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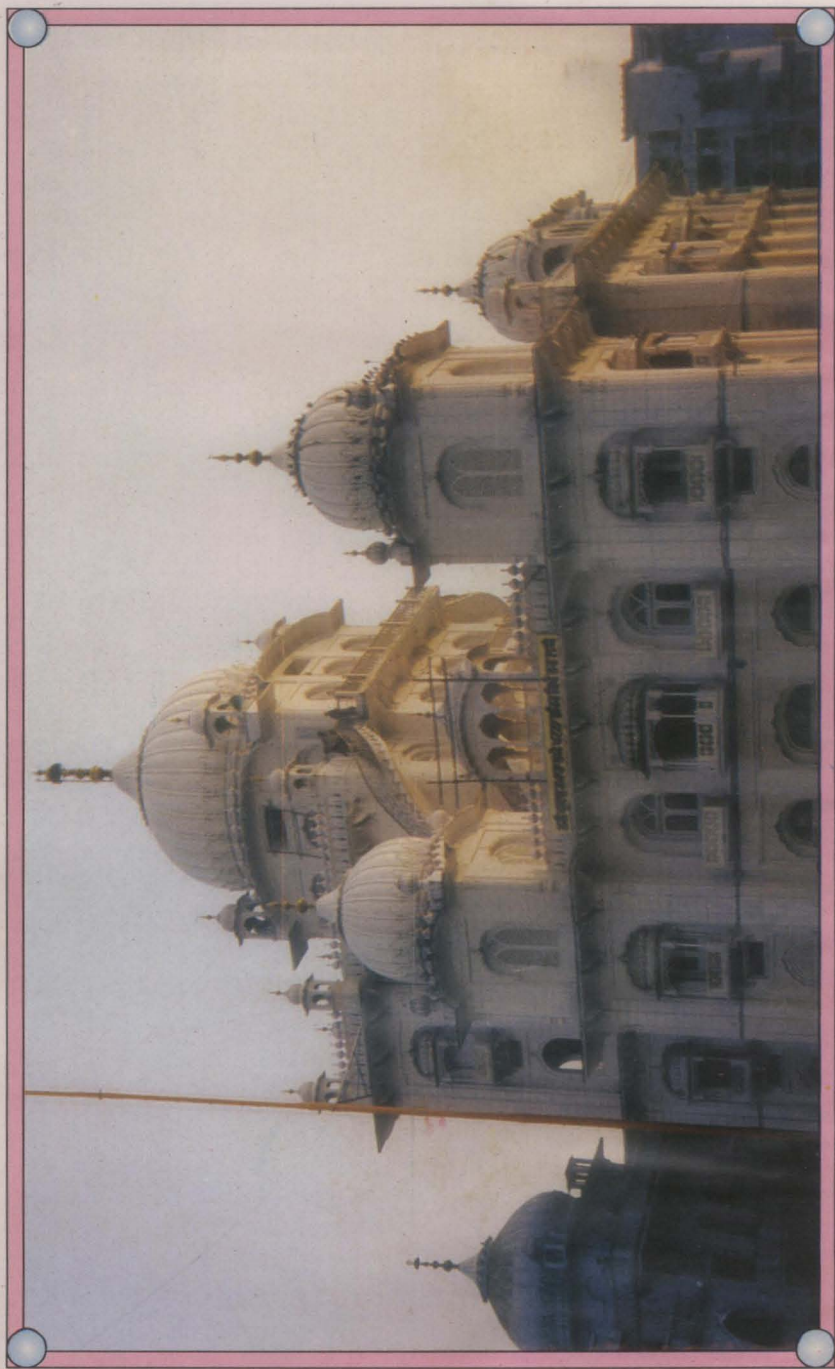
# **Guru Gobind Singh and Creation of Khalsa**



**Guru Nanak Dev University  
Amritsar**



Portrait of Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji – Creator of Khalsa



Takhat Sri Patna Sahib, Patna

**GURU GOBIND SINGH  
AND  
CREATION OF KHALSA**

*Edited by*  
**Prof. Madanjit Kaur**



**GURU NANAK DEV UNIVERSITY  
AMRITSAR**

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2000

ISBN 81-7770-000-6

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CREATION OF KHALSA**

*Editor*  
Prof. Madanjit Kaur

**Number of Copies** : 500  
**Price** : Rs. 225/-

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Published by Dr. R.S. Bawa, Registrar and Printed by  
S. Jagjit Singh Walia, Director, Press & Publications Department,  
Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar-143005.

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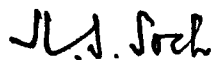
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## FOREWORD

The egalitarian ideology of progressive social revolution of cosmic nature envisaged by Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism became phenomenally manifest in the creation of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth and last Guru of the Sikhs. The publication of the book *Guru Gobind Singh and Creation of Khalsa* on the occasion of the Tercentenary Celebrations of the Khalsa will be a benefitting tribute to the great Guru as an act of appreciation of his marvellous contributions to bind various communities in abiding love, harmony, integration and commitment to serve humanity and defend *Dharma* (righteousness) through the advocacy of his message of unity of God and brotherhood of man. The Guru spelt out the empirical role of the holy man in society as a divinely sanctioned moral responsibility and established the Khalsa commonwealth of saint soldiers (*sant sipahi*) to protect justice, virtues, human rights, freedom, liberty and the oppressed. The Khalsa had to present a model role to fight against all agencies of socio-political exploitation and to establish rule of law and social dispensation.

Guru Nanak Dev University,  
Amritsar



(Dr. H.S. Soch)  
Vice-Chancellor



## PREFACE

It was in pursuance of the completion of Guru Nanak's mission and universal humanistic institutionalisation of the Sikh doctrines that the Tenth Divine Master of the Sikhs, Guru Gobind Singh declared the Creation of the Order of the Khalsa through the sacramental nectar (*Amrit*) of *Khande de pahul* at Sri Anandpur Sahib on 30 March, 1699 on the occasion of the Baisakhi Day. The declaration of the Khalsa proved a unique event of world historical significance. The Guru gave Khalsa a distinct identity (five *kakaars*), the appellation of the "Singh" and a strict code of conduct (*Rahit Maryada*) to provide it a strong sense of belonging, dignity and social solidarity of egalitarian and corporate nature which provided a perennial source of vitality for the sustenance of the mobilised militant resistance of the Khalsa in all the exigencies of the time and space in its struggle against the enemy. The Khalsa of Guru Gobind Singh attained excellence, equally in times of war and peace. Subsequently, the Khalsa proved ever ready line of warriors to fight for the defence of Nation.

The Khalsa represents an ideal example of a role model of a new world order characterised by integrity, commitment, corporate identity, democratic discipline, humanitarian service, concerns for the welfare of all the humanity and spiritual endeavour. In fact, Guru Gobind Singh wished to create a unique organisation as a temporal vehicle of motor force of dispensation for the establishment of a new republican order in the world history free from all sorts of physical, material, temporal and religious evils; social imbalances; economic disparities; bias and prejudices. The Khalsa was pledged to act as servant of God on

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this earth to serve humanity with love, compassion and selfless motive. The ideology of the Khalsa has a great universal relevance a normative basis in the present crisis of spiritual, moral and ethical devoid for the emergence of a corporate welfare world society.

*Guru Gobind Singh and Creation of Khalsa* is a collection of articles by eminent scholars especially prepared by Guru Nanak Dev University to project a documented study of the vital issues related to the life of Guru Gobind Singh and creation of Khalsa. The contributors in this Volume maintain that religion and state rule effect activities in society which depend critically on the social values, practices and ethical norms. The nature of this process exemplify the blending of traditional norms, as the demands of the contemporary historical challenges and social structure provided if there is a creative genius and a chrismatic leader who can translate ideas into practices and abstraction into reality. The result is the emergence of uniquely documented patterns of hypothesis, formulations and presentation of the marvellous story of creation of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh, the unparalleled hero of the history of mankind. It is hoped that this volume would provide significant information to researchers, scholars and students engaged in the study of Comparative Religion, Indian Culture, Social Sciences, Humanities and History of Human Civilization.

We are thankful to S. Jagjit Singh Walia, Director, Press & Publications and his staff for the printing of this book. We owe thanks to Dr. Gopal Singh Dhillon for the preparation of the index of this volume.

***Editor***

## **CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE CREATION OF THE KHALSA**

*Prof. Madanjit Kaur*

Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth and last Guru of the Sikhs, is an unparalleled hero in the history of world. Guru Gobind Singh satiated the forty two years short span of his life with tremendous activities and achievements of far reaching consequence. The Guru was a creative genius and a Divine soul. He presents a unique combination of higher spiritual attainment and excellence in secular endeavours.

Guru Gobind Singh's contributions had left imprints of deep impact on the canvas of Indian history and world civilisation. The Guru met the challenges of his time with undaunted courage and unflinching faith in the life and death struggle for the fulfillment of his mission, Guru Gobind Singh not only preserved the glorious secular heritage of India but also kept alight the torch of equality, liberty and freedom at the cost of supreme sacrifices made by his family.

Guru Gobind Singh not only preached ideals of humanitarian commitments but also raised a new breed of men in India to protect the honour and independence of the country and its people at the cost of their lives. What were the ideals and teachings of the Great Guru? What were the innovations implemented by him which transformed the ordinary man into a warrior? What are the traditions founded by him which brought transformation and positive social change in the fixity of the caste-based hierarchical structure of the Indian society? All these issues demand greater

attention of the historians, anthropologists, sociologists and scholars of comparative Religion to concentrate seriously on the contributions of Guru Gobind Singh on the occasion of Tercentenary celebrations of the *Khalsa*.

Gobind Rai (Guru Gobind Singh after the initiation of *Amrit*, ceremony of Sikh baptism) was only nine years old when his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur, was martyred for the cause of protection of freedom of conscious and freedom of worship by the order of the fanatic Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb in 1675 at Delhi. The execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur was very staggering for the young Gobind. He realised that the adversary meant to destroy the very essence of the secular humanitarian and universal doctrines of the Sikh faith and it was his duty to resist the enemy with all the means at his disposal, for it was the battle of survival not only of the life but of idealism. His mission of life became clear to him. Guru Gobind Singh began to prepare himself for the future responsibility of the Sikh *Panth* and to take up the cause of the oppressed against the tyranny of the autocratic state which was imposing forced conversion and all sorts of atrocities on the people. In his autobiography (*Apni Katha*) which forms a part of the *Bachitra Natak*, incorporated in *Dasam Granth*, the idea of *Dharam Yudh* (the battle for the sake of righteousness) is clearly evident in his compositions. Guru Gobind Singh announced:

I came into the world charged with the duty to uphold the  
right in every place,

to destroy sin and evil. O ye holymen know it well in your  
hearts that the only reason,

I took birth was to see that righteousness may flourish,  
that the good may live and tyrants to be torn out by their  
very roots.<sup>1</sup>

Guru Gobind Singh started preparations for his mission.<sup>2</sup>

Like his grand father Guru Hargobind, he let it be known that he would welcome offerings in arms and horses, and he would also welcome able bodied men willing to join his crusade. In the background of the Sikh traditions he made it sure that his crusade may not be wrongly interpreted as that of the Sikhs against Muslim. By that time five hundred Pathan mercenaries had already joined his private army.

As soon as the Guru started reorganising his army trouble aroused from the quarters of the local Hindu Rajput Chiefs. Raja Bhim Chand of Bilaspur (in whose territory Anandpur Sahib was located) turned hostile and made coalition with the neighbouring hill chiefs to expel the Guru from their territory. The real cause of their anxiety to remove the Guru from their area was that they got apprehensive of the growing popularity and influx of the local people specially of the lower classes to the casteless fraternity of the Sikhs for leadership as a danger to their sovereignty. They bought over Guru Gobind Singh's Pathan mercenaries and attacked him. The battle was fought at Bhangani, six miles out of Paonta in 1688. The Guru defeated the Hill chiefs. Without following up his victory with any political advantage, Guru Gobind Singh returned to Anandpur Sahib.

The first thing the Guru did was to fortify his headquarters. He bought the neighbouring land and built a chain of fortresses—Anandgarh, Kesgarh, Lohgarh and Fatehgarh to keep the hill states in check. Gradually, the Guru became more powerful than the hill chiefs.

The Guru got respite of more than a decade. Secured in his territory the Guru started the task of consolidation of Sikh organisation with greater vigour and care. This period was also full of intellectual pursuit and literary activity.

Guru Gobind Singh was himself well versed in Indian classical Languages, Puranic Literature, Hindi Poetics, Persian, Arabic, Punjabi and various arts of indigenous education. Besides, he had attained excellence in martial arts, hunting and horse riding. As a child he had enjoyed the privilege of good schooling and tutoring at Patna. The Guru himself informs in his autobiography (*Apni Katha*) that his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur had given him instructions of various kinds.<sup>3</sup> Besides, schooling and hunting, the writing of verse was also the passion of young Guru Gobind Singh. During his stay at Paonta (in Nahan State), where he reclined for a few years after the martyrdom of his father, Guru Gobind Singh pondered over the destiny of his nation groaning under the atrocities of oppressive and unjust rule. There sitting on the bank of the river Jamuna, he thought of the way to free his country from the agony and bonds of sin and sufferings. He applied himself to self-education. He went through the whole range of the Puranic epic literature in Sanskrit and composed rich variety of poetry in Hindi (Braj) and Punjabi.

His Ode in blank verse in Punjabi, *Chandi Ki Var* is a unique example of personification of myth into deity of power, symbolic of the victory of virtue over vices and glory of righteousness in this mundane world. In Hindi (Braj) he developed a style and form, which for its martial format, richness of imagination and variety of similies and metaphors from old Puranic literary tradition has remained unsurpassed since his times.<sup>4</sup>

Guru Gobind Singh has greatly enriched the literary heritage of India. His poetic vision depicts the glorious epitome of medieval Indian literary traditions. His creative genius formulated in emotions motivates for higher action and breaks out against superstition and hypocrisy into humour and irony as we find in

his *Chaubis Avtar*. His emotions, often projected with intellectual exercise by the lessons of wrongs done by the past, is raised to the highest pitch of ecstasy when he communes with God in *Akal Ustat* and points to the eternal unity of human existence with the Cosmos.

The idea of Divine Intervention in Human history, is deeply rooted in his writing. In his *Bachitra Natak* he declared that God has commissioned him to uphold righteousness and to destroy all evil-doers root and branch'. While believing in his heaven-ordained mission, he took care to see that his followers did not fall into the web of the Hindu doctrine of *Avtarvad* (theory of re-incarnation). He emphatically asserted that he was human, and that to pay divine honours to him would be blasphemous:

Whoever says I am the (God ), shall fall into the pit of hell.

Recognise me as God's servant only.

Have no doubt whatever about this.

I am a servant of the Supreme Lord,

A beholder of the Wonder of his Creation.<sup>5</sup>

Guru Gobind Singh fully enhanced the importance of patriotic genre as motivating force. He placed literary activity in the forefront of his programme of national reconstruction. He translated classical and ancient stories of Indian heroes as found in the *Puranas*, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* and engaged fifty two poets to help him in this heavy task. The Guru extended generous patronage to scholars and men of letters. Under his patronage considerable literature was composed at his court. The Guru also selected five of the most scholarly of his disciples and sent them to Banaras (Kanshi) to learn Sanskrit and Hindi religious text and Vedantic Philosophy in order to be better equipped to interpret the Puranic epics as well as the writings of

the Guru which were full of allusion in Hindu mythology. The keynote of this vast literature, some of which is preserved in the *Dasam Granth* is optimism, freedom from superstitions, rituals, polytheism and strong faith in the unity of God and unity of mankind. The Guru recognise oneness of all humanity irrespective of racial, genetic, linguistic, geographical and cultural plurality. For his attitude of universal humanism the Guru commands:

I recognise none but the one God.

Except in the protection of the One sole God, nowhere is salvation.

The temple and the mosque are the same;

The Hindu and the Muslim forms of worship are the same.

All men are the same, although they appear different under different local influences.

The bright and the dark the ugly and the beautiful.

The Hindus and the Muslims have developed themselves. according to the fashions of different countries.

All have the same eyes, the same ears, the same body and the same build-compound of the same five elements.<sup>6</sup>

At the time the country was passing through crisis of political and religious disintegration. The writings of Guru Gobind Singh specifically stress the need to revive the inherent pluralistic society of our cultural heritage. Guru Gobind Singh was fully aware about the crucial issue of integration and harmony in our pluralistic society. For the purpose of national unity he repeatedly stressed on the need to strengthen the spirit of unity in diversity in our pluralistic society. Besides, his purpose in producing patriotic literature was to infuse feeling of confidence among his countrymen to come out of despair and like man of action steel their hearts against oppression and fight for righteousness against injustice and tyranny.



In his poetry, Guru Gobind Singh created a new metaphor of the sword. The sword was the symbol of *Shakti*, Kalika or Durga and of 'Akal' Himself. God has been described as *Sarbloh* (All-Steel). In fact, the selection of this symbol was intended to give a new orientation to the psyche of the people, demoralized by subjugation to foreign rule and the streak of passivity in their very nature. The people yoked under slavery of the alien rule needed a new forceful vocabulary and a new principle of faith. This incentive was provided by Guru Gobind Singh by introducing new signs and symbols as medium of communication for spiritual inspiration. In the opening part of the *Bachitra Natak*, sword has been divinised as God. The Guru invoke the Almighty as:

I bow with love and devotion to the holy sword.

Assist me that I may complete this work.<sup>7</sup>

God and sword are mentioned here synonymously. Then following a ringing and soulfully rendered invocation, to the sword. The diction, a form of Prakrit, is so powerful that it reproduces the clangorous rhythm of clashing swords with such a nerve that the mere concentration of the recitation of verses inspire for heroic endeavour and chivalloous action. For example:

Thou art the Subduer of kingdoms,  
the destroyer of the armies of the wicked.  
In the battlefield thou adorenest the brave.

Thy arm is infragile, Thy brightness refulgent  
Thy radiance and splendour dazzle like the sun.

Thou bestowest happiness on the good and vitruos,  
Thou terrifiest the evil. Thou scatterest sinners.

I seek thy protection.

Hail ! Hail to the Creator of the World

The saviour of creation, my Cherisher.

Hail to Thee, O Sword.<sup>8</sup>

In Guru Gobind Singh' anthology of the Supreme Reality, God and sword become interchangeable terms. The preamble to the Sikh daily *Ardas*, or supplication, which begins with the words *Pritham Bhagauti Simer Ke Guru Nanak lai Dhayai* meaning thereby 'Having first remembered the 'Bagauti' meditate on Guru Nanak...' The indication is attributed as a composition of Guru Gobind Singh. The Sikh *Ardas* is addressed to Almighty God. Literally, 'Bhagauti' is sword, what it meant in the religious parlance of the Sikhs is 'Almighty God'. We have to remember that describing such features of the Almighty, Guru Gobind Singh was not trying to alienate other attributes of God as preached by Guru Nanak. When Guru Gobind referred to God as *Sarbloh*, the Guru was not obvious of the attributes of love, compassion and mercy of the God. In his *Jap Sahib* these divine attributes have been specifically highlighted by Guru Gobind Singh. The Guru says:

I bow to Thee, Lord, who art the wielder of the sword.

I bow to Thee, Lord, who art the possessor of arms.

I bow to Thee, Lord, who knowest the ultimate secret,

I bow to Thee, Lord, who lovest the world like a mother.<sup>9</sup>

In the poetry of Guru Gobind Singh, God is predominantly described as symbolized in the weapons of war. He is depicted as the punisher of the evil and the destroyer of tyrants. But the benevolent aspect is also simultaneously and equally forcefully emphasised. God is invoked as the Fountain-head of mercy, the kingman of the poor, and the bestower of Felicity. Thus fusion of the devotional and martial, of the spiritual and the heroic ethos

was the most important feature of the literacy works of Guru Gobind Singh as well as that of this charismatic leadership. The Guru made all sorts of arrangements to generate this spirit among his followers. At his *Darbar* (court), every evening, the Sikhs heard ballads extolling the deeds of warriors who had defied tyranny by the power of arms. A martial atmosphere blended with the spiritual fervour came to pervade the Guru's *Darbar* at Anandpur Sahib.

Guru Gobind Singh was also well aware about the weak practices which had crept into the organisation of the Sikhs and had caused internal disruption in the community. The *masands*<sup>10</sup> (representatives of the Guru) had deviated from their original assignment and Sikh ethics. They were indulging in evil practices and corruption and were misleading the Sikhs of their areas. Many *masands* had set themselves up as Gurus in their own districts and had begun to nominate their own successors. Instead of propagating Sikhism and forwarding the collection and offerings from the devotees to the Guru's treasury, they were engaged in money-lending and trading on the offerings, which they exorted from the local Sikhs.

Guru Gobind Singh decided to abolish the institution of *masands* and to reorganise the 'Guru-Sikh' relationship on closer and direct lines. He did not compromise on half-measures like trying to reform the *masands* but with one stroke of his Order (*Hukamnama*) pronounced an excommunication on the lot of them.<sup>11</sup>

Guru Gobind Singh had decided to provide his people something positive to replace what he had destroyed. The Guru was very clear in his mind about his plan. He had created a spiritually inspired martial atmosphere and an expectancy of military action. The heroic literature produced by him and under

his patronage had proved a successful motivating force for the people to rise in action against injustice, exploitation and the religious persecution of orthodox State. The platform was ready for the future proclamation. Guru Gobind Singh was ready to start his task. He had already announced about his life's mission. He decided to proclaim it and take practical steps to fulfill it. Early in 1699 he sent messages inviting his followers to make a special effort to come to Anandpur Sahib for the festival of Baisakhi.

In his preparations for the proclamation of the *Khalsa*, Guru Gobind Singh did not change any religious ideals preached by the preceding nine Sikh Gurus. He had not only all their attributions but had also acquired the power to mould pacifist *Nanak Panthies* (followers of Guru Nanak) into a creed of warriors (*Sant Sipahi*) and a nation (*Khalsa Commonwealth*) committed to the ideal of the equalitarian society. Guru Gobind Singh had deeply inspired the followers of Guru Nanak by providing them with a high degree of motivation through the creation of the *Khalsa* to achieve the goal prescribed by the founder of Sikhism. Subsequently, the faith founded by Guru Nanak became a political force. Yet it involved no departure from the essential tenets preached by him for the amelioration of man in relation to society.

Guru Gobind Singh's greatest achievement is the creation of the *Khalsa* by the famous baptismal ceremony of the Baisakhi day of 1699 by which the Guru raised the *Khalsa* and bestowed on them his blessings, gift of valour and a distinct identity (five emblems, *Kakars*). The *Khalsa* was bound to a strict code of conduct (*Rahit Maryada*). It was made clear to the *Khalsa* that the affinity between the *Khalsa* and the Guru shall remain conditioned to the adherence of the *Khalsa* to the code of conduct prescribed by Guru. Guru Gobind Singh also ordained *Khalsa* that they should uphold right in every place and destroy evil in every

form; should not submit to oppression and tyranny and fight for the cause of righteousness for the welfare of the humanity. Since the *Khalsa* upheld the social values, it constituted a revolutionary force. The *Khalsa* was obliged to sacrifice its all at the call of the *Dharma* (righteousness). The service of humanity was its religion. In fact, *Khalsa* was meant to be an instrument of God for the fulfillment of humanity.

The establishment of the *Khalsa* was the realisation of Guru Gobind Singh's divinely inspired vision and altruistic attitude for the uplift of the suffering humanity. It was a grand creative deed of history which brought a revolutionary change in the minds of the people and aroused their dormant energies to positive purposes. By the activities of the *Khalsa*, people were made conscious of their servitude and taught to stand up on their feet courageously to redeem their predicament.

The cultural perspective of the *Khalsa* is a documentary evidence of the fact, that the creation of the *Khalsa* by Guru Gobind Singh was the climax of the 230 years of spiritual and social awakening introduced by Guru Nanak.

### References and Notes

1. ਹਮ ਇਹ ਕਾਜ ਜਗਤ ਮੇ ਆਏ॥ ਧਰਮ ਹੇਤ ਗੁਰਦੇਵ ਪਠਾਏ॥  
ਜਹਾਂ ਤਹਾਂ ਤੁਮ ਧਰਮ ਬਿਥਾਰੇ॥ ਦੁਸਟ ਦੇਖੀਯਨਿ ਪਕਰਿ ਪਛਾਰੇ॥  
ਯਾਹੀ ਕਾਜ ਧਰਾ ਹਮ ਜਨਮੈ ॥ਸਮਝ ਲੇਹੁ ਸਾਧੂ ਸਭ ਮਨਮੈ॥  
ਧਰਮ ਚਲਾਵਨ ਸੰਤ ਉਬਾਰਨ॥ ਦੁਸਟ ਸਭਨ ਕੇ ਮੂਲ ਉਪਾਰਨਿ॥  
— *Dasam Granth*, 'Bachitar Natak' (ed. Giani Mohinder Singh Rattan), Pub. Bhai Jawahar Singh Kirpal Singh, Vol. 1, pp. 57-58.
2. See *Hukamnamas*, (letters or epistles) of Guru Gobind Singh pertaining to this aspect in *Hukamname*, ed. Ganda Singh, Pub. Punjabi University, Patiala, 1967, Nos. 33.

3. ਮੁਰ ਪਿਤ ਪੂਰਬ ਕੀਯਸਿ ਪਯਾਨਾ॥ ਭਾਂਤਿ ਭਾਂਤਿ ਕੇ ਤੀਰਥਿ ਨਾਨਾ॥  
ਜਬ ਹੀ ਜਾਤ ਤ੍ਰਿਬੇਣੀ ਭਏ॥ ਪੁੰਨ ਦਾਨ ਦਿਨ ਕਰਤ ਬਿਤਏ॥  
ਤਹੀ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ ਹਮਾਰਾ ਭਯੋ॥ ਪਟਨਾ ਸਹਰ ਬਿਖੈ ਭਵ ਲਯੋ॥  
ਮੱਦ੍ਰ ਦੇਸ ਹਮ ਕੋ ਲੋ ਆਏ॥ ਭਾਂਤਿ ਭਾਂਤਿ ਦਾਈਅਨ ਦੁਲਰਾਏ॥  
ਕੀਨੀ ਅਨਿਕ ਭਾਂਤਿ ਤਨ ਰੋਛਾ॥ ਦੀਨੀ ਭਾਂਤਿ ਭਾਂਤਿ ਕੀ ਸਿੰਛਾ॥

—*Dasam Granth*, 'Bachitar Natak', Vol. 1, p. 59.

4. Some of the finest specimen of Guru Gobind Singh's compositions are given below:

ਪਾਇ ਗਹੇ ਜਬ ਤੇ ਤੁਮਰੇ  
ਤਬ ਤੇ ਕੇਊ ਆਖ ਤਰੇ ਨਹੀਂ ਆਨਯੋ॥  
ਰਾਮ ਰਹਿਮ ਪੁਰਾਨ ਕੁਰਾਨ  
ਅਨੇਕ ਕਹੈਂ ਮਤ ਏਕ ਨ ਮਾਨਯੋ॥

—*Ibid*, 'Ram Avtar', 254.

ਜਿਤੇ ਸਸਤ੍ਰ ਨਾਮੰ ॥ ਨਮਸਕਾਰ ਤਾਮੰ ॥  
ਜਿਤੇ ਅਸਤ੍ਰ ਭਯੰ॥ ਨਮਸਕਾਰ ਤੇਯੰ॥

—*Ibid.*, 'Bachitar Natak', p. 45.

ਦੇਹ ਸਿਵਾ ਬਰ ਮੇਹਿ ਇਹੈ ਸੁਭ ਕਰਮਨ ਤੇ ਕਬਹੂੰ ਨ ਟਰੋ॥  
ਨ ਡਰੋ ਅਰਿ ਸੇ ਜਬ ਜਾਏ ਲਰੇ ਨਿਸਚੈ ਕਰ ਆਪਨੀ ਜੀਤ ਕਰੋ॥  
ਅਰੁ ਸਿਖ ਹੋਂ ਆਪਨੇ ਹੀ ਮਨ ਕੇ, ਇਹ ਲਾਲਚ ਹਉ ਗੁਨ ਤਉ ਉਚਰੋ॥  
ਜਬ ਆਵ ਕੀ ਅਉਧ ਨਿਦਾਨ ਬਨੈ, ਅਤ ਹੀ ਰਨ ਮੈ ਤਬ ਜੂਝ ਮਰੋ॥

—*Ibid.*, Markand Puran, 'Chandi Charitar', Sawayya 231 p. 99.

ਛਤ੍ਰੀ ਕੇ ਪੂਤ ਹੋ ਬਾਮਨ ਕੇ ਨਹਿ  
ਕੈ ਤਪੁ ਆਵਤ ਹੈ ਜੁ ਕਰੋ॥

—*Ibid.*, 'Akal Ustat', p. 570.

ਕੂਰ ਕ੍ਰਿਆ ਉਰਭਿਓ ਸਭ ਹੀ ਜਗੁ  
ਸ੍ਰੀ ਭਗਵਾਨ ਕੇ ਭੇਦੁ ਨਾ ਪਾਇਓ॥

—*Ibid.*, 'Sawayya', 10, p. 15.

ਨਮੇ ਤੀਰ ਤੇਪੰ। ਜਿਨੈ ਸਤ੍ਰ ਘੋਪੰ॥  
ਨਮੇ ਧੋਪ ਪਟੰ। ਜਿਨੈ ਦੁਸਟ ਦਟੰ॥

—*Ibid.*, 'Bachitar Natak', p. 45.

ਅਲਹ ਅਭੇਖ ਸੇਈ ਪੁਰਾਨ ਐ ਕੁਰਾਨ ਓਈ॥  
ਏਕ ਹੀ ਸਰੂਪ ਸਭੈ ਏਕ ਹੀ ਬਨਾਉ ਹੈ॥

—*Ibid.*, 'Akal Ustat', 86. p. 19.

ਦਸਮ ਕਥਾ ਭਾਗੋਤ ਕੀ ਭਾਖਾ ਕਰੀ ਬਨਾਇ॥

ਅਵਰ ਬਾਸਨਾ ਨਾਹਿ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਧਰਮ ਜੁੱਧ ਕੇ ਚਾਇ॥

—*Ibid.*, 'Krishan Avtar', 2491, p. 570.

5. ਜੇ ਹਮ ਕੇ ਪਰਮੇਸਰ ਉਚਰਿ ਹੈ॥

ਤੇ ਸਭ ਨਰਕਿ ਕੁੰਡ ਮਹਿ ਪਰਿ ਹੈ॥

ਮੇਕੇ ਦਾਸੁ ਤਵਨ ਕਾ ਜਾਨੇ॥

ਯਾ ਮੈ ਭੇਦੁ ਨ ਰੰਚ ਪਛਾਨੇ॥

ਮੈ ਹੋ ਪਰਮ ਪੁਰਖ ਕੇ ਦਾਸਾ॥

ਦੇਖਨਿ ਆਯੋ ਜਗਤ ਤਮਾਸਾ॥

—*Ibid.*, 'Akal Ustat', 33, p. 57.

6. ਹਿੰਦੂ ਤੁਰਕ ਕੋਊ ਰਾਫਜੀ ਇਮਾਮ ਸਾਫੀ॥ ਮਾਨਸ ਕੀ ਜਾਤ ਸਭੇ ਏਕੈ ਪਹਚਾਨਬੋ॥  
ਕਰਤਾ ਕਰੀਮ ਸੋਈ ਰਾਜਕ ਰਹੀਮ ਓਈ ਦੂਸਰੇ ਨ ਭੇਦ ਕੋਈ ਭੂਲ ਭ੍ਰਮ ਮਾਨਬੋ॥  
ਏਕਹੀ ਕੀ ਸੇਵ ਸਭਹੀ ਕੇ ਗੁਰਦੇਵ ਏਕ ਏਕ ਹੀ ਸਰੂਪ ਸਭੈ ਏਕੈ ਜੋਤ ਜਾਨਬੋ॥  
ਦੇਹੁਰਾ ਮਸੀਤ ਸੋਈ ਪੂਜਾ ਔ ਨਿਵਾਜ ਓਈ ਮਾਨਸ ਸਭੈ ਏਕ ਧੋ ਅਨੇਕ ਕੋ ਭ੍ਰਮਾਉ ਹੈ॥  
ਦੇਵਤਾ ਅਦੇਵ ਜੱਛ ਗੰਧੁਬ ਤੁਰਕ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਨਿਆਰੇ ਨਿਆਰੇ ਦੇਸਨ ਕੇ ਭੇਸ ਕੇ ਪ੍ਰਭਾਉ ਹੈ॥  
ਏਕੈ ਨੈਨ ਏਕੈ ਕਾਨ ਏਕੈ ਦੇਹ ਏਕੈ ਬਾਨ ਖਾਕ ਬਾਦ ਆਤਸ ਔ ਆਬ ਕੋ ਰਲਾਉ ਹੈ॥  
ਅਲਹ ਅਭੇਖ ਸੋਈ ਪੁਰਾਨ ਔ ਕੁਰਾਨ ਓਈ ਏਕ ਹੀ ਸਰੂਪ ਸਭੈ ਏਕ ਹੀ ਬਨਾਉ ਹੈ॥

—*Ibid.*, 'Akal Ustat', p. 19

7. ਨਮਸਕਾਰ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਖਤਗ ਕੇ ਕਰੋ ਸੁ ਹਿਤੁ ਚਿਤੁ ਲਾਇ॥

ਪੂਰਨ ਕਰੋ ਗਿਰੰਥ ਇਹ ਤੁਮ ਮੁਹਿ ਕਰਹੁ ਸਹਾਇ॥

—*Ibid.*, 'Bachitar Natak', p. 39.

8. ਖੰਗ ਖੰਡ ਬਿਹੰਡੇ ਖਲ ਦਲ ਖੰਡੇ ਅਤਿ ਰਣ ਮੰਡੇ ਬਰਬੰਡੇ॥

ਭੁਜ ਦੰਡ ਅਖੰਡੇ ਤੇਜ ਪ੍ਰਚੰਡੇ ਜੋਤਿ ਅਮੰਡੇ ਭਾਨ ਪ੍ਰਭੰ॥

ਸੁਖ ਸੰਤਾ ਕਰਣੰ ਦੁਰਮਤਿ ਦਰਣੰ ਕਿਲਬਿਖ ਹਰਣੰ ਅਸ ਸਰਣੰ॥

ਜੈ ਜੈ ਜਗ ਕਾਰਣ ਸ੍ਰਿਸਟਿ ਉਬਾਰਣ ਮਮ ਪ੍ਰਤਿਪਾਰਣ ਜੈ ਤੇਗੰ॥

—*Ibid.*, 'Bachitar Natak', p. 39.

ਅਰੁ ਅਉਰ ਜੰਜਾਰ ਜਿਤੇ ਗ੍ਰਹ ਕੇ

ਤੁਹਿ ਤਿਆਗ ਕਹਾ ਚਿਤ ਤਾ ਮੈ ਧਰੇ॥

—*Ibid.*, 'Krishna Avtar', 2489, p. 570.

ਸਾਚੁ ਕਹੋ ਸੁਨ ਲੋਹੁ ਸਭੈ

ਜਿਨ ਪ੍ਰੇਮੁ ਕੀਓ ਤਿਨ ਹੀ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਪਾਇਓ॥

—*Ibid.*, 'Sawayya', p. 14.

ਮਾਨਸ ਕੀ ਜਾਤ ਸਭੈ ਏਕੈ ਪਹਚਾਨਬੋ॥

—*Ibid.*, 'Akal Ustat' p.19.

ਦੇਹਰਾ ਮਸੀਤ ਸੋਈ ਪੂਜਾ ਔ ਨਿਵਾਜ ਓਈ  
 ਮਾਨਸ ਸਭੈ ਏਕ ਪੈ ਅਨੇਕ ਕੋ ਭ੍ਰਮਾਓ ਹੈ॥  
 ਦੇਵਤਾ ਅਦੇਵ ਜੱਛ ਗੰਧੂਬ ਤੁਰਕ ਹਿੰਦੂ  
 ਨਿਆਰੇ ਨਿਆਰੇ ਦੇਸਨ ਕੇ ਭੋਸ ਕੇ ਪ੍ਰਭਾਉ ਹੈ॥  
 ਏਕੈ ਨੈਨ ਏਕੈ ਕਾਨ ਏਕੈ ਦੇਹ ਏਕੈ ਬਾਨ  
 ਖਾਕ ਬਾਦ ਆਤਸ ਔ ਆਬ ਕੇ ਰਲਾਉ ਹੈ॥

—*Ibid.*, 'Bachitar Natak', p. 19.

ਸਿੰਮ੍ਰਿਤਿ ਸਾਸਤ੍ਰ ਬੇਦ ਸਭੈ  
 ਬਹੁ ਭੇਦ ਕਹੈ ਹਮ ਏਕ ਨ ਜਾਨਯੋ॥

—*Dasam Granth*, 'Ram Avtar'. p. 254.

ਜੈਸੇ ਏਕ ਆਗ ਤੇ ਕਨੂਕਾ ਕੋਟ ਆਗ ਉਠੇ  
 ਨਿਆਰੇ ਨਿਆਰੇ ਹੁਟਿਕੈ ਫੇਰਿ ਆਗ ਮੈ ਮਿਲਾਹਗੇ॥  
 ਜੈਸੇ ਏਕ ਧੂਰ ਤੇ ਅਨੇਕ ਧੂਰ ਪੂਰਤ ਹੈ  
 ਧੂਰ ਕੇ ਕਨੂਕਾ ਫੇਰ ਧੂਰ ਹੀ ਸਮਾਹਗੇ॥  
 ਜੈਸੇ ਏਕ ਨਦ ਤੇ ਤਰੰਗ ਕੋਟ ਉਪਜਤ ਹੈ  
 ਪਾਨ ਕੇ ਤਰੰਗ ਸਭੈ ਪਾਨ ਹੀ ਕਹਾਹਗੇ॥  
 ਤੈਸੇ ਬਿਸ੍ਰੁ ਰੂਪ ਤੇ ਅਭੂਤ ਭੂਤ ਪ੍ਰਗਟ ਹੋਇ  
 ਤਾਹੀ ਤੇ ਉਪਜ ਸਭੈ ਤਾਹੀ ਮੈ ਸਮਾਹਗੇ॥

—*Ibid.*, 'Akal Ustat', p. 19.

ਕਾਹੂ ਨੈ ਪਾਹਨ ਪੂਜ ਧਰੇ ਸਿਰ  
 ਕਾਹੂ ਨੈ ਲਿੰਗੁ ਗਰੇ ਲਟਕਾਇਓ॥  
 ਕਾਹੂ ਲਖਿਓ ਹਰਿ ਅਵਾਚੀ ਦਿਸਾ ਮਹਿ  
 ਕਾਹੂ ਪਛਾਹ ਕੇ ਸੀਸ ਨਿਵਾਇਓ॥  
 ਕੋਊ ਬੁਤਾਨ ਕੋ ਪੂਜਤ ਹੈ ਪਸੁ  
 ਕੋਊ ਮ੍ਰਿਤਾਨ ਕੋ ਪੂਜਨ ਧਾਇਓ॥

*Ibid.*, 'Akal Ustat', p. 14.

9. ਨਮੇ ਸਸਤ੍ਰੁ ਪਾਣੇ॥ ਨਮੇ ਅਸਤ੍ਰੁ ਮਾਣੇ॥  
 ਨਮੇ ਪਰਮ ਗਿਆਤਾ॥ ਨਮੇ ਲੋਕ ਮਾਤਾ॥

—*Ibid.*, 'Jap Sahib' p. 3.

10. *Masand*: an agent or a representative of the Sikh Guru; the holder of a *manji*; the Sikh priest appointed from the time of Guru Amar Das onwards to exercise spiritual authority on behalf of the Guru, to receive offerings from the Sikhs and to preach Sikhism in designated areas. Later on the *masands* become corrupt and they began to usurp the offerings received



from the devotees and behaved independently regardless of the Central authority of the *Guru*. Consequently they were disowned and suppressed by Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth Guru of the Sikhs.

11. The first hand documentary evidence of this fact are the *Hukamnamas* (letters or epistles) of Guru Gobind Singh issued to various Sikh *Sangats* after the Creation of the *Khalsa* (March, 1699) which clearly instruct the Sikhs not to have any contact with the *Masands* and to deposit the *kar bheta* (offerings) to the Guru directly by *hundi* (bill of exchange) or through *Mewrah* (postman or courier). These *Hukamnamas* are dated and carry the signatures of the Guru. For details see *Hukamnamas Patshahi 10*, Nos. 46, 48, 49 and 50 in *Hukamname*, ed. Ganda Singh, Pub. Punjabi University, Patiala, 1967.

## **KHALSA : ITS ROLE AND RELEVANCE**

*Prof. Gurdarshan Singh Dhillon*

It was Guru Nanak, the first Sikh Guru, who challenged the conventional yard-sticks of religion and society of his times by welding the spiritual and the temporal planes of human existence into a harmonious whole. He exhorted people to shun the battle of life, not to renounce their hearths and homes, not to retreat to the private solitude of hills and caves but to live the life of full-blooded householders. Aptly described as 'the king of revolution of religious thought'<sup>1</sup>, the Guru aimed at a social transformation that would lead to the emergence of an egalitarian, forward-looking and just social order, with emphasis on work ethic, sharing of one's wealth and contemplation of God's name in pursuit of the higher meaning of life. The Guru's gospel was not a mere system of philosophy or a set of abstract ideas concerning God and mystery of life and death. It was a discipline, a way of life which infused spiritual and social vitality among its followers and brought out a far-reaching transformation in their outlook. The Guru had, in fact, sown the seeds of revolt against the conventional practice of the religion of his day.

It was in keeping with the ideological direction provided by the first Guru that later Gurus took up the new pattern of response to the social, moral and political problems faced by the Indian society. They consolidated, enlarged and systematized that which was laid down by the first Guru. It was in pursuance of Guru Nanak's mission that the tenth Guru Gobind Singh performed the epitomic act of the creation of the Khalsa at Anandpur Sahib, in 1699, on the Vaisakhi day.

Guru Gobind Singh aimed at creating a nation that would be pure and strong enough to free itself from the oppression of the rulers and the priests. The dynamic and revolutionary ideology of the Guru was articulated in the creation of the Khalsa—a brotherhood of saint-soldiers. Sphere of religion was broadened and social responsibility was made an essential part of a religious man's field of action. This was contrary to the prevailing Indian thought which emphasised asceticism, monasticism, celibacy and life-negation. The very conception of the Khalsa embodied the ideal of an integrated human personality which sought to develop all the faculties latent in man.

The Guru believed that religion should be an effective vehicle to promote the values of love, harmony and peace. Spiritual insight into the nature of things should lead to an enlightened understanding of the phenomenal world. Guru's message of oneness of God and brotherhood of mankind vitalised his people and filled them with faith and enthusiasm.

Guru Gobind Singh initiated the practice of *Khande-da-Amrit* (nectar stirred with double edged sword) in 1699. The first to receive *Amrit* were the *Panj Piaras* or the Five Beloved ones. They were to combine moral and physical discipline and become worthy instruments to carry out the Will of God. The initiation ceremony stirred their inner dynamism into action for the welfare of their fellow human beings. Even though it entailed suffering and sacrifice. The first five to enter the fold of the Khalsa were those who had offered to sacrifice their heads in response to Guru's call.<sup>1</sup>

The Guru adopted for himself and his followers the distinctive appellation 'Singh' (lion), who should know no fear and should be ever ready to follow the path of truth and

righteousness. He should bring down the arrogance of those who misused their power and brandished the sword of their tyranny over the heads of the helpless multitudes. Invested with the divinity of a saint and strength and sternness of a soldier, a 'Singh' was to be a saint-soldier. He was to have an enlightened understanding of the phenomenal world and be always ready for full-blooded participation in life. He was to be completely attuned to God's will. His love for God was to be expressed in the form of altruistic deeds or service of mankind. This was quite in keeping with Guru Nanak's injunction. 'Approval or rejection in the court of God is determined only on the basis of one's actions.'<sup>2</sup> Guru's aim was to build up integrated personalities instead of the lopsided individuals indifferent to social needs.

The inner unity of the faith was sought to be strengthened with external uniformity. Members of the Khalsa brotherhood were ordained to wear five K's (1) *Kachcha* (knicker) ensuring briskness of movement at times of action and serving as an easy underwear at times of rest, (2) *Kara* (iron ring) on the right arm as an insignia of sternness and constraint, (3) *Kirpan* (sword) as an emblem of power and as an instrument to eliminate evil and protect the weak, (4) *Kesh* (uncut hair) which have been associated with holiness all over the world and (5) *Kangha* (comb) which was a sheer necessity for keeping the hair clean and tidy. The Guru believed that outward discipline was essential to maintain inner strength and those who deviated from it did not deserve to be reckoned as a part of the Khalsa. 'As long as the *Khalsa* keeps intact its distinctive identity. I shall bestow full glory on them,' declared the Guru. Whenever, five Sikhs assembled they believed that the spirit of Guru Gobind Singh prevailed among them. This conviction took firm roots in the Sikh psyche. It animated and sustained them during the course of their protracted revolutionary struggle. The common bond of being the Khalsa held them

together in the most difficult campaigns. Thus the Khalsa became surcharged with the personality of the Guru who was a symbol of the Highest Personality. As is God, so is the Guru, and as is the Guru, so must be the follower. Such a Khalsa, according to the Guru was to embody in himself the true spiritual mettle and become the image of God with his own attributes.

Considering themselves the standard-bearers of truth and righteousness, members of the Khalsa brotherhood developed the zeal and self-confidence which sometimes fills a whole people and changes history. Inspired by the divine mission (*Agia bhai Akal Ki, Tabi Chalaio Panth*), the Khalsa was also to be His agent in the world to restore justice and righteousness (*Khalsa Akal Purkh Ki Fauj*). One Khalsa was to be equal of a lakh and quarter others. Victory of the Khalsa, in pursuit of righteous cause, was hailed as God's victory and by His own Grace (*Wahi Guru Ji Ka Khalsa, Wahi Guru Ji Ki Fateh*). This also became a mode of greeting with the Khalsa. As an executioner of the Divine Will, Khalsa was not to be afraid of any earthly power. The Guru believed that when all other means to restore righteousness failed, it was legitimate to take up the sword. He looked upon the sword as the visible manifestation of Supreme Power to destroy evil. Sword reminded the Sikhs of their approach to the tyrant and the weak. It was to destroy the tyrant and protect the weak and innocent. It was to serve as a warning against reversion to pacifism, withdrawal from life, other-worldliness and personal salvation. It spelt out the empirical role of the holy man in a societal religion. This marked the climax of the God-oriented mission of Guru Nanak. Gokal Chand Narang has rightly observed that 'the steel of the sword used by Guru Gobind Singh was welded by Guru Nanak.'<sup>3</sup> The Guru's call to wield the sword released the energies of men and women slumbering for centuries and aroused their conscience against their object submission to a tyrannical rule.

The egalitarian principle introduced by the Guru was intended to be a complete break with the earlier religious tradition which sanctified caste. The doors of the Khalsa brotherhood were thrown open to all, irrespective of the distinctions of caste or class. Complete equality was practised in the ranks of the Khalsa. Here it is pertinent to recall that the Five Beloved Ones (*Panj Piaras*) who had offered to sacrifice their heads in response to the Guru's call on the initiation day, in 1699, were drawn from different castes. Guru's egalitarian message, grounded in the sanctity that all human beings are essentially equal, aroused the conscience of the people against untouchability and caste prejudice which had been so deeply rooted in the Indian society. It instilled new confidence and hope among the so-called lower orders of the society who had been degraded, dispossessed and deprived of equal rights for centuries. The peasants, the potters, the artisans, the sweepers and scavengers, all joined the Guru's spiritual commonwealth as equal partners. Guru's powerful and successful attack on *Varna Ashrama Dharma* which was the foundation on which the entire fabric of the earlier Indian religious tradition was reared was a significant step towards the emergence of the Sikhs as an independent community.

Guru's *Nash*<sup>4</sup> doctrine envisaged freedom not only from the bondage of caste but also from hereditary occupational restraints or taboos, lineage barriers, superstitions, rituals and shadow of previous births. Initiation of *Amrit* was meant to destroy diverseness of caste, class and profession. It implied an undertaking to be under the direct control and governance of the Supreme Power directing this universe. The doctrine was of far-reaching consequences, as it was designed to shake to its roots a passive and fatalistic society governed by all sorts of taboos, rituals and superstitions.

The Guru laid emphasis on ethical and moral principles in statecraft and in life generally. Without this foundation of *Dharma*, there could be no true happiness and society could not hold together. The aim was social welfare, not only the welfare of a particular group or caste but of the whole world. This is noteworthy for the tendency of the Indian mind was supposed to be in favour of individual perfection rather than social welfare. Guru envisaged a healthy and harmonious society based on the principles of mutual help, cooperation, tolerance, goodwill and collective well being. The Guru also furnished the order of Khalsa with the institution of *Daswandh* (voluntary contribution of one tenth of one's income to the exchequer of the *Panth*).

The Guru gave a new meaning to the concept of *Mukti*. The Sikh who died in the cause of righteousness was looked upon as a *Mukta* (a liberated soul). The ideal of complete emancipation of man involved not only gaining a higher consciousness for an individual but also total freedom from the fear of death, fear of oppression and injustice and fear of want. This formed the basis of socio-political ideology of the Sikhs. It has become an article of firm conviction with the Sikhs that *Mukti* is not release from the world but liberation from its fears. For them *Mukti* is to seek martyrdom in the battles fought for upholding a righteous and noble cause. 'Blessed are those who die in the service of Lord; such heroes will be honoured in God's court<sup>5</sup>, said Guru Nanak in praise of those who sacrificed their lives for the 'game of love'. In the daily Sikh prayer an eloquent reference is made to the forty Sikhs of Guru Gobind Singh who courted martyrdom at Chamkaur and Khidrana. They are remembered as *Muktas* to this day.

The martyrdom of the Guru's father, mother, four sons and hundreds of followers for the lofty ideals of freedom, justice and righteousness was unique in the annals of mankind. The Guru

ignited that spark in human nature that inspired men to build virtues of compassion, love and commitment to justice and also to suffer and make sacrifices for the cause of righteousness. The ideal of service and sacrifice was of far-reaching import when viewed against the Hindu ideal of the salvation of the individual as a *Vairagi*, or the Christian ideal of mystic contemplation experienced by a hermit in his solitude, or the Muslim ideal of a *Ghazi*, zealously converting the non-Muslims into Islam.

Some scholars have not taken cognizance of Guru's dynamic ideology. They try to blunt the true import of his message by presenting distorted version of his views. J.N. Sarkar contends that Khalsa was a product of the exigencies of the situation. He says, "Guru Gobind Singh organised the Sikhs to suit a special purpose. He converted the spiritual unity of the Sikhs into a means of worldly success...He dwarfed the unity of a religious sect into an instrument of political advancement."<sup>6</sup> Rabindra Nath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi have found fault with the Guru's mission which, they believed, 'diverted the pure stream of religion into the muddy waters of politics'. Their narrow point of view and misrepresentations about the Guru's mission stem from the failure of these persons to capture the spirit of the Guru's ideology in its true perspective. Perhaps they believed that religion was not a matter of self centred spiritual exercise. Creation of the Khalsa was a unique phenomenon in the annals of mankind. Guru declared and demonstrated that it was the paramount duty of the religious man to defend righteousness, even at the cost of his life. In the all-embracing mission of the Guru, religious, moral, social and political concerns were integrated. Religion thus became a potential basis of freedom for man—freedom from tyranny and injustice, freedom from the socio-political persecution of the contemporary rulers and tyranny and oppression of the invaders. Sikh tradition is very eloquent on these subjects. Saga of Sikh



resistance to Mughals and Afghan invaders forms a glorious chapter in the Indian history. Guru's concerns were integrated, universal and without any boundaries.

## CONCLUSION

Khalsa created by Guru Gobind Singh was unique both in its internal features and external form and was to play vital role in the Indian history. In the words of J.D. Cunningham, a living spirit possesses the whole Sikh people and the impress of Gobind has not only elevated and altered the constitutions of their minds but has operated materially and given amplitude to their physical frames.<sup>7</sup>

The Guru released new dynamic force in the socio-political life of the country which enabled his followers to stem the cruel and imperial tide of oppression which had been threatening to destroy the Indian society for the past one thousand years. They organised the most formidable resistance to hordes of foreign invaders, including Ahmad Shah Abdali, known to be the greatest General of the eighteenth century. All foreign invasions from the North-West were finally stopped. Guru's followers were placed in the vanguard of a socio-political revolution which captured the imagination of the people all over the country.

The Guru stood for a catholic faith which was meant for all men without any distinction of race or creed and without any limits of time and space. In these days of globalisation, the lofty ideals of unity of God and brotherhood of mankind can secure the prerogative of equal rights for the entire human race and serve as the most effective basis for a new universal human civilisation of love, peace and harmony.

Religion all over the world has acted as a great cohesive force to unite and sustain the communities. It is well-known that

the Holy Roman Empire lasted more than a millenium whereas the early Roman Empire, the unity of which was mainly political and military, could not last for more than three centuries. As mankind steps into the twenty first century, more and more people all over the world are becoming increasingly conscious of the vast transformative potential of religion to build new bridges of understanding and goodwill. A large part of the world is in flux. There is an ethical and moral vacuum all around. People are in desperate search for some canons of morality, fair-play and justice. The world of old ideas is tottering under its own weight. A world of new ideas, granting dignity, equality and human rights to people is yet to be born. Modernity, secularism and a highly profit-oriented, competitive individualism have shaken the moral foundations of our society. As mankind is working out its transition towards a post-modern, post-secular social order, Guru Gobind Singh's Khalsa can serve as a role model to meet the new requirements

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ਸਚੁ ਤਾ ਪਰੁ ਜਾਣੀਐ ਜਾ ਸਚਿ ਧਰੇ ਪਿਆਰੁ॥  
ਨਾਉ ਸੁਣਿ ਮਨੁ ਰਹਸੀਐ ਤਾ ਪਾਏ ਮੋਖ ਦੁਆਰੁ॥  
ਸਚੁ ਤਾ ਪਰੁ ਜਾਣੀਐ ਜਾ ਦੁਗਤਿ ਜਾਣੈ ਜੀਉ॥  
ਧਰਤਿ ਕਾਇਆ ਸਾਧਿ ਕੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਦੇਇ ਕਰਤਾ ਬੀਉ॥  
ਸਚੁ ਤਾ ਪਰੁ ਜਾਣੀਐ ਜਾ ਸਿਖ ਸਚੀ ਲੋਇ॥  
ਦਇਆ ਜਾਣੈ ਜੀਅ ਕੀ ਕਿਛੁ ਪੁੰਨੁ ਦਾਨੁ ਕਰੇਇ॥  
ਸਚੁ ਤਾ ਪਰੁ ਜਾਣੀਐ ਜਾ ਆਤਮ ਤੀਰਥਿ ਕਰੇ ਨਿਵਾਸੁ॥  
ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਨੇ ਪੁਛਿ ਕੈ ਬਹਿ ਰਹੈ ਕਰੇ ਨਿਵਾਸੁ॥  
ਸਚੁ ਸਭਨਾ ਹੋਇ ਦਾਰੂ ਪਾਪ ਕਛੈ ਧੋਇ॥  
ਨਾਨਕੁ ਵਖਾਣੈ ਬੇਨਤੀ ਜਿਨ ਸਚੁ ਪਲੈ ਹੋਇ॥੨॥

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ਸੇਵਿਹੁ ਸਾਹਿਬੁ ਸੰਮੁਥੁ ਆਪਣਾ ਪੰਥੁ ਸੁਹੇਲਾ ਆਗੈ ਹੋਇ॥  
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# **THE ORDER OF THE KHALSA SIGNIFICANCE IN WORLD HISTORY AND CIVILIZATION**

*Jasbir Singh Ahluwalia*

A unique event of great world historical significance occurred at Sri Anandpur Sahib in India in the year 1699 when the Tenth and last Prophet of Sikhism, Guru Gobind Singh, created the Order of the Khalsa through the sacrament of baptismal *amrit*. The Guru thereby institutionalised the universal, humanistic teachings of Guru Nanak who in the medieval age had envisioned a new civilization characterised by a new value pattern based on the primacy of the human spirit.

Here was a unique message : the humanity of God and the divinity of man—a concept from which emanate, in a sense, the ideals enshrined in the Preamble to the United Nations Charter, which, inter alia, reaffirms "faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small."

We are approaching in 1999 the 300th anniversary of that divine moment in the flux of time that changed the very course of history, particularly in the Indian-sub-continent.

This would be a historic occasion for the Sikh community all over the world not only for introspection and retrospection but also for foreseeing and fore-thinking.

More than that, this would be an occasion for the peoples of the world to renew their commitment, on the threshold of the

coming century, to the unfettered and uninhibited self-expression of the human spirit realizable in a new pluralistic world order.

This historic event—a unique cosmic play, the 300th anniversary of which falls in 1999—unfolded itself at Sri Anandpur Sahib, the city of bliss. Located in hilly surroundings Anandpur was founded by the Nineth Prophet of Sikhism, Guru Teg Bahadur, in 1644. In this historic town is situated one of the five *Sikh Takhts* (the symbolic seats of temporal authority of Sikhism).

For unfolding the *Bachittar Natak* (cosmic event) at the mound (where now stands Takht Sri Keshgarh Sahib) at Sri Anandpur Sahib, Guru Gobind Singh chose the first day of lunar month of Baisakh (the Baisakhi day) that fell on March 30 in 1699 AD—now celebrated on April 13. The beginning of the month of Baisakh symbolizes renewal and regeneration, ripening and fruition. Earlier, it was on this day that Gautam realized enlightenment and became the Buddha, heralding a new era in Indian civilization qualitatively different from the prevalent Hindu civilization and culture. Guru Gobind Singh purposely chose this day for ushering in a new dawn, a new chapter in world history, a new phase of world civilization, envisioned by the first Prophet of Sikhism, Guru Nanak. The Guru had asked the faith-followers from all over India to assemble at Sri Anandpur Sahib on the chosen day. The huge congregation became mysteriously innervated when the Guru with a divine glow in his eyes and a naked sword in his hand, gave a thundering call for a devout Sikh to come forward to offer his head, then and there for the sake of *dharma*. Guru Gobind Singh was putting to test his followers' readiness for sacrifice of life—a sacrifice of the mundane life sublated into the Life Divine. Guru Nanak himself had laid down the test :

If you seek to play (the game) of Love, then, enter upon  
the Path with your head upon your palm.<sup>1</sup>

At the third call of the Guru, according to the tradition, Daya Ram (a Khatri by caste) from Lahore (now in Pakistan Punjab) arose to offer his head to the Guru who took him into an adjoining enclosure. At the subsequent calls of the Guru, came forward Dharam Dass (a Jat) from Rohtak, now in Haryana, in northern India; Mohkam Chand (a washerman) from Dwarika in Gujarat in western India; Himmat Das (a cook from Jheever caste) belonging to Jagan Nath Puri in Orissa in eastern India, and Sahib Chand (a low caste barber) from Bidar in Andhra Pradesh in southern India; they were also taken into the enclosure. The five self-sacrificing Sikhs had undergone a sacramental 'passage', a death-like experience for their celestial vision of and interface with the Spirit-Destroyer and Creator at the same time.

Salutation to the Destroyer of all, Salutation to the  
Creator of all<sup>2</sup>

Clad in new yellow garments with blue turbans, radiating dynamism and determination, they were brought back before the congregation that burst into resounding words of *Sat Sri Akal* (immortal and ever-present is the time-transcendent Spirit). The Guru, then, amidst recitation of the Divine Word, embodied in the sacred hymns, stirred, with a double-edged sword, the water, in a steel vessel, sweetened by sugar plums, and thus prepared the baptismal nectar (*amrit*)—the elixir of courage and compassion—that was administered to the five Sikhs who came to be known as the Beloved Five (*Punj Pyare*). They, with appellation of 'Singh' added to their names, became the first five initiates of the Order of the Khalsa created by the Guru through the sacramental nectar. Guru Gobind Rai became Guru Gobind Singh when he got baptized by the Beloved Five. The act of the Guru seeking baptism from his baptized followers, apart from revealing the democratic ethos of Sikhism, shows that God, the

Guru and the follower become one in spirit (ਆਪੇ ਗੁਰ ਚੇਲਾ); the moment of baptismal transformation becomes the moment of transanimation. This was a sacrament of resurrection, of spiritual ascent of man. The cosmic play at Sri Anandpur Sahib also pointed to the process of descent of God (qua immanent Spirit) in time. The spiritual ascent of man and the historical descent of the Spirit, in a sense, mark, under the generic category of the Khalsa, the evolution of sovereign man in direct communion and unison with the Divine Sovereign (*Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa*).

In the world's speculative thought, Sikh philosophy, in the medieval age, introduced a new revolutionary idea of far-reaching implication and futuristic significance. God in Sikhism is not merely indeterminate Being, but also Creator Who created material world as well as time. Metaphysically this implied non-acceptance of the Vedantic eternity of time, which meant the continuation of a thing in its original self—same state of being (*sat*) eternally, without change, development or evolution. Further, God is also envisioned in Sikh metaphysics as the creative, dynamic Spirit (*Karta Purakh*), becoming determinate (*Sat nam*) in time, in history. The Spirit, through the Guru medium, descends in history to become its operative principle, its dynamic teleology. The spiritual aspect of the Spirit (the spiritual sovereignty) becomes determinate in the Divine Word revealed to the Gurus; the *Adi Granth*, thus, becomes *Guru Granth* (the Sikh Scripture). The temporal aspect of the Spirit (The temporal sovereignty of the Divine) becomes manifest and diffused in the generic category of the Khalsa. Guru Nanak's Panth becomes the Guru Panth, the Khalsa Panth :

This verily is the phenomenal form of the timeless.

Who manifests Himself in the corporate body of the Khalsa<sup>3</sup>

The Khalsa is my determinate form

I am immanent in the Khalsa<sup>4</sup> -Guru Gobind Singh

Much later, Hegel described the modern State (identified with the Prussian military State) as the highest expressional form of the Spirit. The democratic import of the Sikh concept stands in sharp contrast to the tendency towards autocracy and totalitarianism inherent in the Hegelian notion.

The traditional modes of revelation of God known to religion and metaphysics are immanence or reflection in space (nature); indwelling in soul and manifestation in the Word. With Sikh philosophy appears for the first time in religious and speculative thought of the world, a new revelatory mode : the concept of descent of God in time, that is, the Spirit-in-history. The cosmic event (*Bachittar Natak*) at Sri Anandpur Sahib in 1699 A.D. marks the sacrament of the Divine descent *qua* the dynamic Spirit immanent and operative in history—the Khalsa, in its generic sense, being the vehicle of the Spirit.

The baptismal sacrament at Sri Anandpur Sahib was also a cosmic act of regeneration, an experience of sublimation through sublation, that is, dissolution. What was annihilated by the double-edged sword—symbolising the destructive and the creative aspect of God Almighty—was the past *Karma* (deeds done under self-delusion) and its effects and imprints on the psyche that, 'seeping down into the sub-conscious and unconscious layers of mind, solidify into stereotypes, (*Sanskars*) for the present and future deeds. What was created, through sublation of the past *Karma* was a liberated state of mind, no more under siege of the spirit-less customs and conventions, of empty ceremonies and rituals, of degenerating dogma and obsolescent orthodoxy. The partaking of the baptismal nectar awakened the dormant, slumbering spirit of man who rediscovered his divinity, his



sovereignty, his humanity. Realization of the primacy of innate humanity—oneness of all humanity (ਮਾਨਸ ਕੀ ਜਾਤ ਸਭੈ ਏਕੇ ਪਹਿਚਾਨਥੇ)<sup>5</sup> proclaimed by Guru Gobind Singh at the creation of the Khalsa, meant obliteration of all caste based differentiations; all hierarchical disparities; all gender-related discriminations, all creed-centred differences.

On another (empirical) level, the baptismal sacrament institutionalized the evolution, the endogenous development, of the faith-followers into a political community with a corporate identity, besides the individual identity predicated by the five baptismal symbols. Through this institutionalized corporate identity, the Guru wanted to create a mighty force in world history—as a temporal vehicle of the Spirit—for introducing a new societal order, free from evil, injustice and inequity; free from political discriminations and economic disparities; free from credal exclusiveness. What was aimed at through the founding of the Khalsa, through the motor force of a new dispensation with a distinctive corporate identity, was the creation of a new world order characterized by pluralism—religious, cultural, economic and political.

Though the five baptismal symbols define the individual identity of a baptized Sikh, yet their connotations are universalistic in nature. The five baptismal symbols are known as the five *Kakkars* (the five K's) : uncut hair; comb; steel bracelet; short drawers and sword. These five *Kakkars*, marking the visible individual identity, are symbols and not rituals or totems; their ritualistic wearing, without realising and imbibing the underlying spirit, is homologous to Brahmnical tradition of putting on *tilak* (sacred marks on the forehead) and *janeu* (sacred thread) rejected by Sikhism. The uncut hair symbolise the integrality of being, emphasized by the post-modern holistic view, as against the old dualistic view. The comb stresses the value of cleanliness and

purity in personal and social life. The steel bracelet stands for the experiential presence of the Divine whose beginning—less and endless infinity is represented by the circular shape of the symbol. The wearing of short drawers connotes chastity as well as the Sikh rejection of the ascetic tradition that equated nudity with the natural condition of man; this symbol also stands in sharp contrast to the Brahmanical practice of wearing unstitched lower garment (*dhoti*). The sword is not a combat weapon for offensive or defensive action; it is; rather, a symbol of liberated being, of sovereignty of man homologous to the right of a sovereign people to keep the arms. Being symbols, what is important is not their external ritualistic display on the body, but the inculcation in the mind of their significance, their essence, animating the attitude, the deed, the very life of the faith-followers. These are the symbols reminding their wearer that he is to be *sachiar* (truthful living) in his obligation towards God; a *jujhar* (fearless fighter for a righteous cause) in his obligation towards society and a *rehat-dhar* (imbiber of enlightened code of conduct) in his obligation towards the community. These three qualities together constitute the indivisible wholeness of the life of the Khalsa and its members; when the emphasis on the third obligation becomes accentuated at the cost of the two other ones, the five symbols become rituals emptied of their inner sense and essence (ਬਾਣੀ ਬਿਨਾ ਬਾਣਾ).

The five baptismal symbols have deep significance on ethical, social and political levels; they imply a new praxis for individual and social life. Sikhism visualized a revolutionary re-structuration of society, as a step towards a new civilization distinct from the earlier Indic and the Hindu civilization in India, in particular. The Brahmnical system had absolutized the concept of fixity in social organisation, wherein the place of each caste, with predetermined role-structure, as well as of the individual in the caste, was considered to be fixed *a priori* in hierarchical order

given by the law of *Karma*. This system by transforming (in the language of Marx) "a self-developing social state into a never changing natural destiny", ensured stability and passive equilibrium, but at the cost of internal dynamism and evolutionary elan. Seen in this context the role of a Hindu Avtar is a periodical restoration of the balance, whenever the passive equilibrium of society gets disturbed. (This involves the cyclical-devolutionary view of time—a species of spatial time—in which history is seen not as an ongoing directional process, but as a series of the flow and the ebb, occurring in cyclical periodicity). The Sikh Guru is not an Avtar, not only on the ground that God is not conceived of as incarnating Himself in human form, but also for the reason that he is the initiator of a new way of life in the dimension of directional time. (*Path=Panth*), involving innovative structural changes in society.

Brahmanical society permitted only positional mobility of the lower caste in the hierarchical structure through a cultural process named 'sanskritization' by M.N. Srinivas; a lower group having circumstantially gained power or wealth would try to emulate the customs, manners, rituals and even caste denominations of the higher caste for being accepted at a higher rung in the hierarchical ladder. As observed by M.N. Srinivas, this process of sanskritization meant only "positional change for the lower group without any structural change in the system". In fact sanskritization in a way reinforced the principle of fixed hierarchy in so far as it meant vertical mobility within the caste system. It was, further, retrogressive in that it diverted the lower stratum from self-acquisition of status and respectability in its own right, without losing the self-identity in the borrowed feather of the higher class.

Sikhism played a revolutionary role on the sociological

level in re-structuring society on equalitarian basis by rejecting the concept of hierarchical fixity as the tradition-honoured principle of social organization which had received its axiological legitimation from the caste-system, which in turn had the law of *Karma* as its metaphysical basis.

The sociological significance of the baptismal ceremony of *amrit* lies in its being a revolutionary alternative to sanskritization. The baptismal *amrit* provided a new normative principle, process and channel to the lower classes for vertical mobility in their own right, without any sense of guilt about their respective self-identities, which, as such, were no more required to be sublated into simulated behaviour-patterns of the higher caste groups. Says Guru Nanak :

The lowest of the low castes,  
The lowliest of the lowly.  
I seek their kinship-

Why emulate the (so-called) higher ones?  
Thy elevating Grace is  
Where the down-trodden are looked after<sup>6</sup>,

The lower castes and classes were, as such, provided an opportunity of vertical mobility upto the highest level. The new normative principle of social organisation introduced by the baptismal *amrit*, made people realise their essential humanistic identity with a sense of horizontal solidarity as co-equal members in the Order of the Khalsa which does not admit of fixed, stratified role-performance, nor the caste-based differentiation of connubial and ritual functions. Consequently this revolutionary normative principle provides for a new kind of vertical mobility that *ipso facto* involves an ongoing process of re-structuration of open society on equalitarian basis—a process that stands in sharp

contrast to sanskritization that permitted selective vertical movement, while ensuring the foundation of the hierarchized, closed system of caste-based society and the concomitant caste-system.

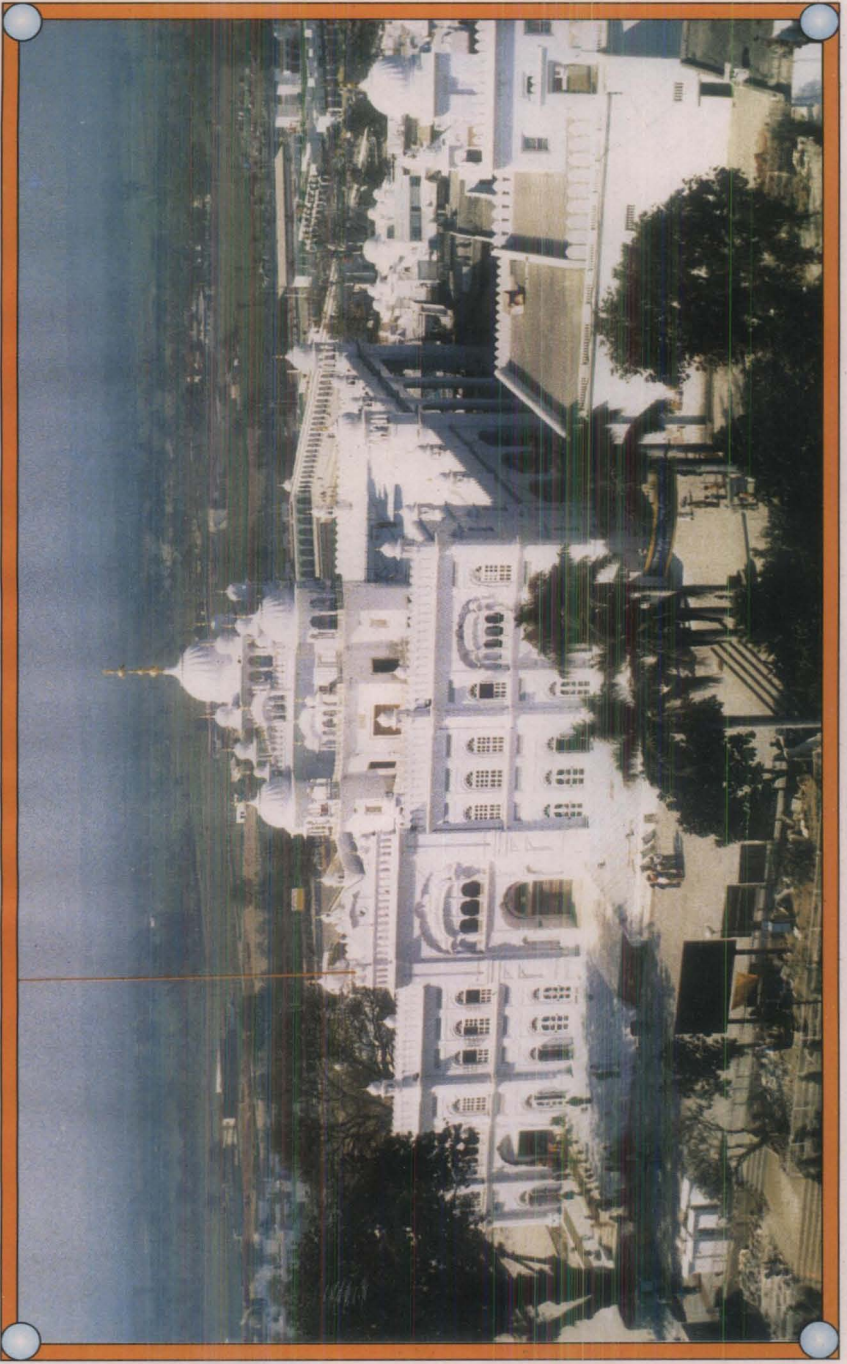
The teleological goal of the Khalsa, for which it was created under the Divine Will (ਆਗਾਯਾ ਭਈ ਅਕਾਲ ਕੀ) *qua* a community of the *sachiar* the *jujhar*, *rehat-dhar*, was not simply, *individual* salvation in the world hereafter; or even *individual* redemption in the world here and now. The universal societal concerns of Sikhism—as distinct from the existential concerns of the Sikhs at any given point of time and place—constitute the teleological goal of the Khalsa presaged by Guru Arjan, the fifth Prophet, in the following words :

All are equal partners in Thy commonwealth, with none  
treated as alien or outsider<sup>7</sup>

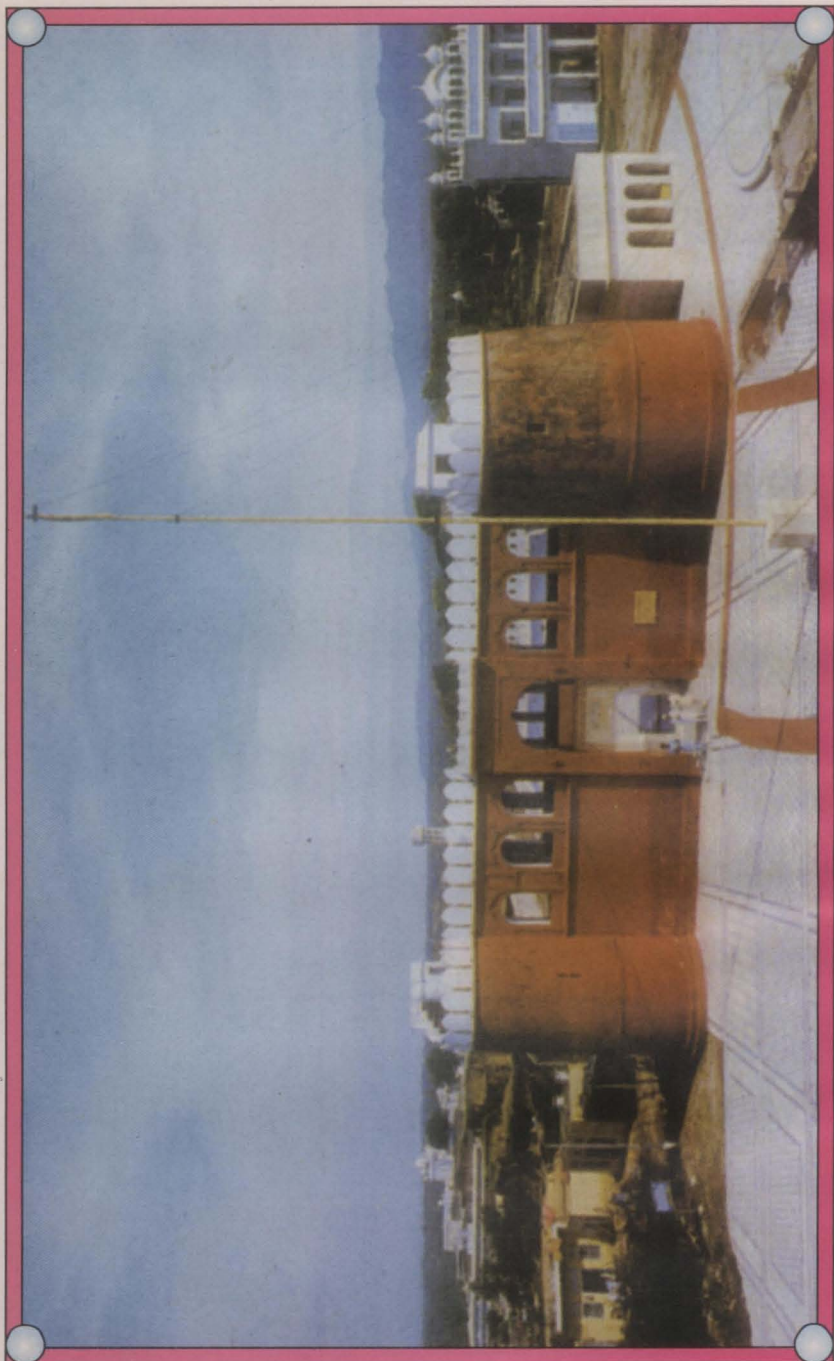
Here was a message for ushering in a new value-pattern, a new dispensation, based on the fundamental principles of equality, justice and compassion, liberty and fraternity; this was a divine manifesto for a new civilization on the pillars of humanism, liberalism, universalism and pluralism. Ontological dualism of mind and matter, and epistemic dichotomy of the subject and the object—that have characterized the Western civilization of the past few centuries—are both sublated into the unifying life of the "Spirit-in-history"—a concept that provides a new normative basis for the emergence of the post-modern civilization, the first intimations of which, appearing in the Sikh thought over 500 years ago, became phenomenally manifest in and through the creation of the Khalsa about 300 years ago at Sri Anandpur Sahib.

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Takhat Sri Kesgarh Sahib, Sri Anandpur Sahib



Anandgarh Fort, Sri Anandpur Sahib



# THE KHALSA : IDEA AND IDENTITY

*Prof. N. Muthu Mohan*

## 1. Introduction

This is an article about the idea and identity of the Khalsa created by the Tenth Master, Guru Gobind Singh on the splendid Baisakhi day of the year 1699 A.D. The Khalsa is a unique socio-spiritual organisation, embodying the great principle of *Miri-Piri*, culminating a glorious movement of subaltern masses for universal brotherhood, justice, equality and a new piety. This is how Professor Puran Singh exalts the spirit of the Khalsa:

In Guru Gobind Singh, Guru Nanak's sword is unsheathed... With the Guru, Heaven unsheathed its sword to save the people from both religious and political oppression - the fanatic, savage oppression of the oppressors... There is the feeling of Buddha in the breast of Guru Gobind Singh, the same renunciation, the same Nirvana, the same goodwill for all living beings, and yet, it no more wears the 'Yellow Robe. A wholly new shape, long tresses knotted on the crown of his head, a soldier's dress, a sword by the side, and riding on his bay charge...."

Professor Puran Singh continues:

We can trace the most modern tendencies of human aspirations in the Khalsa that Guru Gobind Singh created in the Punjab. Some of us trace in the Khalsa the beginnings of a socialistic society... Modern humanity

must come to accept the conclusions of the Guru on the problem of an ideal, yet workable social reconstruction.<sup>1</sup>

Sardar Jagjit Singh sees in the creation of the Khalsa a well-designed programme of a revolution more popular and plebien than that of the French Revolution and other revolutions of secular type.<sup>2</sup>

The modern poet of the Tamils, Subramania Bharati (1882-1921) celebrated the birth of the Khalsa at Anandpur Sahib as the only alternative to the existing Indian society, an alternative of casteless, egalitarian Republic.<sup>3</sup> Suddhananta Bharatiar (1897-1990), a junior contemporary of Subramania Bharati and the one who dedicated around 2000 lines of chaste Tamil poetry to the Sikh Movement, visualises the formation of the Khalsa, where the fifth member of the *Panj Pyara* is a Tamilian.<sup>4</sup> Suddhananta Bharatiar, as if, gave shape in his epic to the desire of the Tamils to associate themselves in the making of the Khalsa. Or, it is another poetic expression of the general view that exists in South India that Sikhism marks a significant premonstration in the history of non-brahmin social upheavels in India, premonishing the ideals of Narayana Guru in Kerala or the Dravidian Movement in Tamil Nadu in the recent period.

It is with this background the present paper looks at the creation of the Khalsa, its idea and identity.

## **2. The Khalsa, its Idea and Identity**

Idea and identity are two concepts used in this paper to explore the inter-space or the complex dialectics between the rational and the real in the study of Khalsa. In the metaphysical sense, idea is a mere abstraction whereas identity means the actuality. However, the Hegelian Philosophy criticised the Western metaphysical tradition in a particular way. For Hegel, the terms

metaphysical and abstraction meant onesidedness, least oriented on life and consequently, lifeless, static and dead. Hegel had a different definition of idea which is multifaceted, dialectical and concrete. According to Hegel, an abstraction can not be realised in life whereas a concrete idea is realisable, as it contains the seeds of actual life. Otherwise, an idea must always contain the possibility of becoming an identity. The problem between the western metaphysical tradition and Hegel is also the problem between Indian metaphysical tradition and the Sikh Gurus. As we can recall, Vedanta in the Indian Philosophical tradition stood for a vague and abstract Brahman-idea which is proposed to be situated beyond the mayic actuality. It is a speculated onesidedness, a negation of reality and, the death of life and concerteness.

Guru Nanak does not take the Vedantic conceptions as real. He calls them dead matter and they are good only for the museum of human thoughts. They have no use in the field of life. He says, the sun is real, the earth is real; all we see and touch meet and love and feel, and are happy or sorry about, is real.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, there is a paradigm shift in the Sikh thinking from the very beginning. Guru Nanak starts his spiritual search with the programmatic question "How to become a *Sachiar*?" The question is a practical one or a search for a concrete idea, an idea which is alive, a question which is aimed at its realisability. Similarly, the famous statement of Guru Nanak "Truth is the Highest, but still higher is Truthful living" is a programme intended to transform the idea even in its birth -into an identity. It is not at all yet another attempt to "discover" the truth through the traditional ways such as meditation or contemplation or rational analysis. The Sikh programme is very much actual. It is to achieve a concrete form or a real result in the form of a living or a way of life of an individual and society. Thus, travelling from Guru Nanak to Guru

Gobind Singh, one finds the project of *Sachiar* or Truthful living realised in the *Sant-Sipahi* (at the individual end) and in the Khalsa (at the social end). It is thus the concrete idea which took its birth in the First Guru becomes an identity in the Tenth Guru and, the Khalsa comes into existence.

### **3. Identity and Historiography of the Khalsa**

In terms of the concepts of idea and identity discussed above, one notices that modern historiography is more attracted by ideas than by identities. Despite its declarations of being rational or due to its being rational, modern historiography shares with the traditional thinking its metaphysicalism or logocentrism and tends to shatter the unity of the phenomenon with its analytical- again metaphysical of the onesided-categories. It pierces the actual identity to separate its movements into mere abstractions. It demands the actual history to be in accordance with the conceptual or ideational necessities. Categories of modernist historiography such as economic system, peasant community, social classes, progress etc. are so conceptualised that they become universal to be applied to any phenomenon in any part of the world in any age. As the post-modernists say, they are metanarratives.<sup>6</sup> It can be accepted that the modernist historiography can give a skeleton-frame of the actual history. However, it leaves out the blood and flesh and nerves of the actual history, and the unique features of the phenomenon go unnoticed.

Modernist historiography does not recognise the factor of identity or the visible face achieved by a particular people. It is forgotten that the entire history of that particular people is due to that identity. Moreover, the modernist becomes incapable to indicate or to analyse the source of inspiration on which the actual identity and the history of the people really stand upon.

Finally, the modernist historiography presupposes domination or a relation of power over the actual happenings of the history. The point of view is kept with the historian while actual history is seen as a raw material. Its Philosophy is the dichotomy of the historian and actual history, subject and object, reason and object of study. It is the reason of the historian which infuses meaning into the raw material, otherwise said, the historian uses the rational tools to transform the actual history into usable commodities. Thus, actual history always remains outside the disinterested subject who studies the phenomenon of history. The idea stands always antithetical to identity.

It is important to us here that such a rationalist historiographic approach to the history of Khalsa is not only unacceptable but also, it is virtually in variance to the philosophy of Sikhism which consciously aims at overcoming the metaphysical nature and abstractness of ideas. It is necessary to be stated that modernist historiography occupies a pre-Sikh position in its philosophical maturity.

Sirdar Kapur Singh, the learned philosopher of the Sikhs, classically touched this problem in his special address at Punjab Association, Madras in 1976. Referring the modernist European attempts to squeeze the historical Nanak' from what these scholars designate as the legendary Nanak' Kapur Singh says, "European literary tradition delights in generalising and in the abstract and the impersonal while the genius of the almost all the oriental languages... is personal, particular and concrete. The historical Nanak' that is sought to be churned out by modern scholars is not the Nanak who gave birth to the historical upsurge and movement known to History, as Sikhism".<sup>7</sup>

Puran Singh deals the same problem in his own way. He rightly points out the impersonal or abstract approach to the history of Khalsa as Brahmanical.

The Khalsa moves round the names of the Ten Gurus in all practical life and happily not in any great fascination round the unknown name of some unknowable Infinite, deathless or Timeless impersonal Being... Social construction is always to be round a person a living person, and not round an abstract principle... The last test of truth is the growth of life by it and in it.<sup>8</sup>

This is not only the philosophy of the Khalsa but also the philosophical basis needed to the study of Khalsa. In this sense Khalsa can not be reduced to the type of 'peasant community' or 'medieval phenomenon.

#### 4. The Spirit of the Sword

The critique of the philosophical inconsistencies of the modernist historiography, consequently, leads us to the issue of identity of the Khalsa in the context of medieval Indian society. Such a placing, we suppose, would tell us the unique features of the Khalsa. The making of the Khalsa encounters atleast three factors: (i) the active oppression hailing from the rulers of the day, (ii) the inertia formed within the Sikh fold in the form of the *masand* system during a period of a century in Sikh organisation and (iii) the casteist Hindu atmosphere prevailing in and around Punjab in its most complex and accumulated form. It is the magic of the Great Guru Gobind Singh and the wonder of Khalsa that the creation of the Khalsa successfully comes upon and contests the said situation. This wonder has got vividly expressed in the militant mobilised resistance enshrined in the Khalsa on the one hand and in the abolition of the *masand* system within the Sikh fold and the declaration of the *Nash* doctrine on the other hand.

The abolition of the *Masand* system and the proclamation of the *Nash* doctrine are so vital to the history of Sikh religion

that without them Sikhism as we have it today can not be perceived at all. History of many other religious movements, even protest movements evidences that during short span of time, say 100 or 200 years, after the formation of such movements, they turn into their opposites, losing all the protest or democratic content with which they come into existence. Such was the fate of Christianity, Islam, Bhakti Movement and many more. During the fateful years of the post-formation period they used to exhaust the initial enthusiasm and allow feudal structures to be crystalised within their fold or to be succumbed to the feudalising surroundings.<sup>9</sup> But the creation of the Khalsa shows that the Tenth Guru consciously abolished the possibilities of such a course of history of Sikhism. By eradicating the *Masand* system, Guru Gobind Singh refused to award sovereignty to the sacred power usually claimed by the priests in religious systems and thus rejected any space for Hinduism within Sikhism. Similarly, the *Nash* doctrine too checked the slipping back of Sikhism into the caste order of the day.

This is the spirit of the Sword of Guru Gobind Singh, a determinate negation of the oppressive moments within and without the Sikh Movement to pursue a positive project of social justice and spiritual innovation. One observes a still more intensive spirit of negation in the creation of Khalsa. The Order of Khalsa has been created by the Tenth Guru on the basis of the test of selection of the first *Panj Pyara*. It is a test of life and death. A great affirmation is established on the sound foundation of a great negation. "Die, while you live" is a recurring theme in the verses of almost all the Gurus. The Great Guru celebrates God as All Death, All-Steel and Sword. He even says, "First, God created the double-edged dagger, and then, the universe".<sup>10</sup> First, a negation is created, then to create life. Finiteness and limits of human inertia are encountered first, then to unleash the infinite creative potentialities of life. Negation becomes a tremendous source of Revolution.

Such a negation for life is unknown to Indian history as Indian history does not know any revolution. Sikhism particularly, the creation of Khalsa-makes a clear and radical departure from Indian tradition making the Khalsa a boundless source of permanent revolution and innovation of life. And that is the spirit of the sword of Guru Gobind Singh

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## **GURU GOBIND SINGH'S ADDRESS TO THE BAISAKHI CONGREGATION OF 1699 ON THE OCCASION OF THE CREATION OF THE KHALSA**

*Prof. Harnam Singh Shan*

Most of the Sikh and non-Sikh historians who have mentioned or described the historic event, pertaining to the Creation of the Khalsa, have stated that Guru Gobind Singh delivered a very inspiring speech while addressing the great gathering at Anandpur Sahib on the Baisakhi day of 1699. Syed Mohammad Latif, the learned author of the first-ever History of Panjab in English, for instance, stated in 1889:

The Guru now embarked on his great enterprize, that of remodelling the Hindu religion and abolishing the distinctions of caste, by trying to bring all men, without distinction of race or descent, to the adoration of that Supreme Being before whom all men, he argued, were equal. He summoned to his presence all Sikhs... In less than a fortnight, 80,000 Sikhs flocked to Makhowal in obedience to the commands of the Guru and, when all had assembled, the martial Guru... delivered an eloquent address which made a deep impression on the minds of his hearers. He commenced by praising God when he described as the Omnipotent, Almighty, invisible and merciful. God must be worshipped, said he, in truthfulness and sincerity, and no material resemblance must degrade Him...<sup>1</sup>

Latif has not mentioned any source or basis of his information and so have some others; Prof. Harbans Singh, for instance, who in his book on Guru Gobind Singh has quoted a part of that address, according to him, "from a report of the proceedings".<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, Bhagat Lakshman Singh (1863 - 1944), probably the first author of a biography of Guru Gobind Singh in English, also seems to be the first writer who while mentioning its source, stated on 10 March 1909: "Ghulam Mohiyy-ud-din a contemporary Muslim historian, thus refers to the above address of the Guru and to the response with which it was met."<sup>3</sup> He then quoted its Persian text in Roman script, as under:

*Hamaha dar yak mazhab dar ayand ki dui az darmiyan bar khezad wa har chahar warn i Hanud az Brahman, wa Kshatrya wa Sudra wa Vaish ki har yak ra dar Dharm Shastra din i alaihda muqarar ast anra tark dada bar yak tarik saluk numayand , wa hama barabar and wa yake khud ra bar digare tarjih na dihad wa tirath hai manind i Gang wagaira anki dar Ved Shastar t'alimi nha takid i mazid rafta ast az khatar badar kunand wa sawai az Guru Nanak wa khulafai o bar digar az sanadid i hanud masal Ram, Kishan, wa Brahma, wa Devi wagaira i tiqad na numaiyand. Wa Pahul i man girifta marduman i hur chahar baran dar yak zaraf bikhurand, wa az yak digar islah burand. Ham chunin sukhnan bisyar guftand. Chun marduman bishin dand bisyare az Brahmanan wa Chhatriyan barkhastand wa guftand ki mazhabe ki mukhalif i Ved Shastar buwad hargiz qabul name kunem wa mazhab i kuhna ki peshinigan baran iqdam namudand ba guftai kodake (Guru Gobind Singh was a young man then) az dust na dihem. In gufta bar khastand. Magar bist hazar kas raza dadand wa mutabaqat bar zuban awurdand.<sup>4</sup>*

This was followed by its rendering by him into the English language, as given below:

That all should come into (the fold of ) one religion, so that the difference between them (the Hindus and the men of the new Faith) may disappear and all the four castes of the Hindus, viz., the Brahmans, the Chhatris, the Vaishas, and the Shudras, for each of which the Ved Shastra has prescribed a different creed, and deal with one another according to one creed; that they should consider each other as equals and no one should think himself superior to another. And all pilgrimages like that to the Ganges, etc., which are enjoined in the *Vedas* and *Shastras* must be removed from the mind and with the exception of Guru Nanak and his successors, none like Rama, Krishna, Brahma and Devi, etc., should be believed in. And after taking my Pahul (baptism), men of all the four castes may learn from one another. He (Guru Gobind Singh) said a great many things like this. When the poeple heard them, many of the Brahmans and Chhatris got up and said that they would never accept a creed that was opposed to the Vedas and Shastras and they would not give up the old religion which the ancestors had believed in, upon the advice of a youth (Guru Gobind Singh was a young man then). Saying this they got up; but twenty thousand poeple accepted the propaganda and agreed to act its principles.<sup>5</sup>

The highly learned Bhagat erred, however in placing his source of information, viz. Ghulam Muhaiyy-ud-din's *Tawarikh-i-Panjab*, in the late 17th century, knowing not that it was completed in 1848 during the middle of the 19th century A.D.

Satbir Singh (d. 1995), a recent historiographer, has repeated this mistake by similarly stating him to be "a contemporary writer."<sup>6</sup>

Mr. Max Arthur Macauliffe (1837-1913) attributed the source of his information to the report of a contemporary news writer of the Mughal Court. " According to the Persian historian Ghulam Muhaiyyud Din", he stated in his magnum opus published in 1909, "the newswriter of the period sent the Emperor a copy of the Guru's address to his Sikhs on that occasion. It is dated the first of Baisakh, Sambat 1756 (A.D. 1699), and is as following:

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 none pay heed to the Ganges, and other places of pilgrimage which are spoken of 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. Let men of the four castes receive my baptism, eat out of one dish, and feel no disgust or contempt for one another.<sup>7</sup>

Proceeding further, Macauliffe, added; "The newswriter, when forwarding this proclamation to his master, submitted his own report:

When the Guru had thus addressed the crowd, several Brahmans and Khattris stood up, and said that they accepted the religion of Guru Nanak and of the other Gurus. Others, on the contrary, said that they would never accept any religion which was opposed to the teaching of the Veds and the Shastars, and that they would not renounce at the bidding of a boy the ancient faith which had descended to them from their ancestors. Thus, though several refused to accept the Guru's religion,

about twenty thousand men stood up and promised to obey him, as they had the fullest faith in his divine mission.<sup>8</sup>

Bhai Vir Singh (1872-1957) in 1930 also mentioned the report of the said news writer (who has been wrongly named as Ahmed Shah Batalvi by Satbir Singh)<sup>9</sup> as the basis of the above account. But he ascribed its "discovery" to "the searching labours of Bhai Ram Kishan Singh historian of Dhuri." According to him, this is what is given in Macauliffe's book, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol., V., p. 93 and on page 428 of Bhai Ditt Singh Giani's book, *Durga Parbodh*, The same *ibarat* (passage), with some minor variations, is available in print in the *tatimma* (appendix or supplement) of the first volume of *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*.<sup>10</sup> Bhai Vir Singh seems to have used either that version which was searched out by Bhai Ram Kishan Singh or the one which was already published by Bhai Ditt Singh Giani (1853-1901) in his *Durga Parbodh* for the transcription in Gurmukhi script and translation in Panjabi language of the said report in his annotated edition of the *Gur Pratap Suraj Granth* (dated 1843) by Bhai Santokh Singh (1788-1844).

But the above-mentioned appendix of *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*<sup>11</sup> was written neither by its author, Lala Sohan Lal Suri, nor by the aforesaid Ghulam Muhaiyy-ud-din (alias Bute Shah), the author of *Tarikh-i-Panjab*<sup>12</sup> Which were completed in 1848 with the annexation of Panjab to the British dominions in India.

According to Dr. Ganda Singh, this appendix is the work of Ahmed Shah Batalia and is a section of his *Tawarikh-i-Hind*,<sup>13</sup> written by him in 1818. It consists of 44 pages of the printed first volume, dated 1885, of the said *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*, and is entitled as *Zikr-i-Guruan wa Ibtida-i-Singhan wa Mazhab-i-eshan*.<sup>14</sup>

If this is so, then the *Tawarikh-i-Hind* (dated 1818) by Ahmed Shah Batalia comes out as the earliest available source of this official report on the subject, earlier than the *Tawarikh-i-Panjab* (dated 1848) by Ghulam Muhaiyy-ud-din in any case. As manuscripts of these so-far-unpublished histories are not within my reach at present, it is not possible to ascertain the exact extent of indebtedness of the latter to the version of the former; although, Sirdar Kapur Singh told us thus in 1989; "Both the Muslim historians record, almost identically, that on this memorable occasion, after the Guru had baptised the Five Beloved Ones.... he addressed the great gathering of the Sikhs and said."<sup>15</sup> Sirdar Kapur Singh has reproduced hereafter a bit polished English rendering of the first part of the said report from *A Short History of the Sikhs*, published in 1950 by Prof. Teja Singh and Dr. Ganda Singh.<sup>15</sup>

This rendering too is a reformed version of the one published by Macauliffe in 1909, intimating the availability of its Persian Text in *Tawarikh-i-Panjab* by Ghulam Muhaiyy-ud-din. But they, Teja Singh and Ganda Singh, have grouped together both the Muslim historians, as under, before quoting its first part in their text and giving relevant references in a footnote, as below:

He basptised them with sweetened water stirred with a dagger and called them his Beloved Ones. Then he spoke at length on his mission and, according to Bute Shah and Ahmed Shah Batalia, is reported to have said, among other things:

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 laid down for them in the Shastars, 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, such as Rama, Krishna, Brahma and Durga, 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.<sup>16</sup>

The above renderings into English (done by Teja Singh & Ganda Singh and 'polished' by Kapur Singh) pertain only to the first portion of the newswriter's (Bute Shah, pp. 405-406; Ahmed Shah's supplement to Sohan Lal's *Umdat-ut-Twarikh*, p. 5.<sup>16</sup>) report and do not seem to conform, at places, to the original Persian text of the report, which has been made available to us by Bhagat Lakshman Singh and Bhai Vir Singh in their above mentioned works. I have not been able to find, for instance, the equivalent matter of their following sentences or phrases in the above Persian version of the newswriter:

1. Do not follow the old scriptures.
2. Adopting the way of (mutual help and —Five K.'S.) co-operation, mix freely with one another.
3. Feel no disgust (no aloofness from —Five K.'S.) or contempt for one another.

The said English renderings, similarly, omit the translated matter of the following Persian sentences and phrases for instance:

1. *Wa hameh brabarand.*

2. *Wa an amle kesh az mian bardashta.*

3. *Taraqi byaband.*

Yet, it is heartening to note that almost all subsequent scholars and historians have not only confirmed the plausibility of its occurrence and accepted the veracity of its content, but have also reproduced the above rendering verbatim in their respective works.<sup>17</sup>

This has all along been so, because the reported portion of that historic address echoes some of those basic principles which were enunciated by Guru Gobind Singh on that auspicious and memorable occasion. These stand fully corroborated not only by his own soul stirring hymns<sup>18</sup> and the writings of his *hazuri* Sikhs (highly devoted and intimate disciples)<sup>19</sup> but also by some scholarly contemporary poets of his court,<sup>20</sup> and some latter writers too who flourished during the same century and wrote detailed accounts of his life, work and contributions.<sup>21</sup> Above all, it is based on the report of a newswriter of the Mughal Court and is vouched for by the above-mentioned three Muslim historians of Panjab, the land of Anandpur, itself.

In order, however, to facilitate further study and research on the subject, I reproduce below both portions of its available text in Persian as well as in Gurmukhi scripts, alongwith their literal translation into English. While copying, transcribing and translating, I have tried to be as close to the original as has been possible under the circumstances, as stated above. Hence, I do not claim complete accuracy in my interpretation and translation of the same.



## 1. ORIGINAL TEXT IN PERSIAN SCRIPT

همه را در یک مذهب در آید که در  
 از میان برخیزد و هر چهار بن قوم هندو از  
 برهن و پختری و سوز و ویس که هر یکی  
 را در دهرم ساستردین علی هدیه مقرر  
 ست آن را ترک داده بیک طریق سلوک  
 نمایند و همه را برابرند و یکی خود بر دیگری  
 ترجیح ندهند. و آن عمل کشتن از میان  
 برداشته ترکی بیابند و تیرتغ مانند  
 گنگ و غیر آن که در وید و شاستر تاظیم  
 آن را تاکید فرموده است از قاطع برادر  
 کنند و سوای از گورو نانک و خلفا او بر  
 دیگر سنادید هندو مثل رام کشتن و برهنه  
 و دیوی و غیره اعتقاد نه نمایند یا اهل

من گفتمه مردمان هر چه بسیار برین در یک طرف بخورند  
 و از یک دیگر اصلاح ببرند - همچنین سنی سنی  
 بسیار گفتند چون مردمان بیشترند بسیار (۴)  
 از برهمنان و هیتریان بخارستند و گفتند که  
 ما مزه‌بسی گوشتانک و همه گوروان بدان  
 قابل شده نه باشند و مزه‌بسی که مخالف  
 وید ساست بود هرگز قبول نمی‌کنیم و مزه‌بسی  
 کهنه را که پیشینگان اقدام نمودند بگفته  
 کودکی از دست نه دهیم این گفته  
 برخاستند مگر بیست هزار کس رضا دادند  
 و مطابقت بر زبان آوردند -

## 2. ORIGINAL TEXT IN GURMUKHI SCRIPT

ਹਮਰ ਹਾ ਦਰ ਯਕ ਮਜ਼ਹਬ ਦਰ ਆਇੰਦ  
 ਕਿ ਦੂਈ ਅਜ ਦਰਮਿਆਂ ਬਰਖੀਜਦ।  
 ਵ ਹਰ ਚਹਾਰ ਬਰਨੇ ਕੌਮੇ ਹਨੂਦ,  
 ਅਜ ਬ੍ਰਹਮਨ ਵ ਛੱਤ੍ਰੀ ਵ ਸੂਦਰ ਵ ਵੈਸ਼,  
 ਕਿ ਹਰ ਯਕੇ ਰਾ ਦਰ ਧਰਮ-ਸ਼ਾਸਤਰ ਦੀਨ ਅਲਹਿਦਾ ਮੁਕਰਰ ਅਸਤ।  
 ਆਂ ਰਾ ਤਰਕ ਦਾਦਹ ਬਰ ਯਕ ਤਰੀਕ ਸਲੂਕ ਨੁਮਾਇੰਦ।

ਵ ਹਮਰ ਹਾ ਬਰਾਬਰੰਦ  
 ਵ ਯਕੇ ਖੁਦ ਰਾ ਬਰ ਦੀਗਰੇ ਤਰਜੀਅ ਨ ਦਿਹੰਦ।  
 ਵ ਆਂ ਅਮਲੇ ਕੇਸ਼ ਅਜ ਮਿਆਂ ਬਰਦਾਸ਼ਤਹ,  
 ਤਰੱਕੀ ਬਯਾਬੰਦ।  
 ਵ ਤੀਰਥਹਾਏ, ਮਾਨਿੰਦੇ ਗੰਗ ਵਗੈਰਹ,  
 ਆਂ ਕਿ ਦਰ ਵੇਦ ਵ ਸ਼ਾਸਤਰ ਤਾਲੀਮੇ ਆਂ ਹਾ  
 ਤਾਕੀਦੇ ਮਜੀਦ ਰਫਤਹ ਅਸਤ,  
 ਅਜ ਖਾਤਿਰ ਬਦਰ ਕੁਨੰਦ ।

ਵ ਸਿਵਾਏ ਅਜ ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਵ ਖਲੀਫਾਇ ਉ  
 ਬਰ ਦਿਗਰ ਅਜ ਸਨਾਦੀਏ ਹਨੂਦ  
 ਮਿਸਲੇ ਰਾਮ, ਕਿਸ਼ਨ, ਵ ਬ੍ਰਹਮਾ ਵ ਦੇਵੀ ਵਗੈਰਹ...  
 ਇਅਤਕਾਦ ਨਾ ਨੁਮਾਇੰਦ।

ਵ ਪਾਹੁਲੇ ਮਨ ਗ੍ਰਿਫਤਹ  
 ਮਰਦੁਮਾਨੇ ਹਰ ਚਹਾਰ ਬਰਨ  
 ਦਰ ਯਕ ਜਰਫ ਬਿਖੁਰੰਦ।  
 ਵ ਅਜ ਯਕ ਦਿਗਰ ਇਸਲਾਹ ਬੁਰੰਦ।"

ਹਮ ਚੁਨੀਂ ਸੁਖਨਹਾਇ ਬਿਸਯਾਰ ਗੁਫਤੰਦ।  
 ਚੂੰ ਮਰਦੁਮਾਂ ਬਿਸਨੀਦੰਦ

ਬਿਸਯਾਰੇ ਅਜ ਬ੍ਰਹਮਨਾਂ ਵ ਛੱਤ੍ਰੀਆਂ ਬਰਖਾਸਤੰਦ ਵ ਗੁਫਤੰਦ,  
 "ਕਿ ਮਾ ਮਜ਼ਹਬੇ ਕਿ ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ  
 ਵਾ ਹਮਹ ਗੁਰੂਆਂ ਬਦਾਂ ਕਾਯਲ ਨਾ ਸੁਦਹ ਬਾਸਦ।  
 ਵ ਮਜ਼ਹਬੇ ਕਿ ਮੁਖਾਲਿਫੇ ਵੇਦ ਸ਼ਾਸਤਰ ਬਵੰਦ,  
 ਹਰਗਿਜ਼ ਕਬੂਲ ਨਮੇ ਕੁਨੇਮ।  
 ਵ ਮਜ਼ਹਬੇ ਕੁਹਨਾ ਰਾ ਕਿ ਪੇਸ਼ੀਨਗਾਨ ਇਕਦਾਮ ਨਮੂਦੰਦ,  
 ਬਗੁਫਤਹ ਕੂਦਕੇ ਅਜ ਦਸਤ ਨ ਦਿਹੇਮ।"

ਈ ਗੁਫਤਾ ਬਰਖਾਸਤੰਦ,  
 ਮਗਰ ਬਿਸਤ ਹਜ਼ਾਰ ਕਸ ਰਜ਼ਾ ਦਾਦੰਦ,  
 ਵ ਮੁਤਾਬਕਤ ਬਰ ਜੁਬਾਂ ਆਵੁਰਦੰਦ।

### 3. ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH

All should come into the fold of one creed  
 so that the difference among them may disappear,  
 And all the four castes Hindus,  
 (viz, the Brahmans, Chhatris, Vaishas and Shudras)  
 for each of whom the *Ved-Shastras*,  
 have laid down different rules,  
 should abandon those altogether;  
 follow one path and  
 adopt one form of adoration (of God).  
 They should consider one another as equals;  
 and no one should think himself preferable to another.  
 They should leave aside all those rites and customs,  
 and be progressive in their pursuits.  
 The notion about pilgrimages, like that to the Ganges etc.,  
 which are enjoined and emphasised in the *Vedas* and  
*Shastras*,

should be removed from the mind.

With the exception of Guru Nanak and his spiritual successors,  
 none of the Hindu deities,  
 —such as Rama, Krishna, Brahma, and Devi, etc.,  
 are to be adored.

After receiving my *Pahul* (Baptism of the Double-edged sword),

men of all the four castes  
 should eat out of the same vessel  
 and reform one another.

He (Guru Gobind Singh) said  
 many more such things.

When the people heard those,

many of the Brahmans and Chhatris got up and said:

"They would never accept the religion

Which Guru Nanak and the other Guru did not adopt ,  
 and which was opposed to the teachings of *Vedas* and  
*Shastras*,

On the other hand,

they would not give up the ancient religion  
 which their ancestors had believed in,  
 at the bidding of just a boy."

saying this, they left.

In spite of that, twenty thousand men

accepted the Guru's gospel,  
 and pledged to act upon it.

— Report, dated 30 March 1699 of the newswriter of  
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## THE BAISAKHI OF 1699 IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

*Prof. Gurbachan Singh Nayyar*

"I cherish you as my son and I have created you to extend the *Panth*" are the lines occurring in the *Bachittar Natak* or the autobiography of Guru Gobind Singh which suggest how the Guru considered it a divine command to defend the claims of conscience and to serve the cause of righteousness for which he had invincible faith. For the accomplishment of this objective, he instituted the *Khalsa* on the Baisakhi day of 1699 A.D. which signifies the birth day of the Sikh community.

Guru Gobind Singh was destined to play such an eventful role in Indian history as no one before him even dreamt of. Writings of Guru Gobind Singh go a long way in depicting his captivative and multi-sided personality. He felt that there was a divine sanction behind his activities for which God had sent him to this world, namely, to promulgate *dharma*, to raise the holy and to cast away the evil doers from the very roots for which purpose the creation of the *Khalsa* was considered essential.

After his pontification as the tenth Nanak, Guru Gobind Singh became conscious of the huge responsibility which fell upon his shoulders as a spiritual leader of the community facing large threats to its very existence. The glorious sacrifice of his father who bore decapitation for the sake of a religious cause was before him. He could not also forgo the life and activities of his grandfather Guru Hargobind who has to resort to arms.

Guru Gobind Singh visualized that he was to destroy



tyranny and injustice root and branch if he was to carry on Guru Nanak's mission of God-realization but the stuff which he had to deal with, was the rotten society, consisting of chicken-hearted and down trodden people, suffering from the germs of superstitions, whims, untouchability and inequality. He was to engraft chivalry upon the religious zest and zeal of the disciples. Moreover, he was to put these devotees in a position where the fear of being overshadowed by Islam was eliminated. He was to work for the emancipation of the poor. He was to blunt the edges of Mughal repression which was growing sharper every day and to strike at the very roots of the autocratic rule and shatter it to pieces. He was to be the saviour of the Hindu religion without being inimical to Islam. Thus, he was to build up Indian nation against heavy odds. It is in this context that he created the *Khalsa* in 1699 but all this was to come from a divine impulse to take up the cause of righteousness. He laid stress on the essentials of religion which ought not to be compromised even under duress.

His own experience and those of his immediate predecessors made him realize that there was a danger of interference from outside. He had, therefore, to prepare his followers to meet aggression from whichever quarter it might come. After a good deal of thought, he decided to make the wearing of arms a religious duty for his followers. This was one of the results of the institution of the *Khalsa* on the Baisakhi day of the year 1699. Armed saint soldiers were created as the claims of conscience had to be defended, if necessary, with the force of arms.

Tradition goes that the Guru invited a great gathering of his followers at Anandpur on this historic day under a big canopy where Gurdwara Keshgarh Sahib stands today. There, the Guru seems to have delivered a speech defining his divine mission of saving the religion which was in a state of great peril. He dwelt

on the religious persecution and the social evils crept into the society of the time, thereby demanding devotees before the flashing sword, willing to offer themselves for the supreme sacrifice as the cause of *dharma*, required sacrificial blood. It is stated that when the five beloved ones presented themselves before the Guru one by one, he stopped his dramatic demand and gave them injunction of taking baptism of the sword. The Guru vested the authority of initiation to Sikhism to the entire *Panth*. This was a significant step towards the ending of the Guruship in person. Henceforth, the Guru pleaded that, only five Sikhs were required to baptise any number of followers to the faith.

After baptizing them, the Guru himself was baptized by them.<sup>2</sup> Guru Gobind Singh virtually abolished the distinction between the Guru and the *Panth*. He said that the Khalsa was his specific form. He resided in the *Panth*. Being very near to him, the *Khalsa* was his body and soul.

There is a strong tradition that the Guru prescribed the commonly known five Ks for the disciples namely wearing of hair, *kanga* or small comb, *kara* or iron bangle, *kachhera* or short dhoti and sword.<sup>3</sup> He directed that his followers would abstain from taking tobacco<sup>4</sup> and affix the word 'Singh' after their names signifying that they were lions. Guru Gobind Singh stressed the need of baptism of sword and the wearing of arms as a religious duty because the exigency of the time required it for the very survival of the religious order.<sup>5</sup>

Enumerating the impact and scope of baptism of sword, Gordon argued that the dry bones of an oppressed peasantry were stirred into life and the institution of the Sikh baptismal rite at the hands of a few disciples anywhere in a place of worship, in the house or by the road-side, brought about the more full-wide development of the new faith. The Sikhs were virtually transformed into a martial race.

The use of arms was not a new thing, either for Guru Gobind Singh or his followers even before 1699. Nevertheless, this injunction for the *Khalsa* has to be seen in connection with the Guru's conception of God. At one place, he addressed God as "All Steel". At another place, the Guru makes the idea even more explicit :

The arrow and bow are You, the shield and sword are You.

They all attain to salvation who workship You.<sup>6</sup>

Here, Guru Gobind Singh attributes 'might' to God through the use of the ordinary names of weapons. There is no doubt that he thought of the divine might as the instrument of God, justifying the use of physical force in the cause of righteousness. It is significant, therefore, that the *Bachittar Natak* contains the following ideas :

To wear sword is to absolve oneself of a million sins.<sup>7</sup>

Sainapat, who had spent a number of years with Guru Gobind Singh, presented the aim of the creation of the *Khalsa* as to annihilate the wicked and the sinful and to remove all adversity. Further, he looked upon the institution of the *Khalsa* primarily as a measure of internal reform. By it, Guru Gobind Singh established a direct link with his disciples, putting an end thereby to the undesirable agency of the *masands*.<sup>8</sup> In the words of Sainapat 'masands were removed and everyone was made a *Khalsa*.' The *Khalsa* were asked to hand over their voluntary offerings personally to the Guru. Sainapat's statement is fully borne out by some of the *hukamnamas* or orders of Guru Gobind Singh himself. His denunciation of the *masands* is well known. It is clear that Guru Gobind Singh instituted the *Khalsa* to reaffirm the faith of Guru Nanak and to meet any challenge of interference presented to the *Sikh Panth* which he wanted to strengthen and

create in them a sense of self-sacrifice in the defence of their conscience.

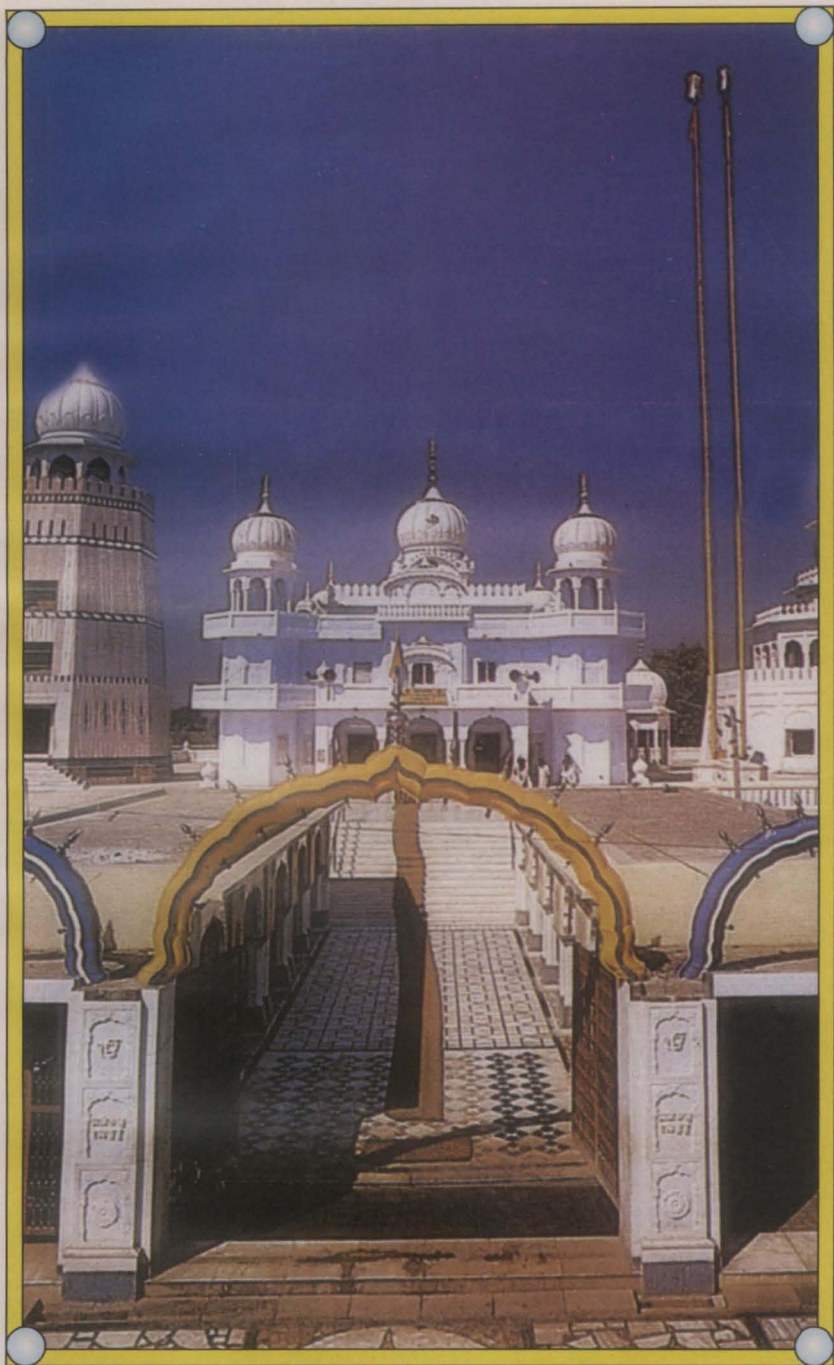
Even before the institution of the *Khalsa* in 1699, Guru Gobind Singh had fought battles for the cause of righteousness. In 1688, he fought against the chief of Garhwal on the borders of the Sirmaur State. On his return to Anandpur on the borders of the Kahlur State, he built fortresses. Around 1690, he personally participated in the battle of Nadaun against the *Faujdar*s of the Mughal Government. In early 1690, he strengthened the defence of Anandpur in the face of threatening expeditions undertaken against him by the Mughal commandants.

After the creation of the *Khalsa*, the Sikhs faced the forces of the Mughals and their supporters in the battle fields as an organised and well knit organization of warriors. The *Khalsa* of Guru Gobind Singh met the reactionary forces of the Hill Rajas and the Mughals in numerous battles.

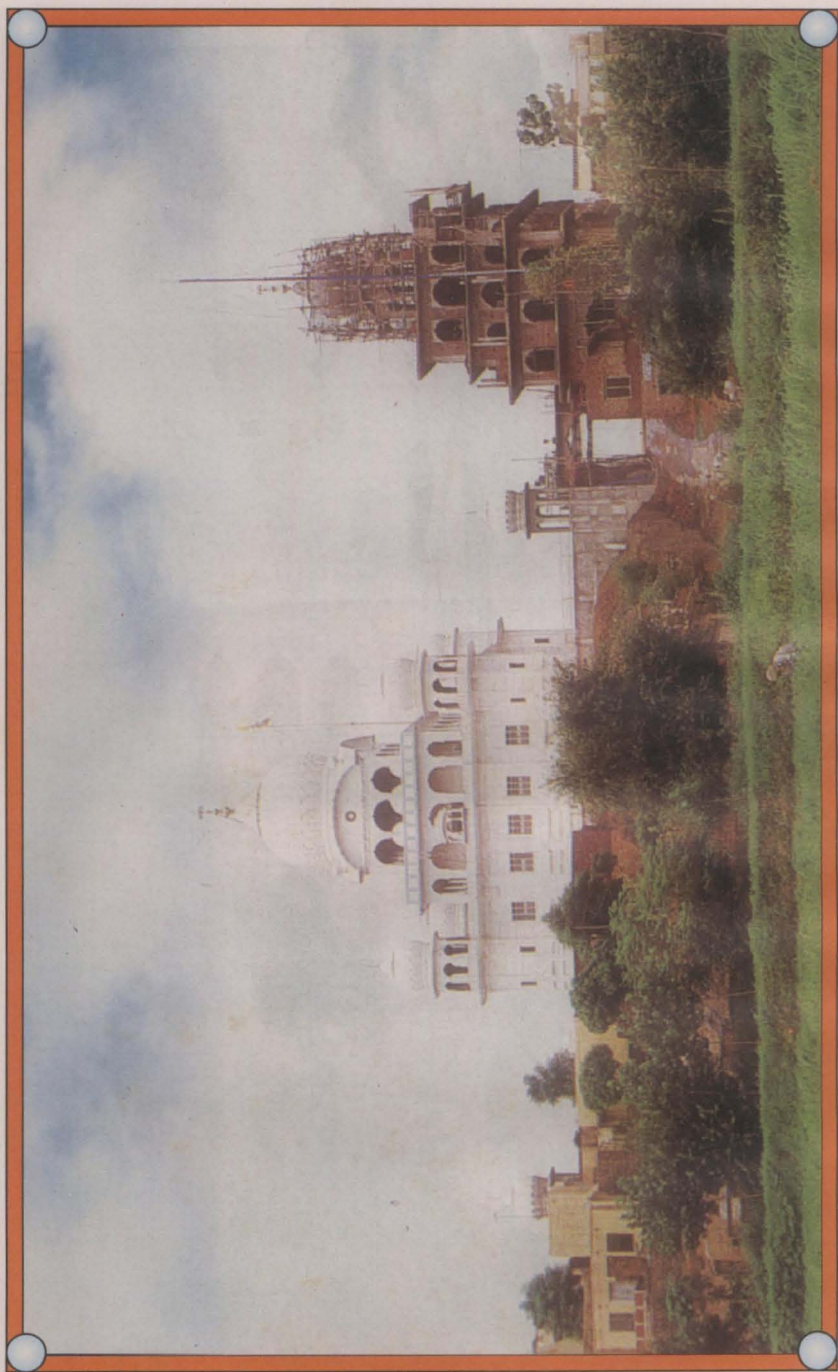
Guru Gobind Singh fought throughout his life against injustice, tyranny and social evils with a divine urge. In order to give finishing touch to the injunction and scheme visualized by Guru Nank, he knelt on the Baisakhi day of 1699 before the selfless common beloved ones devoted for a purely religious cause irrespective of their castes and received *amrit* or nectar from them.

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Takhat Sri Damdama Sahib, Talwandi Sabo



Gurdwara Garhi Chamkaur, Chamkaur Sahib

## KESHAS—GOD'S TEST OF HUMANS

*Dr. Gursharan Singh*

Man is made in the image of God. There are evidence of this in the four religious books namely, *Taurat* of Hazarat Musa; *Jabur* of Prophet Daud; *Anjil* of Hazarat Christ and *Quran* of Hazarat Muhammad. Surely, there must be some purpose of nature in endowing the highest creation on earth - the man, with longest hair on the scalp coupled with biggest brain (cerebrum). No other animal living being haas such a cerebrum in its skull. Nor this crown of glory to adorn its head, as well befits the king of all creation of this globe. This feature cannot be without reason. It cannot be a matter of mere chance or a mistake by nature. Nature knows best what to discard or retain. And whatever is retained is not without any purpose. Practically, hair, a gift from God and not a burden, do not interfere in any daily activity.

No progressive religion or ideology approves of showing disrespect to hairs. Prophets of Islam, Jainism, Buddhism and many other faiths, respected and preserved hairs. Muslim even today venerate the hairs of Hazarat Mohammed. No Musalman can have an opportunity to serve as *Haji* of Haj unless he keeps a long unshorn beard. It is said that **Manu** was the first to laid down condition for Brahmins to cut down their hairs instead of death penalty for his misconduct because of moral death (defeat).

Aurangzeb was a most cruel Muslim ruler, who won the throne of Delhi by killing and imprisoning his father, brothers and their families in a most cruel and merciless manner. He could not be expected to behave kindly towards those who were not his

kith and kin. Besides, he was fanatical bigot and thought that Islam was the only true religion in the world and all other religions were false. He resolved that Islam should be the only religion in his empire. Once Aurangzeb, recognised a person with long unshorn beard as *qazi* and offered his deep reverence and vow. But later on when he came to know that the person was not a *Qazi* but a Hindu, he immediately issued an edict: 'No Hindu in his kingdom can keep beard and tied turban.' Aurangzeb started compelling them to embrace Islam. In April 1669, he issued special and strict orders to the Governors of all provinces to destroy the temples and close the schools of the infidels. Mosques were to be built on the sites of the temples. He also wanted them to make special efforts to compel the infidels to become Muslims. These infidels were to be told to choose between Islam and death. Those who did not accept Islam were to be put to sword. No mercy was to be shown to them. The Sikhs too were not spared and their temples were also destroyed and difficulties were created for their Guru. Similarly Bahadur Shah planned to annihilate the Sikhs root and branch. The homes and hearths of the Sikhs were plundered, their killings officially was allowed and prices were fixed on their heads :

- Rupees ten for a mere information about them.
- Rupees fifty for the actual arrest of a Sikh.
- Rupees eighty for his severed head.

Bahadur Shah further ordered : All Hindus to shave their head hairs and beard so that they were not misunderstood as Sikhs. Thus during the Mughal rule shaving of hairs and beard flourished to its greatest peak and has now become a fashion of the day in India.

### **Scientific Aspect :**

Scientifically, hair are the living tissue always alive and dead only when it falls off in its natural shedding process. Like



other organs, hair are an integral part of the body. Life cycle of the hair presents an interesting study. Each hair originates from its root in the skin, grows to a certain extent specific to the region to which it belongs, lives for a certain period and then falls off. It is then replaced by a fresh growth from the same root and under goes the same process of the life cycle. From birth till death of men, several generations of each hair thus follows one another in turn.

Normal human hairs can be classified according to cyclical phases of growth. Anagen hairs or growing hairs, grow for some three years (1000 days) with the limits generally set between two or six years. The follicular cells grow, divide and become keratinized to form growing hairs. The base of the hair shaft is soft and moist. A darkly pigmented portion is evident just above the hair bulb. Catagen hairs are in the transitional phase lasting a week or two in which all growth activity ceases, with formation of the club hair. Telogen hairs, also known as club hairs, are resting hairs, which continue in this state some three to four months (100 days) before they are pushed out of the hair follicle by the hairs growing underneath them or pulled out by a hair brush or other mechanical mean. It has been estimated that the scalp normally contains about one lac hair with the average shedding rate of 100 hair per day, because 90 per cent of human hair are Anagen and the rest 10 per cent are Catagen or Telogen.

Human hairs are also designated as Lanugo, Vellus or Terminal hairs. Lanugo hair is the fine hair present on the body of the foetus. This is replaced by the Vellus and Terminal hairs. Vellus hairs are fine (fuzz), usually light-coloured and characteristically seen on children's faces and arms. Terminal hair are coarse, thick and dark except in blonds. Hair occurs on all skin surfaces except the palms, soles, glands and prepuce.

Terminal hairs are always present on men's face, chest and abdomen, but Vellus hairs usually predominate on these sites in women. The physiological function of the hair is to ingest and assimilate solar radiations. Each hair is an accumulation of pigmented (coloured) cells-melanin type, which has got the specially affinity for ultra violet rays of the Sun. The Solar radiations cause important photo synthetic chemical developments in the hair cells. Fatty secretion of the skin feeds the hair with the precursor chemical of Vitamin D which is decomposed and recomposed in an assimilate form in the hair cells, with the help of solar rays. Vitamin D is very essential for the growth, development and integrity of all tissues and organs of the body. Besides, Vitamin-D has the most limited distribution in nature of any of the Vitamins. Therefore, it is very essential to preserve and maintain the body resource of it, the only natural food known to contain Vitamins D in significant amount is the milk and milk products.

Without Sun, life is impossible on earth. There is free abundant and inexhaustible supply of solar energy which is safe perennial source of power to meet the needs of life on earth. The solar energy has unlimited potentialities to serve the mankind in a hundred and one ways. The utility of solar energy was known even to the primitive people, who therefore, worshipped Sun as a God. They kept also their body hair secretly intact.

According to the Law of Nature, human has been gifted with hair on his body with a purpose. Hair serve to drain out dirty matter from the body. Just as breathing helps to exhaust harmful gases from the body, similarly considerable dirty matter is discharged through hair. That is why a *Gursikh* has been commanded to wash his hair daily. Hairs are softer than rubber tubes and leeches. During bath when hair are rubbed, they serve

to discharge dirty matter. From, head to foot, hairs on various parts of the body play their role very effectively. Why dont those who shave their hairs ever think of cutting on any other part of the body?

Eyebrows prevent water or perspiration from falling into eyes, due to their particular direction. Eyebrows are like parapets on doors and windows, and removing them can be harmful to eyes. Eyelashes protect the eyes from dust particles, dirt, filth and straws. Similarly, hairs on ear canals and nasal chamber let only filtered air enter the body and stop dirt and filth at the outer checkpoint. Beard and moustaches are for sex differentiation. Mostly males are decorated in nature e.g. Lion, Peacock etc. As head is recognised as the gravitational centre for solar radiations, chin serves as the gravitational centre for attracting moon power. According to Dr. Pasricha of All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi that those who kept moustaches are less prone to suffer from respiratory diseases because moustaches serve as filters for the air they breathe in. Hairs protect us both from intense cold and heat. One who keeps long hairs and ties a turban both in summer and winter remains unaffected by either heat or cold. On the other hand, one who cuts hair, sometimes covers his head and sometimes not, is severely affected by heat and cold. They are most prone to coryza and cold in head. By shaving hairs one suffers lack of essential elements like Zinc, Chromium and Lead. According to research conducted by American psychologist Palgrini and others, unshorn hairs and beard contribute to an impressive personality. On the other hand, those who cut their hairs and shave their beard lose their teeth sooner than others. Repeated cutting of hairs reduces the quantity of protein in the body and one becomes mentally weak.

In the modern fast moving hi-tech scientific era, It is a common problem with every mother to control the long hairs of

hairs enable them to keep the scalp clean and hairs in order? The reply to this is very simple. In the building of better nation, one has to build from the strong foundation up and not from the top down. Today's children are the citizens of tomorrow. Their health has to be built up on a strong foundation. The need of Vitamin-D is maximum during the active growing phase of the early life and hence necessity of long unshorn hair right from the earliest age is rightly justified.

### KESHAS AND SIKHI

*Keshas* is the *Mohar* (insignia) of Guru and every Sikh in this globe is being respected because of these hairs - the unshorn hairs. To cut them off is sheer foolishness and one is declared as *patit* (sinner) as per Sikh *Rehat (Maryada)*. Unshorn hairs, beard and moustaches are an integral part of a *Gursikh* and for their sake, he is prepared to make any sacrifice. Although Guru Gobind Singh laid down the condition of *Keshas* for a Sikh and bestowed *Keshas* as the foremost *Kakar* of the five *kakars* (5K's). on the Baisakhi day (March 30) of 1699, when the tenth Guru initiated the Sikh community into the new order - the *Khalsa* - at Anandpur, the city of Divine Bliss. These 5K's are *Keshas* (unshorn hairs); *Kangha* (comb); *Kara* (iron bracelet); *Kachha* (short Pants) and *Kirpan*(sword). Even prior to this, all the Sikh Gurus and their principal advisors, namely, Bhai Nand Lal, Bhai Gurdas; Baba Buddha; Bhai Dyala, Bhai Mati Dass; Bhai Sati Dass and so on all were *Keshasdhari*. The Guru after about 240 years, merged his being in *the Khalsa*:

*Khalsa mero roop hai khas.*

*Khalsh mahi heo kero niwas*

*The Khalsa*, says Guru, is my other self; In him I live and have my being. Such was his confidence in the strength of the

have my being. Such was his confidence in the strength of the righteous cause that each Sikh called himself a unit of one lakh and a quarter :

*Sawa lakh se ek laraon  
tabbi Gobind Singh naam kahaon.*

According to Bhai Vir Singh, Guru Gobind Singh after a slumbering meditation of 11 months and 11 days, created the Khalsa.

Guru Gobind Singh bestowed these *Keshadhari* and *Amritdhari* Sikhs with the title of *Singh* (a form of address for them) which meant a lion. Truly, they are like a lion in the battle and at the time of peace they surpass Hatim. Lion is the only most furious and powerful mammals having hairy flesh all over its body. Guru Gobind Singh taught his followers to show respect to their hairs because of their many attributes. The English translation of the edict *Hukamnama* of the Guru Gobind Singh still lying in the Central Library of Darbar Sahib, Amritsar is reproduced below :

### ***IK ONKAR SATGURU JI SAHAI***

The Guru shall stand by the entire congregation (*Sarbat Sangat*) of Kabul. We are mighty pleased with you. You should partake of *Amrit* prepared with a two edged sword i.e. *Khanda* from the Five Beloved Once'. Keeping unshorn hairs is our stamp upon you. Never be negligent about your shorts (*Kachh*) and sword (*Kirpan*). Always wear a steel bangle (*Kara*). Wash and comb your hairs both in the morning and evening. None should eat meat of animals slaughtered slowly as *prescribed* by the Islamic law (*Halal*). Do not smoke tobacco. Do not keep company of one who keeps his hairs unshorn and is a killer of a female child. Do not

keep the company of a *Masand* (who claims to be Guru's agent and collects offerings and tithes); a heretic or follower of Ram Rai. Recite *Gurbani* (Sikh scripture) and repeat the name of *Waheguru*. Follow the *rehat* (Sikh code of conduct) prescribed by the 'Guru'. My blessing on the entire congregation."

—The Tenth Guru, Jeth 26, Samvat 1756

These facts have been corroborated by the earliest '*Rehatnamas*'- the Sikh Codes of conduct. In respect of keeping unshorn hairs, the following are *commandments* in the various *Rehatnamas*':

1. The Guru's Sikh never gets himself shaved.  
(Bhai Chaupa Singh).
2. Keep your hairs with loving care. Never cut them with a blade.(Rattan Singh Bhangu).
3. The Guru's Sikh never lets a barber touch his head or face. Only those who keep unshorn hairs deserve to be called Guru's *Panth*.  
(Bhai Kesar Singh).
4. A Sikh is none but a mere sheep without arms and unshorn hair.  
(Bhai Desa Singh).
5. My beloved ones. This is my commandment. Never show me your face without your sword and unshorn hairs.  
(*Guru Bilas Patshahi* 10, by Sukha Singh).

Recognising the significance and importance of five K's during the British rule it was compulsory by law to be Amritdhari for each and every Sikh *Fauji* (soldier). And whenever, any Sikh *fauji* showed disrespect to any of the five K;s and specially to *Keshas*, he was subject to court martial.

Various anti Sikh forces who wanted to annihilate the Sikhs root and branch know very well the importance of *Keshas* in Sikhism. Therefore in very first moment, they always attacked the Sikhs from their *Keshas* - the most deadly and dangerous point. According to the Principle of War, it is always better to attack the enemy's most powerful and strategic point right from the beginning so as to force the enemy to surrender. Therefore, before each and every Sikh martyr, the following condition was laid down :

*Keshas katal karva deo  
jaan maran laee tiaar rho.*

(Either cut down your hairs or be ready to die).

But the Sikhs courted martyrdom and protected the most powerful *Qila-Keshgarh* by tooth and nail.

*Sikhi Kesaan Suaasaan naal nibaahee*

This is what is stressed in the Daily Sikh *Ardas* (prayer) - Let my *Keshas*, breath and Sikhism go together.

Bhai Taru Singh and his sister used to carry cooked food on their heads to supply it to the suffering Sikhs. On secret information, both of them were arrested and brought to Lahore. However, the residents secured the release of his sister by paying a heavy ransom of rupees one lac, because, in those days, it was sincerely believed that :

*Sikh sudavan hai vadh karam  
gau brahmin te soo Dharam*

(it is hundred times worthmore, to save a Sikh or many more. Than to serve the Brahmin or cow, or their ways in preference vov). To Martyr Bhai Taru Singh, his hairs were mercilessly scrapped off along with the scalp. Bhai Taru Singh stood the

ordeal most bravely and all the times kept on reciting *Japji Sahib*. He had vowed that he would leave his mortal frame only after the death of Zakarya Khan, his tormentor. And this is exactly what did happen. Similarly, Baba Ala Singh agreed to pay a heavy ransom of rupees one lac and a quarter to Ahmed Shah Abdali as punishment fee in preference to cut down his *Keshas*.

According to *Suraj Parkash* of Bhai Gian Singh Giani, Some Sikhs asked Guru Gobind Singh that *Rishi Muni* of all the religions were *Keshasdhari*. How then this fashion of shaving hairs began? Guru Gobind Singh replied that Raja Nand Chandra Sudra, was very brave and over powered many kings. These defeated Kings approached the Brahmins to kill Raja Nand Chand, through their *Jap-Tap* and *Mantars*. Raja Nand Chand, came to know of this plan and initially ordered to kill these Brahmins. But on the advise of his Minister, freed these Brahmins after shaving their hairs on the head because of the moral death. But these sinner Brahmins wrote many sloaks about the *Munan* and got their entry into the old *granths*. As result, Hindu started shaving their hairs on the face and the fashion of *Munan* flourished. Earlier to this, it was altogether a different pattern. Hindus used to offer their hairs before *Devi-Devitta* (God-Goddess) being the most precious thing in deep reverence. Other creeds, sects, faiths and ideologies have also expressed deep awareness regarding the importance of keeping unshorn hairs. In the Vedic age, severe punishment was prescribed for shaving one's hairs. Prophets of Islam, Jainism, Buddhism and many other faiths also respected and preserved hairs. The Muslims even today venerate the hairs of Hazrat Mohammed. No progressive religion or ideology approves of showing disrespect to hairs.

Guru Nanak says in *Siri Rag*:

*bhulan andar sabh ko  
abhull guru Kartar.*

(*Siri Raag, Mahalla 1, Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 61*).



All are apt to commit an error. The Guru and the Creator alone are infallible. To err is human. And Guru Amar Dass in *Sorth Raag* says

*so sikh sakha bandap hai bhai  
jo gur ke bhaane vich avai aapne bhaane jo chale bhai  
vichhar chotaa khavai.*

(Sorth, Mahalla 3, SGGS 601).

He alone is the True disciple, friend, kinsman and brother who follows the Guru's Will. He who walks according to his own will, O brother, he is separated from the Lord and bears blows. In this worldly affairs, *dharam* (religion) is based upon certain principles, which is complete in itself and act as a model. While founding the Sikh faith, the first foundation stone that Guru Nanak laid was of self sacrifice, thereby specifically enjoining that who-so-ever, wished to enter the path of his Faith, must come with his head on his palm not to a spirit of seeking any obligation, but out of sheer divine love. Said Guru Nanak Dev :

*jau tau prem khelan ka chao  
sir dhar tali gali meri aao  
it marag peir dhareejee  
sir deeje kaan na keeje*

Similarly, Gur Arjan Dev has also enjoined on the intending Sikhs to accept the ideal of death first:

*pehlan maran kabool, jeevan ki chhad aas  
howo sabna ki renka, tau aao hamare pass*

(Sloak Mahalla 5, SGGS 1102).

Head (*Sir*) of a Sikh is the *Amanat* of Guru which has been offered to Him. Hair is the Gift of God to man. Therefore, one should not meddle in His Creation by own *Manmat* - going astray

from His Will. *Gurbani* says :

Sabat surat Rab de Bhanne baeeman.

The basic discipline is to abide by the Divine Will, willingly and voluntarily. The entire creation is functioning under the direction of the Divine Order, which remains supreme and inviolable.

An English Khalsa lady, MacMillan, who embraced Sikhism, while addressing the Sikh *Sangat* (congregation) Said;

My dear Sikh gentlemen, the *Keshas* of your head are not simply hair, these are those electric wires, which attach you to the powerhouse of mighty Guru Gobind Singh ji and are the culture crown of the hearty head of Bhart-Mata

A Sikh, therefore, as a true *sevak*-servant of Him, must obey his order and live upto his principles. Guru Gobind Singh has simply made it compulsory code of Sikh observance, to take care of the divine Gift and keep it safe in all circumstances.

*Sikhi* and *Sardari* go hand in hand. *Keshas* is the insignia of Sikhism. And pride of a Sikh is *Dastar*-Turban or *Pagri*. It symbolizes grace, culture and honour of a Sikh.

A Sikh neither bares his head nor wears a cap, *but always ties a turban as a symbol of Sardari, honour intoken of being always in obedience of the Divine Will (Sache Kee Sirkaar)*

The Sikh code says :

*Sikh hoe sir topi dharee  
saat janam khusti hoe mare.*

(Being a Sikh and supported by a cap suffers from a devastating leprosy ridden birth and death)

A Sikh with his strong faith in His Creator, is always with a turban on his head as an insignia of his independent conscience and always keep his hair and beard unshorn signifying his complete dedication to the Divine Will:

*Naapak pak kare hadoor hadeesa  
sabat surat dastar sira.*

(Maru, Mahalla 5, *Guru Granth Sahib* p. 1084).

(Make pure that is impure. Deem thou the Lord's presence thy counsel. Let the complete body be the turban on thy head.)

Enslaved by modern contemporary fashions our younger generations are succumbing to hats, caps *patkas*, thereby degenerating the Sikh traditions.

Sikh *Rehat Maryada*, that is, the rules or code of conduct of Sikh religion are the same for men and women. If the *Dastar* is important, then why is it that the Sikh women, with the exception of a very microscopic minority, has discarded and ignored this vital command of the Guru?

### **Epilogue :**

It is a matter of deep shame and mortification to see the disrespect shown to hairs by the modern generation of Sikhhs - the healthiest and the most modern religious ideology. The activities of the so called followers of the most modern religion, capable of giving lead to the whole world, can only encourage degradation and vulgarity but not give any progressive thinking to the world. Alongwith ideological complexities, trimmed beards and short hairs of Sikh Youth in villages and cities have given birth to many social evils. Even those, who are past youth, and are middle aged or old have given up wisdom and in order to look youthful, trim their beards . In such a sad state, it is a mark of misfortune that

no serious remedial measures are being made by *panth* lovers.

We should keep in mind that this new concern for keeping unshorn hair is not confined to only outward appearance. The root cause of degradation is that love and devotion for the Guru has disappeared from the hearts of the Sikhs. The gaining of strength by the anti-Sikh forces in the social milieu has also caused great damage to Sikhism. Life that is being lived is a sign of true culture. Therefore, the present needs to be improved in the light of the past traditions and customs.

Let us live religion. Our life should be our message. Adherence to Sikhism, total submission to the *Hukam* (order) to Guru ensures the greatest independence to our soul and worldly existence. 'Sikhs-Gaurd your Honour.'

## RAJ KAREGA KHALSA

(The Khalsa shall rule)

*Choor Singh*

At the conclusion of every *Ardas* (congregational prayer) the Sikhs recite :

*Raj karega Khalsa, aqi rahe na koe,  
khwar hoe sabh milenge, bache saran jo hoe.*

Whose words are these? What do they mean? Why do the Sikhs recite this litany? To find the answer to all these questions, we have to delve a little into Sikh history.

This couplet is often misconstrued and its origin is also much in dispute. Its most accepted English version is :

*The Khalsa shall rule, all opposition shall disappear:  
Frustrated dissidents shall join, those seeking asylum  
shall survive.*

To trace the origin of this couplet, we have to go back to the time of Guru Gobind Singh because some Sikhs believe that *Raj karega Khalsa* are prophetic words uttered by Guru Gobind Singh.

According to Guru Gobind Singh's Court poet Sainapat, a day before the Guru's demise, Bhai Nand Lal, Dhadi Nath Mal and Bhai Mani Singh were all present at Nander. The Sikhs enquired of Guru Gobind Singh as to whom he was entrusting the *Khalsa*. Bhai Nand Lal in his *Rahit Nama* says that the Guru replied that he has three forms. The first was *Nirgun* of invisible, the second was his Word (*Shabad*) and the third was *Sargun* of

visible. After his physical death he would be invisible. His second form would be the *Adi Granth* and the third or *Sargun* or *rup* (visible form) would be the *Khalsa Panth*. He added that he bestowed his physical form on the *Khalsa*.

The Guru then, accompanied by his *Khalsa*, went to the place where the *Adi Granth* had been installed. He opened the holy book, took a reading, placed five *paisa* and a conconut before it, then went around the sacred scripture five times, bowed every time and declared it as the Guru of the Sikhs for all time to come.

Up to this time the holy book was called *Pothy Sahib*. Guru Gobind Singh, after conferring the holy office of *Guru* on the sacred scripture named it *Guru Granth Sahib*. The Guru stated that in future whoever wished to seek enlightenment, guidance and solace, let him read the *Holy Granth Sahib*. The Guru said that he was entrusting the *Khalsa* to the care of *Akalpurkh* (God). He affirmed :

*Dusar rup Granth Ji jan  
Un ke ang mero kar man  
Jo Sikh Guru darshan ki chah  
Darshan karo Granth Ji ah  
Jo man sath chaho kar bat  
Granth Ji parhe bichare sath  
Jo Mujh bachan sunan ki chae  
Granth Ji parhe sune chit lae  
Mero rup Granth Ji jan  
Is men bhed nahin kuchh man.<sup>1</sup>*

[The *Granth* is my second self. It should be taken for me. A Sikh who wants to see me should have a view of the *Granth*. One who wishes to talk to me, should read the *Granth* and think over it. One who is anxious to listen to my talk should read the *Granth*, and listen to its recitation with attention. Consider the

*Granth* as my own self. Have not the least doubt about it.]

Guru Gobind Singh then sang his last self-composed hymn:

*Agya bhai Akal ki Tabhi chalayo Panth  
Sab Sikhian ko hukum hai Guru Manyo Granth  
Guru Ganth ji manyo pargat Guran ki deh  
Jo Prabhu ko milbo chahe khoj shabad men le.*

[Under orders of the Immortal Being, the *Panth* was established. All the Sikhs are enjoined to accept the *Granth* as their Guru. Consider *Guru Granth* as representing the *Guru's* body. Those who wish to meet God can find their way in its hymns.]

The following two lines which are now recited with this hymn did not form a part of this hymn and they are not the words of Guru Gobind Singh :

*Raj karega Khalsa, aqi rahe na koe,  
khwar hoe sab milange bache saran jo hoe.*

Although some Sikhs believe that these are also Guru Gobind Singh's word, there is no documentary evidence to support this belief.

These words first appeared in Bhai Nand Lal's *Tankhah Nama* which is a record, in poetic form, of a dialogue between Nand Lal and Guru Gobind Singh. The Guru is alleged to have said :

*Sunoh Nand Lal! eh saj  
pargat karoon apana raj*

(Listen Nand Lal! To this testimony!

I shall cause to be established our Sovereign Rule)

Then appear a few other war-like announcements which are

followed by a *Dohera* composed by Nand Lal :

*Raj karega Khalsa, aqi rahe na koe  
khwari hoe sab milenge bache saran jo hoe.*

It is accordingly very clear that these are Nand Lal's words based on what Guru Gobind Singh told him. They are indeed prophetic words and have the sanction of Guru Gobind Singh. That is why they are given such high respect, so much so that they are recited at every *Ardas* as a blessing of the *Guru*.

There is also evidence of other blessings showered on his *Khalsa* by Guru Gobind Singh. He is reported to have said that, "God has destined the *Khalsa* to be the future rulers of the country, and for the realisation of this objective they must continue to struggle unabated.<sup>2</sup> Further, according to Macauliffe, Guru Gobind Singh is alleged to have stated to his mother : "Mother dear, I have been considering how I may confer empire on the *Khalsa*."<sup>3</sup> According to Koer Singh's *Gurbilas Patshahi Das*, page 148, Guru Gobind Singh is alleged to have declared to the *Khalsa* :

*Raj jog tum ko main dina*  
(I have bestowed political sovereignty on you).

Koer Singh based his *Gurbilas Patshahi Das* on what he learnt first hand from his mentor Bhai Mani Singh who was one of the most famous disciples and a *Diwan* (Minister) at the Court of Guru Gobind Singh. Accordingly, what Koer Singh has written is very reliable and it is acceptable evidence that Guru Gobind Singh bestowed political sovereignty on his *Khalsa*. This tallies with what Nand Lal has written, for "bestowed political sovereignty on the *Khalsa*" and *Raj Karega Khalsa* is in substance the same thing. In the light of all this evidence, it is clear that Guru Gobind Singh intended, to and did in fact, bless his *Khalsa* with the destiny to rule Punjab.



In May 1710, Banda Singh Bahadur conquered Sarhind province lying between the rivers Satluj and the Yamuna. Shortly afterwards he extended the boundaries of the Sikh state to the Ganga in the East and upto the banks of river Ravi in the West. He also conquered some parts of what is now West Punjab. Banda Singh Bahadur established the first ever independent Sikh State, complete with a royal seal, its own coin and an efficient administrative system. Even though the first Sikh State was short lived, its effect on the Sikhs was electrifying.

According to Professor Hari Ram Gupta:

In October 1714, owing to the diplomacy of Emperor Farukh Siyar, nearly half of Banda's soldiers, all Sikhs, numbering about fifteen thousand, deserted Banda, and took up service under the Mughals. The couplet Raj Karega Khalsa appears to have been composed by Banda Bahadur with reference to his deserted followers. He joined it to Guru Gobind Singh's hymn and began to sing it as a prayer in order to keep his remaining followers called *Bandai Khalsa*, loyal to the cause of the Guru.<sup>4</sup>

It would appear that Professor Gupta, here, is in error. It is difficult to believe that fifteen thousand Sikhs took up service with the Mughals whom the Sikhs has been fighting right from the time of Guru Hargobind. No authority is cited for this incredible statement. The truth is that fifteen thousand Sikhs left Banda's force because of the intervention of Mata Sundri, the widow of Guru Gobind Singh. She admonished Banda Singh Bahadur for breaches of the *Khalsa* code of conduct. Banda started calling himself a Guru, required his followers to address him as *Sacha Sahib* and changed the *Khalsa* greeting, *Wahe Guru ji ka Khalsa, Wahe Guru ji ki Fateh* into *Fateh Darshan*. For these and other misdeeds Banda was excommunicated from the *Khalsa*

*Panth* by Mata Sundri. Residing at Delhi, Mata Sundri wrote a letter to the *Khalsa* serving with Banda in the Punjab, pointing out that Guru Gobind Singh had bestowed *Padshahi* (political sovereignty) on the *Khalsa Panth* (nation) and not on Banda. She wrote :

*Banda ko khijmat de, de Patshahi nahei  
de Patshahi Panth nij, ap sache Patshahei<sup>5</sup>*

Incidentally, what better evidence could there be than the words of the Gurus' widow, written within six years of his death, confirming that Guru Gobind Singh had bestowed *Padshahi* on his *Khalsa*.

The result of Mata Sundri's intervention was that half of Banda's followers sided with Mata Sundri, left Banda's force and started calling themselves *Tatva Khalsa*. Those who remained loyal to Banda were henceforth known as *Bandai* Sikhs. Professor Gupta is also not correct in his statement that the *Raj karega Khalsa* couplet was composed by Banda Singh Bahadur. It appears in *Tankhah Namah* which was written before Banda came into the picture of Sikh history.

After the defeat of Banda Bahadur in 1716, the Sikhs were almost wiped out. The Mughal Emperor Farukh Siyar issued an edict according to which every Sikh was to be arrested and offered only one option, either Islam or the sword. He was to be executed then and there without hesitation or loss of time. This order was carried out with great zeal. With the sentence of death on their heads the Sikh withdrew to the Punjab hills where they sought refuge in the jungles. Safe in these inaccessible jungles, they sang *Raj karega Khalsa* for the fulfilment of their aspiration and abided their time.

**Tyranny has no long life and tyrants always perish under**

the weight of their own sins. Nine foreign invasions from the North by the dreaded Nadir Shah and his General Ahmad Shah Durrani, and one Maratha incursion, caused the gradual but total collapse of the Mughal rule in the Punjab. When this happened, the *Khalsa* left the jungle on the hills and descended into the plains of the Punjab, carrying fire and sword everywhere. They humbled the Mughals and formed independent principalities known as *misls* on the ashes of the Mughal Empire. They exercised sovereignty in the Punjab and sang *Raj Karega Khalsa* with every justification. In the words of Khushwant Singh.

Ranjit Singh hammered these warring Sikh factions (the *misls*) into a nation and made the nation strong and prosperous. The Sikh nation became not only the strongest Indian power but also one of the most powerful sovereign States in Asia<sup>6</sup>.

Indians who now become irritated on hearing Sikhs claiming to be nation forget or choose to forget that the territories of the Sikh nation extended from the borders of China and Tibet in the North to the deserts of Sindh in the South and from Afghanistan in the North-West to the river Ganges in the East. Present day Indians also forget that it was Sikh nation which put an end to the foreign invasions of India from the North-West which had been going on for a thousand years. The Sikh nation, which possessed the most powerful and disciplined armies in the whole of Asia was highly respected even in Europe. Louis Philippe of France and King William of England sent presents to the Sikh monarch, Maharaja Ranjit Singh, all the way from Europe.

Ranjit Singh named his government, *Sircar-e-Khalsa*, but it was hardly the government of the *Khalsa Panth*. Ranjit Singh had so many non-Sikh Ministers, Generals and other non-Sikhs in positions of power that in the end it was these ministers

especially the dogras who brought about the dissolution of the Sikh *Raj*.

The true standard bearers of the *Khalsa Panth*, reared from the beginning on a republican principle, were the *Khalsa misls*, which fought against the greatest conquerors of all time to save the *Panth* from extinction.

Whereas Ranjit Singh showed great kindness to the British, almost to the extent of becoming subservient to them, the *misls* extended scant respect to the British. On 3rd January 1791, they captured Lt. Col. Robert Stuart, incharge of Anupshahar Cantonment on the Ganga. They kept him as a prisoner at Thanesar for ten months and released him only when Lord Cornwallis, the British Governor-General, paid a ransom of Sixty Thousand Rupees for his release.<sup>7</sup> Such was the courage and might of the *misls*. Ranjit Singh not only unceremoniously liquidated all the *misls* in order to become an autocratic monarch but also destroyed all the institutions of the *Khalsa*, such as the *Gurmata*, the *Sarbat Khalsa* and the *Dal Khalsa*. He surrounded himself with a cotery of sychopants comprising Dogras, Brahmins and Muslims and forgot that it was on the strength of *Khalsa* arms that he came to power. The stalwarts of the *Panth*, such as General Sham Singh Atari, General Hari Singh Nalwa, Baba Sahib Singh Bedi of Una, a direct descendant of Guru Nanak and Akali Phula Singh, the Jathedar of the Akali Takht were all distanced away and tactfully, but without fail, eliminated from all effective voice in the councils of his government. He raised the alien hill Dogras, Dhyani Singh, Khushal Singh and Gulab Singh, almost from the gutter to positions of supreme authority in his government. The insignificant *Purbia* Brahmins, Tej Singh and Lal Singh, were granted such great influence that eventually they were raised to the supreme command of the *Khalsa* Army. By doing all this and forgetting, as did Banda Bahadur, that the *Guru* had bestowed the

*Patshahi* (Sovereignty) on the *Khalsa Panth*, "Ranjit Singh dug his own grave, the graves of his descendants and paved the way to the eventual enslavement of the Sikh people."<sup>8</sup>

Dispossessed of their territories by the British by foul means, the Sikhs have become a dispossessed nation like the Jews, who were in a similar position until the creation of Israel. With so much of adverse publicity against the Sikhs these days, it is time to remind the world that not very long ago, the Sikh nation ruled over the whole of North India and that Sikhs are not just a bunch of insignificant rowdy little rebels as they are made out to be. They are the descendants of brave, mighty warriors who put a stop to all foreign invasions of India and can therefore rightfully walk tall, wherever and whatever their situation may be. As the former rulers of Punjab, the Sikhs have every right to aspire for political power in the Punjab by all lawful means.

The singing of *Raj Karega Khalsa* at every congregational *Ardas* (supplication) is both a reminder and an affirmation of the sovereignty of the *Khalsa Panth* (nation) bestowed on it by Guru Gobind Singh. The Sikhs reverently thank God for this blessing at every prayer session. Just as the Jews believe that they are God's chosen people, likewise, the Sikhs believe that it is their destiny to rule Punjab, the land of their ancestors. To others, this may appear to be blatant wishful thinking, but for Sikhs this belief is an affirmation of their faith in the words of their last Guru. At every *Ardas*, the recital by the congregation, of *Raj Karega Khalsa*, echoes and resonates within the four walls of every Gurdwara in the world.

In 1830, when asked by Capt. Murray, the British Charge-de-Affairs at Ludhiana, as to from what source the Sikhs derived their earthly sovereignty, for the rights of treaty of lawful succession they had none, Bhai Rattan Singh Bhangu, replied

promptly and accurately :

*Dhur dargaahon hum lei Patshaahi  
Sri Satgur ke mukh te pahi,  
Singh hoe raakhaon kim kaan,  
Aerey gaerey ka sangeh furmaan,*

(The Sikhs' right to earthy sovereignty is based on the Will of God as authenticated by the Guru, and therefore, other inferior sanctions are unnecessary).<sup>9</sup>

Sikhs, especially the devout *Khalsas*, who rever the words of their last Guru as the revealed truth, firmly believe that the time will come when their *Raj Karega Khalsa* prayer shall be answered and their aspirations will be fulfilled and an *asli* (true) *Sirkar-e-Khalsa* will rule Punjab, the sacred land of their ancestors. The best is yet to be, and will be, for it is an article of faith with the Sikhs that they are, by Divine sanction, a sovereign nation, destined to rule Punjab. This explains why no prayer session of the Sikhs is complete without their singing *Raj Karega Khalsa* to remind themselves that with the *Patshahi* (political sovereignty) bestowed on the *Khalsa*, by their Guru, they are a sovereign people..

### Editorial Note

This is an abridged version of a paper on *Raj Karega Khalsa*, by Justice Choor Singh, read at a Conference on Sikh Studies held by the European Institute of Sikh Studies in London on 1st November, 1992.

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# BIPAN CHANDRA'S VIEW ABOUT GURU GOBIND SINGH'S RELATION WITH MUGHAL EMPEROR BAHADUR SHAH —A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

*Prof. Dalbir Singh Dhillon*

An objective analysis of Professor Bipan Chandra's views which he expressed in his book *Modern India* (Published by N.C.E.R.T. New Delhi, 1994) needs a careful investigation to find out the historical truth.

The author writes<sup>1</sup> that "Bahadur Shah had tried to conciliate the rebellious Sikhs by making peace with Gobind Singh and giving him a high *mansab*". *Mansab*,<sup>2</sup> means rank, status and position denoted by numerical rank and title i.e. the official position of an employee under the Mughals. Again the author writes<sup>3</sup> that, "After Aurangzeb's death Guru Gobind Singh joined Bahadur Shah's camp as a noble of the rank of 5000 *Zat* and 5000 *Sowar*...", *Zat* means,<sup>4</sup> personal numerical rank held by Mughal officer, whereas '*Sawar*' means, numerical ranking denoting the number of armed heavy cavalymen each Mughal officer was required to bring to the muster. These two above referred historical facts by the author in his book *Modern India*<sup>5</sup> indicate that Guru Gobind Singh was an employee of the Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah with a specific rank.

In this regard it is submitted that no contemporary records either in Persian or Gurmukhi have ever mentioned that Guru Gobind Singh was an employee of the Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah or was given a '*mansab*'.



No doubt some of the eminent scholars have discussed in their respective writings about the relations of Guru Gobind Singh with the Mughal emperors, but no scholar has ever concluded with authenticity by quoting contemporary sources that Guru Gobind Singh joined the services of Emperor Bahadur Shah as a *mansabdar* with a specific rank.

To find out the truth the opinions of some of the scholars regarding Guru Gobind Singh's relations with Emperor Bahadur Shah are hereby analysed.

For example, Dr. J.S. Grewal, an eminent historian, in one of his research papers presented in Twenty-Eighth Session of Indian History Congress held in Mysore in 1966, writes, "Guru Gobind Singh remained with Emperor without participating in any of his campaigns",<sup>6</sup> and the learned author has concluded that Guru was not under the service of the Mughal Emperor with a specific rank. Another prominent work entitled *Guru Gobind Singh and the Mughals* written by Kartar Singh<sup>7</sup> is very useful to study Guru Gobind Singh's relations with Bahadur Shah. He concludes by comparing various Persian and Gurmukhi records that Guru Gobind Singh had never been in the service of Emperor Bahadur Shah. One of the earliest works entitled *Sri Guru Gobind Singh Jee* written by Sher Singh,<sup>8</sup> perhaps one of the most distinguished earlier works on Guru Gobind Singh written in the year 1933, has not mentioned anywhere in his research work about Guru being an employee of the Emperor.

Jadunath Sarkar, a well known historian of Medieval India, writes in his book *History of Aurganzeb*, Vol. III that:

He (Guru) is said to have assisted Bahadur Shah in securing the throne, and the Emperor made much of him at Agra and induced him accompany him on the March to Rajputana and the Deccan.<sup>9</sup>

Another scholar, Indubshan Banerjee, who wrote *Evolution of the Khalsa* in two volumes, has discussed in detail the history of the Sikh Gurus, writes, "... we find no reference anywhere that the Guru participated in any of the actions in which the emperor was engaged and it seems more probable that he has been travelling as a mere companion..."<sup>10</sup>

Other prominent writers on this field like Professor Harbans Singh. Dr. Ganda Singh, Dr. S.S. Bal, S. Khushwant Singh, Dr. Hari Ram Gupta too have not agreed with "service theory" of Guru Gobind Singh.

A Prominent Muslim historian of this field, Muhammad Latif in his book *History of the Panjab* writes :

The new emperor (Bahadur Shah) received the Sikh Guru with distinct and bestowed on him presents, consisting of valuable tents, elephants, horses and appointed him to the command of five thousand men in the army, thus utilizing the services of an insurrectionary leader to the benefit of the State.<sup>11</sup>

This statement do not exclusively proves that Guru was or became an employee of the Mughal Emperor with a specific rank of *Mansab*. Moreover, these views of the writer are personal because he has not quoted any contemporary source to support his views.

One of the European writer Malcolm, writes in his book *Sketch of the Sikhs* that "he (Guru) received favours from the emperor Bahadur Shah; who aware of his military talents, gave him a small military command in the Dekhin"...<sup>12</sup> too is silent about Guru's service under the Mughals and secondly this author also has not quoted any source to support his views.

Max Arthur Macauliffe wrote<sup>13</sup> *The Sikh Religion* in six volumes and he gives a very detailed account of the Sikhs' history and religion, but nowhere he has mentioned that Guru did a job under Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah or he was given a specific rank that of a *mansab*.

Another European writer J.D. Cunningham in his book *History of the Sikhs* writes<sup>14</sup> that

He (Guru ) was treated with respect, and he received a military command in the valley of Godavri. The emperor perhaps thought that the leader of insurrectionary (J.D. Cunningham's and Muhammad Latif's<sup>15</sup> language seems to be the same) Jats might be usefully employed in opposing rebellious Marathas, and Gobind perhaps saw in the imperial service a ready way of disarming suspicion and of reorganising his followers.<sup>16</sup>

The author in footnote<sup>16</sup> 2(p. 72) has mentioned that the above statement is based on Elphinstone's *History of India*,<sup>17</sup> and Khafi Khan's work *Muntakhib-ul-Lubab*.<sup>18</sup>

But a careful study of both these sources i.e. Elphinstone's work *History of India*, and Khafi Khan's work *Muntakhib-ul-Lubab* shall prove that no where the authors have mentioned that Guru was under the imperial service and was given the rank of a noble or *Mansab* with 5000 *Zat* and 5000 *Sowars*. Elphinstone, an eminent historian, who wrote *History of India* in two volumes writes<sup>19</sup> in footnote No.7 (on page 598) that George Forster had mentioned that Guru Gobind Singh had a small command in the Mughal service,"<sup>20</sup> which is confirmed by Khafi Khan" but the learned author (Elphinstone) in footnote No. 7 (p. 598) has not mentioned that on what number of page Khafi Khan has mentioned the above views. It is pertinent to note here that Khafi Khan has not mentioned which has been quoted by the author, rather George Forster has used incorrect translation of the Persian statement of

Khafi Khan and the same statement with faulty translation was used by Elphinstone.

It seems that Elphinstone who wrote *History of India* in 2 volumes used the above said views of Khafi Khan in order to try to prove that Guru Gobind Singh was in the services of Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah (see footnote 7, p. 528). These views were copied and expressed by J.D. Cunningham in his book *History of the Sikhs* (p. 72) and later on by Muhammad Latif, who wrote *History of the Sikhs*.

The following is the statement of Khafi Khan which has led to some historical blunders committed by some historians due to wrong translation of the statement.

Khafi Khan writes in his book *Muntakhib-ul-Lubab*,

*Dar ayyame kih Bahadur Shah badshah 'mut-wa-jah' Haidrabad gardidand, Gobind nam az sargrohan-i-an quam-i-badnam bahazur rasidah be do sad sih sad neza-bardar-e-piyadah dar rakab rafaqat namud."*

Below are given the original lines from the text *Muntakhib-ul-Lubab* written by Khafi Khan :

در ایامی که بهادر شاه بادشاہ متوجہ  
 حیدرآباد گردیدند گویند نام از  
 سوگروان آن قوم بدنام با حضور رسیدن  
 به دو صد صد منزله بردار و پیادوار  
 رقاب رفاقت نمود۔

Infact, Khafi Khan in his work *Muntakhib-ul-Lubab* writes that Guru Gobind Singh-*rafaqat*-i.e. accompanied *Mughal Badshah* in his tour. He had not mentioned anywhere that Guru did a job or service with a specific rank under *Mughal Badshah*.

It seems that the Persian word "*rafaqat*" used by Khafi Khan in his statement against Guru Gobind Singh was wrongly interpreted by George Forster and later on Elphinstone in his book *History of Modern India*, *rafaqat* means company and not service. Elphinstone took the meaning of the word '*rafaqat*' as service instead of 'company'.

Later on the same blunder was committed by J.D. Cunningham who followed Elphinstone and similarly by other writers.

From the above referred statement of a Muslim court historian one can conclude that how much vindictive and derogant remarks he gives to the Sikhs and the Sikh Guru, therefore such a statement should be used very carefully while reconstructing history. But unfortunately this statement is not only used by some writers rather its wrong translation is used to unfold some historical facts of Sikh history and this has created not only error but blunder in Sikh history, whether deliberately or ignorantly.

It is said to be customary in medieval India that if a noble or *Jagirdar/Mansabdar* died without a heir -apparent then his property was attached<sup>21</sup> with the state. According to Sikh chronicles after the demise of the Guru his belongings remained with the *Sangat*. Even, *Badshahnama* of Mughal Emperor *Bahadurshah* did not refer to Guru as a *Mansabdar* or a noble working under the Mughal Imperialist, neither the text refers to Guru's property, whatever it may be.

Lastly, I would like to suggest that almost all the contemporary sources like *Bahadur Shah Nama* of Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah, *Muntakhib-ul-Lubab* of Khafi Khan, *Dasam Granth* of Guru Gobind Singh (though it has some controversy regarding its authorship). *Gurbilas Patshahi Dasvein* and *Akhbarat-i-darbar-i-Mualla* too have not mentioned anywhere that Guru Gobind Singh was an employee or under the services of Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah with a specific rank of a *Mansabdar* to have 5000 *Zat* or 5000 *Sowar*.<sup>22</sup>

After a careful and comparative analysis of the various research works pertaining to Guru Gobind Singh and his relations with Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah, done by the Muslim historians, European historians, Sikh writers and non-Sikh writings, one can conclude that Guru Gobind Singh was neither an employee of the Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah nor he was given a specific rank of a noble or *Mansabdar* with 5000 *Zat* and 5000 *Sowar*.

Thus, the views expressed by Bipan Chandra in his book *Modern India- A history textbook for class XII* seems to be incorrect and needs total revision of the chapter entitled "The Sikh", where the history of the Sikhs has been narrated.

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J.F. Richards, *The New Cambridge History of India-The Mughal Empire*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp. 59-60.
3. Bipan Chandra, *op. cit.* pp. 2, 19.
4. I.H. Qureshi, *op.cit.*, pp. 118-119, J.E. Richards, *op. cit.* pp. 63-64.
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8. Sher Singh, *Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji*, Amritsar. 1955. pp. 128.
9. Jadunath Sarkar, *History of Aurangzeb*, Vol. II. Orient Longman , Calcutta, (Reprint 1971), p. 211.
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11. Muhammad Latif, *History of the Punjab*, Delhi, (Reprint 1964), p. 268.
12. Malcolm, *Sketch of the Sikhs*, Chandigarh, (Reprint 1981), p. 56.
13. Max Arthur MacCauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*.
14. J.D. Cunningham, *History of the Sikhs*, New Delhi, (Reprint 1974), p. 72.
15. Muhammad Latif, *op. cit.*, p. 268, J.D. Cunningham, *op.cit*, p. 72, It seems as Latif copied his material from Cunningham's work even the language seems to be the same.
16. J.D. Cunningham, *op. cit*, See footnote 2 at p. 72.
17. M. Elphinstone, *History of India*, Allahabad, (Reprint 1966), p. 598.
18. *Ibid*, see foot note 7 at page 598.
19. George Forster, *A Journey from Bengal to England*, p. 263.
20. I.H. Qureshi, *op. cit.*, pp. 117 ff.
21. It is said that in the whole of Mughal history such a big *Mansab* and rank like that of 5000 *Zat* and 5000 *Sowar* was very rare. Only Bahadurshah gave this high *Mansab* to those nobles who helped him to secure the throne, since the Guru helped the Mughal Emperor during the war of succession, therefore some writers may have misunderstood the Guru's relation with the Emperor and thus connected the Guru with such a high *Mansab* given to the Guru by the Emperor.

# ROLE OF PERSIAN CONTEMPORARY SOURCES IN THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF GURU GOBIND SINGH

*Prof. Kirpal Singh*

Among the mass of traditions both oral and written relating to Guru Gobind Singh, the Persian source material play significant role in the reconstruction of the history of the Guru. The Persian sources provide fresh and valuable information which is not available anywhere else. For instance, Guru Gobind Singh himself is believed to have written letter to the Emperor Aurangzeb in Persian which was the court language at that time. It gives an eye witness account of various events. It is, therefore, very important to discuss its contents at the very outset.

The letter of the Guru is popularly known as *Zafarnama*. It is in verse. It's mode of expression and style are at variance with the official correspondence of those times. Yet it is certain that it contains the substance of the letter addressed to the Emperor by the Guru. It conveys the feelings and reaction of the Guru towards Mughal officials and the excesses committed by them.

In 1706 A.D., Guru Gobind Singh wrote a letter to Aurangzeb that letter is popularly known as *Zafarnama*. Bhai Daya Singh himself took this letter to Aurangzeb who was in Deccan at that time.

After the battles of Anandpur and Chamkaur, Guru Gobind Singh came to the place which now goes by the name of Dayalpur<sup>1</sup>. (now District Patiala). When the Guru visited that place that territory belonged to the Kangar village which has been



referred to by Guru Gobind Singh in his *Zafarnama*. The Guru wrote:

If you want the word of the Holy *Quran*, I am sending you the same. You may come to the village Kangar and the mutual talks will take place there. You will not have any danger there because whole of the Brar people are under my control.

The opening twelve couplets of *Zafarnama* are in the praise of God. The main portion of the letter is known as 'Dastan'. Subsequently, it has been supplemented by eleven *Hakayat* which have very remote bearing with the text of the 'Dastan'. It is one of the most important source of information about the latter life of Guru Gobind Singh.

In *Zafarnama* Guru Gobind Singh has complained to Aurangzeb about the treachery of his governors who attacked the Guru by breaking their oaths. The Guru informed that he had forty followers to face the hosts of Mughal army :

What can hunger stricken forty persons do when they are suppressed by ten lac of army. Those promise breakers came without any delay and attacked with sword, arrow and guns.

The Guru asserts that he had been forced to wage war against Mughal army:

Forced by the circumstances, I came forward and planned the use of arrow and gun. When all other means have failed, it is lawful to have a last resort to the sword.

The Guru describes the Mughal army in the following lines:

In black uniform they came like flies and all at once they began to make hue and cry.

Guru Gobind Singh describes the battle of Chamkaur in the following lines:

Whosoever came out of the shelter, he was drowned in blood even with single arrow. When I found that Nahir Khan had come to battle field he was also struck with an arrow without any delay. What bravery can be expected in the battlefield when forty persons are attacked by the countless number.

Guru Gobind Singh admonishes Aurangzeb that he should recognise true God in everybody:

You should recognize God and you should not injure others on the advice of somebody.

Guru declares his firm faith in God and intimates Aurangzeb that he was not afraid of his kingly powers:

If you look at your army and wealth, my refuge is God's contentment. If you are proud of country and wealth then my shelter is God.

It has been recorded by Warid in *Tarikh-i-Chugta* that two mace bearers were sent to take Guru Gobind Singh to Aurangzeb who was in Deccan<sup>2</sup> Subsequently we find Emperor Bahadur Shah persuaded the Guru to march towards Deccan. It is very significant to understand that why the Emperor wanted the Guru to go to the South. The reason is simple that in the North he could be source of trouble for the Mughal government, and they wanted to remove him from the Punjab. Guru Gobind Singh was marching towards South in Rajasthan where he heard the news of death of Aurangzeb. Guru then turned towards Delhi. As was usual, the death of Mughal emperor was always followed by the war of succession, therefore, the contest between Prince Bahadur Shah and Prince Azam Shah was inevitable. Now both started marching

towards Agra. Near Delhi, Bahadur Shah met Guru Gobind Singh. In the Persian sources there is no information as to how and why Bahadur Shah met the Guru. That information has been provided by Punjabi-Gurmukhi source *Gur Sobha* where in it has been stated that when Bahadur Shah heard about the Guru's arrival in Delhi, he sought his help.<sup>3</sup> In the absence of any Persian source to collaborate this information, William Irvin has wrongly stated that the Guru joined the rank of Bahadur Shah<sup>4</sup>. Khafi Khan has rightly recorded:

During those days when Bahadur Shah had set out on his march towards the Deccan, a person named Gobind one of the leaders of that notorious sect came to his presence and he was accompanied with two or three hundred horsemen, lancers and footmen and two or three months later, he died from a wound of a dagger though his murderers remained unknown.<sup>5</sup>

It is significant to note that Khafi Khan who was the contemporary writer used word '*Rafaqat Namud*' which means that the Guru accompanied the Emperor. The way the Guru was marching had been recorded by *Tarikh Bahadur Shahi* which is another contemporary source. It has been stated there .

At that time the army was marching southward towards Burhampur. Guru Gobind one of the grand sons of Nanak had come into these districts of travel and accompanied the royal camp. He was in the habit of constantly addressing assemblies of worldly persons, religious fanatics and all sort of people.<sup>6</sup>

No employee howsoever high rank he was, could not act and behave in such a manner.

After the battle of Jajju, Bahadur Shah gave robe of honour

to the Guru for his help, in the battle. This has been recorded in *Akhbarate-e-Darbar-i-Maola*, Jaipur. The manner in which it was received is unique on account of following reasons:

- i. No recipient of robe of honour was allowed to go fully armed in the presence of the Emperor.
- ii. Nobody was allowed to carry the robe of honour. It was worn there the then.
- iii. No subordinate could violate these protocols.

But Guru Gobind Singh acted in his own manner and did not observe any of the protocols. It has been recorded in the newsletter of the *Darbar-i-Maola*, July 24, 1771..

In response to the Emperor's instructions, Guru, the successor of Guru Nanak came duly armed and joined the company. The Guru made *nazar* of one thousand gold *mohars* to the Emperor and received in return, a *Khilat* (robe of honour) and a medal studded with precious jewels as a present and got his leave.<sup>7</sup>

In another entry, in the record of News of *Darbar-i-maola* it has been clearly stated by Emperor that Guru Gobind Singh was a *darvesh* :

November 11, 1708 : The Emperor was informed that the deceased Guru Gobind Singh had left behind a property. Emperor's order regarding the confiscation of the Guru's property was solicited. Emperor told that with that property and wealth the royal treasury would not become replete. It was the property of the *darvesh*. It was ordered to be left untouched.<sup>8</sup>

There are a number of secondary Persian sources on Guru Gobind Singh. These were mostly written when the Britishers

came in contact with Maharaja Ranjit Singh or a bit earlier with the Sikh chiefs. These have been compiled at the instance of British officers. These sources have not been discussed in this paper, as they require separate treatment.

### References

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2. Mohammad Shafi Warid. *Tarikh-i-Chugta*, Persian Ms. Khalsa College, Amritsar (Sh.R.553s), p.i.
3. Saina Pat, *Sri Gur Sobha*, Amritsar, 1925, p. 94.
4. *The Later Mughals*, William Irvin, Delhi, 1995, p. 99.
5. *Muntkhab-ul-Lubab*, Khafi Khan, Asiatic Society, 1874, Part II, p. 652.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
7. *The Punjab Past and Present*, Oct. 1984, Punjabi University Patiala, p. 24.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 25..

# GURU GOBIND SINGH IN BENGALI WRITINGS

*Prof. Himadari Banerjee*

Guru Gobind Singh's life and teachings, his fight against the Mughals and the birth of the Khalsa as the symbol of Sikh unity long received serious attention of historians. Their writings are mostly available in English and Punjabi and occasionally in Urdu and Hindi. But long before the beginning of the present century a few leading literatures, poets and historians also made some commendable contributions in this field in Bengali. Here an attempt has been made to bring them together for the attention of the scholars working on Sikhism.

Growth of militant nationalism coupled with Bengal's quest for India's fighting tradition of the medieval days largely explain the development of this interesting branch of literary endeavour during the last quarter of 19th century. Besides, the annexation of Punjab and the consequent settlement of a sizable number of Bengali clerks, teachers and lawyers in different districts and sub-divisional administrative centres there, stimulated a greater cultural contact between the two distant provinces of the British Indian Empire, namely, Punjab and Bengal. Finally, the Brahmo missionary activities during these years in Punjab also resulted in an increasing awareness among Bengalis towards Sikhism.<sup>1</sup>

## I

It was Rajnarayan Bhattacharya who perhaps first referred to Guru Gobind Singh in his *Punjabeitihās*,<sup>2</sup>. The author dealt with the history of the province since the earliest times and briefly

recorded the exploits of the Tenth Master against the Hill Rajas and the Mughals while reviewing the rise of the Sikhs under their different Gurus. Guru Gobind Singh continued to figure prominently in the penny magazine (*Vividhartha Samgraha*) of Rajendralal Mitra, a noted indologist of the mid 19th century. During the same period Akshay Kumar Datta of the *Sadharan Brahma Samaj* reviewed the role of the Dasam Guru in the *Tattwabodhini Patrika* and portrayed him as the chief architect of the Khalsa symbolising Sikh military greatness of the later medieval days. He also acclaimed the Guru for sowing the seed of independence in Sikh mind.<sup>3</sup> Like Datta, Swami Vivekananda dwelt on the importance of Guru's mission and drew our attention to this in his different speeches delivered in Lahore in the late 1890s.<sup>4</sup>

Incidentally these years also witnessed the bringing out of the works of Rajanikanta Gupta, a prolific nationalist writer whose popularity as a school history text book author had hardly been surpassed by any one of his contemporaries. He recorded the life history of the last Guru on two different occasions. The first one, *Sikh*, originally formed a section of his speech delivered in the City College, Calcutta (1883). It portrayed the rise and progress of Sikhism till the annexation of Punjab in 1849. He devoted nearly one-third of this speech to the success of the Guru in uniting the Sikhs under his banner. The Guru was depicted as the rightful successor to the medieval Indian heroes like Rana Pratap and Chhatrapati Shivaji who fought for the preservation of their national independence in the 16th and 17th centuries. Gupta's other article (published in 1886) characterised him as the father of Sikh militarism, ceaselessly defending the cause of the weak Hindus against the onslaughts of the Mughals. The Guru preached, the author argues, the message of social equality, political unity and national consciousness among his followers

and sought to salvage Indians from the dominance and dictate of caste hierarchy and ritualism. It is not needless to say that a definite Hindu partriotic overtone was a hallmark of Gupa's pen<sup>5</sup> and this had an even more enthusiastic as well as conservative reproduction in the writing of Tinkari Banerjee.

Tinkari Banerjee was accredited as one of the most widely known biographers of the Guru in Bengali. After years of labour in close co-operation with the Bhais of the Barabazar Gurdwara, Calcutta, Banerjee's *Guru Gobinda Singha* came out in 1896. Unfortunately it turned out to be an incomplete work, with an abrupt end. Banerjee was perhaps aware of these limitations otherwise he would not have assured his readers that he would overcome them in the second edition. Generally speaking, he did try to fulfil his promise when a revised and enlarged edition was brought out in 1918. Here he divided the life history of the Guru into five broad sections, each devoted to a specific phase, beginning with his birth at Patna Sahib till his end at Nanded in 1708.

During the years between these two editions, there was hardly any significant change in the attitude and commitment of the author towards the Guru. Banerjee whole heartedly admired and revered him as messenger of God. According to him, the Guru preached nothing contrary to orthodox Hindu religious rites and ceremonies like the caste rituals, widow re-marriage and the *sati*. *Guru Gobinda Singha* also merits our special attention for it surpassed the works of Rajanikanta Gupta both in historical details and the use of source materials available in different Indian languages.<sup>6</sup> Though it failed to establish any clear line of demarcation between Hindus and Sikhs, the author never faulted the Guru for the growing militancy among the latter. In this sense, it even surpassed Sir Jadunath Sarkar's assessment of the Guru.<sup>7</sup>



## II

During the first quarter of the present century, four separate monographs were published and each of them tried to focus Guru's exploits from four distinct and separate standpoints. The first one, a historical play, was written by Haranath Bose. It was brought out when Bengal was passing through the days of the tumultuous anti-partition agitation. As the Swadeshi Movement looked towards a better Hindu Muslim-understanding on broader national issues in Bengal, Bose also sought to convey a similar sentiment in his writing. According to him, Aurangzeb's intolerant religious persecution sealed the fate of the Mughal Empire, earlier built up by Akbar on the basis of Hindu-Muslim co-operation. The Guru aimed at restoring Hindu-Muslim unity during the later middle ages and in the opinion of Bose, he was quite successful in this regard. The Emperor, the dramatist argued, realised the evil legacy of his policy and, therefore, agreed to abandon it towards the end of his reign. Even his son Bahadur Shah came to an understanding with the Guru and sought the co-operation of the Sikhs for restoring peace and order in the Punjab.<sup>8</sup>

The second one came from Basanta Banerjee. The author had a very dismal opinion about the Sikhs of his generation, but he was not disrespectful about the Tenth Master. He also did not regard him as 'a Hindu incarnation of God fighting out the Muslim demons'. The Guru's life, in his opinion, was guided by a few secular political considerations; he sought to implement them through his 'unique brain-child-the Khalsa.' The author also tried to focus him as one of the 'great sons of Mother India' and his life was dedicated to the cause of 'India's regeneration and political unity'.<sup>9</sup>

The third one of this series was published under the title *Sikher Katha* (The Story of the Sikhs): a historical play written

by Jatindranath Sammadar.<sup>10</sup> The dramatist found nothing encouraging in the character and attainments of the Guru. He accused him of waging many futile wars throughout his life. Curiously enough, Sammadar offered no valid argument in his defence and it seems likely that he was disillusioned by the militant politics of Bengal of the post-partition years, often 'guided by communal considerations.'

Finally, came Jogendranath Gupta's volume entitled *Guru Gobinda Singha* published in 1923.<sup>11</sup> It is a popular life sketch written in a simple style aiming at educating school children about the Guru's attempts to unite the Sikhs under the banner of the Khalsa. A systematic perusal of this monograph would point out his close association with the pioneering works of Rajanikanta Gupta and Tinkari Banerjee. The author described the Guru as a man of flesh and blood with many natural human feelings. His Guru was endowed with a penetrating understanding of human character. But the monograph is, however, by no means an original work in a class with that of Tinkari Banerjee.

### III

But we owe some of the finest pieces of creative writings to Rabindranath Tagore and these were written over a period of nearly twenty-five years (1885-1909). with the exception of one, these are all devoted to Guru's moment of joy and sorrow, his victory and anguish as well as his commitment to the cause of India's cultural heritage. Tagore began writing his first essay entitled 'Beer Guru' when he had been in his early twenties and it was generally marked by a spirit of youthful exuberance towards the 'architect of Sikh unity'. Published in the *Balak* the essay primarily aimed at educating Bengali youngsters about Guru's life and mission. He repeatedly sought to impress upon the mind of his young readers that Guru Gobind fought for the

oppressed humanity and laid down his life for bringing an end to Mughal authority in the Punjab.<sup>12</sup>

It was followed by three poems<sup>13</sup> written over a period of nearly twelve years (1888-1899): 'Guru Gobinda' (1899), 'Nishfal Upahar' (A Futile Gift, 1888) and 'Sesh Sikhsha' (Last Teaching, 1899)-each brings forward three distinct phases of life, commencing with his twenty years strict self-disciplined life leading to the birth of the Khalsa in 1699 till his death in 1708. Thus the first one (Guru Gobinda) emphasizes how Guru did train himself to the arduous task of the Sikh leadership leading to the creation of the Khalsa. The second one 'Nishfal Upahar' deals with Guru's utter contempt for wealth and it evolves round a pair of bracelet presented by one of his disciples when he was deeply engaged in study during the pre-Khalsa days. Finally, Tagore's 'Sesh Sikhsha' provides us a picture of how the Daswan Padshah did cut short his life and invited his end at the hands of a Pathan assassin at Nanded. These three poems give us a glimpse of Rabindranath's mind and his attitude towards the maker of the Khalsa. He held that the Guru appeared on the Indian national scene with the message of militarism of the community for the defence of social equality and religious freedom. In order to implementing his plan, continued Tagore, he unified the Sikhs, taught them how to face any crisis calmly and boldly and generated a new hope and confidence which enabled him to carry the community with him till his end.<sup>14</sup>

#### IV

In the present century Tagore wrote a long essay entitled 'Shivaji O Guru Gobinda Singha' which was included as an introduction to Sarat Kumar Roy's monograph *Sikh Guru O Sikh Jati*. This was the longest essay ever written by Rabindranath on the history of the Sikhs. Later on Sir Jadunath Sarkar translated

this essay into English; it was included in the April 1911 issue of the *Modern Review*.<sup>15</sup>

In this essay we come across a significant change in the attitude of Tagore towards Guru Gobind Singh. While praising Guru Nanak for his saintliness and religious liberalism, Tagore started criticising Guru Gobind Singh for 'radicalising' the Sikh Movement.

This reorientation in the writings of Tagore about Guru Gobind Singh requires more than our passing attention. This was largely due to the fact that Tagore's attitude towards militant politics underwent a gradual but definite change in the first decade of the present century. During these years of Swadeshi and boycott agitation, Tagore reversed his stand on the ideological question. The change took place in the background of the rise of political extremism and the spread of the communal virus during 1906-07'. Rabindranath was convinced that these Hindu-Muslim riots frequently flared up due to the failure of the contemporary national leaders to win over the support of the Muslim community. He became increasingly bitter towards both the boycott and terrorism over the years because they not only, 'accentuated communal tension' but also at times involved considerable hardship for the poor low-caste people. For fighting these disquieting developments at the national level, Rabindranath broached the plan of 'building of a *Mahajati* in India on the basis of a broad humanism'. This would envisage 'a decisive rejection of sectarian barriers' and 'a wholesale breaking-down of walls, of communal separation'. This would involve the discarding of 'much of traditional Hinduism. This anti-traditionalism in fact was to pervade virtually of Tagore's post-1907 writings'.<sup>16</sup>

In this ideological background, Tagore realised, Guru Gobind Singh's, Khalsa would hardly offer any effective answer

to contemporary national question. In the middle ages, he found, the birth of the Khalsa rather frustrated the plan of bringing Hindus and Muslims together on a common national platform. It 'diverted the liberal message of the founder of the Sikh faith for achieving certain short-term mundane political gains'. This also sharpened communal hatred much against the preachings of the founder of the faith and generated an endless hatred and disunity in the rank and file of the community. He squarely blamed the last Guru for creating the Khalsa which perpetuated sectarian politics at the point of byonet. Thus Tagore made a complete volte-face about his views on Guru Gobind Singh. It, however, sparked off a long-term debate in the academic world. Professor I. Banerjee bitterly criticised this view of Tagore. He was followed by Professor R.C. Mazumdar and Professor A.C. Banerjee.<sup>17</sup> They were generally of the opinion that Rabindranath misunderstood the spirit of the Khalsa and based his observations about the Guru's 'militarisation of the community' on a complete misreading of the contemporary history.

## V

Perhaps a few lines regarding the sources utilised by these authorities would not be quite irrelevant here. It seems likely that they were generally acquainted with the writings of Cunningham and McGregor and a few also took the help of some primary sources available in Punjabi. Rajanikanta Gupta's writings bear direct reference to Cunningham's work-*History of the Sikhs*. Similarly, Rabindranth's 'Beer Guru' was greatly influenced by McGregor's writings on the Guru. He was also acquainted with the works of Malcolm and Cunningham. Rajendralal Mitra refers to Guru Gobind's *Bachittra Natak* though there is no evidence suggesting his direct access to this text. On the other hand, Bose and Sammadar are both completely silent about their sources. In this connection, Tinkari Banerjee's *Guru Gobinda Singha* merits

our special attention. Like Mahendranath Bose of the *Nanak Prakas* repute, he almost wholly depended on Sikh sources. In his search for a general life history of the Daswan Padshah from the point of view of the Sikhs, the author drew heavily from the *Suraj Prakash*, *Prachin Panth Prakash*, *Adi Granth* and the *Daswan Padshah Ka Granth*. He was well conversant with the writings of authorities like Malcolm. McGregor, Cunningham, Cave Brown and Cust. Though he made little use of them in his work. And in cases where there were any significant differences of opinion among the authorities, he almost invariably relied on the opinion of Bhai Santokh Singh as final and irrevocable. He was not always very happy with the writings of some of the British authorities and sometimes questioned some of the observations of Cunningham on the *Adi Granth*.

Bengali literary mind was greatly influenced by the fighting role of the Guru and portrayed him over a period of nearly one hundred years from different view points. Thus biographies, short character sketches, dramas, poems<sup>18</sup> and essays were brought out highlighting the different aspects of the Guru's mission and his contributions in the history of India. Even the Guru's contributions in the development of Sikh sacred literature did not miss the attention of Bengali authors over the years.<sup>19</sup> Generally speaking, a considerable portion of these works were characterised by a Hindu revivalist sentiment of the late 19th century. But in the present century writings, the Guru was often painted as a secular national hero trying to bring together different nationalities under the flag of the Khalsa. Another interesting aspect of these works was the emergence of the Guru as the representative of God on earth fighting for social equality and political freedom. It would be no exaggeration to conclude that with the exception of a few works, the predominant spirit of these writings was one of respect and admiration towards the Guru and it persisted throughout the

period under review. Taken together, these writings sought to bring the Sikhs closer on a national platform. The process also enriched Bengali language, and it occurred long before the days of state patronage to the development of regional languages. It perhaps also set the stage ready for the introduction of the study of the history of the Sikhs in the College Street Campus of the Calcutta University in the 1930s.

### Notes and References

1. For a further discussion on this point, see the author's article, 'Sikh History in Bengali Literature', *Studies in Sikhism and Comparative Religion*, III, October 1984, pp. 112-17.
2. Towards the end of his life, according to Bhattacharya, Emperor Aurangzeb was impressed by his (Guru's) heroic leadership. It prompted him to come to an understanding with the Sikhs at the beginning of the present century. Rajnarayan Bhattacharya, *Punjabitihās* (Calcutta, 1847), p. 101.
3. Akshaykumar Datta, 'Nanakpanthi', *Tattwabodhini Patrika*, October-November, 1851, pp. 99-102.
4. I am indebted to Captain Bhag Singh, editor, *The Sikh Review*, for drawing attention to this point. *Swami Vivekananda Bani O Rachana*, V (Calcutta, 1961), p. 449; *Ibid.*, IX, p. 84. See also Swami Ranganathananda, *Swami Vivekananda On Guru Gobind Singh*, (Bombay, 1985), pp. 4-5.
5. Rajanikanta Gupta, 'Gobinda Singha', *Beer Mahima*, (Calcutta, 1885), pp. 29-45. For Gupta's literary career, see *Sahitya Sadhak Charitmalā*, VI (Calcutta, 1961). Incidentally, a brief biography of the Guru was brought out in the *Bangadarshan* (then edited by Bankimchandra Chatterjee) in 1878. Its authorship is not known to us.
6. Banerjee based his biography almost wholly on Punjabi sources. In the 1860s Professor Suniti Kumar Chatterjee emphasized the importance of Banerjee's monograph. For it, see his *Guru Gobind Singh*, (Chandigarh, 1967), pp. 38-9.
7. J.N. Sarkar, *History of Aurangzib*, III (Calcutta, 1928), pp. 301, 332. Sarkar criticised the Guru for 'radicalising' the Sikh politics of the late

seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. He borrowed the views of Rabindranath Tagore on the Guru. For Tagore's view see Sections III and IV.

8. Haranath Bose. *Guru Gobinda* (Calcutta, 1908). For a similar view, see also Bipinbehari Nandi. *Sikh*, (Calcutta, 1909).
9. Basanta Kumar Banerjee, *Guru Gobinda Singha* (Calcutta, 1908). There were two more editions of this book and the author did not introduce any major revision there. It was also translated into English by his son-in law Devendranath Chatterjee in 1950. I am thankful to Captain Bhag Singh for drawing attention to this translated edition of Banerjee's work. Besides, Banerjee wrote two more brief character sketches of Bhai Taru Singh and Bhai Mahtab Singh published in the *Bharati* in 1909.
10. Jatindranath Sammadar, *Sikher Katha*, (Calcutta, 1912).
11. Jogendranath Gupta, *Guru Gobinda Singha*, (Calcutta, 1923).
12. Rabindranath Tagore, 'Beer Guru', *Balak*, 1885. It was subsequently included in Tagore's *Itihas* (Calcutta, 1969).
13. For these poems, see *Rabindra Rachanavali*, I (Calcutta, 1980).
14. Besides these poems, Tagore also respectfully referred to the contributions of the Guru in the following articles :
  - (i) 'Chinna Patrabali', Letter No. 84, *Rabindra Rachanabali*, Volume XI (Calcutta, 1961).
  - (ii) 'Ingraj O Bharatbashi', *Ibid.*, Volume XII.
  - (iii) 'Swami Sradhananda', *Ibid.*, Volume XIII.
  - (iv) 'Samudrajata', *Ibid.*
  - (v) '*Sikh Swadhinata*', *Ibid.*,
15. Rabindranath Tagore, 'Shivaji O Guru Gobinda Singha', *Itihas*, pp. 61-74. This essay was translated by Sir J.N. Sarkar into English and was published under the title 'The Rise and Fall of the Sikh Power', *Modern Review*, April, 1911.
16. This paragraph is entirely based on Professor Sumit Sarkar's *Swadeshi Movement, 1903-1908* (New Delhi, 1973), pp. 62, 82-5, 90-1, 326 and 449.
17. I. Banerjee, *Evolution of the Khalsa*, II (Calcutta, 1962), pp. 122-24; A.C.



Banerjee, *Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh*, (New Delhi, 1971), pp. 185-97; R.C. Mazumdar, 'Rabindranath and Guru Gobind Singh', *The Sikh Review*, January 1967, pp. 219-22.. Perhaps the earliest protest came from Professor Binaykumar Sarkar of the Department of Anthropology, University of Calcutta. For it, see his 'Itihas Sikh Jati', *Aitihāsik Prabandha* (Calcutta, 1914).

18. Beside Tagore, Jibendranath Datta wrote two poems on the life and mission of the Guru. They are 'Gurur Ahwan', *Prabashi*, November-December 1909 and 'Wah Gurujiki Fateh', *Malancha*, July-August 1918.
19. For a further discussion of this point, see the author's article 'Sikh Sacred Literature', *Studies, in Sikhism and Comparative Religion*, V, October 1986, pp. 101-12, See also K.S. Grewal's *A Bibliography of References in Bengali to Guru Gobind Singh*, (Patiala, 1967).

# THE HERO AND THE IDEAL—AN INTERPRETATION OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S VIEW OF GURU GOBIND SINGH

*Prof. Satish K. Kapoor*

From the epic age to the present times India has regarded her heroes as the embodiment of *Sakti*, and sought inspiration from them. The people have been regarded as static centres except when carried along by the dynamic forces proceeding from a hero who appears as a vortex of thought and movement in the environment, a sort of condensor and radiator in one for the spiritual forces and values around<sup>1</sup>. As Swami Vivekananda remarked:

We can grasp an idea only when it comes to us through a materialized ideal person. We can understand the present only through the example. Naturally, the vast majority of mankind have put their souls at the feet of these extra-ordinary personalities, the Prophets, the Incarnations of God<sup>2</sup>.

Guru Gobind Singh was one such Ideal—an *Insan-al-Kamil*, who provided the alchemy for the inner transformation of human beings from baser metals into gold. He was endowed with qualities which made him most capable of fulfilling the social and political needs of his time<sup>3</sup>.

"Mark me, everyone of you will have to be a Guru Govind Singh if you want to do good to your country", said Swami

Vivekananda during the course of a public lecture at Lahore in 1897.<sup>4</sup> Although the remark was tinged with emotional overtones it carried a prophetic admonition for the people who had come under the sway of an exotic civilization and found themselves in a state of political and cultural servility. The need of the time was to shake off the complacency of the people and arouse their dormant energies by reviving the traditions of gallantry and sacrifice. The Swami was convinced that the Guru's gospel of action could rouse the people from their slumber and give them their lost manhood<sup>5</sup>.

From Sharatchandra Chakravarty's diary which records Swami Vivekananda's dialogues with his disciples<sup>6</sup> we learn that he was quite familiar with the leonine aspects of the Guru's personality. In a conversation at Balarama Babu's residence in Calcutta (1898) he narrated :

How the revival of the Sikh sect was brought about by his great renunciation, austerities, fortitude and life-consecrating labours—how by his initiation he re-Hinduised Mohammedan converts and took them back into the Sikh community— and how on the banks of the Narmada he brought his wonderful life to a close.<sup>7</sup>

While referring to the baptismal ceremony by which the Guru transfused "great powers" into the lives of his initiates Swami Vivekananda recited the couplet: "*Sava Lakh se ek laraun tabi Gobind Singh nam kahaun*" meaning thereby that "when Guru Gobind gives the Name (i.e. initiation) a single man becomes strong enough to triumph over a lakh and a quarter of his foes."<sup>8</sup> As he narrated the Guru's life his eyes dilated with enthusiasm and seemed to be emitting fire—"his hearers dumb—stricken and looking at his face, kept, watching the wonderful sight."<sup>9</sup> The Swami was convinced that the tale of Guru's heroism

could raise the blood of the people's lives into "crimson splendour."<sup>10</sup>

Considering the fact that Swami Vivekananda described Guru Gobind Singh as "one of the most glorious heroes of our race"<sup>11</sup> and a worthy Ideal which "ought to be before us always",<sup>12</sup> it would be worthwhile to examine the Swami's conception of a hero and the sense in which he used this expression for the Great Guru. Was he a Divinity, a Prophet, a Man of letters, a Poet, a Priest, a King or a combination of all these?

The hero of the Swami's conception was not mythical like Apollo nor was he a "culture hero" like Aztec. He did not belong to a sect, class, order, group or nation but to humanity as a whole. He was not a man of narrow vision or flimsy ideas. Humble to the core of his Being he refrained from any boastful talk. To borrow an Emersonian aphorism, the heroic soul did not sell its justice and its nobleness; it did not ask to dine nicely and to sleep warm. He considered virtue to be its own reward; he did not need plenty and could very well abide its loss.<sup>13</sup> Guru Gobind Singh possessed all these traits in ample measure.

Like Carlyle the Swami believed that sincerity was the hallmark of "all men in any way heroic."<sup>14</sup> Though everyone experienced temporary fits of sincerity and heroism, the hero alone exhibited permanency in this regard. In his case sincerity was not a stilted or simulative virtue, an artificial cover-all but a quality of the soul; in other words he could not help being sincere.<sup>15</sup> Besides, all sorts of heroes were intrinsically of the same material and could perform different types of roles in different situations.<sup>16</sup> "The hero can be Poet, Prophet, King, Priest or what you will, according to the kind of world he finds himself born into", wrote Carlyle, "I have no notion of a truly great man that could not be all sorts of men."<sup>17</sup> This description amply fits

the multifaceted personality of Guru Gobind Singh.

To the Carlylian traits of versatility and sincerity behoving a hero, Swami Vivekananda added another—that of renunciation. He was not self-perpetuating but selfless and dedicated his life to the service of mankind. He suffered "vicarious atonement for everyone of us, and also for all that are to come hereafter."<sup>18</sup> He did not grope in the dark as he was divinely endowed with "the strength of direct vision."<sup>19</sup> Unlike other men who were "bits of straw rocking to and fro in water like feathers blown about in a hurricane", he was a Messenger of God;<sup>20</sup> or as Carlyle says, "a part of the primal reality of things."<sup>21</sup> His mission was formed from his very birth.

The whole plan is there, laid down, and you see them swerving not one inch from it...these man-Gods are the real Gods of all nations and all races.... Therein is our faith, therein is our hope of a reality<sup>22</sup>.

The divine descent of Guru Gobind Singh is revealed in his autobiographical composition *Bachitar Natak*. We learn that the Almighty commissioned him to spread His path, to instruct men in true religion and the moral law, and to lead them away from evil<sup>23</sup>. The Guru wrote:

I come into the world charged with the duty to uphold the right in very place, to eliminate sin and evil, ye Holy men, understand that the only reason I took birth was to see that righteousness may thrive, that the good may survive, and tyrants be rooted out<sup>24</sup>.

Imbued with this Ideal he established the *Khalsa* and launched a *dharma-yuddha* (righteous war) against the mephistophelean forces in *society*. He was, however, not a warmonger. Nor did he regard anyone as his permanent foe. He did not fight any battle

for the achievement of name or fame, wealth or territory but solely for combating tyranny and oppression. Evil must be nipped even if it involved the use of force. Said the Guru:

When all else hast failed thee  
Thou shall rightfully lift the sword<sup>25</sup>.

The sword was not to be used as a butcher's knife but as a surgeon's instrument; it was the protector of saints, the scourge of the wicked and the scatterer of sinners<sup>26</sup>. The sword symbolised *shakti* in its supreme aspect; it was not to be wielded by mercenary fighters but by selfless saint-soldiers ready to sacrifice their lives at the altar of Truth.

Guru Gobind Singh appeared to Swami Vivekananda as a prophet of creative genius who played a vital role in the historical evolution of India<sup>27</sup>. In one of his lectures he recalled how during the medieval times, a plethora of spiritual movements arose to "hold the masses back from joining the religion of the conquerors" and to usher in a socio-religious reformation<sup>28</sup>. Luminaries like Ramananda, Kabir, Dadu, Chaitanya and others preached the equality of man. But their energy was, for the most part, spent in stemming the tide of converts to Islam.<sup>29</sup> "One great Prophet, however, arose in the north, Govind Singh, the last Guru of the Sikhs, with creative genius; and the result of his spiritual work was followed by the well-known political organisation of the Sikhs"<sup>30</sup>.

Referring to the great sacrifices made by Guru Gobind Singh Swami Vivekananda remarked that he dedicated his life to the service of humanity, least excepting anything in return. Nothing could deter him from pursuing the mission of his life neither the intrigues of the Hill chiefs nor the formidable might of the Mughals nor the sacrifices made by his own family. Even when

he found himself betrayed by some of his friends and allies he kept his mental poise, remained undaunted as before and carried on his crusade against *adharmā* "without a single word of murmur" against anyone.<sup>31</sup> The Swami ruefully commented on this fact in his speech at Lahore in 1897:

Driven out from this country after having shed his own blood for the defence of the Hindu religion, after having seen his children killed on the battlefield, this example of the great Guru, left even by those for whose sake he was shedding his blood and the blood of his nearest and dearest—he, the wounded lion retired from the field calmly to die in the South but not a word of curse escaped his lips against those who had ungratefully forsaken him.<sup>32</sup>

No where in history does one find such a supreme example of sacrifice and selflessness.

It may be mentioned that the word "Hindu" did not have a narrow, sectarian meaning for the Swami but represented "the common national stock,"<sup>33</sup> He exhorted in the same speech:

Then and then alone you are a Hindu, when you will be ready to bear everything for them (countrymen) like the great Guru Govind Singh.... You may see thousands of defects in your countrymen but mark their Hindu blood. They are the first Gods you will have to worship even if they do everything to hurt you; even if anyone of them send out a curse to you; you send out to them worlds of love... if they drive you out, retire to die in silence like that mighty lion, Govinda Singh, *Such a man is worthy of the name of a Hindu; such an ideal ought to be before us always.*<sup>34</sup>

The remark gains importance because it was made not by a commoner or a mediocrity but by a person of the eminence of Swami Vivekananda who himself became a celebrity in his lifetime. It may well be argued that a hero alone can understand a hero. "It is the strong that understands strength; it is the elephant that understands the lion not the rat."<sup>35</sup> Understanding is a matter of discernment not belief. It requires the ability to perceive, to grasp and to know—which is possible if one is on the same wavelength and with one's object of perception. Swami Vivekanand was well equipped by his training and accomplishments to comprehend the Guru's personality both from the centre and the periphery and assesses his contribution to humanity.

Swami Vivekananda described the Guru as a great nation builder, By transcending the barriers of caste, community and race, by awakening the torpid strength of the enfeebled, by creating a mass basis for the *Khalsa* and by providing a common cause for struggle he welded the heterogeneous groups and communities into one single whole. "Guru Govind made it understood everywhere that the men of his age, be they Hindus or Mussalmans were living under a regime of profound injustice and oppression. He did not create any common interest. He only pointed to the masses. And so both Hindus and Mussalmans followed him... In Indian history, such an example is indeed very rare."<sup>36</sup>

It is clear that Swami Vivekananda was enamoured of the heroic traits of the Guru's personality viz. his catholic outlook, his humility of spirit, his love for the masses, his devotion to duty, his opposition to tyranny, his organizational skill, his fearlessness, his vision and wisdom and his supreme mission to establish *dharma* in society. He was sure that his countrymen would find deliverance from their predicaments by emulating the Guru who



was both saint and a soldier, a strategist and a spiritualist, a selfless patriot and a universalist, a terror for tyrants and a messiah for the downtrodden. Born to fulfil a divine mission he provided solace to the despondent direction to the bewildered, strength to the pusillanimous and care to the neurotic. The dynamic currents of life which he released in the Indian society vibrate to this day; the inaugural shout of renaissance India— *Wahe Guru Ki Fateh*—Victory to the Guru —reverberates throughout the universe "ringing with a voice of million thunders."<sup>3</sup>

### References

1. Swami Ranganathananda, *Eternal Values in a Changing Society*. Calcutta, 1971, p. 95.
2. Swami Vidyatmananda (ed.), *What Religion is in the Words of Swami Vivekananda* (Introduction, Christopher Isherwood). Calcutta, 1978, p. 293.
3. Guru Gobind Singh combined in him the qualities of most of his contemporaries—the organising skill of Peter the Great, the literary talent of John Bunyan, the philosophical acumen of Rousseau (minus his atheistic learnings) and the religious zeal of Aurangzeb (minus his bigotry). For more details see T.L. Vaswani "Guardian angel of the Hindu nation" in *The Sikh Review*, Vol. VII, No. I, January 1959, pp. 3-4.
4. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. III, Calcutta, 1970, p. 379 (Hereafter cited as *The Complete Works*).
5. Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (1883-1966), a prominent Indian revolutionary held a somewhat similar view. Sensing the historical needs of his times he lauded Guru Gobind Singh and other heroes for injecting self-confidence in the people. "However much foreign and partial historians might have tried to paint our glorious land in dark colours, so long as the name of Chitore has not been erased from the pages of our history, so long as the names of Pratapaditya and Guru Govind Singh are there, so long as the principles of Swadharma and Swaraj will be embedded in the bone and marrow of all the sons of Hindustan. *The Indian War of Independence*, Bombay, 1947, pp. 7-8.

6. The Diary was first published in two parts in Bengali under the title "Swami-Shishya-Samvada". Later it was included in *The Complete Works*, Vols. V-VI in a revised form.
7. *The Complete Works*, Vol. VI (Calcutta 1968), p. 514.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*
10. The phrase is borrowed from George Bernard Shaw's work *Back to Mathusateh* (1-2).
11. *The Complete Works*, Vol. III, p. 366.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 380.
13. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays : First and Second Series* (with an Introduction by Shiv Kumar) New Delhi, 1965, p. 151.
14. Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero Worship and the Heroic in History*, (London, 1959), p. 59.
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 151, 102.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 103.

Carlyle makes a clear distinction between genuine and spurious heroes, p.204.

About a century before the birth of Carlyle, Guru Gobind Singh drew a sharp line between the creative and the destructive geniuses in history. Three types of creative geniuses as mentioned in the *Bachittar Natak* are (Political Heroes and virtuous rulers such as Rama, Krishna and Prahlada; Poets and thinkers such as Valmiki, Ved Vyas and the expounders of philosophical systems; and Saints and mystics such as Dattatreya. See Trilochan Singh "Guru Gobind Singh's conception of History" in *The Sikh Review*, Vol. VII, No. I, January 1959, p. 28.

18. Swami Vidyatmananda, *op. cit.*, pp. 315-16.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 296.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 295.
21. Carlyle, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

22. Swami Vidyatmananda, *op. cit.*, 295.

23. ਮੈਂ ਆਪਨਾ ਸੁਤ ਤੋਹਿ ਨਿਵਾਜਾ ॥  
ਪੰਥੁ ਪ੍ਰਚੁਰ ਕਰਬੇ ਕਹੁ ਸਾਜਾ॥  
ਜਾਹਿ ਤਹਾਂ ਤੈ ਧਰਮੁ ਚਲਾਇ॥  
ਕਬਧਿ ਕਰਨ ਤੇ ਲੋਕ ਹਟਾਇ ॥

*Bachittar Natak*, Chapter VI, *Chaupai* 29.

24. ਹਮ ਇਹ ਕਾਜ ਜਗਤ ਮੇਂ ਆਏ॥  
ਧਰਮ ਹੇਤ ਗੁਰਦੇਵ ਪਠਾਏ॥  
ਜਹਾਂ ਤਹਾਂ ਤੁਮ ਧਰਮ ਬਿਥਾਰੋ॥  
ਦੂਸਟ ਦੇਖੀਯਨਿ ਪਕਰਿ ਪਛਾਰੋ॥  
ਯਾਹੀ ਕਾਜ ਧਰਾ ਹਮ ਜਨਮੰ॥  
ਸਮਝ ਲੇਹੁ ਸਾਧੂ ਸਭ ਮਨਮੰ॥  
ਧਰਮ ਚਲਾਵਨ ਸੰਤ ਉਬਾਰਨ॥  
ਦੁਸਟ ਸਭਨ ਕੇ ਮੂਲ ਉਪਰਨਿ ॥

*Ibid.*, *Chaupai* 42-43.

25. ਚੁ ਕਾਰ ਅਜ ਹਮਹ ਹੀਲਤੇ ਦਰ ਗੁਜਸਤ॥  
ਹਲਾਲ ਅਸਤੁ ਬੁਰਦਨ ਬ ਸਮਸੀਰ ਦਸਤ॥

*Zafarnamah*, 22.

26. In the *Bachittar Natak*, (1,2) Guru Gobind Singh invokes the sword thus:

ਖਗ ਖੰਡ ਬਿਹੰਡੰ ਖਲ ਦਲ ਖੰਡੰ ਅਤਿ ਰਣ ਮੰਡੰ ਥਰਬੰਡੰ॥  
ਭੁਜ ਦੰਡ ਅਖੰਡੰ ਤੇਜ ਪ੍ਰਚੰਡੰ ਜੋਤਿ ਅਮੰਡੰ ਭਾਨ ਪ੍ਰਭੰ॥  
ਸੁਖ ਸੰਤਾ ਕਰਣੰ ਦੁਰਮਤਿ ਦਰਣੰ ਕਿਲਬਿਖ ਹਰਣੰ ਅਸ ਸਰੁਣੰ॥  
ਜੈ ਜੈ ਜਗ ਕਾਰਣ ਸ੍ਰਿਸਟ ਉਬਾਰਣ ਮਮ ਪ੍ਰਤਿਪਾਰਣ ਜੈ ਤੇਗੰ॥

"Thou art the Subduer of Countries, the destroyer of the armie's of the wicked in the battlefield,

Thou greatly adornest the brave.

Thine arm is infrangible, Thy brightness refulgent,

Thy radiance and splendour dazzle like the Sun.

Thou bestowest happiness on the good, Thou terrifies the evil,

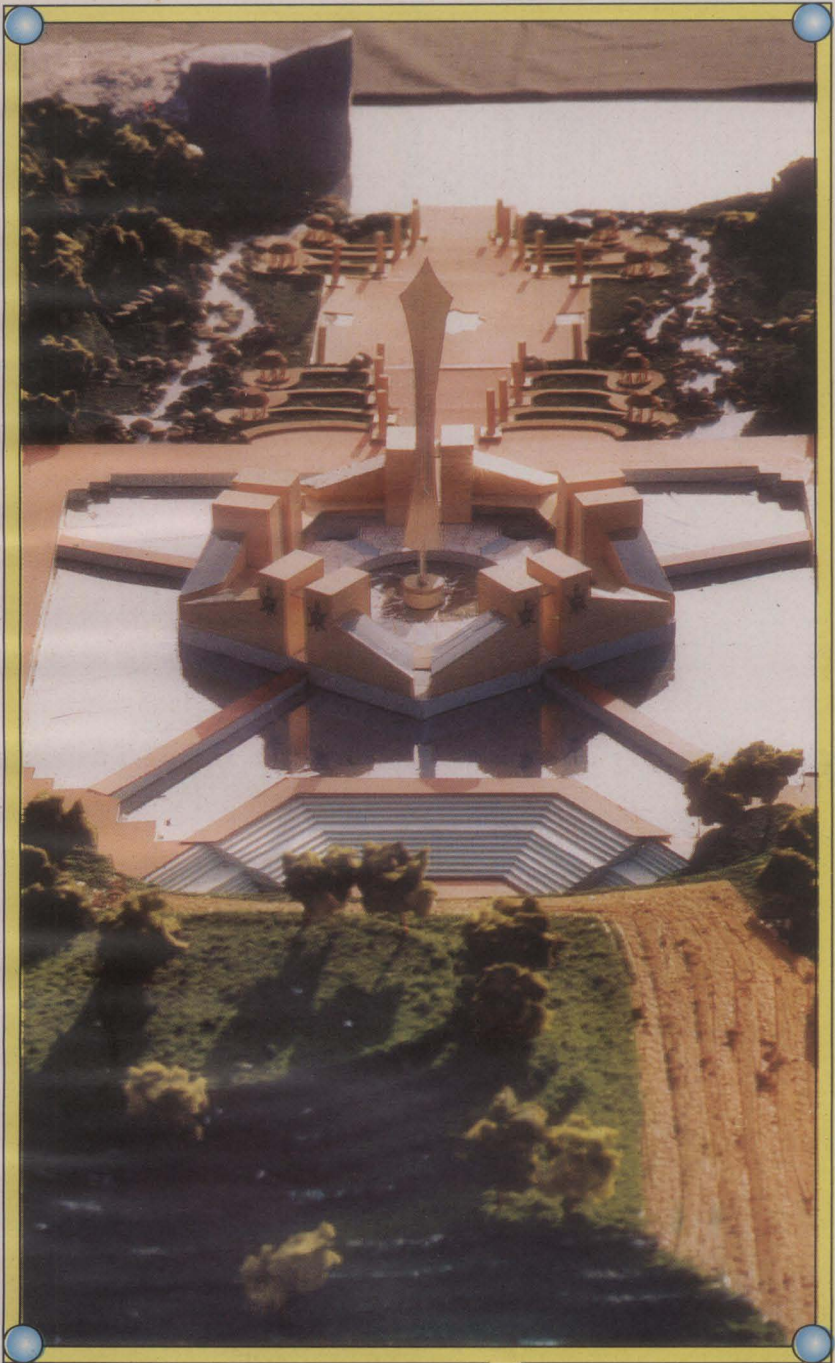
Thou scatterest sinners, I seek Thy protection.

Hail ! Hail to the creator of the World, *The Saviour of Creation*, my Cherisher hail to thee, O, Sword!"

Cf. Dharam Pal Ashta, *The Poetry of Dasam Granth*, (New Delhi, 1959), p. 48;

Gopal Singh, *Thus Spoke the Tenth Master* (Patiala, 1978), pp. 67-68.

27. *The Complete Works*, Vol. VI, p. 166.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 165.
29. *Ibid.*,
30. *Ibid.*, p. 166
31. *The Complete Works*, Vol. III, p. 366.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 379.
33. Swami Ranganathananda : "Swami Vivekananda on Guru Gobind Singh" in *The Sikh Review*, Vol. XXX, No. 340, April, 1982, pp. 47-49.
34. *The Complete Works*, Vol. III, p. 379.
35. *Selections from Swami Vivekananda*, Mayavati, Almora, Himalayas, 1946, p. 399.
36. *The Complete Works*, Vol. VI, pp. 514-515.
37. *Selections from Swami Vivekananda*, p. 526.



*Nishan-e-Khalsa, Sri Anandpur Sahib*



Takhat Sri Hazoor Sahib, Nanded

## GURU GOBIND SINGH'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE INDIAN LITERATURE

*Davindra Kumar*

Guru Gobind Singh had facile pen and was the master of the art of writing. His prolific writings are well known. He was a poet par excellence. His *darbar* at Anandpur became a literary centre. According to the author of *Sri Gurpartap Suraj Granth*, he had fifty two poets who composed religious verses and also translated into Hindi, the stories of Indian heroes and gallantry from various *Puranas*, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharta* epics.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of these writings seems to be to infuse a new spirit among his followers and to make them bold enough to face all injustice and tyranny. Macauliffe writes that Guru Gobind Singh wanted to dispel cowardice and incite boldness in his followers with heroic poetry.<sup>2</sup>

Tradition holds that while crossing the flooded river Sirsa in 1705 most of the writings of Guru Gobind Singh as well as those of his 'court poets' were lost. According to Kesar Singh Chhibar, later, the scattered literary pieces were collected by Bhai Mani Singh,<sup>3</sup> a devoted disciple of the Guru, and those appeared under the title of *Dasam Patshahi Granth*,<sup>4</sup> popularly known as *Dasam Granth*. It has 17377 verses.

It is true that many copies of the *Granth* were prepared by different devotees but prominent amongst them were the copies prepared by Bhai Mani Singh and Bhai Sukha Singh, *granthi* of Patna.<sup>5</sup>

Some scholars hold that all the works included in the *Dasam Granth* have not been composed by Guru Gobind Singh himself but some of these have been written by poets at his *darbar* at Anandpur.<sup>6</sup>

In 1896, a committee of the Sikh scholars was formed by the Singh Sabha to investigate the genuine writings of the Guru in the *Dasam Granth*. Their findings were based upon thirty two old and new volumes of the *Dasam Granth*. According to their investigation the following works were included in the writings of the Guru :

*Jap Sahib, Akal Ustat, Bachittar Natak, Chandi Charitra, Shastar Nam Mala, Swaiyyas, Shabad Hazare and Zafarnama.*

Although, the above decision of the committee cannot be considered as final, but the fact remains that the compositions of the Guru and those of his *darbar* poets written under his direct initiative and supervision compiled in the form of *Dasam Granth* are the specimen of meticulous literary work and bear the stamp of his versatile genius.

Apart from his letters written to the *sangats*, known as *Hukamnamas*, the whole of Guru Gobind Singh's writings are in verse and mostly in Braj and Sanskrit. His writings are almost without parallel in Hindi literature. Some of the poets enjoying his patronage hailed from the Braj region. They brought with them the gift of charming Brij verse of their day.<sup>7</sup> The excellence as well as peculiarities, manners as well as mannerism, imagery, diction as well as metre of Guru's works have no parallel. In his treatment of different themes, the Guru's personality lends his personal touch to conventional themes. The unity of style in most of the works is an internal evidence of the integrity of the works.



A peculiar feature of his style is his *sirkhandi c'hand*, which is his own invention in Punjabi literature.<sup>8</sup> The poetry of *Dasam Granth* is a brilliant, though apparently an isolated phenomenon in the literary history of the Punjabi language.

Some of Guru Gobind Singh's compositions have been discussed briefly as under :

### **Jaap Sahib**

*The Jaap Sahib* was composed to supply the Sikhs with a number of epithets of the Creator. "There are", writes C.H. Leohlin, "actually about 950 names in the *Jaap*."<sup>9</sup> A scrutiny of the names of God would lead us to conclude that God is everything to the Guru. God is formless as well as a positive force. Every activity is His activity and everything in the world is His own projection. Yet everything was not. Because He has no form or feature, no caste or image, beyond description, incomprehensible, having no sign, mark or garb. God of Guru Gobind Singh is no particular entity giving rise to social particularism. He is 'all in all and for all.'

The work also throws light on the point that the Guru was against the priestly class who was solely responsible for the abuse of religion in India. When Pandit Kesho Dutt asked him why he was deliberately giving all charity, honour and power to the low caste people, Guru Gobind Singh replied :

For them was I born, through them have I attained glory and greatness. Without them and without their loving support what am I ? There are millions of creatures like me on earth.<sup>10</sup>

The Guru commences the *Jaap Sahib* with an invocation to God of war, the All Steel. He ends with an attitude of tolerance

that pictures Hindus and Muslims, and even people widely scattered in different parts of the world seeking the same God and being blessed by Him.

The *Jaap Sahib* comprises the noblest hymns composed by Guru Gobind Singh in praise of God. It has 199 *chhands*. According to Leohlin the work was completed in or about 1699 A.D., for daily recitation as a supplement or complement of the *Jappi* of Guru Nanak.<sup>11</sup> It is in couplet form and *Bhujung Prayat chhand* is used. From the point of view of the subject matter, it is a unique composition.

Besides its rich variety, the *Jaap's* metre is a powerful instrument of expression as controlled by the dynamic personality of the Guru and his spirit of devotion. It is, therefore, full of vigour, enthusiasm as well as piety and devotion. *Vir rasa* and *Shant rasa* are depicted and the mood of the verse controls them.

The *Jaap Sahib* is written in Braj *bhasa*, a variety of medieval Hindi, with mixture of Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic words.

### **Akal Ustat**

The *Akal Ustat* is a hymn written by the Guru<sup>12</sup> in praise of Timeless, the *Akal*. In it God has been addressed as *Sarabloh* — All Steel, *Sarabkal* — all Death, *Mahaloh* — Great Steel, *Kharagketu* — having sword on the banner. Edmund Candler writes that when Guru Gobind Singh inaugurated the sacrament of steel he proved himself wise and far-sighted leader. For all material things which genius has inspired with spiritual significance, steel is the truest and uncompromising. Let humanitarianism prate as they will there never has been a race having not been purged and refined by it. In some, it is the only combator of grossness and the monster of self. To the *Khalsa*, it

gave a cause and welded them into a nation in the dark days of Muhammadan rule in the eighteenth century.<sup>13</sup>

In *Akal Ustat*, the Guru makes it clear that *Akal Purakh* is the only God.<sup>14</sup> It is a reality that the Guru by seeking the protection of *Sarabloh* sought his *Khalsa* to be of a strong character like that of steel. *Sarabloh* is the symbol of the Shakti cult. Therefore, Guru Gobind Singh writes :

*Akal Purakh ki rachha hamnai*  
*Sarab loh di rachhia hamnai*  
*Sarab kal ji di rachhia hamnai*  
*Sarab loh ji di sada rachhia hamnai.*<sup>15</sup>

It comprise of 271½ *chhands*. This composition, as it appears from its themes, was composed not at one time, its different parts were rather composed at different times and were later on compiled together. The main themes of this long devotional poem are God, religion, rituals, the world and *Chandi*.

In the long composition, ecclesiastical satires are found interspersed here and there and some of them are the gems of pure poetry.

There are beautiful pieces imbued with *shant rasa*. The Guru loses himself in the most elevated state of realisation, feeling the entire universe losing its separate entity and meeting the Supreme Being, he is addressing.<sup>16</sup>

D.P. Ashta writes that considering from a literary and philosophical point of view, the *Akal Ustat* would appear to be one of the best works of Guru Gobind Singh. It shows the Guru's mastery over language and style and his deep vision in the eternal glory and self-completeness of God. This composition is sure to have a prominent place in *Sant* literature.<sup>17</sup>

The work also reveals the author's intimate knowledge of the people like the Gorkhas, the Tibetan, the Chinese, the Manchurians, the English, the Georgians, the Romanians, the Kandhari, the Qureshi, the Dravidians, the Telangi, the Marhattas, the Bengali, the Dehlavi, etc.<sup>18</sup> This shows Guru Gobind Singh's vast vision to be viewed with tolerance and human sympathy.<sup>19</sup> It was introducing a new strain into the strife-torn India of those times to have pleaded for tolerance towards all humanity with its infinite variety of forms, tongues, manners and beliefs. This spirit has come down to the Sikhs, and distinguishes them in the sorry world of people who have grown up with less tolerant doctrine.

### **Bachittar Natak**

*Bachittar Natak*, an autobiographical writing of Guru Gobind Singh, is perhaps the first Indian autobiography. It was completed on Har Vadi *Panchami* 1755 BK (1697 A.D.). It portrays natural as well as supernatural events pertaining to human beings, gods, goddesses and of other mythological heroes.<sup>20</sup> *Bachittar Natak* is, undoubtedly, an important and indispensable source revealing the personality of the Guru.

It provided significant information to the students of history and mythology interested in the study of the Guru.

The contents of *Bachittar Natak* can be divided into three parts. Firstly, it gives an account of the history of the family of the Guru; secondly, it narrates the mission of the Guru; and thirdly, it deals with the description of the battles he fought against the Mughals and the hill chiefs.

*Bachittar Natak* narrates the chief events of the Guru's life up to the arrival of Prince Muazzam in the Punjab in 1696. For example, the *Atam Katha*,<sup>21</sup> the battles of Bhangani<sup>22</sup> and Nadaun,<sup>23</sup> the expeditions of the Khanzada,<sup>24</sup> Hussain Khan,<sup>25</sup> Jujhar Singh<sup>26</sup>

and the arrival of Shahzada Muazzam<sup>27</sup> have been discussed at some length. However, certain significant events, vis-i-vis, the creation of the *Khalsa*, the post-*Khalsa* battles do not form the part of the *Bachittar Natak*. Thus, it is an enchanting life story told in confident, serene and charming manner. By the sweep of his epic imagination, the Guru brings even the pre-historic past to bear on the grim present. He has drawn his encyclopaedic knowledge of the past as well as the present to enrich his arguments. The work depicts battle scenes<sup>28</sup> as well. In fact, *Bachittar Natak* is a model of the art of self-portrayal.

### **Chandi-di-Var**

*Chandi-di-Var* is a composition of Guru Gobind Singh which forms the part of the *Dasam Granth*. It comes after the description of two *Chandi-Charitras* in *Pauri chhand*. It is known *Bhagauti Ki Var* as well. The theme of *Chandi Charitra*, the exploits of *Chandi*, is the same as that of *Chandi-di-Var*. Both are free versions. To Guru Gobind Singh, Durga was an incarnation of *bhagauti* or sword which is a symbol of the divine power which protects the weak, awakens the suppressed and inspires them into action against injustice and tyranny. The Guru wanted to revive the ancient spirit of Kshatriyas and to breathe valour into the veins of the old dying nation. It was with this exalting notion of national mission that he regarded heroic literature as a means to the noble end. It was in this matrial spirit that he regarded God as All-Steel which is *shakti* and gave expression to his burning desire for new *shakti* in both his devotional and secular works to give him strength in order to champion the cause of truth, justice and oppressed humanity.

Guru Gobind Singh has not merely told the story of the goddess and her battles but has described in detail the various incidents interluding them with similies and metaphores and thus,

has given vivid and lively pictures of the fields of battle and various fighters. Each verse, each line and each syllable breathes the fire of life in the dead, inspires the cowardly to love war and kindles new courage in the blood of both the reciter and the listeners. The rhythms of the verses, the use of alliteration and the diction, all combined together produce a music, which is played in accompaniment with the twanging of arrows, the clashing of swords, the beating of drums, the blowing of conches and the shouts of war cries. The verbal music produced chiefly by employing the devices of alliteration and onomatopoeia seems to reproduce the actual action which this verse sets out to echo. The galloping verse, the best of accented rounds and the varying pause reproduce the speed of action and the hurry of movement in actual fighting. It is indeed a rare verse that shows a mastery of technique and elaborate art of poetics.

Through this writing, the Guru raised the innate heroism of his followers by the presentation of symbolic *Chandi* with the forces of evil; perhaps the Sikhs were called upon to fight against tyranny and evil rampant in the days of Aurangzeb. Emphasis is laid here on the material exploits of ancient warriors with all the realism, thrill and excitement of soul stirring composition.

### **Shastar Nam Mala**

As the name indicates, this composition gives us an exhaustive catalogue of weapons used in the warfare in the days of Guru Gobind Singh. These weapons are praised as deliverers and protectors. *Shastar Nam Mala* is not merely an objective description of the weapons but their panegyric for the brave deeds of heroism which their wielders have performed in the service of their cause, telling at the same time the stories of gods and demons who wielded them.

The work runs into 1318 verses and covers ninety one pages. Various weapons are given fanciful names. Among the simplest of those are names for arrows, bow-roarer, skin piercer, deer-slayer, etc.

The composition is further remarkable for two things. Firstly, it begins with the personification of each of the weapons, and concludes with the worship of God through the medium of weapons. Secondly, in enumerating the weapons of war, the Guru had used all possible names of the weapons and also adopted periphrases which lend dignity and grandeur to the style.

### **Swaiyyas**

These are thirty two stanzas of four lines each. The theme of the *swaiyyas* is divinity, the meditation on the name of God, satire on ascetic practice and superstitions, true divinity and false divinity, rapport between the *Khalsa* and the Guru.<sup>29</sup> The Guru believed in the worship of one God who is omnipresent and omnipotent.

### **Shabad Hazare**

There are ten *shabads* in thirty eight couplets in this composition of Guru Gobind Singh. These *shabads* exhort men to worship only One God and not the manifestations of His Creation. There is a satire on ascetics. The true ascetic is to be an *udasi* at heart. Instead of the ashes to be applied on the body, a true *udasi* should lay stress on the Name and other religious duties. He should not go for matted hair and uncut finger nails. Taking bath at the holy places, exercising mercy, controlling passions, performing acts of charity, practising austerity are of no account, being without an iota of the grace of the Lord.<sup>30</sup>

## Zafarnama

*Zafarnama* is a letter of one hundred and eleven couplets written in Persian by Guru Gobind Singh to Emperor Aurangzeb. It is a rich mine of historical information. It can be divided into two parts. The first part is an invocation of God and the second part is addressed to Emperor Aurangzeb. In the use of language the Guru is very direct, lucid, frank and economical. He has a very impressive telling power of description and can confine a whole scene in very concrete words.

To sum up; Guru Gobind Singh's literary works are full of literary qualities, historical truths and vibration of mind. The Guru drunk deep at the fountain of ancient Hindu scriptures. He vouchsafed the national tradition and the culture of the old *rishis* and warriors. India needed to revive its ancient glory, and the Guru finding Indians fallen on evil days stirred their very souls by recital to them of the deeds of ancient heroes. The Guru's poetic achievements lie not in the depth of themes but also in an artistic's handling of new forms of versification and in the discovery of new condensences. Rhythm is the martial tone and its onomatopoeic effect is the thrill which transports the compositions of the Guru.

## Notes and References

1. Bhai Santokh Singh, *Sri Gurpartap Suraj Granth* (ed.), Bhai Vir Singh, Amritsar, 1926-37, *Rut 5, Ansu 52*; Gian Singh, *Panth Parkash* (1880), Languages Department Punjab, Patiala, 1970, p. 164. But Piara Singh Padam has traced a list of 125 poets at the *darbar* of the Guru. Piara Singh Padam, *Guru Gobind Singh de Darbari Rattan*, Patiala, 1965, pp. 3-5.
2. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion : Its Gurus' Sacred Writings and Authors*, Vol. V, Oxford, 1909, pp. 83-84.
3. Bhai Mani Singh, after the compilation of the *Dasam Granth*, sent the same for comments to Guru Ki Kashi also known as Damdama Sahib. It



remained under discussion for quite some time when some of the scholars opined that it should be in different volumes while other preferred it to be only in one volume. It was finally resolved to keep the compositions in one volume.

4. Kesar Singh Chhibar, *Bansavalinama Dasam Patshahian Ka* (1780) (ed.), Rattan Singh Jaggi, *Parkh*, Chandigarh, 1972 p. 135; Sewa Singh, *Shahid Bilas (Bhai Mani Singh)* (ed.), Giani Garja Singh, Ludhiana, 1961, p. 40; Gian Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 287; Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, p. 260; Kshitimohan Sen, *Medieval Mysticism of India*, London, p. 105.
5. D.P. Ashta, *Poetry of Dasam Granth*, Delhi, 1959, p. 11; Rattan Singh Jaggi, *Dasam Granth Da Kartritav*, New Delhi, 1966, pp. 91-99; Piara Singh Padam, *Dasam Granth Darshan*, Patiala, 1968, pp. 16-26. Some of the historically important manuscript copies of *Dasam Granth* available to this day are :
  - i. *The Granth* by Bhai Mani Singh (including *Adi Granth*), 1906 pages (*Tatkara Bachittar Natak Granthji ka*).
  - ii. *The Granth* by Bhai Sukha Singh of Patna, 626 pages.
  - iii. *The Granth* by Baba Deep Singh lying at Damdama Sahib (1804 BK), 971 pages.
  - iv. *The Granth* by Charat Singh lying at Gurdwara Moti Bagh Patiala, 501 pages.
  - v. *The Granth* at Diwan Khana, Sangrur, 566 pages. Also *Tatkara Granth Ka Sri Mubarak Patshahi Das*.
  - vi. *The Granth* at Toshakhana Patna Sahib.
6. Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs* (1849), Delhi, 1966, p. 71; Gian Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 164; Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. V. p. 260; Gokal Chand Narang, *Transformation of Sikhism*, Lahore, 1912, p. 246; Indubhushan Banerjee, *Evolution of the Khalsa*, Calcutta, 1947, p. 106; Rattan Singh Jaggi, *op. cit.*, pp. 80-81, 198. Besides, the controversy about the compositions of Guru Gobind Singh contained in the *Dasam Granth*, there is also a divergence of opinion regarding the year of its completion. Gian Singh holds that most of the compositions contained in the *Dasam Granth* had been written even before 1699. This, however, does not rule out the possibility that a part of it might have been written at Damdama. According

- to Gokal Chand Narang, the Guru compiled the *Dasam Granth* at Damdama, but we know from the Sikh records that the compilation by Bhai Mani Singh took place twenty six years after the Guru's demise. Gian Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 164; Macauliffe, *op.cit.*, Vol. V. pp. 67, 223; Gokal Chand Narang, *op.cit.*, p. 166.
7. Cunningham, *op.cit.*, p. 261; Macauliffe, *op.cit.* Vol. V. p. 261; D.P. Ashta, *op.cit.*, p. 32.
  8. *Chandi di Var*, Punjabi 55 verses; *Braj-Ramavtar* and *Nihkalanki Avtar*.
  9. C.H. Leohlin, *The Grantha of Guru Gobind Singh and the Khalsa Brotherhood*, Lucknow, 1971, pp. 20-21.
  10. *Bachittar Natak*, VI, 42-43.
  11. C.H. Leohlin, *op. cit.* p. 20.
  12. Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p.366; Macauliffe, *op.cit.*, Vol. V. p. 261; Mohan Singh, *op.cit.*, p. 40.
  13. Edmund Candler, *Mantle of the East*, London, 1910, pp. 146-47.
  14. *Bachittar Natak*, 1.
  15. "Akal Ustat," "in *Sri Dasam Guru Granth Sahib Ji*, Amritsar, 200 BK. p. 11.
  16. *Tuhi* (thou), *Tuhi, Tuhi*, etc., *Akal Ustat*, 51-70.
  17. D.P. Ashta, *op.cit.*, p. 41.
  18. *Akal Ustat*, *op. cit.*, pp. 254-55; G.S. Talib, *The Impact of Guru Gobind Singh on Indian Society*, Ludhiana, 1984, p. 87.
  19. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
  20. See for instance, *Bachittar Natak*, V. 28, 29, 42, 43.
  21. *Ibid.*, I to V.
  22. *Ibid.*, VII.
  23. *Ibid.*, IX.
  24. *Ibid.*, X.
  25. *Ibid.*, XI.
  26. *Ibid.*, XII.

27. *Ibid.*, XIII.
28. Battle of Bhangani, *Bachittar Natak*, VII, 7; VIII, 9-12, 28, 30, 35; Macauliffe, *op.cit.*, Vol. V. pp. 39-40, 44.
29. *Swaiyyas*, stanza 21.
30. *Shabad*, 4.

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