It is a continuous process.

The symbols are not mystic; they are what they are, and no extraordinary virtue is claimed for them except their ordinary use. However, the Sikh never wears this unique uniform. The uniform serves the purpose only of reminding the devotees constantly what army they belong and what are their standing orders. In the ordinary battle that are fought by the soldiers, the sight of the national flag and the respect for the national flag and the respect for the national uniform has often given a firmness and determination to the soldiers who waver or are half-hearted ; the uniform of the Khalsa helps to remind them of their duty when they may be in danger of forgetting what they owe to the order.

It should also be noted, says Sardul Singh caveeshar, that this uniform is like the royal insignia or royal dress, proper only for a real king or a real emperor. If a clown were to wear the king's robes, it would not make him a king, rather he would be a disgrace to such a dress. Similarly those who wear the unifrom of Guru Gobind Singh's soldiers but do not posses the virtues necessary for fighting the battle of life are a disgrace to the uniform and no more than stage soldiers, worthless for any real purpose. Besides, in addition to these five symbols, the baptised are to observe four rules of conduct (*rehat*): not to cut any hair on any part of their

body ; not to smoke chew tobacco or consume alcoholic drinks ; not to eat an animal which had been slaughtered by being bled to death as was customary with the Muslims, but only Jhatka meat, where the animal was cut with one blow ; and not to molest the person of Muslim women”.<sup>1</sup>

The Guru also exhorted his Sikhs that when they are fighting Muslims, the Guru outlawed molestation of women.

“The turbulent period that followed this baptismal ceremony did not give Guru much time to explain the significance of the symbols. He made obligatory for his followers. But they are not very difficult to understand. The chief symbols was the wearing of the hair and beard unshorn. This had been customary among ascetics in India from time immemorial. There is reason to believe that all the Gurus after Nanak and many of their disciples had abstained from cutting their hair (the injunction did not surprise the Sikhs since it was really an innovation). By making it obligatory for his followers, Gobind intened to raise an army of soldier/saints who would wield arms only in a righteous cause, as would saints if they were so compelled. The other eblems were complementary to this and the profession of soldiering”.<sup>2</sup>

Now, here the question arises: did Guru Gobind Singh change the religion as conceived by Guru Nanak. Guru Gobind Singh introduced no change. It was essentially the religion of Guru Nanak that he preached. He helieved in one Supreme Creator who was formless and beyond human comprehension. He outrightly bestowed Guruship a permanent and abiding character by vesting it in the immortality of the *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* and in the continuity of Khalsa Panth. The Guru said :

**All those who call me the Lord,  
Shall fall into the pit of hell,  
Consider me as God’s servant only,  
Have no doubt about this  
I am but the slave of the Lord.  
And have came to see the specacle of the world**

{*Bachitar*}

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## CHAPTER

**Significance of the Creation of the  
Khalsa Panth**

The creation of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh had a great impact on the Indian society. He propagated the ideals set by the successive Gurus, particularly in the field of equality and brotherhood which cut at the root of caste, in other words caste and compartmentalised living. The Sikhs as a whole acquired strength and energy. This, in turn, developed a sense of solidarity and oneness among the people. The society which would otherwise have disintegrated under the crushing weight of communal strife and bickerings, caste quarrels and exploitation of the so-called low castes by the high castes, emerged as a monolithic unit, bound firmly by the fibre of equality and brotherhood.

Religious concepts and practices which obtained in those days comprised mostly rites and rituals. As confusion and chaos prevailed in the society, the division of the people encouraged loyalty to and worship of different gods and goddesses, ignoring completely the spirit of social living. Differences in conventions, customs and modes of worship made religion as such to lose its vital character. A new strength and vigour had to be infused into the religious fold. It was brought home to the people that there really existed no difference in places of worship resorted to by men of different faiths. The Guru says : “ The same god is in the temple as in the mosque, The Hindus worship Him and the Muslims pray. Human—beings are all one, Imbibe they the influences of environs they inhabit.

**Similar eyes, ears and body they have ;**

**They are all made of earth, air, fire and water alike;**

**Allah and Abekh are the same,  
Whom adore the holy Puranas and Puran;  
All are of the same form,  
And in their making,  
The Hindu God and the Muslim God Allah are the same;  
Let no man, even by mistake, suppose there is any difference.**

*{Akal Ustat}*

Guru Gobind Singh, like his predecessors perceived that there was real lack of will among the people and, therefore, he preached the philosophy of one God, the Supreme Reality.

He taught that there was no need of images or idols.

To Him, God, as the inherent source of all power and energy—omnipresent and omnipotent — is only one.

Guru Gobind Singh was convinced that Justice could be attained by the use of force only as the last resort. He felt that the people, because of their apathy, were being subjected to ruthless tyranny and oppression. Their persecution was the order of the day. Evil had to be resisted by taking up arms when other means had failed. But the Guru never believed in fanaticism. The sword was taken as an emblem of power and self-respect.

Guru Gobind Singh advocated the worship of the sword as the incarnation of all-pervading power which smites from the ideals preached by Guru Nanak and his successors. His Sikhism in essence remained the same as ordained by Guru Nanak. Guru Gobind Singh also believed like his predecessors in the Almighty who was eternal and immortal. He condemned in the strongest words the worship of idols. The institution of Guruship was given a new form. He made any five Sikhs assembled at the competent to represent the Khalsa and the Sikhs were told that whenever five Sikhs would assemble the Guru would also be among them. He said that the Guru was the Khalsa and the Khalsa was the Guru.

When Guru Gobind Singh said that the Guru was the Khalsa and Khalsa was the Guru, he was merely adding one more equation to the several the Guruship had already administered though the

change was no doubt revolutionary in some of its consequences, no revolutionary effort was required to achieve it.

Guru Gobind Singh transformed Sikhism into a democratic religion. He decided to evolve a new order with the sole objective of making the people realise the necessity of sacrificing their lives to protect *Dharma*. That the people should fight against the tyranny of the rulers and should refuse to be slaves was his message. When he transferred Guruship to the Khalsa, he declared:

**Khalsa is my true image,  
In Khalsa do I dwell,  
Khalsa is my face and limbs  
With Khalsa do I live all the time,  
Khalsa is my true faith,  
Khalsa is my honour prestige.  
True service is the service of the people,  
I am not for serving people of high castes,  
Charity bears fruit in both worlds,  
If given to worthy people,  
All other charities are futile and useless,  
From top to toe whatever I call my own,  
Whatever I possess I dedicate to the people.**

{*Akal Ustat*}

Guru Gobind Singh gave added brilliance to Sikhism. But instead of handing it over to an individual Guru, this time, he made it over to the entire Guru of the Khalsa, He said :

**As long as the Khalsa remains distinct  
They have my blessings;  
The moment they adopt the Brahminical ways,  
I will not care for them  
The Guru had great faith in the people. He explained :  
All the battles I have won against tyranny,  
I have fought with the devoted backing of these people.  
Through their help I have escaped harm,**



### The love and generosity of the Sikhs

**Have enriched my heart and home  
 Through their grace I have attained all learning;  
 Through their help in battle, I have slain my enemies.  
 Through them I reached  
 I have been nothing without their ready help ?  
 There are millions of insignificant people like me  
 True service is the service of these people;  
 I am not inclined to serve others of high castes  
 charity will bear fruit in this and the next world,  
 If given to such worthy people as these,  
 All other sacrifices and charity are profitless,  
 From head to foot, whatever I call my own  
 All I possess or carry, dedicated to these people.**

{*Dasam Granth*}

It was the Guru's true democratic spirit which sustained him through all his trials and tribulations. He gave to the world democratic traditions and nationalistic fervour three hundred years ago when the democratic concept was wholly unknown to mankind.

There are numerous instances when Guru Gobind Singh bowed before the will of the people. When he was fighting against heavy odds with the Mughal army in the fortress of Chamkaur Sahib the Guru had lost many of his loyal soldiers along with his two sons. When the battle stopped for the night and most of the soldiers had left for their tents, the Guru pondered over the whole situation. It was a very critical juncture in the annals of the Khalsa. Seeing the Guru in deep thought, the Sikhs begged of him with folded hands that they had come to the conclusion that the Guru should leave the fortress immediately to save his life. They passed the *Gurumatta*, The Guru was told that at the time of the Khalsa's creation, that it was the Guru himself who had resolved a order for him Now, the Guru had to accede to the Khalsa and decided to leave the fortress at midnight.

At Nanded, when the Guru saw his end approaching, he made

his intention of departing from this world, known to the Sikhs. The Sikhs desired to know who would be their future Guru. They had benefited from the spiritual guidance provided by irten gurus for many years, but now onwards who would pilot their ship of destiny. The Sikhs told the Guru that when he was present amongst them, they got inspiration from him to fight against the tyranny and injustice. Who would be their future Guru now? The Guru said that the Will of God could never be resisted. He who was born must die one day. It was immortal God who alone did not perish. All other living beings, however great and exalted, must depart one day from this world. Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva perished when their time came. His Will should abide and nobody should mourn. The Sikhs enquired about their future Guru. The Guru placed five paisa before *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, bowed before it and said :

**The Enternal father willed and I raised the panth  
All my Sikhs are hereby ordained to believing in the  
Granth as their preceptor.  
Have faith in the holy Granth  
as your master and consider it  
the visible manifestation of the Gurus,**

He who hath a pure heart will seek guidance from its holy words. This was the most marvellous act of Guru Gobind Singh while conferring of the supreme authority on the people, the Khalsa.

Guru Gobind Singh stood for the whole humanity. He lived and worked for the upliftment of the down-rodenn irrespective of their caste or religion, sect or race. He stood for secularism and never performed a single act which was communal or parochial in character. He used the words "Hindustan" and "Hindustanis" in his writings. He fought battles, risking his life, sacrificing his father, his sons and, in fact, his all for the nation. He was the beau-ideal of all those inhabiting the sub-continent. He stood for national unity and emotional integration of the Indian people. The democratic institutions created by him three centuries ago, are the shining lighthouses, showing new paths to the human race having faith in democratic ideals. The Guru created the Khalsa, transferring sovereignty to the poor and needy of the country, so that they might remember in the days to come there was in history, a Guru by the name of Gobind Singh.

Guru Gobind Singh was a staunch nationalist. Today, those who talk of nationalism should learn a lesson from the teachings of the Sikh Gurus. Nationalistic spirit imbued with human empathy was the chief contribution of Guru Gobind Singh. In his poetry, this line of thought could be witnessed throughout. His aim was to arouse nationalist feeling and human dignity in the masses of India.

After the death of King Harsha, no leader of any stature was left in India who could infuse the nationalistic spirit among the people in order to enable them to face the onslaught of foreigners. Many small principalities fought among themselves over small matters but lacked the strong will and determination to face the foreign aggressors. No individual had any traits of chivalry which was in the basic character of Rajputs. They just sang songs about the heroic deeds of their Masters, eulogizing their character and achievements. They could not inspire the people for any collective and co-ordinated effort. There were powerful people in deed but there was no national spirit and there was nobody to provide them with inspiring leadership.

With the advent of Muslim rule in India, there developed some sort of mutual brotherhood among the people. Even the foreign rulers like Akbar tried to build up a homogeneous society. Sufis and Saints paved the way for the cultural unity and communal homogeneity of India. It was at this time that Guru Nanak came to this world to preach the message of good will and harmony. Punjab was at the mercy of the Muslim invaders. Guru Nanak brought closer the warring group of Hindus. The Guru aroused the national spirit and dignity amongst the people. He outrightly condemned the inhuman treatment meted out to the Indians at the hands of the invading armies. He laid stress upon maintaining the national character. He urged the people to adopt their mother tongue and to avoid the ways of life of the ruling class. The other Gurus too endeavoured their best to contribute towards establishing a society in which the spirit of nationality should reign supreme. However, the martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dav and Guru Tegh Bahadur brought the goal nearer and accelerated the pace of national struggle and self-defence.

Guru Gobind Singh had a deep look at the past events and religious conditions prevailing in the country and came to the conclusion that a revolution seemed to be the only solution. To him armed revolution seemed to be the only way along with saintliness. He made the wearing of the sword obligatory and started army training camps to train the timid people to use the arms in case of any eventuality. He not only himself composed heroic poetry but directed his court poets to do the same. These poetic compositions inspired the poor and the down-trodden and they turned into a national force which dealt a severe blow to the Mughal imperialism and created a history of sorts by weakening the Mughal empire. The Guru elicited their co-operation and enabled the sparrows fight the hawks.

The Guru laid great stress upon the cultural affinity, social unity and spiritual homogeneity which form the basics of nationality. He condemned the prevailing social order which encouraged mutual hatred. He found that false vanity and hypocrisy amongst the people was a great hinderance in the path of national renaissance of India. Such people misled the common folk and exploited them. The upper classes were pitted against the interests of the country and nationalistic spirit of the people.

The Guru's writings in the *Dasam Granth* stirred the readers' feelings against the aggression. By founding the Khalsa he created a force for the defence of the contry and protection of the weak and down-trodden. He preached the concept of All-steel. With the creation of Khalsa, the long spell of ruthless persecution and inhuman treatment came to an end. The people became undaunted and cared for the dignity of the man and national honour of the country.

The spirit of sacrifice could be found throughout the Guru's poetic compositions. In these compositions, the Guru only eulogized such persons who were imbued with this spirit against oppression and suppression. The poetry has proved a forceful factor of self-renunciation and continuous struggle.

The Guru' urged the people to forge cultural unity and to take pride in the cultural heritage of the country. The Guru succeeded to a great extent in rejuvenating the nationalist spirit of the common

man. Many people gathered under the banner of the Guru and dealt a severe blow to foreign aggression, social oppression and tyranny.

The country gave birth to this great hero whose revered name is Guru Gobind Singh and who was supreme, unique and unsurpassed in heroic deeds. Not just that. He himself excelled in acts of chivalry which led the country to the path of cultural unity and emotional integration of the people. He succeeded in uprooting forces antagonistic to cultural and national unity and created the invincible Khalsa and brought the people, belonging to any caste, creed or colours closer to one another. He made the country strong enough to lead a life of glory and pride. The Khalsa was able to raze to the ground the great castle of the Mughal rule. But to achieve his purpose, the Guru had to make a great sacrifice at the altar of national homogeneity and cultural unity and infuse the flame of patriotic spirit.

The Guru “ had realised that the Hindus as a race were too mild by nature, too contented in their desires, too modest in their aspirations, too averse to physical exertion and hopelessly scrupulous in not giving pain to others, even to their thier enemies. He also realised that they were a religious people, and terror stricken and demoralised as they had become, they were still strongly attached to religion and had shown great readiness to suffer for their faith. There could be only one way of moving such a race. They had religion but no national feeling. The only way to make a nation out of them was to make nationalism their religion. And Guru Govind Singh did make nationalism a religion with them and all that was calculated to foster a national sentiment was incorporated as articles of faith in his new creed”.<sup>1</sup>

Ideology of the Khalsa aimed at a balanced combination of Shakti and Bhakti. It was a brotherhood in faith and brotherhood in arms. The sword became the object of worship with the Sikhs which it remains till today. It symbolises power and safety.

A new awareness of social egalitarianism had a miraculous effect on the people. A tremendous change was effected in the whole tone and tenor of nation’s character. Even those people who had been considered as dregs of humanity were changed, as if by

magic, into something rich and strong. The sweepers, barbers and confectioners who had never much as touched the sword and whose whole generation had lived as grovelling slaves of the so-called higher castes, became, under the stimulating leadership of Guru Gobind Singh, doughty warriors who never shrank from fear and who were ready to rush into the jaws of death at the bidding of their Guru".<sup>2</sup>

The dry bones of an oppressed peasantry were also stirred into life and the institution of Sikh baptism at the hands of a few disciples anywhere in a place of worship, in a house or by the road—side brought about the more full and widespread development of the new faith".<sup>3</sup>

The greatness of the world is false and fleeting to a few. After reviewing the history of his times in India and the west, I arrive at the conclusion that Guru Gobind Singh was the world's greatest man in the seventeenth century.

Sadhu T.L.Vasvani says: "He was a practical mystic. He became a saviour of India by breaing the force of the Mughal Imperialism and building up the Khalsa. Looking back through the vista of these three centuries, can you picture to yourself the Guru and the India of his days? India disunited; India oppressed, Akbar's dream murdered by his successors; and Guru Gobind Singh the very picture of sadness. Iron had entered in his soul. But he weaves it into a great vision, the vision of free Khalsa, the word Khalsa means the pure and the pure in heart become the servants of God and the prophets of freedom when the Khalsa soul is purified, new martyrs will arise until the destiny of the Khalsa is fulfilled".

"The Khalsa was meant by the Guru to be a symbol of pure democracy. Members of the Khalsa dined together and worshipped together. The one great view taken by every member of the Khalsa was 'Service'.

Blessed is the Gobind. To him came the call :

Arise : He responds to the call : "The servant standeth, a sacrifice to thee, O Lord" Gobind descends from the mountain height to the plain below. Govind arises to the saviour of Hindustan : Govind became a perfect sacrifice to the Sat Sri Akal, The True one, the

Deathless one : Govind fulfils the destiny of his life, “cleverness and tricks do not make history : It is the men who build history. Guru Gobind Singh is great for his absolute self-surrender to God and his wonderful sacrifice. Guru Govind Singh was a perfect sacrifice”.

“Look around you, nation jealous of nation, armies and fleets arrayed one another survey the communities : see how one quarrels with another, I see the strifes of the ambitions. Behold oppression, pain-suffering, the tears and the tragedy of the poor and weak. Then behold the tear washed face of Guru Gobind Singh. Arrayed against him is the Imperial might of the Mughals”.

Paying his tributes to the land of the Punjab, the land of Nanak and Gobind Singh, Swami Vivekananda said : “This is the land which is held to be the highest esteem even in the holy Aryavarta. This is the Brahamavarta of which our great sage, Manu speaks. This is the land from whence times arose as history shows is to deluge the world. This is the land where, like its mighty rivers, spiritual aspirations have arisen and joined their strength till they travelled over the length and breadth of the world, and declared themselves with a voice of thunder. This is the land that after all its sufferings has not yet entirely lost its glory and its strength”.

“Now be awake : let new India arise from your hearts. Let India arise out of the peasants’ cottage grasping the plough, out of the hunts of the fisherman, cobblers and the sweepers. Let her spring from grocer’s shop, from beside the oven of the fruit-seller. Let her emerge from the factory. From marts and from markets. Let her emerge from the grounds, groves and forests, from hills and mountains. Open those treasure chests of your’s and those jewelled rings among your contrymen. No sooner, you open their treasure chests you will hear the inaugural shouts of renaissance—India ringing with the voice of a million thunders and reverberating throughout the universe—Wahe Guru Ji Fateh Ki, Wahe Guru Ji Ka Khalsa Victory to the Guru.

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## CHAPTER

**Rituals and the Khalsa**

In almost all religions of the world, some type of rites, rituals, sacraments and ceremonies are performed through which God, gods and goddesses are worshipped to seek their blessings. Worship is done everywhere by people whether sitting in homes, shops, places of business or temples. These are the rites which people perform to please the Divine Power to get peace and happiness in this world or to seek salvation in the next. These rites form the organised mode of worship.

Ritualism in religion has come to us through the ages. Rites and ceremonies are valuable to the extent they remind the people of their relation with God. One ritual can be as good as another provided the object worshipped is Divine Reality and the relation between the object and the symbol is crystal clear.

In ancient times the priestly class encouraged ritualism and went to the extent of instilling fear among people, saying that if such and such ceremony was not performed it would bring the wrath of God. On account of this the hold of priests over the people increased tremendously. In the primitive society, priests were known as magicians and were said to have possessed certain miraculous powers. They combined purification with sacrifice. People were asked to make sacrifices to escape the curse of God, gods and goddesses. The magic performed by priests is said to have brought fortune to people. It could bring rain for good crops, ward off natural calamities and even help defeat the enemy. Thus the primitive man's religion was based on occult powers and magic and rituals were part of it.

Then came the Vedic age. New gods and goddesses came



into existence which were worshipped by the people in order to seek salvation. These gods were Indra, Sūrya, Agni, and Usha. They were invoked to bestow gifts such as property, long life and happiness. Hymns were chanted to please them to seek their blessings. Although peoples' attitude towards worship changed, the custom of making sacrifices continued unabatedly. Prayers too were like magic tricks which impelled the deity to do as the devotee desired. Hymns recited on the occasion of sacrifices were preserved as charms and were supposed to bring victory in war, prosperity and happiness in life.

Then developed another class of brahmins. In the early Aryan society, they became the most dominant and influential class. Kings and rajas sought the blessings of brahmins in the performance of various functions of the State. *Havans* and *yagnas* were performed with the help of brahmins to seek blessings of God.

The brahmins were supposed to be learned people. They were required to perform religious services ; they also imparted education to the people. They were respected for their piety and simplicity. But with the passage of time people started offering them costly gifts. Rajas specially loaded them with wealth and treasures. They became the privileged class and began to exploit the innocent and ignorant people engrossed in superstitions. They led luxurious lives in the name of religion and service to the people. They became corrupt with money and the prestige they commanded. They preached performance of rituals for the emancipation of the soul and brahmins became an institution and occupied the high place in religion. Worship was turned into the mechanical performance of rituals.

They exploited the Hindu society so much and organised the religious aspect of social system to such an extent that from birth to death the services of brahmins became indispensable. Ceremony at the time of a child's birth, *mundan* ceremony, wearing of holy thread and other ceremonies concerning marriages had to be performed and at the time of death the brahmin was required to perform one or the other ritual.

With the advent of Islam in India, there was intermingling of

cultures. Two streams of culture began to develop parallel to each other. Islam could not be absorbed in the mainstream of Hinduism. The brahmin found his counterpart in the *mulla*, who was also considered a noble and privileged person. He was patronised by the rulers. The *mullas* too accumulated wealth and riches and were exploiting the rich by creating fear in them about the day of destiny, when everybody would have to give an account of his deeds. This fear lurked in the minds of the people and they followed the dictates of the *mullas* without questioning.

Before the birth of Guru Nanak, besides the brahmins and the *mullas*, several hundred *yogis*, *fakirs* and *sidhs* wandered from place to place wearing typical garbs denoting symbols of austerity. They roamed from one end of the country to another, carrying with them their staffs, rosaries and their pipes of hemp; they smeared their bodies with ashes and painted their heads with frontal marks. They preached asceticism and mortification of the flesh which were supposed to endow the practitioners with miraculous powers.

With the passage of time, there came in them moral degradation and their values became decayed. They started indulging in immoral practices. In a way, they looted the people and extracted money from them. The innocent people worshipped them like gods for fear of their curse. If any person did not serve them well they gave him *sarap* (curse) and those who entertained them in a royal manner were given *vars* (blessings). They had considerable hold on the people and dominated the religious life of the people.

When Guru Nanak was born, people were ignorant, backward and deeply steeped in superstition. Huge sums were spent on futile ceremony though they were barely making both ends meet. It was a life of blind conventionalism which led to hypocrisy and mammon worship. The spirit of both Islam and Hinduism found expression in a number of meaningless formalities, and extraneous observances. Formalities reigned supreme. Alchemy and thaumaturgy were freely professed and incantations and spells practised.

In short, people in the country were hopelessly divided. Sunk

low in the depths of ignorance and superstition they had become spiritual slaves. The caste system had become rigid under the influence of the brahminic revival. It was considered a horrible sin for a *sudra* to hear Vedic hymns and this could be punished by pouring molten lead into his ears. Nature had forever settled a person into the caste in which he was born, and he was bound to it for life without any regard to his poverty or riches, talents, character or skill. Human dignity and feelings were bound up in separate castes.

Bhai Gurdas tells us that there was quite a confusion when the castes and as many as four *ashrams* got mingled. There were *sanyasis* offering different demonstrations and *yogis* set up their twelve maths. People were extremely divided and were sunk low in superstition in *kalyuga*.

The Hindus had four castes and the Muslims were divided into four sects. With jealousy, arrogance and vanity, they fought each other without any reason. The Muslims regarded Mecca and Kaaba as sacred while Hindus worshipped the Ganges and Benaras. Islam was reduced simply to circumcision whereas Hindus only wore sacrificial thread and frontal marks. Ram and Rahim denoted only one God but their followers traversed different paths in ignorance, People had altogether forgotten the teachings of their holy books—the *Quran* and the *Vedas*. The world was lost in avarice. Truth had vanished and *mullas* and brahmins were struggling against each other.

The Hindu were totally indifferent to the miseries and troubles of the contemporary world. Brahmins were considered superior to others and were the only ones having sanction to read *Vedas* and other holy scriptures. The masses were denied this opportunity. So they remained generally ignorant and were sunk in the quagmire of superstition. The priests had reduced religion to a mockery. Its spirit was dead and instead there had sprung up a religioin of formal ceremonies and rituals. The priests, the hereditary guardians of Hinduism, could not unite all Hindus.

They shut themselves up in the impregnable four castes. The privileged ones were taken in and the rest were left to fight their own battle in their own way.

Idol worship was the most common feature of religion. People having committed several sins in their daily life went every year on pilgrimage. They thought that all their crimes, corruption and other evils could be washed away by a dip in the holy Ganges. Thefts were common and so was adultery. But the sacred thread worn round the body put on them the hallmark of high character.

The Hindu caste system had lost its originality and elasticity, and had become rigid giving rise to evils and miseries. The so-called high class priests neglected teaching of spiritual realities to the people who were sunk in superstition and materialism. Religion was confused with caste distinctions.

In the words of Shri Gokal Chand Narang: "The popular religion about the time of Nanak's birth was confined to peculiar forms of eating and drinking, peculiar ways of bathing and painting the forehead and other such mechanical observances. The worship of idols, wherever they were permitted to exist, pilgrimages to the Ganges and other sacred places, whenever they were allowed, the observance of certain ceremonies like the martial and funeral rites, the obedience to the mandates of the brahmans and lavishing charitable gifts upon them constituted almost the whole of Hinduism as it was then current among the masses".<sup>1</sup>

Thousands of gods and goddesses came into existence and their following increased tremendously. A sort of rivalry was created among them and a competition developed as to who was the superior among gods.

As far as the common mass of Muslims were concerned, they were no better than the Hindus. They were ignorant of their religion and teachings of Islam were unknown to them. *Mullas* and *qazis* who professed the knowledge of the tenets of Islam were in reality ignorant of *Shariat*. They were fast degenerating.

The ideal to worship one God was preached by Prophet Mohammad but in actual practice most of the Muslims worshipped *pirs*, *fakirs* and graves.

The teachings of holy *Quran* were altogether forgotten. They were promised beautiful nymphs in heaven and thousands of slaves, and fully furnished houses with all the luxuries of life. Such liberal

promises of future happiness were enough to attract them to follow the teachings of *pirs* and *fakirs*. People had thus lost their moorings. Moral standards were completely forsaken and religion had lost its sanctity.

Guru Nanak found himself in a precarious situation when he started preaching the Name of God. He strongly condemned ritualism and idolatry as also the priestly class. He told people to discard age-old ceremonies having no relevance to reality. He was opposed to superstitious type of worship of God. It was not the way a person worshipped the Almighty that was important but the sincerity of purpose was lacking. Even at a very early stage in his life, when Guru Nanak was asked to wear the sacred thread by the priest, he told him :

**Out of the cotton of mercy spin the thread of contentment,  
The Knots of continence,  
Give it a twist of righteousness.  
O, priest, put around me such a thread  
If thou hast it,  
It will not break once worn,  
Nor burnt, lost or get soiled.  
Blest is the man, O Nanak, who weareth such a thread.**

*{Asa-di-Var}*

Guru Nanak laid emphasis on ethical living and spiritual experience. He tried his best to wean the people away from all the impediments and formalities which stood in the way of purity of true religion. Ethic was regarded as the basis of all religious beliefs. He told people that spiritual awareness could not be attained without noble actions, without selfless service and without piety and truthful living.

To keep the purity of religion Guru Nanak had to wage war against the forces of conservatism, orthodoxy, ignorance and superstition. He attacked the citadel of brahmins, *mullas* and *yogis* and fought against the cults of the priestly class. He tore apart the veil of falsehood and brought people face to face with truth and reality. He exposed the futility of useless and meaningless ceremonies

and rituals as also claims made by the brahmins for the salvation of human beings. His task consisted of weaning people away from the worship of idols and images and leading them to worship only one God who was the Creator and the Destroyer. He fought against hypocrisy, superstition, forms and ceremonies and showed people the true path of worship for their emancipation. The Guru told the brahmins :

**O Brahmin, make God the image of Thy worship  
And right living the neeklace of tulsi, sit in the boat of God's  
Name and pray  
O merciful Lord, be merciful to me  
Why thou waterest the barren land and wastest thy life.  
The mud wall thou buildest shall fall  
Then why thou plaster it  
Fill the mind with noble thoughts  
Make the raft of the sacred Name,  
Become beautiful and cross the ocean of life  
Make thy body like a Persian wheel  
Let thy mind be the bullock, yoked to run the wheels  
Then irrigate thy mind with nectar  
Let passion and wrath be thy weeder and  
With them clear the farm of weeds.  
The deeper thou digest, thou shall be happy  
And thy labour shall bear fruit  
O God, if thou art merciful,  
One becometh swan from a heron  
Thus prayeth Nanak, the humble slave  
O God, be Thou merciful to me.**

*{Rag Bassant}*

Guru Nanak also explained the essential of a true Muslim. He said:

**It is far too easy to call oneself a Muslim  
But far too difficult to become one**

**He who believes firmly in his faith  
 Has a right to be called a Muslim  
 His deeds must accord with his faith in prophet.  
 He must scrub himself clean of pride and vanity  
 He must not have any fear of life and death  
 Resigned to the Will of God  
 Believing the Creator as Supreme  
 He must quell thoughts of self  
 And be compassionate to all living beings.  
 He alone is worthy to call himself a true Muslim.**

{*Var Majh*}

To the *sanyasis* and *bairagis*, Guru Nanak had the following advice to give :

**Ye colour thy clothes to adopt the garb of the order  
 And ye seem to wear a surplice of worn out  
 clothes and a good sound bag to receive ablution  
 Ye go begging from door to door, without being humble  
 And ye assume the role of teachers of the world.  
 Thus, ye O blind fellows, lose all honour and respect  
 Lost in absurd superstition, ye comprehend not the word  
 And thereby gamble away the souls for a mere trifle  
 Women ye have abandoned, and subdued by passion.  
 Ye attach thyself with others' wives,  
 Mind ye, O people, blessed is he who dwelleth at  
 the feet of the Lord, be he the householder or a sanyasi.**

{*Rag Maru*}

To the *yogis*, Guru Nanak said :

**Yoga is neither in a patched coat,  
 nor in the yogi's staff, nor in ashes  
 Smeared on the body, nor in the ear rings,  
 nor in shaven head, nor in blowing of the horns.**

**Abide in the pure amidst the impurities of life  
and yet remaineth spotless.  
Thus thou shalt find the way of true yoga.  
Yoga cometh not by tall talk,  
for he alone is a true yogi who looked all men as equal  
Yoga consisteth not in wandering in cremation ground or  
sitting in contemplation  
Yoga consisteth not in roaming about  
nor in bathing at places in the midst of attachment,  
Then, verily one attaineth the true state of yoga.**

*{Rag Suhi}*

About going on pilgrimages and washing sins in the holy rivers,  
Guru Nanak said :

**The more places of pilgrimage one visits  
The more one puts on garbs  
the more one suffers.  
Suffer thou, these are thy own deeds.  
By fasts one loses the taste of tongue.  
By not putting clothes one groans day and night.**

*{Asa-di-Var}*

Guru Nanak vehemently condemned idol worship. To him it  
was a futile attempt to attain salvation. He said :

**One worshipeth gods and goddesses  
But what can one get out of them ?  
One washeth the stone gods with water  
They sink themselves ; how can they  
ferry one across.**

*{Sorath}*

Instead of worshipping stones and images, Guru Nanak asked  
them to remember His Name only. He said :

**I shall never fall a prey to doubt  
And shall never worship anyone else but God**



I shall not go to graves or cremation grounds  
 I shall not visit others' houses influenced by desire  
 My thirst has been quenched by the Name.

{*Sorath*}

*Mantras* and incantations have no place in Sikhism. Guru Nanak decried them outright:

I have no faith in *tantras* and *mantras*  
 My mind is only absorbed in the Lord  
 Who resides in my heart.

{*Suhi MI*}

*Havans* and *yagnas* do not find any place in Sikhism. Guru Arjan said : "Havans, yagnas, pilgrimages to holy places are performed but they all lead to ego and other vices".

{*Gauri MV*}

All the sacraments were rejected in Sikhism. Guru Amar Das said :

So many ceremonies are performed,  
 But without the Name of the Lord  
 They are but woe and egoism  
 One is entangled in Maya's fetters  
 He can secure release only, through the  
 light of the Guru, sayeth Nanak.

{*GauriMIII*}

Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Master, too condemned idol worship. He said :

Some worship stones and put them on their heads,  
 Some suspend lingams from their neck ;  
 Some see God in the south,  
 Some bow their heads to the west,  
 Some ignorant people the dead,

**The whole world is engrossed in futile ceremonies  
Hath not found the secret of the Lord.**

*{Akal Ustat}*

The Guru repeated the same ideal while addressing idol worshippers. He said :

**O great beast that doth not recogniseth Him  
Whose glory filleth all the worlds.  
Thou worshipeth things the touch of which  
shall make you lose heaven  
Instead of worshipping the Supreme Lord  
By intending to perform good deeds  
Thou committest so immoral acts  
Which ashamed the greatest sins,  
Fall at the feet of the Lord, O fool,  
Who is not in a stone.**

*{Akal Ustat}*

Guru Gobind Singh said again :

**Some believe in the images of Vishnu,  
Others call Shiva their Lord.  
Some consider His abode in the temple  
Others believe He lives in a mosque,  
Some call him Rama, some Krishna,  
Some accept the incarnations as God.  
Abandoning all these ways, I only  
believe in the Creator who hath created all of them.**

*{Sawayyas (12)}*

**Why dost thou worship stones,  
A stone cannot contain the Lord.  
Worship Him only as thy Lord,  
All ailments, physical and mental,  
Shall be cured when thou remembereth Him.**

**Meditation on Him only is acceptable ;  
these futile deeds are meaningless.**

Guru Gobind Singh has further elucidated this point. He said :

**The wicked hill chiefs and their henchmen  
conspire my life to finish everyday,  
For I worship only the Lord and  
break the stone gods whom they worship.**

{Zafarnama (95)}

Thus, in the Sikh religion, there is no place for rituals and rites. Guru Nanak exhorted the people to bring about simplicity in religion. Sikhism does not believe in *vars* (blessings) or *saraps* (curses). When Guru Nanak visited Jagannath Puri, he did not perform the *arti* because earthen lamps were lighted in *thalis* and incense and flowers were offered. The Guru sang a hymn and gave a new form of *arti*. He said :

**The entire sky is the salver,  
The moon and sun are the lamps.  
The luminous stars are studded in it like jewels,  
The winds waft the scent of the sandalwood on the mountain  
Thus is His worship performed.**

{Rag Dhanasri}

Such form of worship was advocated by Guru Nanak. In Sikhism there is no place for symbols, rituals and pilgrimages to holy places. Guru Nanak diverted people's attention from the formal and outer side of religion and laid emphasis on the inner life through ethical living.

In short, Guru Nanak and his successors laid great stress on the essential inwardness of true religion. For the Sikh Gurus, rituals were meaningless. What mattered was the purity of mind and sincerity of purpose, and worship which lacked such qualities was only mechanical in nature and thus futile. The Guru said :

**Burnt be those rituals and formalities  
That make me forget my Beloved Lord.**

Guru Nanak's faith can be summarised in his hymn:

**As the lotus remaineth detached in water  
or as the duck in the stream,  
So doth one cross the ocean of life by  
meditating and ensuring the Lord in his heart.**

*{Sidh Gosht}*

Again Guru Nanak said :

**What all these rituals are worth?  
If the heart is not pure.**

Only simple ceremonies are performed by Sikhs on different occasions. All these ceremonies are of common nature. They remind us of the truth and reality and the relation of man with God. They are means to an end which is union of soul with the Lord. On all occasions, happy or otherwise, hymns from *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* are recited and prayer is offered to the Akalpurkh. *Shabad* is of greater importance than rituals and is recited to remember God.

## **References**

1. Gokul Chand Narang, *Transformation of Sikhism*, p.20 .

## CHAPTER

**The Khalsa Way of Life**

At the time of Guru Nanak Indian society was divided into several castes sects which were like watertight compartments. Birth determined the status of an individual ; his deeds of merits did not count for anything. The concept of equality was inconceivable for the same reason. The spirit of oneness was almost non-existent.

In Sikhism, there is no place for divisions based on caste. No Sikh is expected to consider himself superior to anybody else for no man is born high or low, All are equal. A Sikh should be humble and modest and should have a desire to serve mankind.

Guru Nanak does not divide men on the basis of their creeds. For him men are of two kinds : *Gurmukhs* and *Manmukhs*. The former look to God and practise truth and work for the welfare of the entire mankind. The latter follow deceit, falsehood and selfishness. Whatever a man may call himself he has to tread the same path if he wants to attain liberation from pain and misery and from mundane life. Everybody has to follow the same code of conduct.

Thus complete equality among all men is a fundamental of Sikhism. Guru Nanak said that the laws of nature were the same for all. All castes and creeds were treated equally in the next world. In the house of the Lord nobody was superior or inferior in any way. Guru Nanak said:

**What merit is of caste**

**He who tastes poison will surely die.**

{*Var Majh*}

Guru Amar Das strongly condemned the practice of Sati and not only advocated remarriage of widows but also exhorted his followers to prevent women from performing *sati*.

Infanticide was also prevalent. Female babies were killed at birth. Guru Gobind Singh forbade this evil practice and asked his followers to shun the company of those who indulged in it.

The Sikh Gurus upheld the right of all men to equality, and stood up against untouchability. People of all castes, both high and low, were asked to assemble and partake food from the common kitchen. All men were taught to lead a life of virtue and truth, regardless of the circumstances of birth or pedigree.

An individual must be alert mentally and spiritually in an ideal society and should be physically fit. In the ideal Sikh society, a Sikh should be a true Sikh in all respects and should possess certain qualities. Guru Ram Das said :

**He who calls himself the disciple of the Guru ; the true Guru  
Shall rise in the early hours of the morning  
And meditate on Nam.  
Shall take bath to cleanse his mind in the 'nectar pool'  
And shall labour during the day  
He shall hear the words of the Guru  
And repeat the Name  
For then will his sins be forgiven and  
His sorrow and suffering cease.  
With the advance of the day, he shall sing the  
hymns of the Guru and keep God in his mind in all that he does  
He who repeats the Name with every breath  
And with every morsel that he eats  
He is the true Sikh, him the Guru loves.  
He to whom the Lord is gracious  
Listens to the teachings of the Guru and he becomes his disciple.  
Nanak, your humble servant begs for the dust of the feet of the  
Sikhs who worship and lead others to the path of worship.**

*{ Var Gauri }*

A of Guru Gobind Singh with Bhai Nand Lal is of utmost importance. It gives a gist of the duties a true Sikh should perform:

**O friend, hear me, this is the way of life for a disciple of the Guru.**

**Rise in the early hours of the morning, take bath,**

**recite Japji and Jap Sahib, and meditate on the**

**Name of the God in the evening, join the sangat and hear the recitation of Rehras, the praises of**

**God, and the edifying sermons. Those who follow such a routine, always endure.**

**Nand Lal, listen carefully to what I say. In**

**these categories I subsist : the category of the**

**Attributes, the category of the Word of the Guru**

**with love in their hearts and faith in their**

**minds. This, the Form of the Guru, the men should**

**behold, day in and day out. Men should serve**

**each other, without pride and selfishness.**

**Those who serve humanity, their service**

**do I acknowledge as the service to My person.**

**Listen, O Nand Lal, thus humanity shall be**

**freed and attain everlasting bliss.**

The code defines a Sikh as one who believes in the word of the Gurus, baptism prescribed by the tenth Guru and the *Adi Granth* and does not believe in any other religious tradition. A Sikh should live according to the teachings of the Gurus and should have belief in one God.

He should not believe in the existence of gods and goddesses and should regard only the ten Masters and their teachings as the path to salvation. He should have no faith in castes. Nor should he practise them. He should not believe in untouchability and miracles and should reject all superstitions and accept the unity of God as the Supreme Reality.

The Khalsa should seek the blessings of the Supreme Lord in all the deeds he performs. The supplication, which requires him to

pray for the welfare of all, is meant to remind him that he should desist from deeds inconsistent with this prayer. The daily prayer of the Khalsa is meant to reinforce his will and put a healthy moral effect on his activities and fight his foe in the battle, or, even as himself gets subdued, does not lose heart, shall be exalted both in this and the next world. Whatever wealth a Sikh brings home should be the result of his honest earning ; out of this he should dedicate one-tenth to the cause dear to the Guru. He should regard the mouth of the poor as the receptacle of the Guru, believing that whatever is put there reaches the Guru. A Sikh is distinct from both Hindus and Muslims. He is not to believe in Hindu temples or their idols, their sacred places, their gods and goddesses, their modes of worship, their *mantras* or their fasts. Nor should he have any faith in fasting or the graves of the Muslim saints. A Sikh should regard the wife, sister or daughter of another person as his own mother, sister and daughter. He should not indulge in gambling or stealing and should avoid taking tobacco and intoxicants.

The Sikhs can freely inter-marry but must not have any social or matrimonial relations with smokers, with persons who kill their daughters, with the descendants or followers of Prithi Chand, Dhir Mal and Ram Rai—*masands* who had gone astray from the principles of Guru Nanak.

The salutation among the Sikhs shall be “Wahe Guru ji ka Khalsa, Sri Wahe Guru ji ki fateh” (Lord’s is the Khalsa, Lord’s is the Victory).

Smoking, cutting of hair, eating the flesh of animals killed in the semitic Muslim manner and sexual intercourse with any but one’s wedded wife are the cardinal breaches of the Sikh faith. Anyone guilty of any of these must show repentance, pay a fine, promise not to offend any more and be re-baptized; otherwise he or she stands excommunicated from the Khalsa.

### **Attributes of the Khalsa**

Though born of and brother to the Hindus, the Khalsa is a distinct community, entirely different from the former in outward form, conception of God and Gurus, language and script of the



scriptures, religious rites, mode of worship, social customs and in its attitude towards caste and creed.

The Khalsa symbolises the oneness of God, all humanity and the abolition of caste barriers.

The Khalsa is a fragrant flower of which the seed was sown by Guru Nanak and nourished by his successors with their very spirit and blood.

The Khalsa is the ideal of humanity, the marvellous creation, the greatest contribution and the crowning glory of Great Guru Gobind Singh.

Thus, natural in form, modern in mind, progressive in views, optimistic in outlook, believer in the oneness of God and of all humanity, embodiment of service and sacrifice, imbued with religious humility and martial spirit and with traditions of unparalleled glory, the Khalsa occupies a proud position in the comity of nations:

**He is the Khalsa**  
**who speaks evil to none**  
**who gives in charity**  
**who subdues his passions**  
**who does not yield to superstitions**  
**who is awake day and night**  
**who delights in the sayings of the Gurus.**  
**and does not fear at all**  
**Does not offend anybody**  
**Otherwise the Lord will himself be offended.**

**He is the Khalsa**  
**who protects the poor.**  
**Who combats evil**  
**Who remembers God.**  
**Who achieves greatness.**

## **Rites and Ceremonies**

Although rituals as such are not performed by the Sikhs, certain

rites and simple ceremonies are usually performed by them on certain occasions.

When a child is born in a Sikh family, it is an occasion for great rejoicing. Some relation or friend of the family recites the invocation to the Almighty which is given as Preamble to *Japji*. He then takes a drop of honey or water mixed with sugar on the tip of the *kirpan* and touches with it the tongue of the child. A prayer to such God's blessing is offered.

At the time of marriage the priest tells them about the new phase of life they are going to enter and their respective duties and responsibilities. Marriage is a companionship for spiritual advancement and not for physical enjoyment. Thereafter, the scarf of the bridegroom is placed in the hands of the bride by her father and both are asked to stand. Then the four *lavans* are read out one by one from *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*. With each *lavan* both the bridegroom and the bridegroom stand. The first *lavan* emphasises discipline and the second the growth of love and enthusiasm. The third lays stress on restraint and the fourth and last mentions the harmony of perfect bliss derived from marriage:

**They are not wife and husband who only sit  
together, rather are they husband and wife who have one  
spirit in two bodies.**

{*Var Suhi*}

Before *lavans* are performed a hymn is sung:

**I attach myself to thee, leaving all my  
relations who are false,  
I come to cling to thee.**

At the end of each *lavan*, the couple bows down and takes their seats. Thereafter, the *Anand* is read and the prayer is offered. After distribution of *Karah prashad* the ceremony is over. Then lunch, or whatever the case may be, is offered to the marriage party.

## Death Ceremony

When a person is on his death bed, his relations and friends read *Sukhmani*, the psalm of peace, to console him. Complete

silence prevails. The dying person is neither removed from the *charpai* nor any other ceremony is performed. No earthen lamp is lit. Only the Name of God is repeated.

When a person dies, no lamentations are allowed. Instead, everybody is supposed to bow before the Will of God. *Wahe Guru, Wahe Guru* is repeated again and again.

The Guru Arjun said :

**O kam, you send men to hell  
And make them wander through myriad wombs  
You cheat all minds  
Sway all the three worlds  
Vanquish one in meditation  
Your pleasures are illusory  
You make one unsteady and weak  
And punish the high and low alike.**

{*Slokas Sahskriti*}

*Krodh* (wrath) is another emotion which is condemned in Sikhism :

**O Karodh (wrath), O father of strife,  
You know no compassion,  
You have powerful sway over vicious men  
who dance to your tunes as does the monkey  
And then have to face punishment  
at the hands of couriers of death  
in whose company human beings turn into devils.**

{*Guru Arjan-Slokas Sanskriti*}

Wrath as a passion is charged with psychological power. It may lead to perversity in an individual, for this emotion draws its strength from the evils existing in human beings. It pervades one and all. *Lobh* (greed) is the desire to possess what belongs to others.

**O *lobh* (greed), you have swayed even the best men by your waves  
And men's minds waver and run in all directions to gather more**

and more

You are a respector of neither friendship,  
nor any ideal, nor mother, nor father.

Thus every individual must subdue his senses. Guru Nanak said :

Avarice is the dog, falsehood the sweeper

And anger is the fire that burns man like a *chandal*.

I indulge in self esteem only.

O Lord, these are my acts :

O friend, speak only that which brings you honour.

{*Sri Rag*}

O foolish mind, by your tongue  
you destroy yourself.

## Ideal of service

To serve fellow beings is the ideal of a true Sikh. Service enhances the sense of fellow feeling and creates love for all. It also purifies the heart.

Serve others and repeat the word

Practise contemplation and self-control

to kill ego.

{*Guru Nanak-Prabhati*}

Dedicate yourself to world's service

And you will get a place in the court of the Lord.

{*Sri Rag*}

Service can be of different types—serving the poor and needy, giving in charity, helping a person in distress or saving someone in danger. The Gurus ordained the Sikhs to help the needy, contribute to the free kitchen so that the poor are fed, cook and serve food and clean utensils in the *Guru-ka-langar*, dust the shoes (and sometimes polish them too) of the *sangat* and give to the fund maintained for the welfare of the community. This spirit of service

creates love and affection among fellow beings and tells them to live in humility. It makes man forget his social status, so that he no more thinks in terms of high or low, rich or poor,

**O Lord, I will be blest if I bring water for, wave fan  
over and grind corn for Thy devotee;  
I will cast my empire and mansions into the fire  
And will cling to the feet of the servant of Thy saint  
And care no more for rich people.**

remains contented and this itself brings him joy and happiness. Peace can be attained only by *sabar* (contentment).

A true Sikh should have patience and should bear all adversities smilingly, come what may. He should never be disappointed, even in the face of heavy ordeals. In the words of Guru Amar Das, "There is no greater penance than patience, no greater happiness than contentment, no greater virtue than mercy and no stronger weapon than forgiveness".

A devotee should realise that all human beings belong to one family. They must love each other and have affection for all.

**God abides in every heart,  
It is your duty to treat one and all with respect.**

{Guru Gobind Singh}

"A Sikh repeats daily in his prayer *sarbat ka bhala*, welfare of all human beings, irrespective of his caste, colour, creed sex. He should have faith in universal brotherhood ; at the same time, he should have courage and boldness. Guru Gobind Singh combined *shakti* and *bhakti*. Without bravery, a man remains at the mercy of the tyrant and surrenders to injustice. He has to fight against the evils and for this he should be bold and fearless. Guru Gobind Singh said :

**O, Great God, grant me this boon only,  
That from the noble deeds I may turn not.  
I may fear not him whom I face in fight  
certain be my victory**

**And this be the teaching to my mind  
 My desire be to sing His praises,  
 When the period of my life draws to an end  
 I may fight my foes valiantly  
 And die a heroic death.**

{Epilogue to *Chandi Chariter*}

In short, a Sikh's way of life is *Nam Japna*, *Kirt Karni* and *Wand Chakhna*. All true Sikhs should meditate on the Name of God who is the Supreme Creator and Destroyer.

“All those who hear the *shabad*. The basic creative attribute of the Lord in Sikh faith explains the general creative genius and approach of an average Sikh in all temporal aspects of the community's existence. Bhai Gurdas said :

**Cursed are one's hands and feet  
 without service and in the absence thereof  
 all other religious deeds of persons are of no use.**

Guru Nanak laid great emphasis on this aspect. He said :

**In order to merit recognition  
 In the next world,  
 It is imperative to render service in this world.**

All Sikhs should share their earnings with others. They should at least spend one-tenth (*daswandh*) of their earnings in charity for a noble cause. “Whatever a Sikh earns through honest means, he should deposit in cash or kind in the common pool and from that common pool gladly accept his sustenance including food and clothing. Every Sikh should take food in the langar and then say: ‘O Guru, provisions are thine, only devoted service thereof fall to our part. We have taken meals from Thy cauldron. Keep thy Khalsa's deg (the common cauldron) and tegh (sword for righteous cause) always on the upgrade. We must meditate on Thy Name and engender in our heart full faith of Thy pious feet in thanks giving”.

Lastly, Guru Nanak exhorted his disciples not to renounce the world. He condemned renunciation and running away from the

realities of life. There is no need to go to forests or mountains. Even by continuing to live in the family, one can remain a good person. Guru Nanak said :

**As the lotus lives in water detached,  
As the duck floats without drowning,  
So does one cross the ocean of life.  
If one's mind is attuned to the word  
One lives in detachment enshrines the Lord in his mind.  
Short of hope, lives in the midst of hope.  
And sees the unperceivable and unfathomable.**

*{Guru Nanak-Ramkali}*

## CHAPTER

**The Khalsa's Relevance Today**

The teachings of Guru Gobind Singh are as relevant today as they were 300 years ago. It must be remembered that Guru Gobind Singh did not change the teachings of his predecessors from Guru Nanak to Guru Tegh Bahadur. His faith was in every way the logical development of the teachings and traditions initiated by his predecessors. In Guru Gobind Singh's teachings is found Guru Nanak's faith in one God, who through human comprehension, can be experienced through love and worship of the "Name". In Guru Gobind Singh's teachings is Guru Angad's insistence on *Seva*, (service to mankind) and the third Guru Amardas's emphasis in mental and physical health. In Guru Gobind Singh, we see the fourth Guru Ram Das's creative ability. In him is found Guru Arjun's gentleness, his love for both the Muslims and the Hindus, his literary genius and the spirit to make sacrifice. In the tenth Guru also live the sixth Guru's spirit of valour, seventh Guru's mercy and the eighth Guru's spirit of valour. In Guru Gobind Singh's writings can be found Guru Tegh Bahadur's conviction that the poor and down-trodden, nay the oppressed people, must be given refuge and once this refuge is extended, it should never be withdrawn even if at the cost of one's life.

Besides these qualities, Guru Gobind Singh had another virtue. He had the power to turn timid, soulless people into brave soldiers who could fight against the tyranny and injustice of the rulers. He moulded these people into a nation. Guru Gobind Singh was not just a warrior. Guru What is not realised is the mental anguish the Guru went through before he finally decided to resort to the use of force to right the wrongs. This problem had been faced by many a noble man before the advent of Guru Gobind Singh. For example, the



dialogue between Lord Krishna and Arjun on the battle field of Kurukshetra. Arjun knew it fully well that his cause was just and noble. But this was also known to him that to gain what was his by right, he would have to spill the blood of his kinsmen who had wronged him. How then is a person to decide whether he should submit to oppression and tyranny in the hope that the gesture would bring the change of heart in the oppressors or he should fight against tyranny and so ensure the prevalence of justice. His father, Guru Tegh Bahadur, had been executed for no other offence than to protect the *Tilak* and *Jenau* of the Hindus. Guru Gobind Singh must have questioned himself, should the entire Sikh movement be allowed to die its natural death only because it did not please the rulers of the day or, should he see it grow ? Guru Gobind Singh pondered over the critical situation. He retired to the seclusion in the hills of Naina Devi above Anandpur and spent forty days meditating and seeking guidance from the Almighty. After a prolonged meditation from the he found the answer—which resulted finally in the creation of Khalsa on the Baisakhi day of 1699.

Guru Gobind Singh, from the outset believed in *Dharm Yudh*; a just war, But how to know whether anybody is fighting a just war. He himself has to decide about the justness of his cause for waging a war or defending himself by the use of force. According to Guru Gobind Singh, the war is just and is being fought for the protection of a noble cause. Besides it should be resorted to only when all other means have been explored without success. He wrote in *Zafarnama*—epistle of victory addressed to the Mughal Emperor, Aurangzeb—” Chukar ast Hama Heel Dar guzast halal Ast Burdan Ba Shamsheer Dast”. “When all other means fail, it is righteous to draw the sword”. The Guru explicitly said that his sword struck tyrants not men. A weapon was to protect the weak and destroy the wicked; the war is to be fought, was to be without hatred or desire to take revenge.

It must be remembered that the Guru's own father and his two sons had been executed while his two other sons died in the battle field. Many of his followers fell in battle but not once the Guru talked of revenge or settling scores, not once he uttered a word against Islam. On the other hand, a good many Pathans fought

on his side as his comrades in arms; and more than once his life was saved by his Muslim admirers, who even imperilled their everything; the *Dharam Yudh* must be fought without desire or any gain, whatsoever. He won a number of battles but he never bothered to acquire even an inch of land : a just war can only be waged by a people fired by one ideal, by crusaders and not by mercenaries and the crusaders thus armed must go into the battlefield without fear, without counting the odds against them with faith that he would win and without any concern for the consequences. The Guru turned a timid and untrained people against one of the most powerful and massive armies of his time.

The Guru himself had a brave heart. When the news was brought to him that his two infant sons had been executed earlier and two sons had died in the battle field, he remained calm exhilarating no sign of agony and pain on his face. He said, "Char Muey to Kya Hua, Jeevat kae Hazaar". What if four had died many thousands of my sons still live to carry on the crusade".

This spirit must be revived today when the whole world is burning and a warlike atmosphere is prevailing all around. Dark clouds are hovering in the sky. The so-called modern nations have entered into a mad arms' race. Even India is not lagging behind in this race.

If one has to fight the *Dharam Yudh*, he could go into the battle field convinced that there could be no nobler end than to fall in the battle. The Guru said :

**O God grant me this boon only.**

It is not a great wonder that the Sikhs have for the last 300 years received countless onslaughts of every discription. The Sikhs honour the memory of Guru Gobind Singh as the paradigm of greatness, goodness and heroism all the times.

In this world, time is on the side of the sword. The mightier the arms, the better one's destiny. But was this not the same message prophet Mohammad before and Lenin and Nietzsche after him had given to the people. Here also there is vital distinction. Guru Gobind Singh certainly approved of the social dynamism that Prophet

Mohammed had imparted to spiritual awakening, but he never condemned the use of arms either to force the people into his fold or tried to divide mankind. Following the footsteps of Guru Gobind Singh, in Maharaja Ranjit Singh's regime there was no persecution on the ground of religion. On the contrary, Muslims, who had persecuted the Sikhs during their regime, were given important civil posts and in the army too. His regime was totally free from cruelty and religious persecution. It was the Muslim bard Shah Muhammed, who gave vent to the feelings of utter anguish at the loss of the Sikh empire. In Maharaja's regime, all Sikhs, Hindus, and Muslims lived in unity as never before.

It was a great miracle of Guru Gobind Singh's teachings that throughout the Sikh history, men from all religions fought on the side of the Sikhs and the Sikhs took causes not only their own, but with which they were not even remotely concerned, as in the case of Rohillas during the eighteenth century. That the Muslims manned the artillery of Ranjit Singh, that the most important ministers in his Government were non-Sikhs, Ranjit Singh's munificence towards the religious shrines makes it amply clear that there is something more to the teachings of Guru Gobind Singh than could be visible on the surface.

Not once did Guru Gobind Singh employed treachery or surprise attack during the many battles he fought. Even while literally fighting a life and death struggle simultaneously against the Mughals and the Rajput chiefs of the Shivalik hills, he nowhere differentiated between one or the other man.

Even on the battlefield, he never fired the first shot. When Muslim generals challenged him on the battlefield, he let them strike first. And, whenever forgiveness was asked of him, he straight - away did so with an open heart. After the death of Aurangzeb, when the Guru was requested by Prince Muazzam and later Bahadur Shah to help him in the battle of succession, he did not provide him justice. He gave Banda Bahadur the orders to chase Wazir Khan of Sirhind. Therefore, what the Guru emphasised was that power must reside in clean, ethical and just hands and a armed rebellion was justified only when all other avenues had failed.

Arnold Toynbee has compared the Khalsa with Lenin's organisation. He had stated that Lenin divided men into classes. He wanted only workers of the world to unite to finish off the conquerers. Whereas the Guru wanted the whole mankind to unite under the banner of *Dharam* a where he who has, keep it in trust for the society and God, and he who has not instead of divesting the others, works for himself with his clean, honest intention to earn and then also to share, not out of patronage, because this is how he is to be redeemed in spirit. "That there is no parasitic class, no beggar, no prostitute, amongst the Sikh society consisting mostly of the middle, not lower or upper middle classes, is a befitting testimony to the secular ideals of Guru Gobind Singh, says Dr. Gopal Singh. And that is what also makes it so effectively democratic, but no one, not even the Guru, could escape being bruised if he transgressed the limits of ethical or social behaviour set for other".

It may also be mentioned that not even once Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh had mentioned the name of Punjab. They have mentioned every other parts of India, and the entity called "Hindustan". Their outlook was national. Guru Gobind Sigh wrote his poetry in all the languages. He cut cross all the barriers of caste, creed or religion and dealt with man only as man.

The Guru created the Khalsa, who has remained in the forefront of the struggle for man's emanipation in this sub continent. Swami Vivekananda has pointed out, such examples as that of Guru Gobind Singh are indeed very rare where Hindus and Muslims would have joined hands to wage a war of liberation under a common banner. The India of today owes much to the teachings of Guru Gobind Singh in building a modern humanistic society, in which not only the opportunities are equal, but the man, individually is also free to keep his concience and to rebel if his internal autonomy is attacked. This is what distinguishes the idea of Guru Gobind Singh from Lenin. The individual exists for the society, but the society must also exist for the universal spiritual flowering of God, and must instead of shackling man's soul in exchange for bread, allow it any opportunity to liberate, deeper and enrich it, so that the infinite human possibilities are not thwartec, being tied down only to his physical hungers and wants".

The Guru's ideal society would be a society of working man and woman, shorn of superstition and distinctions of every kind, equal in every way, with eternal and absolute values as their guidelines, both individually and collectively, with a spirit of sacrifice but not of adventurism and welded to the use of arms all other avenues for redressal of grievances had failed.

The Guru was of the opinion that peaceful approach can bear fruit only if the enemy has some scruples and is influenced by religious and ethical values, but if he did not have any regard for such values, the only remedy would be to oppose him.

The Guru was not happy with the caste-ridden society of his times. He opined that human beings are the same whatever religion, race, colour or creed they may belong to. They are the same type and are equal in the eyes of God. The idea of brotherhood of man helped the exploited and weaker sections of society to assert themselves. In order to wield effective power, the people must organise themselves because only through proper organisation, they could make their presence felt. They must have a common objective which could keep them united.

Today, the whole world is in crisis. It is this which makes the teachings of Guru Gobind Singh relevant. Three centuries ago, Guru Gobind Singh gave birth to the Khalsa. It was a period of a great and profound transition and a deepening crisis. The transition in the affairs of men and the crisis in the souls of men was sensed by Guru Gobind Singh three centuries ago. Indeed the initiation of Guru Gobind Singh was no solitary affair. More than two centuries ago, an equally extraordinary mind what means that of Guru Nanak had the same profound and clear premonition and had spoken of the remedy and the way out of crisis, which was then silently brooding over the mankind, and was assuming menacing spectre, threatening to destroy soul and civilisation both, if not the mankind also.

“He did not question in so many well chosen phrases, neatly formulated, says Kapur Singh, but he gave the answer clear and explicitly, without ambiguity and with certainty of conviction and vision. In numerous ways, both by precept and practice he asserts and exhorts that the key to these and the fall of people and civilisation

in the ethical activity, freely and voluntarily pursued and independent of any supernatural blind necessity or destiny such as has been presupposed by almost all the ancient and modern thinkers of social philosophies. Thus, the man is his own destiny and necessity and thus he may avert the crisis that has now undertaken him”.

Guru Gobind Singh said, : “The power of God and Felicity, this is my sole prayer before Thee. Give me the strength to pursue ethical conduct, come what may.”

The Khalsa enjoyed all the good qualities like democracy socialism, equality and purity. In this age of crisis the Guru’s message to mankind is : “Rehat Pyari. Mujkho, Sikh Pyara Nahin”. I admire his way of life and not the Sikh.

“Rehat Rahe Soi Sikh Hamara, O Sahib Hoin uska Chela. He who lives a righteous living alone is my Sikh. He is my Master, and I am his disciple.

“Jab Lag Khalsa Reha Nyara, Tabtak Teg Diomein Sara, Jab eh Kare beprin Ki rit, main na kurnan iski partit. So far as the Khalsa maintains its identity and dignity I shall bestow them all my essence, and if he adopts, Brahmanical customs, I will not care for him”. A true religious man alone can be a true patriot and a true servant of society and humanity.

## CHAPTER

**Future of the Khalsa**

The question very often being asked by the Sikhs, especially the Sikh youth is to why, at all, the Khalsa was created. This is a million dollar question, which needs an equally elaborate answer.

When there were already in existence many religions in the world, where was the necessity to add one more to them? Alternatively what was the special role that was intended to be played by the new religion? The gods and goddesses of Hinduism, Prophets of Islam and Christianity and other theistic religions were already there to preach the message of God. They had already propagated the Supremacy of the spiritual over the mundane. They had told the people that God was the sole power as being the source of all goodness, happiness and virtue. They had also been propagating how not to fall a prey to the evil forces that reigned supreme at various times in the history of mankind. These evils included Maya, Satan, greed, lust, sex outside wedlock, anger, haughtiness, pride, and love for worldly goods.

In spite of the noble causes preached by these prophets and saints, the people were falling victims to the evil forces. They had lost their moorings as well as their ethical values of life. They had fallen prey to the forces inimical to the evolution of a man of spirit.

At the time of Guru Nanak's birth the moral degradation had reached abysmal depths. Both the Hindus and the Muslims had forgotten the true spirit of religion and were groping in the dark. No silver lining was visible anywhere on the horizon. Darkness prevailed all round. The rulers of the day were simply exploiting people and crimes were committed in the name of religion and humanity. The women were being treated as slaves and chattels as men used

them only to satisfy their lust. They had, in fact, no rights and liberties. Widow remarriage was unknown and the Hindu women performed *Sati* at the pyres of their husbands.

Guru Nanak preached the oneness of God and the equality of all human beings. All his successors, the nine Gurus followed Nanak's teachings. Then the last Sikh apostle, Guru Gobind Singh, created the Khalsa. The Sikhs were given new form, but the essence of the religion of Guru Nanak remained the same. The Sikhs were converted into saint soldiers, who were prepared to fight against tyranny and injustice in all form and anywhere.

The Sikhs were taught to pray to God for the welfare of the entire mankind; *Sarbat ka bhalla*; Guru Gobind Singh advocated the freedom of worship for all and faith in and devotion to God occupy the primary position in this scheme though faith is one's spiritual guide *Guru*. *Guru Gobind Singh had to fight both the Hindus and the Muslims and yet both of them fought alongside him. Even as the Guru fought battle after battle, he refused to preach hatred against the religious persuasion of any of his adversaries. One of his disciples, Bhai Kanhayya, when asked why he was administering water to the wounded on the battle field without the distinction of friend or foe, is said to have answered—My Guru has instructed me thus : "See only the face of the Beloved in all". Aurangzeb had given the Guru every conceivable cause for grievance against him. Nevertheless the Guru helped his son, Bahadur Shah, in the battle of succession. Similarly the Guru was approached by the widow of Ram Rai for help. Ram Rai had established a *gaddi* of his own at Dehradun in opposition to the Guru's house. Similarly when the Guru was approached by the widow of Ram Rai for help, Guru Gobind Singh went out of his way to rescue her from the vile intrigues and attacks of her detractors.*

Though Guru Gobind Singh was a great warrior, he always remained a saint at heart. He wished that all human beings should prosper equally. He said that all human-beings are equal. Arnold Toynbee has called the creation of Khalsa, the precursor and forerunner of Lenin's Communist Party two centuries later in history, an idealistic minority fighting with the weapons of the adversary in



the name and for the sake of the majority, obliterating all distinctions of caste, nationality and sex.

That a military and political power whose tentacles were spread throughout the vast subcontinent of India was successfully challenged after its slavery above thousand years by the followers of Guru Gobind Singh in the brief span of half a century after his demise, speaks volumes for the new dynamism he had installed in his race, divided and degenerated by caste or class region or religion, superstition and servility. How much caste had demoralised and disintegrated our nation is exemplified by the task that the high caste Brahmins for a long time refused to anoint, Shivaji, the founder of the first Hindu power; because he was the son farmerd and hence a low-caste. Only after tons of gold had been gifted to them by Shivaji did the Brahmins agree to trace his genealogy to be a kshatriya.

By declaring all men and woman of all castes and creeds to be equal as much in spiritual as in the secular sphere. Guru Gobind Singh gave a new dimension to the soul of man everywhere. No other miracle is socially significant to a whole people than to transform their minds and soul and to make them sovereign in thier own right.

While Guru Nanak had Guru Gobind Singh gave a new earthly hope to the liberated souls. It was in the name and for the sake of the ideal, the one and the only God that men and women should seek earthly power and not for self-gratification or glory. It is remrkable that, a whole lot of men have found and employed the deadliest weapons and intrigues to gain and retain power. The truth the guru enjoined upon the Khalsa to use it in the interest of the poor and the downtrodden. Guru Gobind Singh taught us that God not only bestowed earthly powers but also directed it to be used for the fulfilment of the society as much as one's own soul. Contrarily some individuals or societes flout with inunity the moral code of conduct. He said that God in diverse ways creates conditions for their ruin and destruction.

That is what makes Guru Gobind Singh very relevant to society in all ages, even the modern scientific age, when people have

unravelling the mysteries and controlled the forces of nature as never before.

And yet, Guru Gobind Singh did not believe in any god or goddess, and decried superstitions and rituals in their name as spurious and false. He was fully involved with the welfare of God's creations. He lauded the weapons but emphasised that they should only be used for the noble cause and never for evil or subjugation of others. His dictum was one must overpower oneself and not the others.

But, alas! The followers of Guru Gobind Singh have forgotten his noble teachings and they are not following him in his footsteps. Born in 1666, in a short span of 42 years only the Guru gave a new direction to the society. The Khalsa was created merely 300 years ago, yet the qualities which the great Master expected of his Sikhs, are missing. That the Sikhs go to their shrines is only a ritual. The religious symbols are being discarded with increasing regularity, especially by the Sikh youth. The Guru preached throughout his life, "He who keeps the light of the Divine life the torch of truth burning for all the twenty-four hours in the shrine of his heart, he alone is to be deemed as the pure Khalsa". have no effect on the Sikhs of today. Nobody expected that just in 300 years, the Sikhs would start disowning their religion for the preservation of which Guru Gobind Singh had to sacrifice, his father, mother and all the four sons. The contention of Sikh youth of today is that these outwardly symbols have become futile in this age of science and technology. However, this fact is belied by the zeal shown by some of the American Sikhs. United States of America is the most advanced country in the world both scientifically and technologically. This clearly shows that material comforts are no substitute for spiritual hunger which can only be satisfied by recourse to religion.

Compassion was Guru Gobind Singh's hallmark. His arrows had golden tips so that if anybody got wounded by them, he would have the means to arrange for his medical treatment. When a complaint was made to the Guru that Bhai Kanahiya was serving water to the wounded among the enemies, the Guru appreciated his services and said that he had really understood his message.

But, the Sikhs are today confused and are fighting among themselves not for the glory of Khalsa but for their own personal gains. They do not bother about the poor and the downtrodden for whose upliftment Guru Gobind Singh fought throughout his life.

The Sikhs today have entered the mad race of money making and use of all sorts of unfair means to become rich and wealthy. On the other hand, Guru Gobind Singh, after leaving the Anandpur fort, had thrown into the Sirsa rivulet, all the wealth he had, so that none of his followers would be led away by greed. Sikhs today do not spare even the shrines' funds. Devotion to the faith and selfless service have been pushed into the background. No Sikh is bothered about spreading the message of the Sikh Gurus.

Guru Gobind Singh had envisioned permanent ascendancy, "Chardikala" for his Khalsa. But it has been sliding down into mal-practices and impurities. The need of the hour is to rejuvenate the community. This was the call the tenth Master made when he converted the weak and timid people into the mighty army of saint-soldiers who could challenge one of the mightiest empires in the history and emerge victorious. Though the Guru might have lost many a battle, yet moral victory was his. It was only Guru Gobind Singh who could dare his few comrades to fight against the Mughal army, consisting of thousands of soldiers.

Guru Gobind Singh created a classless society but today the Sikh society is completely caste ridden. It is divided among Jats, Khattris, Scheduled Castes and others. Could any Sikh claim to be wishing good of all the human beings when they treat others as inferiors and outcasts? These sons and daughters of the Guru are even denied the right of worshipping god in a shrine. This is precisely the treatment meted out to lakhs of our comrades, who are labelled as Sudras. Principles of equality of all mankind have been forgotten. Guru Nanak had even said :

**If there are men treated as lower than the lowest;  
I, Nanak, embrace them as my equals;  
I have nothing in common with those who treat  
themselves high caste.**

Khalsa fraternity have no objection whatsoever if someone preaches his own faith in a peaceful manner. The Khalsa upholds the freedom of worship for one and all. It is the faith in and devotion to God that occupies the primary and highest position. Faith is one's spiritual guide or Guru. Though essential, it occupies a secondary position. The Khalsa believes in the unique declaration of the Sikh Gurus : 'O God : Take mercy and save the burning world'.

The members of the Khalsa pray everyday for the good of all. It is done on a sound basis of a broad outlook and respect for all the religions as the Gurus had said that all the doors, all theistic religions lead to God, with Guru's guidance. The Khalsa should realise that every such religion has an essence stressing devotion to God and a secondary part consisting of means to achieve and preserve the essential part, as also the rituals and ceremonials. The Khalsa has full respect for *Avtars* and prophets of all religions as they had to accomplish the main object of giving the message of God as source of all goodness and they were the means to reach God, But, unfortunately, the devotion to God as the essential part has been left aside by the followers of those *Avtars* and prophets and what was secondary is being brandished as the most important part of religion. If Lord Krishna declared in *Gita* that the unmanifest God, who is not born and does not die, his followers today say that Lord Krishna is the greatest and worship his image in temples while they do not see the spirit of unmanifest God in a low caste person.

If Jesus Christ had declared that Father in heaven is the greatest, his followers say Jesus as the only Son of God the greatest and convert others to their faith. If prophet Muhammad said that Allah whose message, he carried is the greatest, his followers say that the Prophet is himself the greatest.

The Khalsa has to avoid bigotry and narrowness, and has to draw attention of the world towards these evils. The common ground in the realm of love and devotion to God and *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* admirably represents such a realm. The essential part of religion as hymns of love and devotion to God as contained in the *Granth Sahib*, and composed by Hindu and Muslim saints and, of course, the Sikh Gurus is a great example.

The teachings contained in *Guru Granth Sahib* are to be emulated by all mankind the world over, so that all the virtues may prevail and evil and selfishness may be rooted out.

But today selfishness galore prevails at all limits social, personal and political. Ethical standards have taken wings and evaporated and morality is a thing of the past. The Khalsa has to adopt ethical standards and teach to the world living a honest life and uplifting the poor and the downtrodden is the great service as well as a sure way to reach God. The Khalsa has to propagate that religious tyrannies are not to be perpetuated on simple and innocent people. Following the high path of universal good and the way to avoiding evil of selfishness, the Khalsa must reach the people large. The orthodoxy of out futile rituals must be shed. A progressive scientific outlook is a must for the Khalsa.

A wind of rot is setting on the Sikh society. It has sunk to a level which is perhaps much more dangerous and darker than that of the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. In early twentieth century, the Singh Sabha raised the banner of revolt against the priestly monopolies and their blind followers. The Sikh shrines and institutions were then under the control of some *sadhus*, *pujaris* and *granthis* who through ignorance and selfishness had drifted back to many a Brahminical practices and rituals. With the spread of education and religious awakening, it was not difficult to disillusion the people so be able to launch a revivalist movement and bring them back to the spirit of positive Sikh faith, with the efforts made by Sardar Thaker Singh Sandhanwalia, BhaiVir Singh and some other notable Sikhs. The movement had a very successful beginning particularly with the support of the Sikhs who were devoted to the faith. Then, chief Khalsa Divan came into existence and spread a network of Singh Sabhas with the result that the Brahminical influence over the Sikhs came to be gradually weakened and various un-Sikh practices, that had crept up round the Sikh customs, were removed.

The Sikh Gurudwara Reform movement of 1920 was also the result of the puritanical spirit infused in the Khalsa. The gurudwaras were liberated from the clutches of the *Mahants* who were indulging in all kinds of malpractices and vices within the very precincts of

the holy shrines. The Sikhs had to make sacrifices to achieve this purpose. The rich shrines became the places of worship and people went there to seek blessings of the Gurus and get peace of mind. They thronged the shrines in large numbers to be able to listen to the *Gurbani*, the message of the Gurus given to the whole mankind.

But, with the passage of time, the management of Sikh shrines went into the hands of unscrupulous and corrupt elements. Cliques came to be formed on the basis of groupism and regionalism. This created casteism among the Sikhs which is totally against the basic tenets of Sikhism. Groups with un-Sikh like unhealthy divisions and subdivisions to the detriment of Sikh principles.

The unity of God, obeisance to the Guru's word and doing nothing else, which are the fundamental plans of Sikhism are openly flouted in many Sikh shrines both historical and non-historical. Right in the presence of the holy *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* people are seen prostrating before, and making offering to the self Styled saints and *sadhus* and even political leaders. This practice has encouraged a number of fraudulent imposters and pretenders to assume the form and character of gurus and gather round themselves gullible men and women of feeble minds.

The evening prayer is followed in some shrines with a un-Sikh like practice of *Arti* with lighted lamps. This practice was strongly criticised by the founder of Sikh faith, Guru Nanak, when he visited Jagannath Puri. It is described as artificial worship. The lighting of *ghee* lamps, keeping of *kumbh* or pitcher full of water, covered by a red cloth fastened at the time of ceremonial reading of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, particularly at *Akhand path* itself is becoming a hollow ritual, as it is, this type of rapid and continuous day and night reading with, at times, nobody to hear it, it has no sanction of the Guru. It is a later innovation started over half a century after Guru Gobind Singh had left his mortal coil. At that time, it had some significance and shows the intensity and depth of the faith of the mid-eighteenth century Sikhs when they were engaged in a life and death struggle with the foreign invaders and were ever ready to lay down their lives in the cause of the Khalsa. But that was an extraordinary situation. In the normal circumstances, the *Akhand paths* should be performed in shrines and houses, when the

*Gurbani* is listened to by many people. However, *Sadharan path* should always be preferred to others *paths*. It can be performed easily by an individual or by the members of the family. When read slowly the hymns can be followed by the listeners and they can understand them very well. It can leave indelible impression upon their minds. The *Sadharan path* as a regular part of one's life keeps one in tune with the Guru and makes life sublime, freeing one of his egoism.

Sometimes, the *Akhand path* becomes, a business like a *Shradh* for seeking blessings for the departed souls in the world beyond. A devotee may be living in any part of the world, but if he pays the prescribed fee to the shrines' management or to an organisation set up for the purpose in India or in any other part of the world, an *Akhand path* is performed at a distance of thousands of kilometers away in his name or of any other person.

At times, the number of complete readings and recitation of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* can be obtained at a price. The Sikh Gurus had created a classless society, and in administering the *Amrit*, Guru Gobind Singh had given to the Khalsa the common suffix of the Singh or Kaur to knit them all together into one brotherhood to the distinction of previous faith and had given the Khalsa only one faith.

Now, under un-Sikh influences, the castes and caste distinctions have reappeared among the Sikhs with a vengeance. The addition of caste suffixes is now becoming a common fashion. The Sikh educational institutions were expected to be the centres of reform and their custodians and teachers to be the torchbearers and guides for the Sikh youth. But the teachers in and schools are quite the offenders in this respect- Many Sikh youth prefer to write their names without the word Singh. The word Singh is not being used and even only 'S' is used between the name and the caste. This is ridiculous. Some of the un-Sikh like customs have entered into the Sikh marriage ceremonies, *Nam Sanskar*, etc. Take the case of *Jayamala*, when a bride garlands the bridegroom after the *milni* prayer. She not only puts a seal in the choice of her husband but actually performs the first main ceremony of the *Swayamber* marriage according to the ancient custom. This ceremony is performed in the full public view, in the presence of the parents of

both the boy and girl. Now marriage after the *Jayamala* is such unlike the Sikh marriage which is an *Anand* marriage- It is against the Sikh *maryada* and should not, therefore, be performed as a part of the Sikh marriage.

The person entrusted with the performing of the marriage ceremony rarely pay any serious attention to see that the couple is regularly baptised. The promises made on the occasion have become only a formality.

Many Sikhs pay regular visits to the Hindu places of worship. The Sikhs have started going to Vaishno Devi temple to pay obeisance to the Mother Goddess. This is an un-Sikh practice. Sikh Gurus forbade the worship of god and goddesses. Modern Sikh women can be seen in five star hotels and posh clubs in metropolitan cities, drinking whisky and some of them smoking with their hair cut. Many Sikh parents are themselves getting the hair of their children cut. This is very trend and has to be checked.

These are only a few un-Sikh like customs and practices that have crept into the community. They must all be guarded against and eradicated. A reformist movement has to be organised so that delay in reforms may not give sanction of tradition to the evils which are becoming deep-rooted. Let the Sikh intelligentsia realise the gravity of the situation and create a strong public opinion in favour of reform to save the community from the mire into which it is falling.

No doubt, there is a lot of degradation in the Sikh society today. Un-Sikh like practices are damaging the very foundation of the teachings of the Sikh Gurus. The youth is not listening to their parents advice. They are openly revolting against them. All sort of reasons nay excuses are being trotted out which have no meaning. The Sikh society is faced with a crisis of the worst type in its five hundred and thirty years of history. The Sikhs will have to struggle hard to maintain their identity. The religion is being attacked both from the inside and the outside. The youth should come forward to protect their heritage, culture and tradition. The western influence is damaging the values cherished by the Sikh Gurus. Time is running out. If the Khalsa does not rise to the occasion and now save it



disintegration the Sikh society will crumble. If the Khalsa do not guard against the malpractices at this critical juncture the sacrifices made by the Sikh Guru will go waste.

However, one should not be too pessimistic. The community whose past was glorious will also have a glorious future. There is no cause for despair and dismay. The Khalsa's foundation was laid with the blood of the Sikh Gurus and subsequently many became martyrs and laid down their lives to protect it from onslaughts. During the transitional period, the members of the Khalsa brotherhood with feeble and fickle minds will be out and a new generation of devotees to the faith will come to the fore determined to protect it, preserve it and uphold its traditions.

The future of the Khalsa is bright. As Arnold Toynbee has said:

“They (The Sikhs) are the Burliest men on the face of the planet tough and capable and slightly grim. If Human life survives the present chapter of men's history, the Sikhs, for Sure, will still be on the Map”. { *East To West* by Arnold Toynbee. }